

Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2016 REVIEW: Entrails by Parachute Dance***

Entrails is the debut dance piece from emerging company Parachute Dance. As the name implies it is anything but an easy watch, though this is by no means a criticism.

Directed and choreographed by Roisin O'Brien, *Entrails* takes inspiration from Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*. Like the novel, it is a complex portrayal of the human body and how it responds to difficult and traumatic events. The dark tone is established from an early stage, as our dancers come to life from a foetal-like position, twitching and blinking as though exasperated with life already, and as the dismembered parts of a mannequin are scattered across the performance space.

Capturing human fragility – whether physical or emotional – is no easy task, and the success of this piece comes largely down to O'Brien's creative direction and the skill of the three dancers, Jenny Geertsen, Emily Neighbour and Kayla Tome. Each are commanding in their own right, flitting between representations of strength and decline. Fear is manifested through wide, manic eyes; frustration through the exasperated pushing and shoving; dependence through the way in which they interact with one another – at times having to physically support the weight of each other as their struggle becomes too much.

The Space @ Venue 45 on Jeffrey Street offers the perfect space for such a performance; intimate and stark, the audience has no choice but to be thrust into the world of the dancers. Though claustrophobic at times, this adds to the intensity of the piece, and lends a believability to the suffering encapsulated by their movements and expressions.

Though highly interpretive, there are still nods to Heller's narrative. Parachutist clothing for example lies strewn across the stage, and is appropriated by the dancers at various stages, who react with fear and revulsion. Those unfamiliar with the novel may miss the subtleties of these references, however, and find the piece a little lacking in story or direction. The addition of speech – the repeated proclamations of “Help them!” and “I tried” – comes as somewhat of a surprise in a piece which has wholly relied upon movement to tell the story, though it is successful in provoking questions among the audience: Who should the character be helping? What is it that they wish they had done differently?

In a sense, this is interpretive direction at its very best; we are not given one specific character or story with whom we can engage, instead, we are forced to look at the wider impact of war and suffering, and to consider the dancers' struggle as a representation of the trauma felt by society as a whole.

This is a highly creative and thought-provoking piece, which may not sit well with all. There is nothing delicate or pretty about the dancers' movements; instead, they are deliberately jarring and disjointed, designed to convey the often confusing and conflicting ways in which our bodies respond to distress. The three dancers are captivating and truly give their all to what is a gritty, innovative and exciting piece from this new and promising company.