



Arts & Entertainment

U2 Guitarist and Choreographer Wife Show Mysterious Moves at REDCAT by Richard Guzman

Posted: Tuesday, May 15, 2012 6:00 am | Updated: 9:59 am, Wed May 23, 2012.

DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - When Morleigh Steinberg moved to Ireland about 20 years ago after marrying U2 guitarist The Edge, she was immediately drawn to the paintings of Louis le Brocquy, a widely hailed Irish artist and close friend of the band. "He is a towering figure in Irish art," said the dancer and choreographer who now divides her time between Los Angeles and Ireland. "I had just moved to Ireland feeling quite disconnected and unfamiliar with Irish culture, but when I saw his paintings I felt like I could connect with his art."

She imagined his paintings in multi dimensions, filled with movement and grace. So she asked him an obvious question, or at least one obvious to artists: Had he ever seen his paintings "danced." Le Brocquy said no, but that he would be honored if it could happen.

That was the launch pad for *Cold Dream Colour*. The dance homage to the painter that debuted in Ireland in 2010 will have its American premiere at REDCAT May 16-20. The five performances will feature an original score by The Edge (Dave Evans) in collaboration with composer and musician Paul Chavez.

The piece involves three choreographers. In addition to Steinberg there is Oguri, who is internationally known for his presentation of the languid, Japanese dance form butoh, and Liz Roche, artistic director of the Dublin-based dance company Rex Levitates. Steinberg, who also serves as artistic director, and Oguri will be on stage as dancers. The subject may seem impenetrable to some, but Mark Murphy, executive director of REDCAT, said that it works, even for audiences who have never heard of le Brocquy. "Even if people aren't familiar with his work, it is still a beautiful and absorbing performance about a love for artistic expression in general," said Murphy. "Its themes are universal beyond a specific artist."

Behind the Dance

Born in Dublin in 1916, le Brocquy passed away recently at the age of 95.

During his seven-decade career he worked primarily in oil and watercolors. He was also an illustrator, sculptor and tapestry maker. His work has been exhibited in museums such as the Guggenheim in New York and the Tate Modern in London. He is perhaps best known for his abstract portraits of famous figures including Irish writers William Butler Yeats and James Joyce. He also painted U2 frontman Bono. Just as those unfamiliar with le Brocquy shouldn't be scared of the performance, those who know his

art should not expect exact re-creations that simply move to music. “We tried not to be literal, like this painting is taking this shape so we’ll take this shape,” Steinberg said. Instead, she said, an effort was made to examine the content of the work and use it as inspiration for the dance. While she considered things like light and color, the aim was to capture the spirit of the paintings and use it as the basis for a three-dimensional performance. This comes through in the dreamlike pieces, and the hypnotically calculated dance movements are meant to portray the complex layers of le Brocqy’s work. The movements are combined with minimal set design, a dimly lit stage and dancers dressed in off-white and gray barely-there tones. The overall feeling is reminiscent of a blank canvas that is being filled with movement.

“His images were very strong,” Oguri said. When approaching his choreography, he added, “I wanted to see through the paintings, not like a reflection.”

Steinberg, who is also a filmmaker, has a long history of collaboration with Oguri. He was the subject of her first feature documentary, *Height of Sky*. It aired on the Sundance Chanel in 2008. Many U2 fans will know Steinberg not for that work, but as the belly dancer in the band’s 1991 “Mysterious Ways” video and Zoo TV tour. She married The Edge in 1992. She said she hopes his involvement with the piece brings new audiences to dance.

“One thing that interests me [is] to have a music audience come in and see something they normally wouldn’t see,” she said. “I like that cross audience.”

Murphy said that while the music is specific to the show, and inspired by le Brocqy, rock fans may recognize The Edge’s distinct guitar sound, often marked by a shimmering, vibrating echo. Murphy said he likes the interplay with Chavez’s gentle escalation of sound.

“There’s this intense buildup and anticipation created by the music that matches the work on stage beautifully,” he said.

Cold Dream Colour runs May 16-20 at REDCAT, 613 W. Second St., (213) 237-2800 or redcat.org.

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