

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Johanna Austin

Raw Egg and All, It Works

by Ellen Miller

Kevin Flanagan enters the stage with a big jump. In his monochromatic get up: blue top, blue shorts, blue wrist tape, and blue, tall grippy socks (the kind that make me think about hospital socks), he thoughtfully eyes a spotlight a few feet away. Flanagan gestures with his arm. The spotlight follows his command, moving away from him a bit. He looks at the audience and wiggles his eyebrows, a rhetorical can I make it? “Yeah!” someone calls out. Thus encouraged, he bends his knees again and jumps into the spotlight.

Sierra Rhoades Nicholls enters similarly, sporting an all red outfit complimenting Flanagan’s blue. We might expect Liam Bradley (completing the primary color trifecta in yellow) to enter in a jump as well. Instead, they saunter on stage and shrug. The audience laughs.

In *I Think It Could Work*, Full Out Formula members Nicholls, Flanagan, and Bradley don’t try to hide the effort that their individual skills and combined acrobatics require. They breathe heavily, communicate verbally, and take the time needed to balance, center, and catch breath. This is necessary for safety, but as an audience member it’s a welcome change from an oft-present expectation that performances seem effortless. Nicholls, Flanagan, and Bradley are working hard, but they are also clearly having a blast.

The performers take turns pointing to individual audience members and asking questions. Point. “Pick a number between one and five.” (Three). Point. “Around the world or into space?” (Around the world). Point. “How do you take your eggs?” (I’m a vegan). The audience cackles. Flanagan, Nicholls, and Bradley compose an acro sequence using the audience’s answers. Three: the number of flips Nicholls executes while balanced between Flanagan and Bradley. Around the World: a moment where Flanagan and Bradley swing Nicholls by hands and feet in a full 360 degree circle before carefully setting her back down. Perhaps because of the unexpected answer, no eggs feature in this bit, but they do make a memorable entrance later on.

When all three performers are on stage together, it is Nicholls who commands the room, often while balancing upside down on only one arm. An upside down table with four niches rests in the center of the stage. Within each niche, a silver rod can balance securely with a

wooden block atop it. At first, Nicholls merely steps from rod to rod, clenching the blocks with her toes as Flanagan and Bradley move the rods to ensure she has another block to step toward.

Soon though, she inverts, balancing herself with her hands clenching the blocks, elbows locked out and legs straddled in a precarious handstand. She remains impressively upside down for minutes while Bradley and Flanagan solicit audience feedback on the performance from audience members. "Fast or slow?" (Slow). Nicholls raises her legs slowly from the straddle to be perfectly aligned above her head, before lowering them back to the straddle. "Is it slow enough?" (No!). Nicholls obliges, slowing the ascent and descent of her legs.

Bradley, Nicholls, and Flanagan play an intense game of musical chairs amongst themselves in which the performer left standing must answer a question posed by the performer(s) who got the chair(s). While Nicholls confides that her biggest fear is her mother dying, Bradley responds that their biggest fear is not living up to their potential. As Flanagan ribs Bradley about their response, Nicholls breaks into an impression of a chicken, squawking loudly before laying an actual egg. "My potential!" gasps Bradley, taking the egg from Nicholls and holding it aloft.

Nicholls and Flanagan bring in a large blue tarp, laying it flat in the middle of the stage. Bradley, puffing himself up like a ringmaster, pulls off their shirt. They gesture widely with their arms, pumping up the crowd. Then, they spar with Nicholls and Flanagan, tossing the egg back and forth. Bradley cracks the egg into a glass bowl and separates out the yolk with their fingers. Prokofiev's [iconic music](#) from the ballet Romeo & Juliet plays, heightening the drama as Bradley gently places the yolk on their arm. They turn to face the back of the stage, the yolk slips gently down their arm, along their bicep, across the muscles of their back, and down their other arm. The journey of perfectly shaped yolk along defined muscle is oddly mesmerizing. As Bradley turns back toward the audience, the yolk breaks, oozing down their arm. Nicholls licks it up.

Flanagan's talent, balancing long sticks on his body (notably his forehead), is impressive. By now, the audience is even initiating conversation with Flanagan while he balances the sticks. Truthfully, though, my mind is still on the egg.

[I Think It Could Work](#), Full Out Formula Produced by Almanac, FringeArts, July 24.

I Think It Could Work *plays July 25-26 in New York before heading to the [Edinburgh Fringe Festival](#).*

Home Page Image Description: *Three performers dressed in single-color primary colored outfits (one blue, one red, one yellow) express surprise with open mouths. The performer in blue, Kevin Flanagan, grips the wrists of Sierra Rhoades Nicholls, dressed in red; he leans back while supporting her weight as she appears to levitate off the ground, her legs extended in front of her body six inches above the floor. Above her, Liam Bradley, dressed in yellow, pulls their legs up in a tuck jump, feet flexed and arms extended above their shoulders.*

Article Page Image Description: *Liam Bradley and Kevin Flanagan watch Sierra Rhoades Nicholls intently from their position to the side of the stage, seated in folding chairs. Nicholls supports herself upside-down with one hand gripping a block that is balanced atop a silver rod. Her other arm is extended parallel to the floor at her side and her legs are extended in a straddle above her head.*

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