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From: **The Straits Times**, posted on 26 September at 12:57 PM

SINGAPORE NOW
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Gentle sermons turn into endless drills - Lisbeth Gruwez



Belgian Lisbeth Gruwez creates a dance to the cadences of televangelist Jimmy Swaggart's sermons. – PHOTO: ESPLANADE

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BY LISABEL TING

Music is usually an integral part of any dance performance, the swells and ebbs of the melody creating a structure for the dancers to anchor themselves to.

Lisbeth Gruwez eschews all that.

In *It's Going To Get Worse And Worse And Worse, My Friend*, the Belgian trades conventional tunes for the hard-hitting cadences of American televangelist Jimmy Swaggart's sermons.

She says her performance explores the power of speech and the hypnotic hold that orators have over their audiences.

In a telephone interview from Belgium, the 36-year-old says: "In Europe, we have this beautiful example – Hitler. The content of course was horrible, and I don't agree with it at all, but theatrically, he had really beautiful movements. American President Barack Obama is not as nice to look at."

In the 50-minute performance, Gruwez is tossed around like a ragdoll in an incessant storm of words. Repeated refrains hit again and again like a jackhammer, turning Swaggart's voice into a frightening tide of conviction.

Swaggart, 78, is a Christian speaker who was active in the 1980s, when his hour-long sermons were broadcast by more than 250 television stations worldwide. He was eventually disgraced in the early 1990s due to a series of sex scandals involving prostitutes.

To create a soundscape for her performance, Gruwez spliced together phrases from his speeches, accompanied by a three-part choreography.

The first section is gentle, using soft, stroking movements to "draw the audience into the speech".

She says that the next part "turns quite violent with the words – they're thrown like bullets". In this segment, she works with a musician who plays the recorded speech segments as she commands the stage.

"It's like a conversation between us, a game," she says. "We don't know how it's manipulated. Am I manipulated by the words or do I manipulate them with my body?"

The final part of the performance is what Gruwez calls the catharsis.

She says: "There are no more words, just a shaking body. The words are no longer important, but only the energy that is provoked by the words, whether good or bad."

Book it

IT'S GOING TO GET WORSE AND WORSE AND WORSE, MY FRIEND

Where: Esplanade Theatre Studio

When: Oct 20, 5pm

Admission: \$30 from Sistic

For more on the other performances in the eighth annual da:ns festivals' Shift programme at the Esplanade in Oct 2013, you can also read:

[Beautiful collision \(stcommunities.straitstimes.com/show/2013/09/26/beautiful-collision-hiroaki-umedas-holistic-strata-and-temporal-pattern-0\)](http://stcommunities.straitstimes.com/show/2013/09/26/beautiful-collision-hiroaki-umedas-holistic-strata-and-temporal-pattern-0)- on Hiroaki Umea's Holistic Strate and Temporal Pattern

[Close the distance under the same roof \(stcommunities.straitstimes.com/show/2013/09/26/close-distance-under-same-roof\)](http://stcommunities.straitstimes.com/show/2013/09/26/close-distance-under-same-roof)- on The Infinitesimal Distance Between Two Bodies

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This article was first published in The Straits Times Life! on Tues, Sept 24, 2013.

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