

DTF Review: Perhaps All the Dragons

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Last Updated: Wednesday, October 8, 2014, 16:30

Smock Alley

They may seem distant, the 30 international speakers who appear to us, individually, as recordings on a video screen, but this sly and witty installation brings them closer. The audience for Belgian company Berlin's gently teasing show may begin to wonder where the theatre is in this: staring at a screen and waiting for a monologue does not suggest a thrillingly live connection. But co-creators [Bart Baele](#) and [Yves Degryse](#) have devised an elaborate, almost responsive experience whose interconnectedness becomes gradually and gleefully apparent.

Over the course of five encounters, no one audience member will share the same path in a single sitting. Instead, we become a model of the familiar six degrees of separation theory, a mathematical parsing of the Earth's population that suggests it's a small world after all.

Each fascinating story is carefully cultivated. My visit begins with a Russian man with a flawless memory and synesthesia, trying to learn how to forget, and spins on to an audience with a heavily banged opera singer who has played Carmen 38 times, and then the mayor of a small French village with no inhabitants.

Every speaker hushes suddenly with a disturbance elsewhere in the room: a figure on the screen next to yours butts in on the conversation while visual fillips and physical surprises increase a sense of a carefully plotted live interaction.

The performance is as much ours: we are regarded intimately, in a cocoon of sound and eye-contact, but a satisfying amount of spill lets you peep across at other displays and realise the complexity of the installation. Everyone, for instance, gets to hear from a professor of social psychology, expounding the six-degrees theory while illustrating the beauty of organic cohesion, from singing crickets to the neurons of the brain. "Who is listening to whom?" we hear.

In this beguiling replica of co-ordination and co-operation, it becomes easy to make connections. *Until Oct 11*

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