

sioscarnach *psshwssh!*

Daghdha Dance Company
Institute for Choreography & Dance (ICD) @ Firkin Crane, Cork, Ireland
November 22, 2000

Daghdha - one of Ireland's longest established contemporary dance companies appointed the Japanese American choreographer Yoshiko Chuma as its new Artistic Director in September 2000. This is a bold move for Daghdha, and *sioscarnach*, their first touring production since Chuma's appointment, is indicative of the leap taken.

sioscarnach - 'whispering' in Irish, is an odd title for this collection of work. What whispers within these dances? *sioscarnach* is a provocative trail through some of the most important movements in contemporary dance innovation since the Judson Dance Theatre of the 1960s. What whispers is a history re-inflected in contemporary Ireland, winding its way into the flesh and sensibility of this international company.

Opening the evening is Mark Baldwin's *The State*, set to the declamatory and difficult music of Louis Andriessen. Baldwin's choreography has an intellectual edge; it crafts space in careful geometric structures that demands a particular precision from the four women who dance the piece. Jane Kellaghan's understated but powerful presence best meets its demands, as she opens and closes the work with a compelling composure.

Terry Creach's *Kin* is a big contrast to Baldwin's work. *Kin* is warm whilst *The State* is cool. *Kin* weaves a moving corporeal connection between five dancers through a kind of distant contact which comprises hand and feet touches; passing connections between forearm and brow. This constantly moving web of community is performed in blushes of rose, mauve and burgundy conjured through costume and light. Sound by Andy Russ allows for big shifts of gear - the space of silence, cattle bells and other cacophonies. Aching duets move in closer for an erotics driven by the rhythm of group adhesion, and fired by breath.

Lastly, Steve Paxton's re-working of a 1965 duet *Lecture on Walking* was a sly wink to contemporary dance practice. Three of the dancers (holding hands with two or three of their colleagues) explained the intricacies of walking, whilst walking. The night I saw the piece, one of the dancers walked underneath the seating bank, describing the change in her walking as she went. Another of the dancers went outside the ICD and walked its circular circumference, describing his walking and those of passers by through his headset microphone. The dancers spoke with an assurance and

fluency that belied the excellence of their improvisational skill. This is a piece about un-doing the conventions of dance, and the space of performance. Such un-doings were the currency of explorations at Judson, and it's interesting that this work asks such questions in such a contemporarily provocative way. This was a delight.

psshwssh! sioscarnach isn't dance for beginners, it moves in different languages and demands we move with its sideways leaps.

Jools Gilson-Ellis

(444 words)

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Jools Gilson-Ellis

(250 words)