

Dance Theatre of Ireland (IRL) & Soul Steps (USA)

Every Little Step... *the Rhythm of Hope*

African-American Stepping,
Irish and urban rhythms,
and
The stories we have to tell



Dance Theatre of Ireland

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Culture Ireland is the state agency for the promotion of Irish arts worldwide, working under the aegis of the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport. **Imagine Ireland** is a year-long season of Irish arts in America in 2011, an initiative of Culture Ireland, with funding from the Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport. www.imagineireland.ie

Every Little Step... *the Rhythm of Hope*

Premiere **November 17-20th, 2011, Joyce SoHo (New York)**

"The very least you can do in your life is to figure out what you hope for. And the most you can do is live inside that hope. Not admire it from a distance but live right in it, under its roof" Barbara Kingsolver

"Accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope. Everything that is done in the world is done by hope." Dr. Martin Luther King

Every Little Step... *the Rhythm of Hope* is a collaborative dance co-production between **Dance Theatre of Ireland (DTI)** and **Soul Steps (NYC)**, a project that combines African-American Stepping (body percussion dance), Irish and urban dance rhythms, modern dance and storytelling; an original programme which includes dancers from **both** companies. It will premiere as part of ***Imagine Ireland*, Culture Ireland's year long celebration of Irish Arts in America in 2011 in New York, at Joyce SoHo, November 17-20, 2011.**

When you have tried and tried; when you have run and run; and finally - you have to stop. You can't go on. Now... listen. For this is when you will hear the rhythm of hope. Dance Theatre of Ireland and Soul Steps, the New York-based African American stepping company, bring this original creation, drawing on their unique vocabularies and individual stories and above all on rhythm. It draws on sheer human energy and determination, embodied by the precision of the choreography, the teamwork of the performers, and their personal stories.

Every Little Step... is an evolutionary meeting of Irish and African-American rhythms, dance, and culture. The piece explores that interaction - developing a vocabulary that interacts with the audience: an exhilarating and engaging performance. **Every Little Step...** is all about **rhythm**. Touching on the ways that people sustain in good times and bad -- How hope is born, how it is tested, how it is fulfilled and is a connecting force in our lives. Through rhythm, the spoken word, poetry, call and response (with the audience) there is a physical musicality that drives the performance.

The performance is designed to be versatile - it can take place in Theatres and can also be performed for Festivals (indoors and outdoors) in school settings or community halls. Educational outreach and audience engagement are uniquely **part** of the art form of **Stepping**. In that respect our two companies have much to offer as these are twin pillars of the work of **DTI** as well. As part of this performance we will be conducting Workshops to give participants an *experience* of body percussion technique with Irish Rhythms, Modern dance and storytelling (see **OUTREACH**, below).

The meeting of **Soul Steps** and DTI came about through an introduction made by the US Embassy, Ms. Karyn Posner-Mullen, in December 2009. Subsequently DTI invited Soul Steps to conduct workshops at their Centre following which a collaboration was initiated by Robert & Loretta, Dance Theatre of Ireland Directors, with **Maxine Lyle**, Director of **Soul Steps** (New York), who are the choreographers of the project.

"Without hope life is meaning less and less."

Author Unknown

"Hope is like a road in the country; there was never a road, but when many people walk on it, the road comes into existence."

Lin Yutang

"The problems of our world cannot be solved by sceptics or cynics whose horizons are limited by the obvious realities, but by men of vision, hope and imagination."

John F. Kennedy

"Culture is the strongest ambassador of the human condition we exchange around the world."

Kevin Spacey, Actor

Here are some links to the work:

<http://vimeo.com/23563185> "**First Steps**" rehearsals between DTI & Soul Steps

<http://vimeo.com/23563185> "**Second Steps**", rehearsals excerpts 2

<http://bit.ly/nMFFxk> "Third Steps", rehearsal extracts 3, Sept 29, 2011

<http://youtu.be/4f-CnyZdGdw> Photos from **Every Little Step**

<http://www.dancetheatreireland.com/pages/Creations/everystep.htm> Information on the production.

Every Little Step... the Rhythm of Hope **Company Biographies**

Dance Theatre of Ireland

Dynamic and multi-faceted, Dance Theatre of Ireland has extensive International performance experience, including performances in France, Netherlands, Italy, the U.K. Germany, the USA, Sweden, Bulgaria, South Korea and Spain. The Company has produced work by its Artistic Directors Robert Connor & Loretta Yurick, as well as commissioning work from International choreographers including Charles Linehan (UK), Rui Horta (Portugal), Joanne Leighton & Martine Pisani, Dominique Bagouet and Charles Cre Ange (FR). Their international co-productions *Parallel Horizons / Under the Roof*, with *Now Dance Company* KOREA premiered in the *Seoul Performing Arts Festival*, with 8 dancers and 4 musicians, and toured in both countries. Their 2007 *Block Party*, a playful performance for public spaces, has been very successful and on tour internationally each year since. Whether for the theatre or open spaces, their work embraces the search for vocabularies that enlighten the process of being human. Their work has been described as a constant reflection on our human states of frailty and strength.

They are founders and directors of an award-winning Dance Performance Outreach programme, **DANCE POP**, which reaches out to very diverse populations and in particular to the young, and multicultural groups.

Artistic Directors Robert Connor & Loretta Yurick



Robert Connor (who performs in this work) & Loretta Yurick are founders, principal choreographers and Artistic Directors of **Dance Theatre of Ireland** and have created over 30 original dance theatre works, most utilising original music and design with some of Ireland's finest artists, including artists Robert Ballagh, Nigel Rolfe, and musician Pól Brennan (Clannad), among others. They have also collaborated and produced the work of many seminal international choreographers in Ireland.

Their work (*Exodus, Watermark, As a Matter of Fact, Evidence, Soul Survivor, PRISM, Parallel Horizons*) has incorporated Digital Technologies and video, including motion capture & 3-D Digital animation and has been presented at many international Festivals: **Tanzwochen Dresden, CNetART (Dresden), Monaco Dance Forum, Essexdance MESH Festival, Dublin Theatre Festival, Darklight Festival and Seoul Performing Arts Festival, Greenwich Dance Festival London, Fira Tarrega Spain, among others.** Other theatre and outdoor street work has toured to major venues and Festivals in **Korea, Italy, France, Sweden, Netherlands, Germany, Wales, England and Spain**, and to every major theatre in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Robert & Loretta are founding Members and former Officers of the Association of Professional Choreographers & Dancers in Ireland (now *Dance Ireland*). In 2001, Irish **President Mary McAleese** officially opened their **Centre for Dance** in Dun Laoghaire, where, under their direction, more than 2000 people now dance yearly, commenting: "You are powerful Ambassadors for the exhilarating language of dance...".

They are also founders of the **Dublin Youth Dance Company (DYDC)** and progenitors of Ireland's largest outreach programme in Dance, **DANCE POP** (Dance Performance Outreach Programme).

Soul Steps LLC (New York, USA)

Soul Steps was founded in 2005 by step artist Maxine Lyle. Their mission is to expand the presence of stepping in the arts while creating avenues for cultural exchange and awareness among diverse communities. They specialize in the live performance, artistic instruction, and educational outreach of African-based step dance. **Soul Steps** reaches far beyond conventional boundaries and concentrates on the body as a percussive, story-telling instrument. Performances include the personal and cultural stories of the artists and the generations of ancestors they represent. NYC based Soul Steps has toured extensively in the USA and internationally.



Maxine Lyle, Artistic Director/Performer, began stepping at the age of seven in her hometown of Newark, NJ. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Williams College and Master of Fine Arts degree in Theatrical Management and Producing from Columbia University. She now performs, choreographs and offers step instruction to youth and adults throughout the Northeast. She has extensively researched the local and international history of stepping. In 1996 she co-founded *Sankofa*, the Williams College step team, which celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2006 and is now under the official auspices of the *Williams College Dance Program*. She has been a creative advisor to college and youth step teams and taught at arts institutions, including the Youth Alive Step

Team (Pittsfield, MA), the Manhattan College Step Team, the Westfield State University Step Team, the Vermont Arts Exchange, Berkshire Pulse, Eden Hill, and Simon's Rock. Her choreography has been featured at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (Mass MoCA).

The Dancers / Performers (8)



Angela L. Brackett, a native of Hillsborough, New Jersey, began stepping at the age of 6 in her church community. She co-founded Hillsborough High School's first step team in 2002. She studied dance at Raritan Valley Community College and continued her dance education at Hunter College in New York City. While at Hunter, Angela performed with the Inter-varsity Christian Fellowship Step Team and toured with the Hunter College Dance Company, where she worked with well-known contemporary choreographers Ronald K. Brown, Robin Dunn, and Randy James.



Heather DeLeon hails from Brooklyn, NY. She is a 2005 graduate of Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, where in 2001 she was co-founder and head choreographer of *Hatari*, the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts step team. As a young girl her father introduced her to the art of stepping and she has continued to expose herself to stepping ever since.

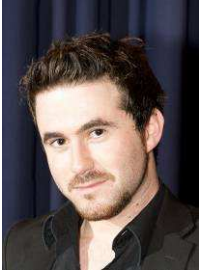


Adrienne Heaslip is an Irish, hip hop and contemporary dancer from Tralee, Co Kerry. She trained as a competitive Irish dancer from the ages 4-14 and has qualified on many occasions for the World Irish Dancing championships. Adrienne has toured internationally as both a community member and (since 2008) a full-time professional core member of the Siamsa Tire National Folk Theatre of Ireland. In 2007 she completed a Masters with First Class Honours in Contemporary Dance performance from the University of Limerick. This is her first production with Dance Theatre of Ireland.



Marc Stevenson studied classical and contemporary dance with the *Cie Grenade* of Josette Baiz (Aix en Provence), from the age of 10. At the same time he completed a Literary Baccalaureate (A level) with cinema and dance emphasis from 2000-2003. For 5 years he was a professional contemporary dancer with *Cie Grenade* Company touring internationally and involved in the creation of many original works. He is a musician (guitar) and singer and has sung and played with many professional and semi-professional companies, and is also versed in African percussion. Since 2010 he has been living in London. He has also been active in developing and promoting heritage and cultural tourism

in the French West Indies.



Andrew Vickers is from Galway, and is a trained Irish dancer who has been performing for over 10 years. He has been a featured dancer with Celtic Entertainments performing with Frankie Gavin and De Dannan in the show *Women of Ireland*. For 9 years he worked as a principle dancer with Star Entertainment's *Magic of the Dance* and Ceol Chiarrai Productions on *To Dance on the Moon*, *The Spirit of Ireland*, and *Dance of Desire*. He is at studying for an MA in Traditional Dance Performance at the University of Limerick and also worked in American Tap, Hungarian Body percussion and Latin and contemporary dance.

About African-American Stepping

"Stepping is tap dance without tap shoes, James Brown without the music of the JB's, Cab Calloway sans piano, a marching band without John Philip Sousa. It is jazz, funk, rhythm and blues, and rap without instruments. Stepping is lean and mean. The music comes from the synchronized interplay of hands and feet, from chants and hollers. It is a way to make music using the body as instrument." (*Washington Post*)

Stepping is a unique dance tradition created by African American college students. In stepping, the body is used as an instrument to create intricate rhythms and sounds through a combination of footsteps, claps and spoken word. Stepping comes from a long and rich tradition in African-based communities that use movement, words and sounds to communicate.





There is constant audience interaction throughout the *live* performance but also, we will be giving workshops in the community in Dance & *Step Dance* and the unique use of body percussion with Irish rhythms. We will be working with local **schools, colleges, dance clubs, youth groups, slam poetry/rap groups, Irish traditional step dance groups, youth dance & theatre companies, immigrant resource organizations, gospel choirs, plus open public workshops.** They are a very important part of the reach of **Every Little Step... the Rhythm of Hope.**

