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# Short of Lying review: Luanda Casella grabs our attention, then keeps us on the edge of our seats

## Dublin Theatre Festival 2022: Structured like a Ted talk, this tricky performance tackles identity and culture in the internet age

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Short of Lying: Luanda Casella tells the audience an absorbing 75-minute story as she simultaneously deconstructs its fabric. Photograph: Jean Philippe

Sara Keating  
Wed Oct 12 2022 - 12:23



### Short of Lying

Space Upstairs, Project Arts Centre

★★★★☆

“What makes the life of someone worth telling?” [Luanda Casella](#) asks halfway through her tricky staged lecture. Using a set of narrative tools that she flags for the audience — a hook, a flashback, a cliffhanger, catharsis — Casella tells the audience an absorbing 75-minute story as she simultaneously deconstructs its fabric, enlisting our attention while manipulating our emotional response throughout.

Structured like a [Ted talk](#), Short of Lying revolves around an incident that may or may not be true. Speaking through a headset while roaming the stage, Casella includes the audience through direct address and occasional interaction while using a simple visual display to illustrate (or undercut) her points. In style, this is storytelling 101.

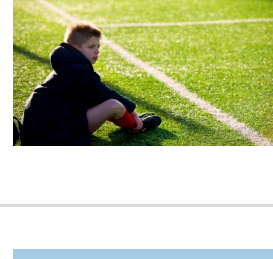
*The script is finely edited and crisply funny, but the light touch is just one of many diversions*

To arouse our interest, Casella talks to us about addiction, holding back specific revelations to keep us on the edge of our seats. Eventually she shares details about her compulsive posture as an expert on the internet, before re-enacting the ways in which she tries to calm her body down when exposed to the stress of clickbait stories or the neurological alarm she feels when she tries to unplug. The script is finely edited and crisply funny, but the light touch is just one of many diversions.

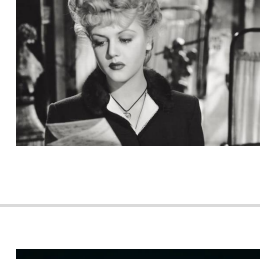
Short of Lying is played out against the backdrop of an oversized white screen, against which Casella projects evidence that both complements and contradicts her storytelling strategy. The screen has a more powerful visual effect, though, its slow unrolling at key points providing an auditory atmosphere that heightens the theatrical stakes and provides a startling final moment that feels surprising despite its inevitability. None of Casella’s stories may be true, but they serve their function: authentically evoking contemporary conversations about identity and culture in the internet age.

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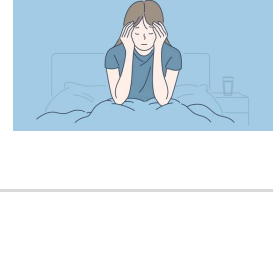
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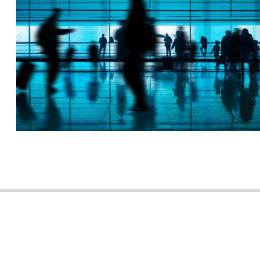
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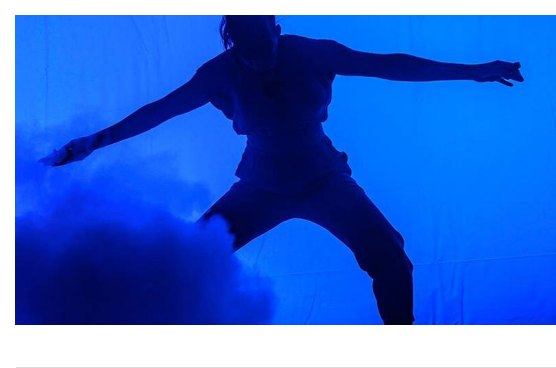
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Sara Keating, a contributor to The Irish Times, is an arts and features writer



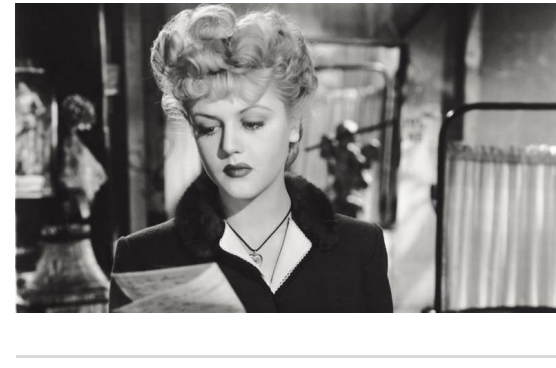
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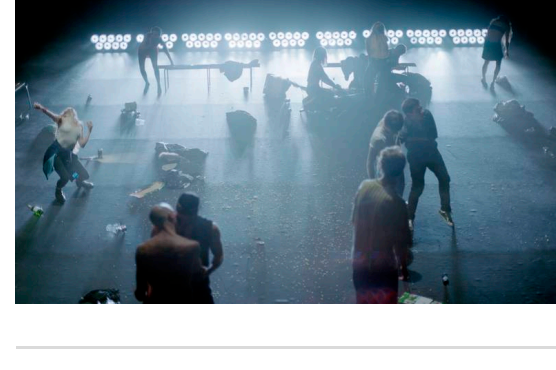
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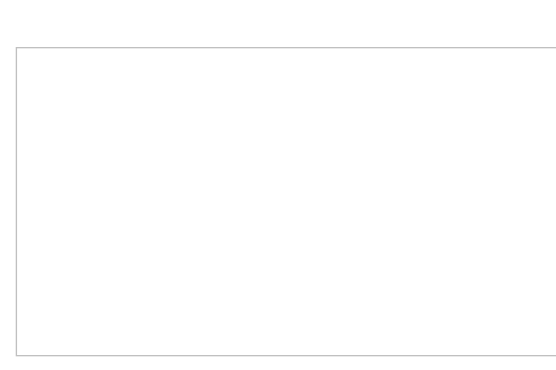
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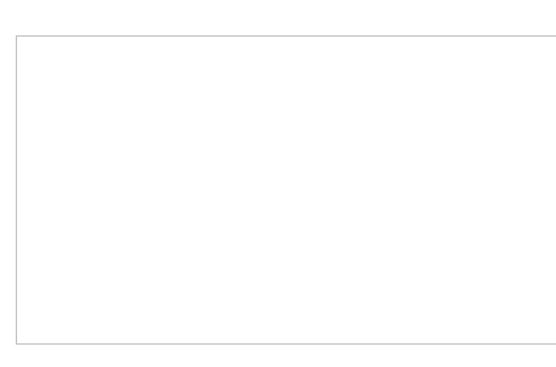
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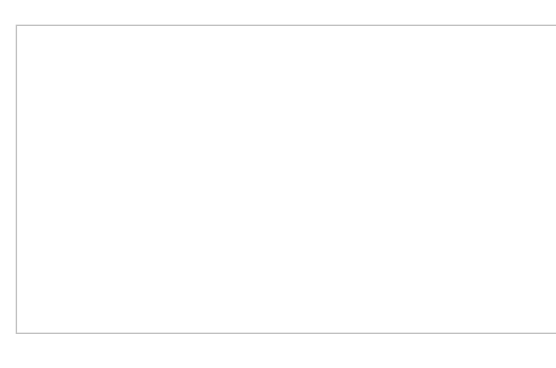
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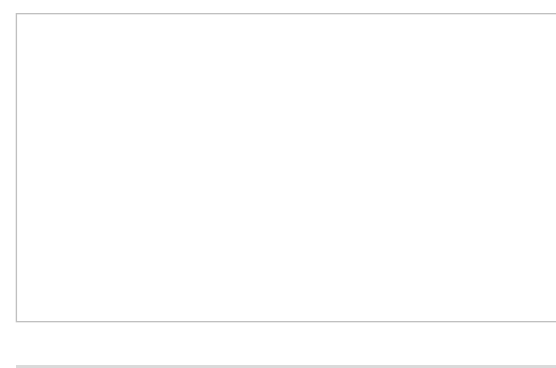
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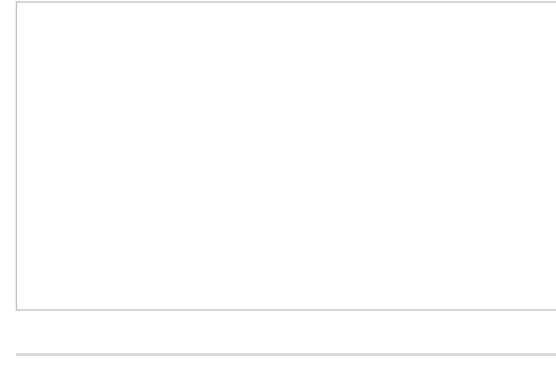
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