

Mary emerges from the scriptures

The sound of birdsong dominates the early moments of this female dance duet in an inventive soundscape by composer and cellist Mary Barnecutt. Choreographer Justine Doswell is drawn to the movement of birds and here that instinct immediately helps generate the outdoor natural feeling of the Mediterranean biblical era.

Performed around an octagonal mini-temple in the centre of St Patrick's Cathedral, Mary the Christian icon and Maryam the Islamic persona meld together in this sacred space. The dance created by Doswell with dancers Justine Cooper and Salma Ataya is influenced by bird movements and the shapes of Islamic calligraphy. Costumes by Katie Davenport disrupt the traditional feminine, with both dancers clad in dark dungarees over

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rust-coloured tops, emphasising the strength and practicality of this iconic mother-figure.

The tiled floor becomes part of the geometric shape of the dance, beautifully captured by film-maker Luca Truffarelli's fluid camera. The 25-minute dance is followed by a short video of Shaykh Dr Umar Al-Qadri chanting the verses of the Koran that tell of Maryam; this vital ingredient clarifies the multicultural impetus of this meditative duet, binding Christian and Muslim energies with charm and grace.