

## Press Article

### Chris McCormack Musings and intermissions Dublin Tigre Fringe review September 2016

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*When overturning stereotypes, or indeed any expectation, it helps to have an edge. Why enter stage left when you can pull up outside the theatre in a Golf, pumping electronica at the highest volume? Choreographer Oona Doherty lends literal meaning to street dance as she combines slick shuffles with flashes of pain and turmoil, before ushering the audience inside the auditorium. Doherty's dance is a breakdown of the disadvantaged male, often cast under suspicion. Redrawn in the choreographer's sensitive shapes, he expresses himself by coughing up syllables that eventually unroll into phrases of disgust ("I'm sick to the back teeth with you") and support ("Keep her lit"). Lewd utterances in German and French widen the scope to further afield. You can't help but be moved. Choral music fills the room as Doherty combines threatening gestures with the beautiful turns of classical dance. Dismissed lowlifes are elevated to greater heights, in an artist's demand for their respect.*

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### Cédric Chary - Les Plateaux festival Paris 2016 / Lazarus and the Birds of Paradise

*La révélation des PLATEAUX est incontestablement Oona Doherty. Sidérante chorégraphe irlandaise qui en 8mn a bluffé le public de La Briqueterie - CDC du Val-de-Marne avec "Lazarus and The Birds of The Paradise"*

*The Revelation of the day's is undoubtedly Oona Doherty. Staggering Irish choreographer who in 8 minutes blew away the audience of La Briqueterie-CDC du Val-de-Marne with "Lazarus and the birds of the paradise"*

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### Rachel Donnolly Dublin Dance Festival 2016 Reviw : tottally Dublin.ie LAZARUS and the birds of Paradise

*The stand-out piece so far has been Oona Doherty's Lazarus and the Birds of Paradise, a solo performed by Doherty herself as part of First Looks at DanceHouse, a strand of the programme presenting work in progress. Oona manages something very rare with this piece – it's a performance that's about a social issue, a political issue, but without being crassly and explicitly about that issue; meaning the choreographer comes at it sideways, intuitively. She internalises a body language, a culture, that's part of the fabric of her native Belfast, and re-presents it spliced with something like divinity. It's the language of harsh streets, fear and aggression – a thin veil of defiant posturing concealing vulnerability. Set to a score of clamouring, angry male voices from docudrama Wee Bastards? mixed with the sweetly epic strains of Allegri's Miserere Mei, Deus, Lazarus and the Birds of Paradise channels violence, hedonism, joyfulness and despair to transform the trampled, disregarded and reviled into something beatific.*

**Wera Hipplesroither - Rakete: Tanz und Performance einer neuen Generation**  
**10.05.2018**

*Ein Bericht vom ersten Raketen-Abend: Der Abend am 3. Mai beginnt mit Oona Dohertys „Hope Hunt & The Ascension into Lazarus“, Teil des gefeierten Tanzzyklus „Hard to be Soft“. Wir werden gebeten, das Gebäude zu verlassen und begeben uns in den Innenhof des Museumsquartiers, um das Einfahren eines Mercedes zu beobachten. Das Auto fährt auf die Menge zu, hält abrupt an und Doherty steigt begleitet von lauter Musik aus. Mit beeindruckender Stärke beginnt ein Tanz, der sich mitunter in die Menge hinein bewegt, konfrontiert und uns wieder hinein ins Theatergebäude drängt. Die expressive Tanzbewegung ist durchsetzt von Textfragmenten, die stichwortartig auf männliche Gewalt und Fehlverhalten verweisen, wie etwa das Stichwort „Köln“ oder das Nachpfeifen und Beschimpfen von Frauen auf der Straße. Auch verschiedene Tanzstile werden wild durchmischt, es finden sich Bruchstücke aus dem klassischen Ballett genauso wie aus dem Breakdance. Der Assoziationsritt endet mit einem Schrei nach Hoffnung und so etwas wie einem langsamen Tod. „Hope Hunt“ ist weder anklagend noch verharmlosend oder übertreibend. Mit vollem Ernst und Körpereinsatz dekonstruiert Doherty die leeren und überzogenen Gesten toxischer Männlichkeit, die im Hier und Jetzt neu verhandelt werden müssen.*

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**Delphine Neimon - Lazarus and the birds of the paradise : Oona Doherty ou la radieuse eurythmie ?**  
**06/10/2016**

*C'est dans le cadre des Plateaux orchestrés par La Briqueterie – CDC du Val-de-Marne que le public découvre la sidérante Oona Doherty. Originaire d'Irlande du Nord, la jeune chorégraphe crève littéralement la scène, l'écran, les pupilles et les esprits : éclatante, sincère, habitée, elle interprète Lazarus and the birds of paradise, 1er volet de la série en devenir Hard to be soft – A Belfast prayer in four parts, avec une vibration intérieure, une aura fébrile qui relève du sublime. En huit minutes exceptionnelles, la danseuse déroule un exemplum en mouvement, un mystère sacré à l'égal des pièces médiévales célébrant la sanctification humaine. Immaculée, nimbée de lumière, elle incarne tour à tour les figures populaires qu'elle a pu croiser dans son Ulster natal, une zone en crise, où l'ennui, le chômage, l'exclusion, la violence quotidienne ravagent les corps, les coeurs et les âmes. Lazare et les oiseaux du paradis : il s'agit ici d'explorer la question de la résurrection de l'individu, par l'espoir, par la foi, par la colère parfois, ces émotions fortes qui nous arrachent à la bestialité pour insuffler cette humanité mystérieuse et impalpable qui nous sert d'identité. L'homme peut-il espérer un jour devenir ange ? Est-ce sa vocation ? Où trouver la perfection dans ce monde de brutalité ? Comment y aspirer ? La grâce divine existe-t-elle ? De quoi est-elle faite ? n'est-ce pas tout simplement l'esprit qui soudain est pris de saisissement ? Avec cette gestuelle si particulière, une maîtrise du corps qui mêle mime et danse hip-hop, voguing et contorsionnisme, Oona Doherty défriche le territoire créatif qu'elle s'est choisie, entre chair et âme, en quête de sincérité, observant l'univers urbain avec acuité et empathie. Enseignante par ailleurs, elle témoigne d'une formidable énergie, d'un enthousiasme communicatif, d'une passion sans borne pour le réel qui l'entoure, ces gestes, ces êtres qui croisent sa route. Amoureuse de l'humain, elle en aborde les facettes disparates pour y déceler un fil directeur, une cohérence, une raison d'être. Visuelle, tactile, elle affectionne le morcellement car il appelle à la recomposition. Percevoir l'ordre secret du monde, le socle énigmatique de l'être, cette adepte du collage dans son essence*

*la plus surréaliste, des collaborations de toute nature avec des artistes venus d'horizons variés, s'applique à en faire le credo d'une danse qu'elle prêche comme la source d'un formidable torrent de vie. Pluralité demeure son mot d'ordre, puissance et enthousiasme son ressort créatif, amour le fil sur lequel elle évolue dans un perpétuel effet d'eurythmie étourdissant et radieux.*

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**Christophe Pequot - Waiting for Oona Doherty**  
**www.gauchebdo.ch, 8 March 2018**

*The Irish artist Oona Doherty mixes a physico-sociological theatricality, the urban dance alphabet, neoclassical ballet memories and the contemporary with an aspiration to the sacred in a solo that holds violence at bay.*

*Based in Belfast and formed at the London School of Contemporary Dance, the University of Ulster and the Laban Conservatory in London, the work of choreographer and dancer Oona Doherty was hailed by many prizes. At 31, she is one of the choreographers scheduled for the event Les Printemps de la danse which takes place until March 18th at the Théâtre Sévelin 36 in Lausanne.*

*The artist has, pegged to the body, a melancholic and introverted mood that permeates her choreographic creations, including Hope Hunt & The Ascension of Lazarus noticed by a plethora of programmers. The melancholic Cogito is translated into her dance by a subjectivity on the run, disjointed and plural. Evidenced by a form of multiplication of an exposed and tearful self-transiting between several incarnations. Oona Doherty's melancholy seems to be a real crisis and existential anguish as described by Kierkegaard. Either a catharsis of Being and a relation to its dark foundations. But also to the outcasts heard in voice over in Hope Hunt..., between aggression, victimization and dance meditation.*

*"You can see the soul of a man in his eyes" according to Hildegarde de Bingen, a mystic Benedictine nun, composer and woman of letters. In her gaze turned to the skies, the choreographer and dancer knows how to transcend the revolts, provocations, errors and impasses of the marginalized evoked by their gestures and voices. This, in a form of trance taking care of pain and impotent rage, deleterious sometimes, lives forgotten, precarious, here resuscitated.*

*Oona Doherty has a fragile and deconstructed way of her own, to repatriate the signs of challenges, violence and apostrophes, which some young people use in the urban space to challenge and exist. It is less virulent and avenging behaviors that are invested, refigured by the dancer as their archetypal traces. These are worked by the filter of a surprising gestural relevance leading them to the dance by a particular phenomenon of accumulation. Thus this breathing, expiration that the dancer carries back in a sound and fast way. Hope Hunt & The Ascension of Lazarus tiles spectacular moments close to the martial arts, including the famous vertical kick dear to Jean-Claude Van Damme, Jet Li and the Brazilian fighting dance, capoeira. There may be some glimpses of Lloyd Nelson's choreographic work. His physical theater DV8, which is pronounced deviate, which means "deviant". The body and the verb conjugate and begin a sulphurous dance which reveals crudely what our societies try to dissimulate falsely (but by exclusion and violence). Lloyd Newson's radical shows highlight injustices and reveal in images and words the fate of old men, women and homosexuals, while castigating our hypocrisy.*

*If we are far from the virtuosity deployed by the Belgian-Moroccan choreographer Sid Larbi*

*Cherkaoui in some creations mixing hip-hop, contemporary and works of the religious repertoire, Oona Doherty chose, on purpose, the Miserere of Gregorio Allegri. And its alternation between the Gregorian monody (likened to God Almighty) and the choral mass (the assembly of the faithful terrorized and powerless) is constant and regular. Tibi soli peccavi thus comes to death like a death knell our eternal repentance: "Against you and you alone I sinned".*

*There are also the recumbent arms of ballet (the fifth position of the ballet and its arms in the crown), style first ballerina of Swan Lake and some iconic forms of hip hop dance that are slowly deconstructed. What marks, is this movement caught in the ecstatic trance, this look towards the beyond, in the distance, eyes shining and as if showered with tears. The dancer is not then without repatriating the memory of Catherine Mouchet in the film of Alain Cavalier, Thérèse, who chooses the voluntary confinement of Carmel. Hence this impression of infinite melancholy tense to the listening of voices, of an invisible out-of-field, of a revelation perhaps. And this shy character, on the verge of implosion, detached, concentrated that goes with an urban gesture reminiscent of the white rapper Eminem in the film about his life, 8 Mile.*

*The body atmosphere, at once acrobatic, liquid, convulsive, destructured stratum by stratum, evokes certain pieces of the Flemish choreographer Koen Augustijnen. Composing a solo from simple gestures, as from everyday life, that she explores and dereals to extract the plastic and energetic force. The Irish artist produces a personal and in-depth aesthetic that draws its strength from the authenticity of its creative intent and is anchored far from any effect of formalization.*

*Slang suburban male dominated is also spoken, danced, remix by the choreographer and performer. She also finds there the rites of girls' bands who interpellate themselves by chanting "Hey, Sylvie ... Whore", which turns in loop. Her movements then confine to a haunting go and return to the same postural positions. There is no shadow of an ironic distance over her solo. But a willingness to engage in somatic, unconscious states, sometimes recalling the painting of Francis Bacon and its twisted anatomy, to foster a form of empathy.*

*Oona Doherty has worked artistically in a prison environment and has developed a scenic form setting references to the science fiction of an Aldous Huxley. Either the dystopia THX 1138, film about the belief of Georges Lucas depicting a universe in the 25th century that has removed all emotion from human nature. We remember those bodies dressed in white, lost and controlled in immaculate spaces. Returned bodies, tormented in particular by police officers armed with electric lances. The unique dialogues lie in a oneway communication between humans (or what's left) and an effigy symbolizing a monotheistic religion. The whole being of an incredible sadness and power of supplication. We then remember the t-shirt and training pants with three emblematic bands in the "white" variant of Oona Doherty's solo. The soundtrack and gesture of Hope Hunt & The Ascension of Lazarus, sociological and biblical title if any, is also responsible for references taken from The Hate of Mathieu Kassovitz and, especially, in a docu-fiction We Bastards? (visible on the net). Real false, unpleasant young people are "locked out" in Belfast. They lined up street harassment, beatings drunk homeless and various invectives while expressing themselves in an irish slang, where the same words chopped, shipwrecked come back. The end of the "film" is an act of contrition or redemption. The leader of the "gang" poses with the sign marking his popular qualification ("scum") as in medieval times while a tramp, throws himself into*



*the water before emptying his bottle.*

*In an amateur montage worthy of a local TV trash, we also follow the vagaries of a young woman Gloria, who screams in terror, being seized panic attacks on a sidewalk. On stage, we hear her screams. And the performer takes up some of her gestures to drift after Pina Bausch and Alain Platel and many other choreographers to a choreographic canvas. See her outstretched arm, her body twisted and shaking, her face distorted by a vernacular language incomprehensible to the layman.*

*At first glance, in a quest for a purified and complex dramaturgy marked by the memory of disjointed urban bodies, askew, on the margin we could describe, in part, "beckettian" the dance of the Irish. We remember that Samuel Beckett, her famous compatriot and playwright has achieved many concordances including the modern ballet and the method of Jacques Dalcroze's rhythmic gymnastics he discovered in 1928 and will have a profound impact on the development of dance in Europe and in the United States. From Waiting for Godot to Acts without words, to the End of the game or Oh les beaux jours, body language allows even in its negation to put away, in questions or in failure, the verbal language.*

*We discover, as choreographed by Oona Doherty, the abandonment of all privileges of vertical stature; the fall always renewed, the fact of dying incessantly in this way of bouncing like a fish out of the wave which agonizes, the agglutination of the elements such as the breath, the liquid dimension of a body in decomposition and dismemberment, the importance of the tremor to stand up; the replacement of any story or narrative frame with a "gestus" as a logic of postures and positions; the search for minimalism; the investment by the dance of the walking and its accidents and the conquest of gestural dissonances.*



[http://www.mouvement.net/teteatete/portraits/oona-doherty-la-fille-de-belfast\\_1](http://www.mouvement.net/teteatete/portraits/oona-doherty-la-fille-de-belfast_1)

<http://www.totallydublin.ie/arts-culture/arts-culture-features/falling-fast-and-slow-oona-doherty/>

**LE MONDE | 07.06.2018 à 08h13 | Par Rosita Boisseau**  
**La danse virulente et poétique d'Oona Doherty**

*Deux masses de chair s'attrapent, s'étreignent comme pour se noyer ensemble, s'accrochent pour ne plus jamais se séparer... Combat de molosses, catch en cage ? Deux hommes tout simplement, torse nu, pulsions à vif, butent l'un contre l'autre. Devant eux, une jeune femme tendue jusqu'au bout des muscles, gobe la moindre parcelle de leur étreinte en crissant « poussez, poussez, poussez ».*

*On est dans un garage glacial, récupéré par une artiste de cirque, dans la banlieue de Dublin. Début mai, chair de poule. Se risquer pieds nus est un exploit. La chorégraphe Oona Doherty, 31 ans, – c'est elle, la boule de nerfs ! – ne le demandera qu'après quelques heures de répétitions aux deux interprètes John Scott et Brian Quinn. Comme d'ôter leurs tee-shirts. « Je suis prêt à tout pour Oona, glisse John Scott, figure de la scène chorégraphique irlandaise depuis le début des années 1990, pendant que des salves d'argot local tambourinent l'espace. Elle a des convictions et du cœur. »*

*Une ardeur magique*

*L'Irlandaise de Belfast dont le nom circule de bouche en bouche depuis un an parmi les programmeurs suscite une ardeur magique. Sa pièce Hard To Be Soft : A Belfast Prayer, est à l'affiche, les 9 et 10 juin, des Rencontres chorégraphiques internationales de Seine-Saint-Denis. Elle y a été programmée pour la première fois en 2017 avec un solo de neuf minutes : « Tout d'un coup, on voyait concentrée chez cette jeune artiste l'expression de la colère, de la résistance, de la révolte, dans un style rien qu'à elle, entre contemporain et hip-hop, commente Anita Mathieu, directrice de la manifestation. Qu'il s'agisse des stigmates subis par les femmes et plus largement par la population d'Irlande du Nord pendant le conflit, elle s'attaque à son environnement avec détermination. »*

*Observer Oona Doherty, en répétition, peaufiner encore et encore cet éclat de chair et de hargne, d'impuissance aussi,...*

BIMENSUELLE  
N°447  
1<sup>er</sup> décembre 2017

# La lettre du spectacle

L'INFORMATION DES PROFESSIONNELS DU SPECTACLE VIVANT

1<sup>er</sup> décembre 2017

## (RE)CONNAISSANCE : OONA DOHERTY.

La neuvième édition du concours (Re)connaissance, les 24 et 25 novembre à La Rampe, théâtre d'Échirolles (38), a reçu 1 420

spectateurs et connu deux soirées à guichets fermés.

Le 1<sup>er</sup> prix (7 000€) et le prix du jury (4 000€) ont couronné l'Irlandaise

Oona Doherty et son

solo *Lazarus and the birds of Paradise*.

Le second prix est allé à un autre solo, *Everything is ok*, de l'Italien Marco D'Agostin.

Une mention spéciale, mais dépourvue de dotation, est allé au duo *Horion* de Malika Djardi. Cette édition autorisait pour la première fois les soli et ils ont dominé les débats.

Pour la dixième édition d'autres changements sont annoncés à commencer, sans aucun doute, par le lieu. Contrairement aux usages, le rendez-vous 2018 n'a pas été annoncé.



DR

*Lazarus and the Birds of Paradise*