

Review: Tundra

Seona Mac Reamoinn

Last Updated: Wednesday, May 21, 2014, 18:37

Tundra

Samuel Beckett Theatre

We feel and hear the Arctic wind howling across the imagined tundra of [Emma Martin](#) Dance, and watch through gauze and flickering lights as four figures stagger into this inhospitable territory, in search of shelter or maybe a future. This edgy, image-driven work, which opened the [Dublin Dance Festival](#), is directed with the style and pace of a Nordic noir thriller.

The “grey building”, which this quartet of lost souls encounter, is a transit camp of memory and fantasy. Dreams and nightmares are summoned and expunged. It is a space both alien and domestic in Sarah Jane Shiels’s finely lit design, inhabited only by Raymond Keane’s chain-smoking Grey Man. In this blurred space, secrets and demons are untangled or realised; the women ([Justine Cooper](#) and Oona Doherty) make the most impact in Martin’s angular and jangled nervy dances, spinning, stretching and flailing as jerky, asymmetrical patterns abound. But occasionally, for this oddball collective (including an athletic [Neil Fleming Brown](#) and Simon Jaymes) there is an oasis of calm: a reaching hand, a proffered shoulder, a shared cigarette; a human need to connect.

Tension is ever fuelling this disciplined work, keeping us alert and engaged. It is palpably underpinned by [Nick Roth](#) and Francesco Turrisi’s score played live, evoking Balkan folk tunes, a primal beat, atonal rumblings and Slavic murmurings. The crackling of a small black-and-white television, around which the group gather, underlines the cinematic technique of the dance. It’s all shadow play and silhouettes, camera-hugging images projecting the stereotypical or the surreal; a stark vignette of a trio of mantilla-draped dancing widows, morphing into cabaret artists, all fishnets, flicked heels and feigned seductive poses.

The characters gather too around a wooden table, a communal moment of remembered house parties. The final visual is of that same table now laid for formal dinner, the figures shedding their darker selves to dine together, accompanied by the Grey Man, part puppeteer and projectionist.

Ends Friday

© 2014 irishtimes.com

<http://nomoreworkhorse.com/2014/05/23/16308/>

Information

This entry was posted on May 23, 2014 by **No More Workhorse** in **Dance, Theatre, Theatre Review**

Tundra – Dublin Dance Festival – Review



Tundra – Review by Sarah Gilmartin

The Tundra explored by Emma Martin Dance is a dark and foreboding landscape, a world that blurs the lines between nightmare and reality, offering a disorienting narrative full of engaging moments and action. The domestic is well represented in the impressive set design (Emma Martin & Sarah Jane Shiels). An armchair in the foreground, an old television set displaying static, transmissions failing. The table and chairs in the background will later be set for dinner, but not before the characters climb on top and sing into a suspended microphone, dangling surreally out of the darkness, from heaven or hell.

This sense of existential vertigo is mirrored in the choreography, the disjointed, jerky dances by the women in particular (Oona

Doherty and Justine Cooper) drawing us into the tense world of the tundra, giving an angular, rhythmic beauty to its strangeness. Their subsequent antics bring contrast to the piece – black wigs and pink pom poms – undercutting the darkness with humour, offering a freakish parody of reality. The pair are joined in their search for meaning and for hope with their male counterparts (Simon Jaymes and Neil Fleming Brown), the four outsiders moving together in a moment of connection that is genuine and affecting after the isolation that precedes it.

Shadows dominate the domestic, unsettling us as we watch the characters do battle with stranger versions of themselves, trying to grasp at a future. The gauzy sheath that hangs over the set at the beginning acts as a film, preventing us from fully accessing or understanding their world. Who is the Grey Man (Raymond Keane) who sits smoking in the armchair and what control does he possess? The rows of light bulbs flashing from above are an art installation in their own right, attracting the eye but refusing to let it settle.

Three veiled widows dressed all in black interrupt proceedings, their cabaret movements projected onto cinematic screens, adding another element of style. Later they sit, as on a casting couch, crossing and uncrossing their legs for the chain smoking Grey Man director.

Through it all the live score by Nick Roth and Francesco Turrisi works to stir emotion. At times primal and forbidding, elsewhere the anthemic melodies lead us along with the dancers as they progress in leaps and bounds over the flat and icy plains.

Tundra finished on May 23rd as part of the **Dublin Dance Festival**. The Festival continues until May 31st.

Find out more about **Emma Martin Dance here**.



where Samuel Beckett Theatre, Trinity College, Dublin 2
01 896 1334

[Location Map](#)

when €22, €18 conc / €17 Early Bird

how much 7.30pm

lethursday

dance

Tundra

Tundra is a sparse, Soviet piece of intense physical movement. Sitting behind a gauze curtain, the audience feels like Big Brother, observing an occultish scene with an Andy Warhol-esque poltergeist and weary travellers, collapsing and delicate after escaping the Tundra. Melancholy turns to hysteria, soundtracked by hissing white noise. An industrial glow, ever-flickering, illuminates the scenes, and three Morticia-like soundless dolls haunt the limits of the stage. The dance is battlelike, the dancers appear to be keeping evil at bay, even as it lurks quietly, a twirl of smoke, in the corner. This is a beautiful, unsettling piece of haunting dance theatre. Feel the tingle down your spine. / [Kate Coleman](#)

post



Calendar (.ics)

[Download](#)

link

<http://lecool.com/dut>

Copy