

JUSTINE DOSWELL PROPOSAL

All 12 women present (working title)

"What is the meaning of life? That was all-a simple question; one that tended to close in on one with years, the great revelation had never come. The great revelation perhaps never did come. Instead, there were little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark; here was one." — Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*

12 women in an empty space aged 15 – 65

12 women believe

.... a love song, a prayer, a revolution or an act of conciliation and forgiveness?

12 women are present for 7 minutes

12 carries religious, mythological and magical symbolism, generally representing perfection, entirety, or cosmic order in beliefs and traditions since antiquity.

Interpreters and collaborators resident in the Republic of Ireland (as pictured top to bottom on the RHS)

Mary Nunan, Muirne Bloomer, Liv O'Donoghue, Aoife McAtamney, Kama Bugala, Emma O'Kane, Salma Ataya, Millie Daniel Dempsey, Justine Cooper, Ella Clarke, Emily Kilkenny Roddy and Rebecca Reilly.

The performance, the happening is their mutual understanding and acceptance of the present moment they are sharing. Present in body, present in mind, their presence is individual yet collective. They are present in the space, stepping. The stepping develops into a pelvic circular motion with one arm pointed to the sky. Different gestural patterns subsequently develop. It is a ritual, primal, simple, yet complex and divine. The women are independent yet solidarity envelops their cells. Their bodies are their prayer and the space is their sacred place.

Currently I am in the midst of choreographic research funded by an Arts Council Bursary, supported with residencies at Dance Limerick, Shawbrook and Dance Ireland. Point of entry was J.S.Bach's *Art of Fugue BWV 1080* using the complex contrapuntal score to explore form, to synergize movement, immersing myself in self-referential, interweaving, interdependent patterns, mathematics and divine geometry. Cycles inherited, causal relationships, adapted and then recreated anew. J.S. (*The Art of Fugue* is based on a 12 note single subject.) During the process I connected with artists from my past and my present and our research took us back to the source, Lutheran principles. "*Bach plays to God and himself in an empty church*", wrote the composer and critic Wilfrid Mellers of *The Art of Fugue*. *Soli Deo Gloria, Glory to God alone..* regularly inscribed at the end of Bach's compositions, a doctrine that everything that is done is for God's glory to the exclusion of mankind's self-glorification and pride. This led us to shared questions of faith and reason, polarisation and inclusion in these times we are currently experiencing and the importance of recognising our interconnectedness with compassion, empathy and care.

Another important influence to highlight is the Irish State's difficult relationship with women's bodies. Positively, last year a national referendum repealed the 8th amendment in the country's constitution and abortion was decriminalised, allowing women the right to bodily autonomy. However, there is scar tissue. As one my collaborators, Ella Clarke states "*in this decade of Irish independence centenaries 2012-2023, bodies of discarded children from septic tanks have been dug up and the country disinters their bones into a political arena that lays the female body bare in its use and abuse by society, institution and memory.*" The atrocities of the Magdalene laundries led by the Catholic Church in Ireland and the failure of the Irish state to protect female citizens, even most recently with the cervical screening scandal, alongside the work that is still to be done for trans communities, all must be resolved and atoned.

My residency continues next week and the piece I propose to you for Danse Elargie this evening is: 12 women are present, an intergenerational gathering spanning 50 years, 12 women I know, trust and admire with inter disciplinary practices, they happen to be women. They do not dwell on their womanness, they are human and women. For 7 minutes they embody the past, the present and the future. They are both strong and vulnerable, they embrace the paradox and they are present in the space.

Proposed music: Martin Gretschnann aka Acid Pauli (Berlin based DJ and composer).

