

FINANCIAL TIMES

Tere O'Connor Dance, Dance Theater Workshop, New York

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Published: November 13 2009

A spirit of experimentation regularly drives Tere O'Connor's dances, but the abundance of invention in *Wrought Iron Fog* (running until Saturday) beggars the imagination – and feeds it.

The New York choreographer's dancers occupy a private sphere of play animated by mechanical compulsion and voluptuous whimsy. Matthew Rogers makes a steeple of his hands, throws back his head and twirls on his toes like a playground swing's unwinding chain. He does it again – for fun. Erin Gerken shapes her arms into a half-square, as if measuring a plot of air.

Soon others join her. In O'Connor's world, whimsy and compulsion are infectious. You catch them like the common cold – by being close by.

The hour-long work proceeds with the same serendipitous flow as a Cunningham dance. But where the late choreographer emulated the easy coincidences of pedestrian traffic and the instinctive herds and migrations of animals, O'Connor takes his cue from human consciousness – and unconsciousness. Watching Cunningham dancers, you don't think about the inner life; with Gerken, Rogers, Hilary Clark, Daniel Clifton and the mesmerisingly innocent Heather Olson, you can't stop thinking about it. These dancers are bursting at the seams with hapless interiority. Their worldly movement excites perplexity, remoteness, lust and glee in them; they are what you call characters.

For years before *Wrought Iron Fog*, the characters were more neurotic than playful. The dances seemed bitter about how easily rutted in habit people were. This dance – positively glowing with movement (under Michael O'Connor's golden light) – is more hopeful. Its vastness of suggestion offers the kind of horizon you might find in Kansas: always visible and out of reach.

This is the theatre of déjà vu. The dancing almost resembles something you have seen before: a courtier's ingratiating bow; that creepy championship ballroom move in which the man manoeuvres the woman by the neck; Apollo's muses; a mime rendition of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star". But not quite.

In the gap between what we see and what we imagine, a beautiful weedy world of possibility grows up.

★★★★★

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