

STEPS IN A NEW DIRECTION

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In celebration of International Women's Day today, the Firkin Crane in Cork is presenting an evening of solo dance works by some of Ireland's most exciting contemporary women choreographers. This is definitely worth a trip up to Shandon, not only because it is unlikely that these six women will be dancing on the same stage again in the near future but also because the evening includes poetry readings/performances by Irish women poets and it is also accompanied by the extraordinary photographic exhibition, *Triur Ban*, by Cindy Cummings, Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill and Amelia Stein – more of that later.

Solo Independents is the second in the series *Image: Woman: Text*, which focuses on the relationship of the written and the visual as elements of women's art and performance practice. It pushes at the conventions of discipline we expect from dancers and poets. Some of these dancers speak or improvise sound-scapes, and the poets may well sing as well as perform their poetry. The evening includes women who are artistic directors of their own dance companies – Mary Nunan of Daghdha Dance Company and Adrienne Brown of New Balance Dance Company. Nunan's *Dialogue* incorporates spoken text as well as danced movement. Brown's piece *The Well*, was performed at the Imaginaire Irlandais Festival last year; a haunting work based on a poem by Paula Meehan.

Christina Svane O'Haire in her piece *Me And Big Mama* projects 'energy shapes of syllables' as a way of developing her dance. This is a piece which arose from O'Haire's curious relation to physical geography during her pregnancy. She speaks of this experience as a "revelation about space", and her dance is driven by "the space around (her) body". This kind of dance performance, with its emphasis on experimental improvisatory techniques, has particular critical and aesthetic importance for the development of contemporary dance in Ireland.

Cindy Cummings, a performer and choreographer based in Dublin and well-known for her brilliant work with Icontact Dance Theatre, will perform a new piece *Lost Moments*. This work is multi-disciplinary, incorporating music, dance and video, and has been developed out of Cummings' collaboration with Portuguese composer Nuno Rebelo. First brought

together during the European Choreographic Forum last year, they have continued working together since.

The evening at the Firkin Crane also includes the ballet piece *Adios Nonino* by the Spanish-Irish choreographer Alexandra Diana, and the tap work For “Honi” by Diane Richardson of the tap company Tapestry, Richardson’s solo is a tribute to one of the old tap greats Charles ‘Honi’ Coles, with whom she studied. Honi, she says “was generous with his time and ever patient when you couldn’t quite get that triple break.”

Slipped between all this dance work, three women poets will perform their work: Orla Martin, Maire Bradshaw and Christine Michaels. Martin opens the evening with extracts from her collection *The Trek From Venus*. Marie Bradshaw and Christine Michaels (founders of Cork Women’s Poetry Circle) will both perform from recent work – Bradshaw from her second collection *High Time For All The Marys*, and Michaels from *Who Made The Rainbow?* A cassette of poems and songs.

After the evening’s performances there will be a reception and official opening of the *Triur Ban* exhibition. The three women artists, Cindy Cummings, Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill and Amelia Stein, (a dancer, a writer, a photographer) have collaborated for over three years to produce this inter-disciplinary work. It seems fitting that the evening ends here, with three women who have made a work out of a long collaboration, across disciplines and cultures, and asking political and artistic question about being a woman in contemporary Ireland. *Solo Independents* at the Firkin Crane promise to be a step in a very interesting direction for dance in Ireland.

Jools Gilson-Ellis is a multi-disciplinary artist. Her CD-ROM installation *mouthplace*, with composer Richard Povall is at The Triskel Arts Centre until March 17th.