

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Wonder About Merri

Sarah Elgart · Wednesday, May 20th, 2020

Today we celebrate and acknowledge the last of the winning films from **Dare to Dance in Public Film Festival: Round 3**, Tamar Rogoff's remarkable short **Wonder About Merri**, which unanimously won the Festival Award for Most Daring Film. It's interesting, because we started **D2D: 3** in a pre-pandemic world, so one of the first things that is striking for me now in viewing the film again is seeing the busy streets of New York City, but of course there is far more to the film than that.



Like me, Tamar does a mixture of site-specific, film, and traditional proscenium theater work, and in part because of that simpatico and how much I loved her film, we met and had lunch when I was there in February. In addition to large scale and historically based site and stage works, Tamar has done considerable work with individuals facing conditions like Cerebral Palsy. In **Wonder About Merri**, we get an insight into a day in the life of Merri Milwe, who has been diagnosed with a condition called Dystonia, in which the sufferer's muscles contract and twitch involuntarily and often uncontrollably. Merri gets around using a wheelchair, and the film begs the question (and the viewer) *how then, can Merri dance?* Part of the beauty of the film is its' complete lack of pretense, and Tamar's astute sensitivity to the simple magic that exists in everyday life.

As with the other winning **D2D** films, I asked Tamar a number of other questions about the film as well as her process:

SE: *Was your film created specifically for the festival and/or did you have a particular urge to make a film in the public realm and if so why and where was it made?*

TR: **Wonder About Merri** was made in New York, and not made specifically for Dare to Dance in Public Film Festival, although next time it will be... I love site work and the newness of passersby (encountering it)!



SE: *How did you come to make this film? What were the inspirations and/or ideas behind it?*

TR: Merri (Milwe), the lead character was the inspiration—I wanted people to think about why she could dance although her disability kept her from walking.

SE: *When you approach making a dance film, do you have a pre-existing idea for a form or*

subject? Do you let the footage shape the project? How much of the end product is determined in editing?

TR: The footage shapes the project quite a bit. A lot is shaped in editing—and always the ending is a surprise. But I do make a storyboard. My next film will be a bit looser—will experiment with more “what happens on the street” awareness.

SE: *What were the biggest challenges you faced in making the film?*

TR: Merri’s disability—she gets tired. And (more) funding would have helped.



SE: *How did you raise the funds for making your film?*

TR: Kickstarter.

SE: *Who/what was your biggest collaborator and/or influence in making your film, and what did you learn from the filmmaking process from or as a result of them?*

TR: Shachar, who was the DP and also edited with me. I learned about the official filmmaking milieu. I learned about making a short film—my first! (Tamar’s previous film, Enter the Faun, is feature length)

SE: *What are you craving to do next &/or is there anything else you’d like to say?*

TR: I want to make more short films and continue to work with interesting people in interesting places. I want to be less bogged down by traditional filmmaking and open to fresh approaches.

You can learn more about Tamar Rogoff’s remarkable work in the links below, but first treat yourself and take 5 minutes to watch **Wonder About Merri**.

Enter The Faun DVD and Digital Download

<http://enterthefaun.com/buy/>

Tamar Rogoff's Website

Enter The Faun Website

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