



OTUS, Company Oliveira & Bachtler, Riverfront, Newport

December 5, 2016
by Jane Oriel

A stream of sawdust drops from above, straight and true like an Angel Falls. The woody taste is on my tongue, the dust misting the air.

Paperback-sized blocks of wood in their hundreds are placed in random high piles around the floor space. Others are a snaking domino trail, supporting the weight of a careful-stepping female, who slowly and meticulously walks atop the entire route. The other half of this performance for two, a man, fights sleep at an oddly perched table. He snaps himself to attention again and again but the power of slumber constantly calls him back. This opening sequence fascinates, being added to by the satisfyingly tipped dominos.

Two people sharing an odd space. They move around each other, then separate out to either juggle or climb, enjoy their own company, have adventures. They can also annoy the hell out of each other with copy-cat moves and mockery like bored kids.

Company Oliveira and Bachtler was born of the circus and for OTUS, they use dance and physical theatre to bridge the space between normality and the moon.



Hugo Oliveira is at home in a slapstick world. Buster Keaton and he, share a droll fatalism and his seemingly accidental juggling is an antithesis to the hypnotic, mechanised usual fair but as skilled as it is, does not hold my attention for the duration.

Developed under Chapter's creative dance programme Coreo Cymru, the exploratory freedom afforded this company is to be treasured, offering a safe place and the rolling time in which to smash the constraints of both mind and performance.

Like many experimental works, it's not quite there. Most set pieces captivate but joining

sequences such as a chase and capture scene lack a natural fluidity, appearing stilted with other lesser defined sections acting as time-marking bookends.

Be it success or less so in the middle section, it would always be in the shade of the trapeze finale. Heralded by an emotion-laden soprano vocal, Sage Bachtler Cushman, throws herself into the rope and frame with a fury. Oliveira’s body weight is a roped counter balance allowing the full-skirted performer to ride the vicious storm. The spinning velocity is merciless with her sometime lifeless frame as she’s tossed on the elements with the vocal soaring higher.

Delicate poetry this is not and the result is raging abandon with a bolero-like conclusion.

Bravo to the braveness of OTUS and the imagination of all involved. Photography: J P Martins

Mike Smith review

<http://www.asiw.co.uk/reviews/otus-company-oliveira-bachtler-riverfront-newport>

Sage on OTUS

<http://www.asiw.co.uk/my-own-words/sage-bachtler-cushman-otus-takes-circus-theatre-new-heights>

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Thank you so much for your thoughts on Otus! I would just like to add that these photographs were taken by JP Martins

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