

# FLARE DAILY

On behalf of all of the organisers of Flare Festival 2017, I want to say a massive thank you to all of our volunteers. You have been absolutely brilliant .

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With special thanks to **Casey Shortt** and **Cory Duffin** . You have gone above and beyond to help make this festival happen. **Thank you!**

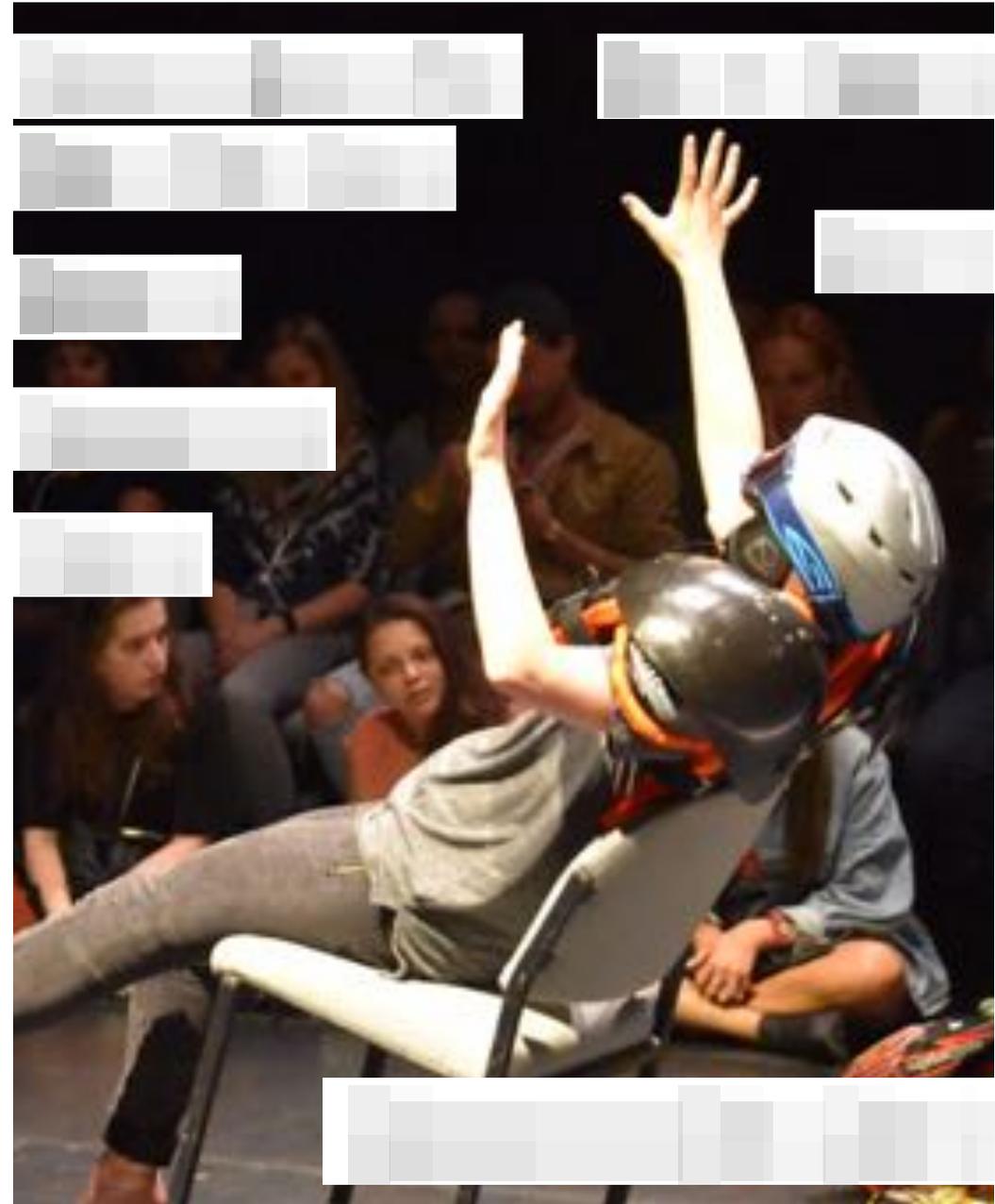
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"What is molar to you?" asks Spanish performer Quim Bicas Bassart. We learned that molar is also a tooth in Spanish, as in English, but is also slang for "cool" or awesome. The standing audience members were asked what happiness and being cool meant to them, not an easy question to answer on the spot, but philosophy was not expected. The performance was mainly by Bassart interspersed with a voiceover from a woman.

Blogs about what happiness and cool mean to other people were projected onto a white sheet across a wall. Then the woman read facts about how many books, articles and general information there are about what happiness is and how to be happy. So it seemed at first that the audience was being asked to question their own understanding and whether it was superficial.

However, it soon became clear that this was not to be a deep and meaningful analysis, it was more about the popular theme nowadays of living in the present. The hyperactive Bassart could not seem to contain himself from frenetic running and dancing; alternating disco, street style, twerking, "sexy", 80s and ballet with some yoga and exercise moves thrown in. He danced up close and personal with individuals, obviously enjoying unnerving them.

The songs became more energetic from Bruno Mars's 'Uptown Funk', Pharrell Williams's 'Happy' to the remix of Elvis's 'A Little Less Conversation'. Bassart, paraded placards with upbeat messages, indulged in karaoke, encouraging others to join in, while causing some of the audience to break out of the two lines the audience had been asked to form into dancing.

The woman spoke about the effect of happiness and how it is a feeling and an emotion which takes the body over and makes a person feel alive. Bassart created a quirky celebration of happiness for the audience who left smiling, albeit confused, in spite of the quieter song he ended with. Lyrics included: "Clap along if you feel like a home without a roof, clap along if you feel happiness is the truth".

The Lord Mayor of Manchester Cllr Eddy Newman spoke after the performance finished, talking about the recent Manchester bombing and the painful, difficult experience it had been for the city. He said he wished everyone had seen the performance, which was so happy and wonderful.

Slan Ilett

## BREATHE (EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE OKAY)

*BREATHE (Everything Is Going To Be Okay)*, is a beautiful, emotional and kinetically immersive theatrical experience, written and performed by Alice Jane Turner. The performance places you at its center, taking you on a journey that feels like its creator is confessing their own depressions, anxieties, and troubles to you, the ever watchful eye. This is not to say this a story confined to its creator, quite the opposite, somehow it feels universal and through its calm and at times heightened delivery, it resonates with each person present in their own intimate and personal way. The piece is further strengthened by Turner, playing a captivating, harmonious, and at time disorientating accompaniment of violin playing.

There is something extremely moving and tranquil about watching an artist's fingers move forwards and backward across an instrument that clearly means so much to how they express themselves, and how others, in turn, are given their perspective on what they perceive as reality. The additional integration of a loop-pedal within the performance further resonates around the auditorium the emotion and turmoil not only felt by Turner but the audience alike, who are transfixed by the journey unfolding in front of them. There is also something mechanical within the performance as through the use of the loop pedal, the sounds are warped, heightened and stretched from what they once were mere moments ago.

At times, the live-music feels neither upbeat nor sad, however, there is an inherent stillness about it. It is both a vehicle for warmth and joy but, equally, it also projects dread, anxiety and somberness within the confined space that is the auditorium. I found myself submerged within its grandeur and humbleness, often

closing my eyes to truly let myself and my body, absorb its changing rhythms and beats, according to its emotive reverberating message and narration of, "you are surviving."



*BREATHE*, also integrates subtle

and effective lighting barely noticeable however, without its

integral use the performance would be at a disadvantage. Soft pulses from the lights overhead

give notion to a heart beating in time alongside the music, while blue washes transform the space into a claustrophobic and intimate underwater environment, where things seem and appear just out of reach. It is in these moments of reflection that Turner's instrumentals hit us the hardest, both crippling and freeing at the same time. The stage design to plays its part, simple and bare, it allows a layered performance to occur unobstructed by the objects around it, avoiding the complication of overshadowing the action in the here and now.

If any criticisms were to be found within the piece, it would be that at its very beginning. The initial voiceover felt slightly overdrawn however, this could be my own interpretation of a piece that delivered far more than expected, and left me feeling far more than I ever knew I could. Ultimately, the narrative is clear, concise and touches on a subject all too real for most to talk about.

Overall *BREATHE*, is a unique and highly immersive theatrical experience that reassures you, "everything is going to be okay". It is both daunting and liberating at the same time while encapsulating some truly haunting and (for me) beautiful instrumental pieces I have ever had the true pleasure to experience and witness. Turner possesses such a command and control of her talent when controlling the unpredictable instrument, she plays, while under immense strain and pressure that performing in front of strangers entails. Leaving the space, I felt like I had undergone a journey that was while highly personal and felt equally shared and experienced with those present.

Kyle Higgins

## SOMEONE LOVES YOU DRIVE WITH CARE

Tom Cassani's *Someone Loves You Drive With Care* is a tricky show. It writhes around, resisting both definition (is it magic, or lecture, or theatre, or all, or none?) and our attempts to weed out its trickery. A mesmeric exposure of deception, performance, and the overlap of their shared Venn diagram; the piece invites us to consider how knowledge of deception might engender truth, and an understanding of lies might guide our way to honesty.

Cassani is a captivating performer, assured and measured. His commitment is evident: to the evident toil of developing and maintaining his skill as an illusionist, and to his art in his self-subjection to physical risk and pain, both horrifying and entrancing for the audience. He balances charm and affability with menace. Combined with his almost alien capabilities at misdirection, which are put to work in a nuanced way devoid of physical trickery, he gets inside our heads, rendering us distinctly aware of our own fallability as human beings, and the fragility of our sentient understanding of the word. A pervading sense of elusiveness characterises the piece; language here is shifting and illusory, used wryly so that we feel that it might be turned back on us, the meaning of words twisted and distorted by unusual usage and syntax, so that words usually so mundane and commonplace seem unfamiliar and mystifying. Take for instance the peculiarity of the phrase "I was born at a very young age", or of observing "my home is melting – is your home melting?" But alongside this authoritative manipulation of language is also a beautiful craft with words, the text sometimes possessing a poetic quality: the phrase "I've took what was left and ended up right here", for instance, skittishly riffing on the ambiguity of 'left' and 'right', a double entendre which instils a sense of the experience being in continuous flux.

The piece possesses a sinister eeriness, which is potent, and gives a sense of distinct unease throughout. But the unease we feel is deliberate, and puts us on guard. In a piece seeking to expose the techniques of deception and help us spot it in action, we become vigilant to the slipperiness of the piece and the games played upon us. "You are not out of control," he tells us, "you want to be. What do you want to see me do now?" He turns responsibility back onto us, our willingness to be led astray by our own consciousness, our impulse to see what we want to rather than what is really in front of us. Cassani succeeds in using his skills of prestidigitation and misdirection to alert us to the trickery at play, so that we might at least try to seek it out. We know we're being led astray, that something is at play; that we are the subject of forces at work which we struggle to see. Cassani is so highly accomplished that it still remains difficult, even impossible, to spot precisely how the web is spun around and enmeshes us, but this is both the joy and the terror of the piece, its mystique and magic: that we come away feeling both enlightened and misled.

*Someone Loves You Drive With Care* makes use of the diverse and unique toolkit at Cassani's disposal, wherein words, lights, sound, theatricality, illusion, space and interaction are used to give shape and colour to this rich and complex piece. "All wonder is the effect of novelty on ignorance," Cassani asserts in the piece.

In that case, call me ignorant, because  
*Someone Loves You Drive With Care*  
leaves me full of wonder.

**Linford Butler**



## SPRACHSPEL

*Sprachspiel* is an exciting, energetic, engaging performance inspired by the work of Austrian philosopher, Wittgenstein, that language does not solely comprise of clear-cut concepts. Mats van Herreweghe and Geert Belpaeme's sequence of intricate and calculated movements sits on the fence between theatre and dance, and conveys a unique form of communication, only to be truly understood by those making the exchanges. The minimalist set – a sole white rectangular box centre stage – and costumes, plain black trousers with a plain blue t-shirt, allowed each movement to be heightened and fully appreciated.

Mats and Geert were engaged in an intriguing game, resembling that between two children in the playground, each attempting to win one over on the other with another exceedingly eccentric movement. The game began with the two performers kneeling and engaging in a battle of intricate, soft, delicate hand movement with the box as their stage. At first it appeared that the two men were mirroring each other, but it soon became apparent that the two were not working in unison but were on opposing sides in this constantly shifting game. With each stage of this intense game the moves became ever more complex, so much so that one of the performers could be found balancing on the shoulders of the other.

After all the eccentricity, the performance came full-circle with the two men, who had been competing for their masculinity, working as one, creating a gentle ebb and flow between the two bodies. The perfect way to end this mesmerising and captivating performance.

**Emily Cotter**

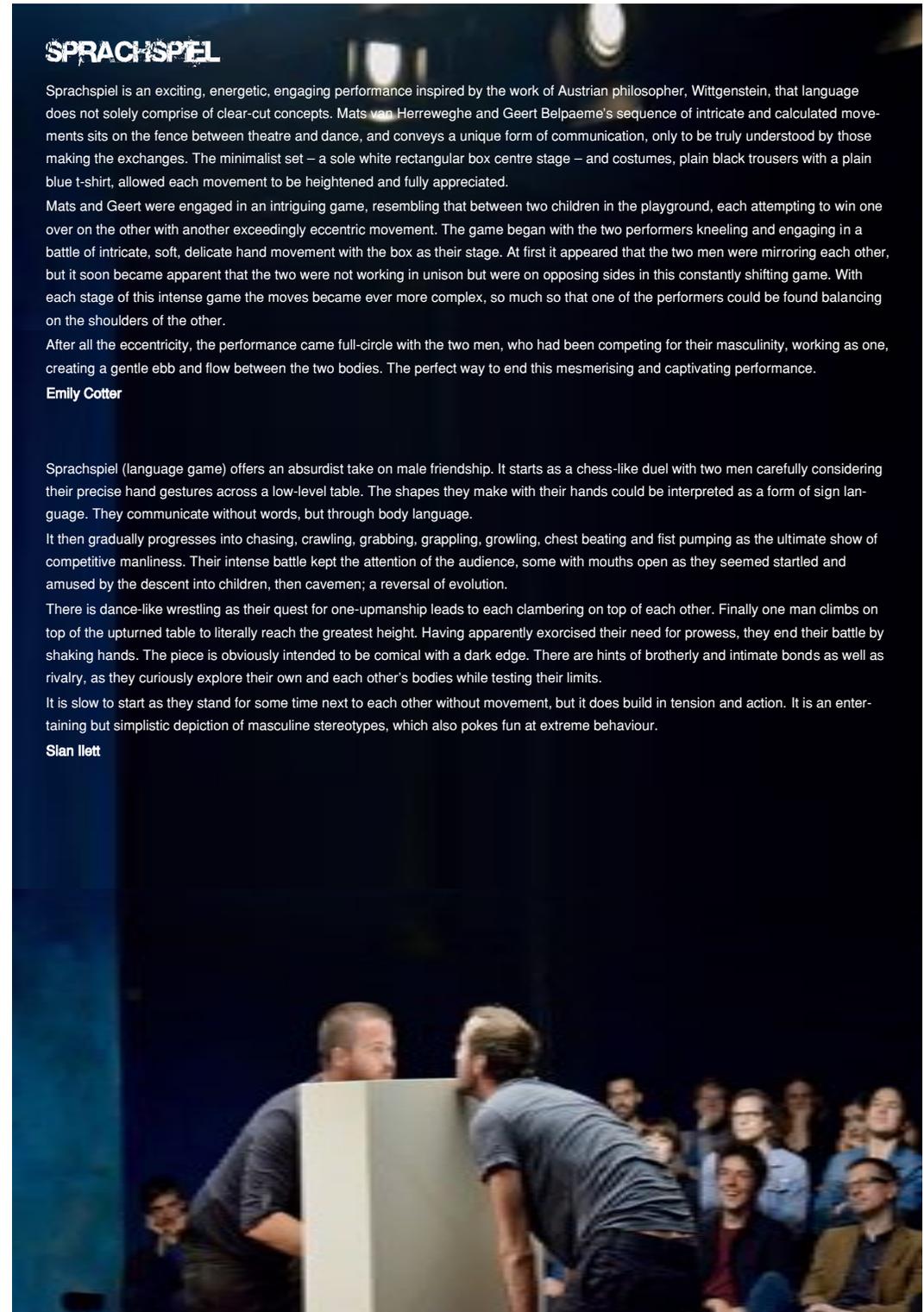
*Sprachspiel* (language game) offers an absurdist take on male friendship. It starts as a chess-like duel with two men carefully considering their precise hand gestures across a low-level table. The shapes they make with their hands could be interpreted as a form of sign language. They communicate without words, but through body language.

It then gradually progresses into chasing, crawling, grabbing, grappling, growling, chest beating and fist pumping as the ultimate show of competitive manliness. Their intense battle kept the attention of the audience, some with mouths open as they seemed startled and amused by the descent into children, then cavemen; a reversal of evolution.

There is dance-like wrestling as their quest for one-upmanship leads to each clambering on top of each other. Finally one man climbs on top of the upturned table to literally reach the greatest height. Having apparently exorcised their need for prowess, they end their battle by shaking hands. The piece is obviously intended to be comical with a dark edge. There are hints of brotherly and intimate bonds as well as rivalry, as they curiously explore their own and each other's bodies while testing their limits.

It is slow to start as they stand for some time next to each other without movement, but it does build in tension and action. It is an entertaining but simplistic depiction of masculine stereotypes, which also pokes fun at extreme behaviour.

**Sian Ilett**





Ten-people enter willingly into an unknown space, they are told they are about to go on a journey that will be quite like anything they have ever experienced or encountered before, the only request is that they allow themselves to be set free.

Party by BEACHES is a beautiful, thought-provoking and immersive theatrical experience like no other, it that takes you on a journey from the dull present, to both memories real and curated. Often blurring the line between what is reality and what is the figurative-cosmos, you are guided by the unseen hand around a space, in which intimacy and your own understanding of existence is questioned. Part dance, part performance Party, is a captivating disorientation of the senses that unfolds within a fleeting and temporary community, that for the participant can only exist in this moment; Outside can wait and all other life's triviality's appear lost to the façade of this inauthentic time while inside this space.

Party, encapsulates a surreal quality about it too, in both its form and content which journey you through the inner psychology and workings of the human heart to the very events and scenarios occurring around you. Transfixing narration, accompanied by a captivating and at times hypnotic score together align to the very rhythm of your heartbeat, raising it from its normal resting rate of a simple 60-bmp to an elevated 110-120 etc. This new found freedom and exhilarating atmosphere effectively crafted by BEACHES, transforms traditional performance to new heights which sometimes had me asking how far will this go, and do I want it to stop?

Unseen and indistinguishable performers intimately embrace you within the darkness touching you, caressing you, and at times guiding your body in an emotive and physically engrossing dance; this is a place where time stands still, and the only presence is that of your companion in the abyss of the unknown darkness. It is bewildering that even though the person next to you is unknown, their presence is a constant reassurance that everything is going to be ok. The very touch of skin under your fingertips feels deeply private and BEACHES, should be commended for creating such an exclusive and confidential experience set in such a confined space.

Footsteps and movement around you, bring you back to this warped reality where strange textures pressed against your skin and under your feet inform you all this is real and sadly at any moment, the real world waits outside. It is a strange mentality to let go of every worry and concern around you but, Party achieves this with simple music and a strong and emotive narrative aided by a dedicated ensemble working silently and cooperatively in the darkness.

One of the most powerful moments of Party comes at the very end when you are asked to remove your blindfold, exposing you the new and alien environment occurring around you. It is in this moment, that the sights and sounds hit you, and as your eyes adjust to this new place, you are welcomed with a sight that at first appears unwelcome and disfigured, however, transforms into what it always was and will be, love.

Overall Party, is a unique immersive theatrical experience like no other. I implore any and every one to experience it first hand for themselves. Expertly crafted and curated it will stay with me for the rest of my life in those moments when all seemed just about lost. The real world outside those walls no longer seems that daunting and alone, and for that I thank you.

Kyle Higgins

## RISE TO VERTEX

Stitch Theatre's Rise to Vertex is a playful, at times elusive, but wholly inventive piece of theatre, which ruminates around the figure of the hero and the nature of heroism: its trials, tribulations, sacrifices, profits, successes and failures.

In doing so, Stitch manipulate the slippery, polysemous nature of words to consider how hero narratives and other mythologies develop and stick in our cultural psyche. It is done well. For instance, using alternate etymologies for key narrative terms such as 'back-story', which here means "the story of backs", the performers dancing with their backs exposed and turned to us – and is also playful and irreverent.

The space is interestingly used, physically and metaphorically, as almost a third performer. It has a logic of its own, and associated rules which define how the performers, and we as audience, can differently engage with and move through the space and within the piece itself. The piece's traverse layout encourages an atmosphere of inclusion and collectivity, and its division in half and the subsequent migration of the action and the audience from one region of the performance space to another is interesting for its accentuation of the space's regulation – that as audience we can move freely from one half to the other, but the performers must complete the physical task of creating a gateway for themselves in a salt barrier dividing the two halves, emphasises their different engagement with space and its use in the rituals of repeated practical and physical challenges. It is this sense of ritual achieved through the observation of lengthy rites – the pouring of salt, several minutes of dancing, attempting to save eggs from breaking, and leaving and entering the different regions of the stage – which effectively nods to the rituals and conventions common to hero narratives more generally.

The piece effectively applies the hallmarks of a DIY practice: sparing use of rudimentary materials, inclusivity, and the curation of moments of agency and action for the audience, wherein they are integrated into and a key mechanic for the piece, conceived more as collaborators or co-conspirators than passive spectators. In this, Stitch Theatre demonstrate a keen knowledge of, and an evident inspiration from, a lineage of DIY work. It is especially influenced by Action Hero's Watch Me Fall, echoed in their male-female duo work, their positioning of one another in risky positions during physically demanding tasks, and in their narrative preoccupations: for Stitch the figure of the hero, for Action Hero the daredevil, but both mythologised and often aggressively masculine figures. The piece also channels, deliberately or not, Search Party's Growing Old With You, in its similar use of salt in tasks with a ritual quality and in laying out the spatial boundaries of the performance space; and in both pieces' ideas around the interpersonal implications of falling, catching, holding and carrying. Stitch profitably borrow from the context of the DIY practice they seek to create; but are innovative and novel in reintegrating their influences into their own work, with its unique tone and character.



But I found Rise to Vertex not just an interesting artistic experiment and narrative exploration, but a touching and profound examination of the preservative potential of friendship and of mutual support; that our greatest heroes are those who are there to catch us and carry us when we fall, no matter the height we've fallen from or the number of times we do. That salt can be used as a preservative might be a coincidence; but it seems to me an apt visual metaphor for the ultimately redemptive message the piece carries.

Linford Butler