

# BAD ARM

2015 EDINBURGH FRINGE REVIEW

**"EXCELLENT ENTERTAINMENT" - VAL MCDERMID**

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Irish Dancing can get a bad press; all those Riverdance pastiches, all that complicated costumery. Maire Clerkin, in her one woman performance, doesn't so much take on the negative stereotypes as simply show one woman's reality, in a strikingly-mobile evocation of her personal life and times. Basically, as the daughter of a highly successful dance teacher, she has to endure being at the end of the queue when the trophies and the praise are distributed. Using back projection of the family photos, she shows just what it was like growing up in London, neither really Irish nor English (and finding out what the description "Plastic Paddy" means). Living with sharing costumes and backstage gossip, all the while grinding through the rigorous practice and posture, and steps, steps, steps. Understandably, her description of her teenage rebellion years highlights her love-hate relationship with the dancin', the craic, and Irishness in general; but in growing acceptance of her roots, for all their ambivalence, she re-visits them once more. What makes this production so unusual is how steeped it is in its topic; Maire Clerkin shows the athleticism but also the monotony of the endless training, and along the way shows the humour, the ridiculousness and the heartache of Irish life and culture in general. In what is a virtuoso performance, she leaves the audience understanding many aspects of her life's work – expressed, indeed, through the medium of dance.