

A piece of my heart

Choreography: Justine Doswell in collaboration with the cast

Cast: Alessandra Azevedo, Joanna Banks, Kama Bugala (Dublin Youth Dance Company), Millie Daniel-Dempsey, Rebecca Reilly and Emily Kilkenny Roddy

Music: Veinte Años, 1935 by María Teresa Vera and Guillermina Aramburu (Kassner Associated Publishers Ltd UK), performed and recorded by Isaac et Nora (2019) | Madame Vodevil.

Poster of La condition humaine II, 1935 by René Magritte. "... we sometimes remember a past event as being in the present. Time and space lose meaning and our daily experience becomes paramount. This is how we see the world. We see it outside ourselves, and at the same time we only have a representation of it in ourselves." René Magritte

Fixed camera filmed by Luca Truffarelli at the Complex, Dublin.

Six women are present.

Aged 18 to 81, their presence is singular and plural, individual and collective, real and imagined. Together they sculpt the space in nostalgic reverie, editing their recollections in each step they take; yearning for past selves, for connection to the versions of themselves they once were and those they have loved, still love. *A piece of my heart* is a bittersweet vignette, a succession of moments that explore love and loss, nostalgia and regret. A subjective progression of past, present and future, a personal memoir tinged with joy and melancholy.

"Why do we lose ourselves in memories instead of living in our present? Because once upon a time, they were the happiest place we knew." Ranata Suzuki

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Note: 1978 – 1983 Havana, Cuba was my home, it is the first place that my memory is my own and not a reconstruction of photographs. However this work is a multitude of metaphors and meanings for me. It's simplicity is layered. Veinte Años I recall as a child, a pure classic. When I heard Isaac et Nora's version through a friend's social media channel, it sparked. I contacted their management and the song's publisher and was very kindly given permission.

*My brother was born in Havana/Habana, I was not. I was older, I remember, he doesn't. A piece of my heart has remained. Calle 26 entre primera y tercera, Miramar, our last address. March 31 1983 was the day we left. A profound influence. My parents were not diplomats. My father worked for United Nations and the Cuban government. That statement sums up how my family lived in Cuba. Foreigners, however low priority foreigners. My parents had Cuban / Soviet Union (for that time – many nationalities / I visited our Bulgarian next door neighbours when on tour with Irish Modern Dance Theatre) and international diplomatic and technical friends, our house was an open house. My parents listened - different points of view, however they supported the people that needed to be supported. Under suspicion, but never caught. As a child I witnessed many instances. With my mother I was brought up by a group of incredible Cuban women: Neida, Mercedes, Lourdes and Consuela are the ones I most remember, all complicit.

I have returned numerous times as an adult, with my partner, daughter and most recently with my brother in 2018. My daughter (17) has a passion for history. In the unpacking of my father's books we found a copy of the Cuban Communist manifesto dated 1980 with my father's hand written questions / observations in the margins, which with my permission, Sophie has leant to her Irish history teacher / historian and academic for further research.

*This note is solely for you. I have no intention to appropriate an identity that isn't my own, I speak of the experiential essence that is the undercurrent, ground of the work.

The video I share is approx. 5 minutes. I would like to rework it to 8 minutes with a longer intro (a proposed 20 sec palm tree video prologue, followed by the physical palm tree being brought on stage and trunk / leaves, stool set up, as well as the Magritte poster of "*La condition humaine II*" positioned / blue tacked on a back surface – if needed a portable white board) and a slightly elongated solo ending for Kama Bugala.

To finish after the June 2021 6 women (because of covid19) excerpt rendition was made/filmed (originally the research included 12 women December 2019 – <https://vimeo.com/385727835>) I was reminded of Garcia Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba*. I mentioned to my friend, mentor, choreographer Ella Clarke. Ella said yes, I see it too. Joanna Banks, the Matriarch with her 5 daughters. A coincidence. Ella suggested I make a full length work on the play and tell no-one. That's just an additional observation, my father loved Garcia Lorca... As a young man he lived in Seville in the late '50s after leaving Paris before moving to the United States. A beloved phrase in our house was "A las cinco de la tarde".