

## THESE BEASTS ARE OUT TO LUNCH

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[published in *The Examiner*. (1997) Sept 20: 14]

**Jools Gilson-Ellis** invites you to a fabulous Sunday repast, that makes a meal of family life

The deliciously-named Fabulous Beast Dance Company are bringing their beasts to the Firkin Crane, Cork, at the end of this month to perform a new dance theatre work. Sunday Lunch, commissioned by Firkin Crane follows a day in the life of an ordinary Irish family whose neuroses simmer under the surface. There is a sense of reunion within this newly-formed company, many of whom trained together in London. Such a sense of homecoming feeds into the family focus of the work, but doesn't produce the inevitable kitchen sink conundrums.

In Sunday Lunch there is a father who dances brilliantly, but only when he's alone; a mother who bullies her daughter and a priest who has tantrums. The work promises to be a witty and provocative look at domestic life in Ireland.

Dublin-born choreographer Michael Dolan has just returned from an extensive tour with the extraordinary Canadian physical theatre/dance company La La La Human Steps. La La La work with extremes of physicality to produce gravity-defying choreographies which bodies flying, falling and only-just-caught in the air. Dolan's influences promise a curious and forthright look at the dynamics, loves and disasters of Irish family life.

In forming Fabulous Beast, Dolan brings together a group of classically-trained dancers who work with some of the most important Irish and International dance companies. Australian Tristan Borrer is a graduate of The Royal Ballet and has worked with the Nederland Dans Theater – one of Europe's most innovative dance companies. JJ Formento works regularly with Dance Theatre of Ireland. Jenny Roche has recently returned from a six month stay in Montreal where she collaborated with artist Karen Michelson on *De Lacrimae Verum*. Colm Seery also trained at The Royal Ballet, performed many classical roles with Dublin City Ballet, the Irish National Ballet and the Vienna Festival Ballet. Rachel Lopez de la Nieta trained at The Central School of Ballet

and performed with English National Opera and Ballet Voltaire, more recently she created Multi Species Ballet for Channel Four.

Making Sunday Lunch has been a collaborative process amongst all six dancers, facilitated and led by Dolan. The range of technical/choreographic skills in the group actively feeds into the process. Much of this work is a highly theatrical use of physicality with influences coming from circus, physical theatre and contact improvisation. Creating the work appears to be a playful, irreverent affair, interested in finding ways to stage narrative that doesn't rely on dance or theatrical clichés. Grappling with narrative with an experimental bent might seem like a contradiction in terms, but the company's delight in transformation may just produce the tension necessary in such a project.

Although these dancers are an international group, half are Irish, and others are Irish-based. The process of developing a dance theatre work about Irish family life is made within the context of many of these and other dancers needing to leave Ireland for professional training. Most of these dancers graduated in the early '90s and have spent much of their professional life outside of Ireland. This work in Cork is in a sense part of a growing tendency for the recent Irish Diaspora to return home for work. Certainly it is also part of Firkin Crane's artistic policy to promote the work of Irish choreographers and dancers, but more widely, it is still too often not possible for Irish dancers to work consistently in Ireland.

Sunday Lunch is presented in association with the Centre for Migration Studies, UCC, and 'The Scattering', a conference on Irish migration. The pragmatics of being a dancer in Ireland and the theme of the Irish family in this new work, make this an appropriate connection.

An extract from Sunday Lunch will be performed as part of events for 'The Scattering' in Devereaux Hall, UCC on Wednesday, September 24<sup>th</sup>. Go and see Fabulous Beast Dance Company perform Sunday Lunch at the Firkin Crane. Like so many classical ballets, Sunday Lunch is a story of love and tragedy, but this is also an Irish story about an Irish family. It's also pretty funny. And you never know – these beasts might just be fabulous.