

This article will explore the question of how contemporary Irish theatre navigates and responds to digital culture and emergent counter-attention modes. More particularly, how does Irish theatre appeal, interrogate and exploit the strategies used by new communication technologies in order to appeal to a contemporary Irish theatre audience? I will begin to tease out this enquiry by examining a number of performances programmed as part of the 2015 and 2016 Dublin Theatre Festival, namely Dead Centre's *Chekhov's First Play*, ANU Productions and CoisCéim's *These Rooms*, and Michael Keegan-Dolan's *Swan Lake/Loch na hEala*. These performances engage specifically on the effects of the digital culture shift in Ireland – a shift, I will argue, that has affected the ways contemporary Irish theatre audiences approach and experience certain types of performance. The article focuses on several performances from the Dublin Theatre Festival 2015 and 2016 programmes in order to explore the cultural shift in Ireland towards digital culture and how it has transformed the way contemporary Irish theatre is defined, created and consumed. Looking at specific programming choices for the 2015 and 2016 Dublin Theatre Festival, the article traces the pervasive nature of information-intensive environments in Ireland and links it to the bodily, immersive and affective performances programmed as part of the Festival.

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**Keywords:** Irish theatre, Dublin Theatre Festival, digital culture, affect, *Chekhov's First Play*, *These Rooms*, *Swan Lake/Loch na hEala*

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# Contemporary Irish Theatre and Digital Culture

## *Performative Reflections of a Changing Irish Experience*

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Cultural change can be described as a change in the triadic relation formed by perception, body, and language. This triadic relation is unequivocally constitutive of theatre. (Fischer-Lichte, *Show 9*)

In a clever revision of one of theatre's most recited lines, Christopher Murray proposes that Irish theatre holds a "mirror up to nation", placing particular emphasis on the historically responsive and meditative nature of theatre in Ireland. This mirror up to nation concept is not only demonstrated in a multitude of twentieth-century Irish plays that sought to explore and challenge the political milieu and Irish culture of the time, displayed most notably in the works of J.M. Synge, Seán O'Casey, Lady Gregory, Brian Friel, Frank McGuinness, Tom Murphy, Samuel Beckett and Marina Carr, but can equally be applied to the less text-based, more experiential Irish theatre of the last decade, exhibited in productions by Corn Exchange, Blue Raincoat, Pan Pan Theatre, Brokentalkers and ANU Productions. As Irish society becomes increasingly "information-intensive" – saturated with media, images, technology, digital interactions and new communication technologies – Irish theatre comes under pressure to adapt its form to reflect this experience of Ireland. This adaptation is reflected in the form of a more experiential, affective mode of performance; a mode that reflects what it is and above all what it *feels* like to live in an information-intensive society.

This article will explore the ways in which contemporary Irish theatre navigates and responds to digital culture and emergent counter-attention modes. More particularly, it will consider how Irish theatre appeals, interrogates and exploits the strategies used by new communication technologies in order to appeal to a contemporary Irish theatre audience. I will begin to tease out this enquiry by examining a number of performances programmed as part of the 2015 and 2016 Dublin Theatre Festival, namely Dead Centre's *Chekhov's First Play*, ANU Productions and CoisCéim's *These Rooms* and Michael Keegan-Dolan's *Swan Lake/Loch na hEala*. These performances engage with the effects of the digital culture shift in Ireland – a shift, I will argue, that has affected the ways contemporary

Irish theatre audiences approach and experience certain types of performance.

This article will trace a particular development in contemporary Irish theatre informed by digital culture and our ever-increasing engagement with multi-form, information-intensive environments, whileby commenting on specific programming choices for the 2015 and 2016 Dublin Theatre Festival as demonstrative case studies. Dublin Theatre Festival is the longest running theatre festival in Europe and a central fixture in the contemporary arts scene in Ireland. Murray observes that Irish theatre can be defined as “a long energetic dispute with a changing audience over the same basic issues: where we come from, where we are now, and where we are headed” (224), and Dublin Theatre Festival certainly embraces this idea as demonstrated in their programming choices year on year. In addition to programming international work, the Festival seeks to showcase Irish productions, always with the prevailing agenda to respond to issues that are pertinent to Irish society, both at a local and global level. Willie White, the director of Dublin Theatre Festival, emphasises this point by noting, “The festival is conceived with a local audience in mind” (*2016 Dublin 2*). Since its inception, the Festival has been fundamental to the continually shifting definition of Irish theatre; this article draws upon this connection. By focusing on the Dublin Theatre Festival programme from the past two years, I hope to provide a valuable indication of the contemporary theatrical milieu in Ireland and demonstrate contemporary Irish theatre’s particular engagement with digital culture.

## Digital culture and counter-attention

In a similar vein to Murray’s mirror up to nation proposal, Erika Fischer-Lichte suggests that a shift occurred in European societies’ perception, bodies and language as a consequence of substantial developments in art, industry and culture at the turn of the twentieth century. Amongst other factors, she cites the impact of Impressionism, Cubism, railways, automobiles, the industrial innovations of Frederick Taylor, the adoption of conveyor belts in industry and the reform of housing, nutrition and hygiene. Fischer-Lichte concludes that these developments “required the human body to adapt its movements to the given rhythm of a machine” (*Show 5*). A binding and dynamic relationship exists between our bodies and our surroundings; each must continually adapt to the other in order to thrive. Therefore, as digital culture continues to engage the population, so too will it affect perception, bodies and language requiring society to adapt to the given rhythm of a mediated, technology-driven environment.

One of the ways this rhythm is illustrated is in emergent forms of counter-attention. The prevalence of new communication technologies such as the Internet, email

and social media places additional demands on our cognition and thus introduces a significant challenge to the ways in which we delegate and direct our attention. Consequently, counter forms of attention have emerged, such as hyper attention and modes of low-level attention similar to trance, which are maintained and precipitated by long periods of time interacting with technology. Accordingly, performances must respond in unique and experimental ways to recognise this shift.

In her 2012 book, *How We Think*, N. Katherine Hayles suggests that, in contrast to the developing countries where scarce resources are identifiably food, water and shelter, the scarce resource in the developed countries is incontrovertibly human attention. Hayles contends that, “the sheer onslaught of information has created a situation in which the limiting factor is human attention. There is simply too much to attend to and too little time to do it” (12). Thus, when our surroundings continue to make multiple demands and people are always contactable in order to carry out these demands, it is reasonable to assume that cognitive patterns and approaches, as well as attention modes, will adjust and continue to adjust to the changing environment. In a further study, Hayles identifies two modes of attention – deep attention and hyper attention – suggesting the latter mode has grown in prominence due to the influence that information-intensive environments exert. She notes the difference in the two attention types as follows: “[Deep attention involves] concentrating on a single object for long periods [...] having a high tolerance for focus times” (“Hyper” 9), while hyper attention involves, “switching rapidly among different tasks, preferring multiple information streams, seeking high levels of stimulation, and having low tolerance for boredom” (“Hyper” 12).

Hayles draws a direct link to the rise of modes of hyper attention with our repeated digital interactions that require switching between tasks frequently, in addition to the effect of the information-intensive environments we inhabit which are also changing rapidly. Hyper attention, and more widely, the notion of counter-attention constitutes a new type of consciousness that, although on first enquiry may seem automated, is in fact deeply embodied. For that reason, contemporary theatre is seeking to offer a more affective aesthetic experience through multi-form means in order to tap into digital culture in its various manifestations.

Affective encounter in performance is a primarily felt, bodily encounter between the performance and the spectator. *The Affect Theory Reader* describes affect as “the name we give to those forces—visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion—that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension” (1). It occurs on an intensive, asignifying plane only available in present experience. Brian Massumi explains that the “the primacy of the affective is marked by a gap between *content* and *effect*” (84).

In other words, affect is located between the signifying potential of the image and the emotion that this signifying image may instil. Thus, affective encounter occurs within the present moment and is felt prior to being known or identified. We understand the affect and seek out conceptual significance or meaning from the resonance left by the affective encounter subsequent to the event.

This reference to affective encounter in performance occurring in “the present moment” indicates a temporal, relational and bodily state. According to Josephine Machon, presence, and the consequent immersion it delivers, is “A very real exchange of energy between humans [that] exists within the immediacy of the live and ongoing present of performance” (39). The concept of presence as an exchange of energy is significant because it not only highlights the deeply affective nature of encounters that occur within the present experience but also the non-discursive, experiential space that it inhabits. As affect occurs within the present moment, meaning is accessed through the resonances in the body. Affective encounter establishes an embodied experience and foregrounds the felt aspects of performance. In doing so, the performance’s emphasis will always be on the stimulation of the spectator’s senses and communication of sensation. I will return to the notion of affective encounter in reference to the mode of aesthetic experience that the performances which I reference construct for the spectator.

By extension, in setting out the characteristics of postdramatic theatre, Hans-Thies Lehmann charts the following developments that move text-based theatre towards a more experiential, affective mode of performance: “more presence than representation, more shared than communicated experience, more process than product, more manifestation than signification, more energetic impulse than information” (85). Lehmann connects these developments to the pervasiveness of technology and media as well as the emergence of new communication technologies. These characteristics place a considerable emphasis on the experiential aspects of performance influenced by digital culture and promote the establishment of affective encounter within performance.

In sum, the establishment of affective encounter in performance can be used as a way to connect to modes of counter-attention by foregrounding the bodily impact of the performance and the embodied response of the spectator rather than focusing on the conceptual connection of the spectator to an elaborate narrative. It is therefore the argument of this article that many contemporary Irish theatre performances which engage with digital culture employ multi-form, multi-media means to impact the spectating body affectively rather than conceptually through a highly structured narrative in order to appeal to forms of counter-attention by simultaneously imitating and challenging the strategies used by new communication technologies. In what

follows, I will apply the proposals of Hayles and Fischer-Lichte to performances within the Irish context, using the 2015 and 2016 Dublin Theatre Festival programmes as an illustrative anchor, in order to further explore the cultural shift in Ireland towards digital culture and how it has transformed the way contemporary Irish theatre is defined, created and consumed.

## Performative reflections of a changing Irish experience

In order to understand the shifting definition of Irish theatre and its dialogic and formative relationship with Dublin Theatre Festival, it is valuable to return to Murray's proposal of Irish theatre acting as a mirror up to nation. In his outline of the mirror up to nation concept, Murray notes:

[T]he mirror does not give back the real; it gives back images of a perceived reality [...] Therefore, a prescriptive approach to the relations between art and society in Irish drama is unfruitful. An open, pluralist form of dramatic criticism seems preferable. Drama helps society find its bearings; it both ritualises and interrogates national identity (9).

The 2015 and 2016 Dublin Theatre Festival programmes indeed sought to both ritualise and interrogate national identity by presenting works that distinctly engage with digital culture and explore its impact on Irish society. However, these were not text-based plays that engaged with digital culture as a central narrative subject; they did not demonstrate by directly mirroring the real. Rather, the performances displayed digital culture by foregrounding affective communication and employing multi-media and multi-form means to deliver their message. In other words, the mode of performance sought to both appeal and examine modes of counter-attention precipitated by digital culture through an integration of experiential, affective, immersive techniques within performance.

The opening note of the 2015 Dublin Theatre Festival programme remarks that the performances chosen aimed to showcase the "excellent play writing that we are renowned for", before noting that "artists are also taking on new forms to respond to the challenge of describing the contemporary world in which they find themselves" (2). The following year, in an interview with the *Irish Times*, Willie White observed that the 2016 Festival was focusing on "forward momentum" and in the prefatory note to the 2016 programme, he further states, "What is evident in the works are common concerns about how we live, how we make sense of the past and how we can live together now and in the future" (2). Indeed, while the 2015 and 2016 festivals chose to programme a number of traditional text-based plays as anticipated, a large number of the performances presented a detailed

commentary on contemporary Irish life, particularly society's engagement and immersion in digital culture, delivered through distinctly multi-form, affective means.

In the section that follows, I will examine Dead Centre's *Chekhov's First Play* from the 2015 Festival followed by ANU Productions and CoisCéim's *These Rooms* and Michael Keegan-Dolan's *Swan Lake/Loch na hEala*, both of which were presented at the 2016 Festival. To return to Fischer-Lichte's proposal referenced at the beginning of this article, each of these performances can be seen as an abstraction of contemporary Irish life; they are a reflection of the substantial cultural change that has occurred in Ireland, and globally, towards a culture of the digital. Therefore, based on Fischer-Lichte's proposed triadic relation, these performances present a distinct commentary on contemporary Irish society's perception, bodies and language.

When Anton Chekhov wrote his first play, it was reportedly met with poor reviews; since then, it has received little attention. Thus, it seemed unusual that Dead Centre, an Irish theatre company recognised for their experimental, visually compelling style, had chosen to adapt this play, albeit in a loose fashion, calling it *Chekhov's First Play*. In their blurb for the play the company note that when the text was discovered in 1921, "The title page was missing. The play they found had too many characters, too many themes, too much action. All in all, it's generally dismissed as unstageable. Like life" (2015 Dublin 17). *Chekhov's First Play* can be broken down into two parts. The first part stages a relatively conventional presentation of the play complete with traditional costumes and set, with one notable exception. Upon entering the theatre, the audience are instructed to wear the headphones that are provided. Then, Bush Moukarzel, the co-director of *Chekhov's First Play*, introduces himself to the audience, stating, "You're probably wondering why you're wearing headphones. *Chekhov's First Play* is really complicated and messy so I thought I'd set up a director's commentary to help explain what's going on, what it's about, and why you should like it." Moukarzel continues through the first half of the play to provide a sharp commentary about the text, the actors and the action; he appoints himself as a guide through this unstageable play.

The choice to use headphones and commentary in the performance is striking on a number of levels particularly when considered in relation to Irish theatre's response to and engagement with digital culture. Firstly, it invites the spectator to be hypersensitive of their role as an observer while also allowing for a critique surrounding the bias of certain perspectives and their motives in addition to the power that commentary can exert. Furthermore, sound by its nature is invasive, intrusive, intimate and bodily. Therefore, we can consider the act of listening as a dynamic engagement between matter and body. As Fischer-Lichte points out,

sounds enter the body and break down its limits. When a sound resounds in the listeners' chests, inflicting physical pain or stimulating goose-bumps, they

no longer hear it as something entering their ears from outside but feel it from within as a physical process creating oceanic sensations. Through sound, the atmosphere opens and enters the spectators' bodies (*Transformative* 119).

*Chekhov's First Play* not only tests the boundaries of sense invasion, it also convinces the audience to connect with the resonance of this invasion in an affective and experiential manner.

As though directly demonstrating contemporary theatre's move away from text-based plays towards more bodily, experiential forms of communication, the second half of *Chekhov's First Play* descends into a chaotic party-like atmosphere. Some of the characters begin to remove their costumes and replace them with modern garments such as backpacks and wool sweaters. The characters begin to refer to information about their own lives alongside lines from the play, mixing real life with fiction. In addition, the performance plays contemporary songs and the characters on numerous occasions break into choreographed dance routines. Finally, at the end of the play, a member of the audience is invited, through an instruction on the headphones, to fill a role in the play. These aspects culminate not only in displaying a move from representation to presence and an emphasis on process over product in contemporary theatre, but foremost in asking the spectator to embrace the lack of signification and instead engage with the affective communication on offer.

The connection between the play and the complexity of life is established from the outset in the blurb provided by Dead Centre. If, as it suggests, *Chekhov's First Play* is generally dismissed as unstageable due to its multitude of characters, themes and action, then the commentary throughout, in addition to the growing unreliability of the observations alongside the unpredictable sound/image relationship, carries a deliberate message concerning the deceptive nature of contemporary media and its extensive influence. Thus, *Chekhov's First Play* offers insight into a changing Irish experience and in turn, a changing concept of Irish theatre. What is evident in this performance is that Irish theatre, in subject and form, is responding to cultural change and is seeking to appeal to emergent attention modes and to engage with digital culture by creating more experiential, bodily, affective, multi-form, multi-media performances.

ANU Productions are recognised internationally for their immersive, site-responsive work that explores social issues that have been largely overlooked by society. *These Rooms*, a co-production between ANU Productions and Irish dance company CoisCéim, seeks to commemorate the 1916 Easter Rising in Ireland, a pivotal occasion in Irish history whereby Irish republicans staged a revolt in Dublin city in an attempt to end British rule and establish an Irish republic. The performance pays particular attention to the men and women who lost their lives as a result of the Easter Rising and the

effect on the city and country in the aftermath. *These Rooms* plays with three timelines – 1916, 1966 and the present moment in 2016 when the play premièred. The majority of the performance is set in 1966 during the fifty-year commemoration of the events; the memories are still raw, resonating furiously from each performer and each corner of the building in which the performance takes place.

*These Rooms* is an ambitious piece, involving the audience wandering around a bar and a house that holds a secret of the historic events in every room. Significantly, a mark of the influence of CoisCéim, when words fail in *These Rooms*, as they often do when exploring events such as this, bodies speak. The experience created in *These Rooms* is interlaced with tightly choreographed dances, some of which express sheer aggression and capture the rebellious moment, and some of which speak of unbearable grief and loss. The bodies of the performers and the performing body of the space speak on an affective and intensive register. They seek to connect to the embodied memory of the Easter Rising, which arguably lives on in the bodies, minds, streets and spaces of the country to this day so that each spectator has a unique understanding of the piece.

The performance space is the dominant character as it uncovers the wounds and secrets of the Easter Rising as the audience wander through the building. In his phenomenological study of space, Gaston Bachelard discusses spaces that can induce a qualitative change in our bodies. He proposes, “By changing space, by leaving the space of one’s usual sensibilities, one enters into communication with a space that is psychically innovating. For we do not change place, we change our nature” (206). Therefore, for Bachelard, there is a difference in how particular spaces are experienced on a bodily level. This notion is demonstrated distinctly in *These Rooms*. In the first instance, the performance consists of sensorially-striking vignettes awaiting the spectator in each room of the performance space which encourage embodied spectatorship. Additionally, noting ANU Productions’ considered use of space and the creation of a site-responsive performance, Brian Singleton comments on the company’s use of “micro-sites” that “have a material ‘host architecture’” but “also have the ‘ghosts’ of sometimes absent narratives that the company seek to uncover” (6). Indeed, expanding upon the notion of memories resonating from the performance space, the building in which *These Rooms* takes place, 85 Dorset Street, is the birthplace of Irish playwright Seán O’Casey who wrote a number of notable plays surrounding Irish nationalism and the Easter Rising. This aspect adds another layer to the performance; another resonance to be felt in the space. It presents an absent narrative through affective means and implied presence.

Michael Keegan-Dolan’s *Swan Lake/Loch na hEala* draws on aspects of the Irish legend “The Children of Lir” and *Swan Lake*. Rather than presenting a straightforward

narrative that combines the two pieces, Keegan-Dolan demonstrates his expertise as a dancer and choreographer by choosing to foreground the performance's affective, embodied potential. *Swan Lake/Loch na hEala* is set in the Midlands of Ireland which is known for its bleak, liminal, mystical landscape, most famously encapsulated by Marina Carr's writing. The character of Prince Siegfried from *Swan Lake* is re-imagined as Jimmy; a clinically depressed man in his mid-thirties grieving the loss of his father. Jimmy's mother has decided to sell the family home which deeply distresses Jimmy. In an effort to end his life, Jimmy visits a nearby lake where he encounters four swans. What follows is a visually striking, affective and phenomenally immersive performance dominated by dance and music.

The stage design of *Swan Lake/Loch na hEala* presents a place that is under construction. A large ladder stands upstage right, flight cases populate the stage at various points representing different material structures in the story such as the town councillor's car and the house in which Jimmy and his mother live. An exposed stage structure juts out from the back wall. While each of these pieces communicates an unspecified place undergoing transformation, the most striking communication of place is through the bodies and movements of the performers. The live band that plays onstage throughout the performance also contributes to the communication of the space, weaving Nordic-Irish folk music into the story.

Returning once again to the notion of mirror up to nation, *Swan Lake/Loch na hEala* raises several issues pertinent to Irish society such as depression, housing, loneliness and clerical abuse, and communicates these issues through distinctly affective means. The performer's movements working in parallel with the live music arguably explore the subjects in a more compelling manner than description or representation might achieve. Fischer-Lichte proposes, "We have a particular capacity for perceiving rhythms and tuning our bodies to them. When the temporality of a performance is organized and structured through rhythm, different 'rhythmic systems' clash. The rhythm of the performance collides with the various rhythms of each individual spectator" (*Transformative* 136). This collision, understood as a type of affective encounter, reaches the spectator on a qualitative, bodily level, allowing for resonances and reverberations of the past to mingle with it and to carry into the future, therefore allowing for a more potent understanding of the piece.

In *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard explores the ability of spaces, particularly rooms and places in the home, to evoke a type of poetry that resounds, reverberates and echoes through the body. These deeply felt echoes resurface and apply themselves to future encounters. Throughout his study, Bachelard refers to the intimate exchange between the body, thoughts and the space that surrounds us. In *Swan Lake/Loch na hEala*, Keegan-Dolan has created a performance that has listened to the poetics of

space that surrounds us, focusing specifically on the Midlands of Ireland, and the powerful resonances and reverberations that this place communicates to the body. Keegan-Dolan presents this in such an embodied manner that, while the narrative is at times quite abstract and non-linear, the spectator is left in no doubt of its essence because they too are invited to feel the bodies and spaces speak, they too are invited to feel the resonances and reverberations move through their body.

In sum, *Chekhov's First Play*, *These Rooms* and *Swan Lake/Loch na hEala* are representative of the forms of performative reflections on the Irish experience that are finding their place in contemporary Irish theatre. These three performances can be viewed as an engagement with digital culture, not least for the form in which they deliver their narrative. Each of the performances chose to centre in on the affective possibilities of performance over the conceptual. What is being presented in each is a deeply experiential, affective encounter where bodily communication between the performers and the spectators lies at the heart of the piece. If one considers the effect of mediatised environments and prolonged digital interactions on our perception, body and language, *Chekhov's First Play*, *These Rooms* and *Swan Lake/Loch na hEala* offer valuable insights into what it means to inhabit, engage and most importantly experience an information-intensive world.

## “Speak[ing] to the world in their own accent”

Performance scholars, particularly those engaged in the field of digital culture and performance research, have begun to explore performance styles which aim to capitalise on bodily experience and are turning their attention towards the forms that may assist in enhancing the felt aspects of performance. Rosi Braidotti, a noted scholar within the field of posthumanism, contends that:

Contemporary information and communication technologies exteriorize and duplicate electronically the nervous system. This has prompted a shift in our perception; the visual modes of representation have been replaced by sensorial-neuronal modes of stimulation. As Patricia Clough puts it, we have become “biomediated” bodies (90).

Braidotti’s observation foremost provokes a wider discussion about the way in which bodies relate to the mediatised world in which they inhabit. But furthermore, her statement highlights an inherent shift in perception and experience through modes of simulation and stimulation which in turn raises the question of how contemporary performance will continue to engage with and exploit the strategies used by new communication technologies to appeal to modes of counter-attention which thrive on affective encounter. Each of the performances discussed in this article present a

distinctly experiential, affective and often immersive experience as a way of engaging with the cultural shift that can be observed in Ireland and internationally.

Modes of counter-attention have become more prevalent compelled by the extended periods of time we spend engaged in digital interactions. This article has examined the ways in which contemporary Irish theatre is responding and adapting to these attention modes precipitated and developed by the shift towards digital culture. It has also examined the performances that aim to connect on a bodily level with the audience by means of affective encounter and experiential modes of performance using multi-form means, thus responding to modes of counter-attention, which favour many streams of information rather than one narrative unveiled over an extended period of time.

This article has suggested that Irish theatre is exploiting the strategies used by new communication technologies in order to comment on their effects on society. I began my enquiry by referencing the 2015 and 2016 Dublin Theatre Festival programmes as a cluster-example of performances in Ireland that focused particularly on the effects of the digital culture. *Chekhov's First Play*, *These Rooms* and *Swan Lake/Loch na hEala* display a progression in the engagement and a considerable shift to bodily forms of expression as the most effective way to communicate with their audiences. Consequently, these performances, in various ways, present a shifting notion of what Irish theatre is and what it could be. Irish theatre is beginning to engage with digital culture thereby aiming to deliver more experiential, bodily, affective, multi-form, multi-media performances.

Fischer-Lichte suggests that cultural change manifests itself in the perception, body and language of a society in a triadic relation. Irish theatre is attempting to open a performative conversation by delivering more multi-form, affective, immersive performances that interrogate and reflect different attention styles and what it feels like to live in largely mediatised environments. Thus, it seems appropriate to end on a reflection posed by Willie White in reference to the performances presented as part of the Dublin Theatre Festival in 2016 and, more widely, on the constitution of contemporary Irish theatre: "Our artists are immersed in the present day and alive to the possibilities for the future, they are confidently making work that is rooted in where they live and that speaks to the world in their own accent" (2). This accent is manifestly conveyed in affective, bodily modes of communication displayed in contemporary Irish theatre.

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