

Press Release: 1 June 2021

TWO BELFAST DANCERS NOMINATED FOR SAME PRESTIGIOUS DANCE AWARD

The National Dance Awards are the Dance Industry's most prestigious annual awards, and this year two of the nominees for OUTSTANDING FEMALE MODERN PERFORMANCE are both from Belfast and shared the same dance teacher growing up.

<http://criticscircle.org.uk/nominees-for-21st-national-dance-awards-announced/>

Jemima Brown for her role in **STEPSONIC** with Tom Dale Company; and **Oona Doherty** for her own work **Hope Hunt & the ascention into lazarus**

The winners will be announced in a special online ceremony on the 25th June.



Jemima Brown in STEP SONIC
Photo Credit; Chris Nash



Oona Doherty in HOPE HUNT
Photo Credit: Florian Thévenard

Both dancers attended Susan McMillan School of Ballet, Queens Parade, Bangor, and share fond memories of their teacher who has since passed away.

JEMIMA: *"I started training with Susan at the age of 12 in 2006 and she got me through all my RAD Ballet grades up to Grade 8. I then went onto help assist her in teaching the baby ballet - grade 3 classes, until I moved to London in 2012. She was one of my biggest inspirations, and supported me through my whole journey. Even when I moved to London she would always reach out and tell me how proud she was of all my achievements, to this day I owe every moment to her and always dance with her in my heart. I know she would be unbelievably proud to see myself and Oona's names side by side in this dance award nomination"*

Tom Dale Company's **STEP SONIC** was celebrated for re-inventing the traditional choreographer/dancer/composer relationship allowing the dance itself to collaborate in the music-making process. The work explored new ways to create, perform and showcase electronic music. Using an array of microphones and bespoke equipment, the dancers performed within a sonic playground, which allowed the sounds of their movement to be captured, amplified, processed and structured. The result was a mesmeric performance experience and a digital soundscape that had been entirely triggered by motion. Tom Dale drew on the musical talent of Jemima Brown alongside her talent as a dancer to make the performance so unique and worthy of this award. STEPSONIC toured the UK in Autumn 2019, performing at THE PLACE in London and various venues and theatres across the UK.

Oona's piece **Hope Hunt & the ascension into lazarus** is an attempt to deconstruct the stereotype of the concrete disadvantaged male, and raise it up into a Caravaggio bright white limbo. It looks to make the smicks, the spides, the hoods, the gypsies, the knackers, into the birds of paradise. It is a hunt for hope.

Oona Doherty has already won a number of previous awards: Best Performer Dublin Tigre Fringe 2016; Aerowaves 2016/17 ; Total Theatre Award Edinburgh Fringe 2017; The Place Dance Award Edinburgh Fringe 2017 and the (Re)connaissance Grenoble 1st Place Jury prize 1st Audience prize 2017

The performance is now available online (performed by a different dancer)
<https://www.sadlerswells.com/whats-on/2021/dancing-nation-hope-hunt-and-the-ascension-into-lazarus-excerpt-oona-doherty/>

Although the two dancers never met back in Belfast their careers have crossed paths since moving to London:

OONA DOHERTY: *“Jemima is an amazing dancer we met in london when i was auditioning for a new hope hunter. her technique, sincerity and drive is pure class, you can learn loads just from dancing in the same room as her. I mean yea it would be cool to win, but if Jemima gets it i can say my mate's the best dancer in england and when she see's me she'll have to buy me a pint, so its a win win”*

JEMIMA BROWN *“The first time I ever saw Oona was actually at The Edinburgh Fringe Festival, I was just chilling on the grass somewhere and I heard some loud rave music coming from a car and all of a sudden she jumps out of the boot and starts dancing - (part of her show Hope Hunt and The Ascension into Lazarus) - an incredibly powerful show!!! We never actually met back in Belfast, although I had always heard lots about her and Susan had always said we should meet up.. however we have crossed paths in London and I auditioned to work with her, if it wasn't for Covid we nearly had a performance in the pipelines... hey ho maybe sometime soon I hope! I couldn't think of anyone who deserves this award more, she is an INCREDIBLE artist through and through, her work is rich with grit, energy and rawness. She has that edge coming from Belfast which I just LOVE. So great to see our names together, 2 female artists representing Northern Ireland”*

Tom Dale Company (TDC) is one of the UK's leading contemporary dance companies. In 2018 TDC was made a National Portfolio Organisation of Arts Council England. Combining dance, electronic music and digital media, TDC is a leader in its field, producing world-class work which is simultaneously bold, exciting and constantly evolving. Its award-winning participatory activities for young people deliver exceptional transmedia

programmes across Nottinghamshire and further afield. The synergy between dance and the digital arts is the major artery pumping through TDC's practice and is woven into all of the company's programmes of work. The company's vision, through its collaborations with the digital arts, is to re-imagine dance and to explore new ideas, aesthetics and techniques with an exceptional team of dancers, digital artists, electronic musicians, poets, writers, designers and visual artists.

Biographies:

Jemima Brown: is a freelance dance artist and musician. Originally from Belfast, Northern Ireland. She attended Hunterhouse College and began dancing at the age of 3, training in Ballet, Irish dancing, Hip-hop and Musical Theatre.

Jemima went on to study at London Contemporary Dance School where she graduated with a First Class BA(Hons) in Contemporary Dance. She has been working professionally for the last six years with extensive experience in contemporary and commercial work.

Jemima has toured in various productions across the UK and internationally with Tom Dale Company's '*I-Infinite*', '*Surge*' and '*Step Sonic*', James Cousins Company '*Epilogues*', Avant Garde Dance Company's '*Fagin's Twist*', and Joss Arnott Dance '*5|0*'.

She has recently been working with Shobana Jeyasingh Dance on a new production touring in 2022 and research & development with Akram Khan Company.

Her commercial credits include; Kylie Minogue '*Magic*' music video and live performance for 'The late show with Stephen Colbert', Paloma Faith '*Til I'm Done*' music video, Fleur East '*Mine*' music video, Leif Coffield '*Bloodstains & Love notes*' & '*Say My Name*' music videos, Ellie Goulding '*Close to Me*' performance at The X Factor Final 2018, SWATCH '*Your Move*' launch event for new collection *SKIN* and Plan B photoshoot with Atlantic Records.

In 2020 Jemima was also nominated for 2 awards National Dance Awards: The Emerging Artist Award and Outstanding Female Modern Performance, so this is the second nomination from the NDAs.

Jemima has always been a keen musician, singer/songwriter alongside her dance career. Recently signed to Diverge Records under the artist name MYMA, she produced and released her debut EP '*ALTER EGO*' which is available now on all streaming platforms and is currently working on a new album to be released early next year!

Jemima is committed to working with young people and inspiring the next generation of dance artists: *"In summer 2019 I came home to teach some workshops as part of Project Dance N.I - an incredible event for young people to get a taster of high-quality industry professional work with some amazing artists from all over the world. The talent blew me away and I can't wait to come back and teach some more. Last year (just before covid) I came back to judge/adjudicate at a dance competition called 5,6,7,8 Elite Dance Competition held at The Europa Hotel and it was so inspiring to see the energy and talent of dancers from Northern Ireland, they are in a different calibre. My dream is to come back and create a performance experience at the Giant's Causeway..) live music and dance event, some form of animation lighting on the hexagons.. just need a big budget and good weather!"*
Jemima Brown

Oona Doherty is a Northern Irish based Dance Artist.

She studied at St Louise's comprehensive college, Falls road Belfast, The London School of Contemporary Dance, University of Ulster and LABAN London. BA Honours and Postgraduate in Contemporary Dance Studies.

Choreographies include - Hope Hunt and the Ascension into Lazarus (2015) Tiger Dublin Fringe Festival Best Performer Award in 2016 and the winner of the Total Theatre Dance Award at the Edinburgh Fringe in 2017. Reconnaissance Grenoble audience 1st place, judges 1st place 2017.

Hard to be Soft – A Belfast Prayer in (2017) voted no.1 UK dance show of 2019 by the Guardian.

Lady Magma: The Birth of a Cult in (2019)

Lazarus multiverse (2020) for (La) Horde, collective at Ballet National de Marseille (FR).

Music videos include - The Rubber Bandits sonny & waiting (2017-2019). Girl Band Shoulder blades (2018) Jamie XX I dont know (2019)

Oona Doherty was one of the Aerowaves 2017 selected artists, a Prime Cut Productions REVEAL Artist and The MAC Theatre Belfast HATCH Artist in 2016-17, an Associate Artist at Maison de la Danse de Lyon (FR) in 2017-18, an Associate Artist at La Briqueterie Vitry-sur-Seine (FR) in 2017-19. S Top10 Irish Artist in 2017 by the Irish Times. She is Dublin Dance Festival Artist in Residence in 2020-2022. Venice biennale Silver lion award 2020. And one of the seven chosen choreographers for big pulse 2021

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Notes to editors

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<https://youtube.com/user/jemimabrown93>

<https://m.facebook.com/jemima.brown.7>

<https://open.spotify.com/artist/7eSFo9ccEi9iUc5R60rPgL?si=tEtQGWzwT-uSzJVQDjwB9A>

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