

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Deep End Dance

Sarah Elgart · Wednesday, December 9th, 2015

Choreographically, I have always been pre-occupied with how to create illusions of weightlessness while moving through space, even while gravity bound as we humans are. I will never forget seeing, as a child, a moment in Jean Cocteau's beautiful film *Orpheus* when Orphée returns to the underworld in search of Eurydice. In this busy "street scene" wherein sellers shout out their wares, Orphée leans against the corner of a building and suddenly rounds it, arms and legs akimbo as if pulled by a magnetic force or swept away by a great wind. Haunted, I immediately ran outside and tried to perform the move myself, and have tried to recreate it for years in my site works. And while it makes for inventive movement exploration in search of that effect, try as I might, gravity always seems to win in the end.



A weightless David Bolger in Deep End Dance

Except where water is concerned. The deep end of a swimming pool and most certainly the ocean are other worlds altogether wherein what is possible and the rules concerning weight and gravity are entirely different. So when I saw this beautiful and moving short, **Deep End Dance**, by David Bolger, choreographer and artistic director of CoisCéim Dance Theatre, Dublin (a company I am excited to hear of and investigate further), I knew I had to write about it. Bolger performs with his 76-year-old mother, Madge Bolger, who, as is noted, worked as a swimming instructor for many years at Marian College, where the film was shot and where she taught David to swim as a boy. That set up alone makes **Deep End Dance** almost entirely worth it.



Underwater angle on Madge Bolger from her son's POV in Deep End Dance

In the opening frames of the film, Madge lovingly straightens her now grown son's tie, cuddles his face, fastens a nose clip, and then suddenly, almost shockingly, pushes him into the water. While we catch glimpses of her still standing poolside from his underwater POV, she eventually joins him in a gorgeous and poignant duet. From the push on what ensues is a dance that appears to be almost entirely choreographed, both in the water and with camera, and I wonder at the rehearsal process and how many takes were necessary to render the finished product, given that the dancers needed also to breathe. But what I love most about **Deep End Dance** is its absolute unexpectedness and sense of magic and whimsy. The music and the palpable love of mother and son, the shots, the use of stillness, the light shining through the water, and of course the beautiful weightlessness of the movement, take my breath away.



Mother straightens her son's tie before the start of Deep End Dance.

Deep End Dance was produced by Martha O'Neill/Wildfire films for An Chomhairle Ealaíon/The Arts Council and Radió Teilifís Éireann under the joint RTÉ Dance on the Box Scheme.

Given that it's holiday time, and in the face of the frightening events of late, it moved me to see something that ultimately is simply about love and beauty. We all can use more of both right now.

Enjoy.

[embedvideo id="64452605? website="vimeo"]

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