

Magazine

[Home](#) | [Magazine](#) | [2026](#) | [Alice Ripoll & Hiltinho Fantástico: PUFF](#)



Alice Ripoll & Hiltinho Fantástico: PUFF

With a lightness of touch and breath, a solo that brings both joy and oppression to its surfaces

Hiltinho Fantástico in Alice Ripoll's *PUFF*. © Camille Blake

Georgia Howlett

16 June 2026

[Review](#)

3 minutes

There is no fluff to the opening of *PUFF*. Audience hubbub is cut cleanly by Brazilian dancer Hiltinho Fantástico's undramatic entrance. He bounces onto the stage as if from nowhere, surrounded on all sides by our gaze.

PUFF continues a seven-year collaboration between Fantástico and choreographer Alice Ripoll that hybridises contemporary dance and Brazilian

urban forms. The word *puff*, a synonym for a ‘light breath’, inspires the way Fantástico moves, or is moved. At first, he bounces from one foot to another like a tumbleweed in the breeze, head lolling, eyes rolled back and arms held up and out as if in tired prayer.

The flirt and sway of samba soon finds its way into his hips after prolonged silence, jarringly broken by an audience member’s phone. Fantástico (literally) shakes off the interruption and the music begins, an infectious original soundtrack by Ripoll and musician Mimosa. A torso tickled by rhythm is delightful to watch. Bursts of capoeira are effortless despite the incredible physical feat of the technique. Fantástico springs high from low squats and sends himself legs first through a skipping rope of his own arms.

The second half introduces grip and unease. The circular patterns of samba’s roots, and indeed many urban social dances, are echoed by Fantástico’s strained progression around the perimeter of the stage. Hunched over, shoulders gurning, he surveys us one by one as *PUFF* becomes inexplicably abstract. Drops of sweat trace his path. Gold, glittering paint released down his back is quietly shocking, but the silver paint that later runs from his mouth more so, for it coats his teeth like a vampire with a penchant for unicorns.

The research behind *PUFF* explores silenced cultures and the breadth of knowledge they possess. Capoeira is inherently disguised in its concealment of self defence within dance. Passinho dance, born out of Rio de Janeiro’s favelas from which Fantástico himself originates, was once criminalised. The styles have necessary disguisement and forced disappearance in common. The exposed staging, semi-nudity and Fantástico’s solitude leave little unseen. And yet there is trickery in his fast footwork that charms and disarms, in the use of paint that relies on deception.

The more compelling illusion, however, is Fantástico’s metamorphosis, the result of not only physical exertion. *PUFF* is a slippery traversing of unique yet complementary movement languages. In transmitting these to us, Fantástico is changed. It is not unlike the retrieval of a memory, each recall

slightly distorted and influenced by context, in this case, a scrutinising audience in the round. Fantástico's magic is his ability to bring to the surface, as a soloist, essences of dance cultures rooted in the collective, and the coexistence of joy and oppression that make up their ancestry.

Reminiscent of his opening bounce, he fires up his legs to leap through the finale, this time with great liberation. While airborne, the height of an inhale, the light is snatched from us. *PUFF* is left unfinished, a landing hidden from view, in flight on the breath that carried him to us. ●



PUFF by Alice Ripoll & Hiltinho Fantástico

Dublin Dance Festival



Watch on



13.05.2026, Lilian Baylis Theatre, London, UK



Direction: Alice Ripoll

Creation and performance: Hiltinho Fantástico

Assistant direction: Alan Ferreira, Thais Peixoto

Light design: Tomás Ribas

Costume, scenography: Alice Ripoll, Thais Peixoto

Tour manager: Joana D'Aguiar

Production assistants: Isabela Peixoto, Thais Peixoto

Original soundtrack: Alice Ripoll, Mimosa

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