

[Being In the Moment with Tere O'Connor](#)

By Mary Love Hodges - Friday November 13, 2009



Tere O'Connor's Dancers

Sitting in the audience at the premiere of Tere O'Connor's *Wrought Iron Fog*, I had an experience I haven't had in a while. I was carried away by a work of pure movement. It was a wonderful reminder of what dance can be and why I love it.

When it comes to O'Connor's work, everyone seems to be talking about "craftsmanship" right now. He does have that artisan's ability to set delectable details in a tapestry of layers and echoes without overstuffing. A master of the transition, O'Connor has devoted much of his inquiry to the ways in which moments evolve into other moments. I first saw it in 2006's *Baby*, which focused explicitly on this element. For *Wrought Iron Fog*, it feels like he has zoomed out, drawing on all he knows about movement craft (unlike previous work, dancers do not speak or scream or sing) to concoct a fantastic event for his audience. Like a chef composing a menu—mixing flavors, textures, and colors—O'Connor knows how to combine ingredients to underscore, accent, and cleanse our palates for the next morsel. But unlike a dinner on discrete plates, *Wrought Iron Fog* unfolds continuously, one seamless evening of experiences. James Baker's score (also richly layered), the set by Walter Dundervill and O'Connor, and Michael O'Connor's lighting were simple, beautiful and highly theatrical, intensifying an already highly anticipated event.

The strength and passion of his ideas, his gift for structure, and his leadership in the contemporary dance community mark O'Connor as a visionary, and it's easy to slip into speaking of him as an auteur (I am guilty). But he is not interested in orchestrating every moment, and according to a video preview from *Wrought Iron Fog*'s development at MANCC, large portions of the dance are improvisation-based. The work maintains a spontaneous quality throughout—a testament to the dancers' many talents—so that improvised portions and set choreography coexist without feeling separate.

Writing a play-by-play of the dance is unnecessary, and would read more random than interesting anyway. Besides, O'Connor has been highly vocal in his opposition to this method of describing dances. *Wrought Iron Fog* simply absorbs its viewers like a dream; the *now* is so much more real and interesting than the telling later.

Mary Love Hodges is a new writer to the Urgent Artist blog. She has written about dance for The Brooklyn Rail, Dance On Camera Journal, and Critical Correspondence. She lives in Bushwick, Brooklyn, balancing interests in dance, books, and sustainable living. She is currently dance editor for The Brooklyn Rail.