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Dispatches from the Fringe: great reckonings in small spaces in 'Tend/Liminal'

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Liminal by Liadain Herriott

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Liminal by Liadain Herriott and Tend by Emma Fitzgerald and Antje O'Toole

Rating: ★★★★★

Encouraging the development of shorter works, the Tiger Dublin Fringe offers two for the price of one at The [Samuel Beckett Theatre](#) with "Tend" by Emma Fitzgerald and Antje O'Toole and "Liminal" by Liadain Herriott.

Fusing text, song, projections and movement "Tend" begins with O'Toole walking through a spiral of clear, plastic cups set out to resemble a mediation wheel while Fitzgerald sits at a table operating a computer. In what follows moments of intimacy are sought, found, resisted, images of

dancers and a woman and child are projected onto a screen, the spiral becomes a circle becoming both a platform and a prison as stories are told and “Tend” explores its big questions and personal concerns. Moments of wonderful creativity such as Fitzgerald trying to embrace a resistant O’Toole in the fragile spiral, a poignant rendition of Love Me Tender or Fitzgerald being walked like a patient strapped in as she mouths words silently while O’Toole hums “Somewhere over the Rainbow” were both powerful and poignant.

But other moments were less successful and sapped the pace, lingering a little too long or lacking the inventiveness of “Tend’s” finer creations. Original movement sequences were not as engaging as they might have been and indeed movement was most successful when referencing Paul Johnston’s 1999 production of “Without Hope or Fear.” Throughout, the use of text was cleverly handled, with O’Toole’s simplistic, descriptive passages contrasting well with Fitzgerald’s lyrical poeticism. But not all contrasts worked as well with “Tend’s” tackling of the big questions, such as rape and refugees, losing out to the power of the personal in which lay the universal and “Tend’s” true strength.

“Tend” feels at times like a work in progress, with some amazing powerful moments contrasting with others that lacked the same impact. “Tend” expands when it contracts and focuses more on its personal themes of trust, intimacy and sacrifice rather than the big questions. And when it does it is a work of quiet power and poignancy.

“Tend” *** 3 stars

If “Tend” feels like a work in progress, “Liminal” is a self-confessed [dance](#) solo in progress in which Liadain Herriott explores the plight of a classical girl living in the modern world. Throughout, Herriott is acted upon by various pieces from the classical canon which then give way to electronic beats on occasion. Her struggle is evident as she searches for somewhere to belong. But nowhere quite fits. Only at the end is some sort of resolution hinted at and even then it belongs to neither place, becoming instead something of Herriott’s own making.

In “Liminal” Herriott’s signature stylings abound: acute, disjointed articulations coupled with the physical characteristics of a human puppet at the behest of an unseen puppet master. As always, Herriott is the mistress of her own body, with flawless articulations perfectly executed with consummate control. Feet, arms, fingers, eyes, lips, nothing is left unattended, nothing left to chance with all being subsumed by Herriott’s technical excellence. The result is often spellbinding, often mesmerising.

But in its current incarnation “Liminal” is not the finished product and strongly suggests there is more to come. Indeed it is not so much what’s there as what’s not there. At times Herriott’s movements seem to uncharacteristically lack range, confined within a disjointed jerkiness as if she is still searching, as indeed she is. The sequence in which Herriott attempts to connect with Tchaikovsky’s Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture seemed to lack depth in contrast with the swell and passion of the music. In contrast, the final sequence where Herriott dances with an orange lampshade flowed wonderfully and was sublime to behold.

In “Liminal” Herriott seems to belong nowhere. Not in the classical, nor the modern, nor the liminal space in between. Rather she belongs in a space of her own making, fashioned from dancing through the light and the half-light, the shadows and the dark. With “Liminal” the audience are afforded an opportunity to witness an amazing artist crafting a new work. It all doesn't fit yet, but when it does it hints at something wonderful to come. Huge credit also needs to go to the uncredited lighting designer whose understanding of both the work and their craft was exemplary.

**** 4 stars

“Tend” by Emma Fitzgerald and Antje O’Toole and “Liminal” by Liadain Herriott run at the Samuel Becket Theatre as part of the Tiger Dublin Fringe till September 10th. Show begins at 8.30 pm

Tickets: €14/€12

For further information go to [Tiger Dublin Fringe](#)



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