



Photo: Ros Kavanagh

MÁM

**Directed and Choreographed by
Michael Keegan-Dolan**

2020 TEACHERS RESOURCE

**New Zealand
Festival** OF THE ARTS

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CAST AND CREATIVES

Directed and choreographed by **Michael Keegan-Dolan** (Ireland) teacdamsa.com

Music by **Cormac Begley** cormacbegley.com and **stargaze** we-are-stargaze.com

Set Design by **Sabine Dargent**

Lighting Design by **Adam Silverman**

Costume Design by **Hyemi Shin**

Sound Design by **Helen Atkinson**

Stage Manager **Marina Dunford**

Assistant Stage **Manager Sinéad Cormack & Penny Foxley**

Lighting Manager **Veronica Foo**

Production Manager **Peter Jordan**

Sound Manager **Sandra Ní Mhathúna**

Sound Technician **Ber Quinn**

Costume Supervisor **Amanda Donovan**

Performers

Imogen Alvares, Cormac Begley, Romain Bly, Tyler Carney, Lisa De Boos, Aki Iwamoto, Zen Jefferson, Mayah Kadish, Amit Noy, James O'Hara, Johnny O'Reilly, Keir Patrick, Ellie Poirier-Dolan, Rachel Poirier, Connor Scott, David Six, James Southward, Latisha Sparks, Carys Staton, Aart Strootman, Maaïke van der Linde, Marlies van Gangelen

ABOUT THE SHOW

Mám 1: Mountain pass. **Mám 2:** Yoke. *Faoi mhám an pheaca, under the yoke of sin. 2. Lit: Obligation, duty, function. **Mám 3:** Handful. *~ mhilseán, of sweets. Scaipeann sé ina mhámanna é, he throws it away in handfuls.**

Beneath the brooding slopes of the second largest mountain in Ireland, Cnoc Bhreanainn, in the far western reaches of the Dingle Peninsula, there stands a community hall just up from the seaweed-strewn shores of Traigh na Feothanai. This venue was the crucible for the formation of MÁM – a musical and choreographic exploration of the spiritual and cultural powers. The work is informed by the profound immersion in Corca Dhuibhne (an Irish language speaking region of West Kerry) that Teac Damsa has experienced over the past two years.

Twelve international contemporary dancers, musicians from the Berlin-based **stargaze** collective, and the concertina player Cormac Begley imagined, developed this composition under the stewardship of Micheal MacAodhagain-O'Dobhailen (Michael Keegan-Dolan).

There are no words in MÁM, but much of its creation was incubated within the realm of An Ghaolainn (the Irish language), as the company embarks on a journey to work increasingly through the Irish language in coming years. The word MÁM itself can mean an obligation, a yoke and a handful of goodies, but it's more commonly used to refer to a mountain pass or the easiest way of surmounting a large geographical obstacle. It's both an escape route and an accessible entrance-way, but can also be a place of danger, with ferocious funnelled winds and risk of exposure to the elements. As a word from the Irish language it captures some essence of this production, which arises directly out of where it was made, where the oceanic rain washes off the mountainside, through reedy fields towards the sea cliffs beyond Halla na Feothanai.

PRODUCTION AND TECHNIQUES

SOUND

Music is a key element in this performance. Musicians are centre stage throughout the production and are integrated into the performance as actors. Irish Traditional concertina player Cormac Begley opens the performance, wearing a menacing rams head. The concertina, a popular instrument for traditional Irish dancing, invokes the feeling of a social gathering. Traditional Irish folk tunes like O'Neill's March, are motifs through the performance. Further into the performance contemporary classical group *stargaze* are revealed. Their music draws from a wide range of influences including classical, contemporary pop and electronica. One of the pieces they have composed is by Baroque composer Georg Philipp Telemann.

The dancers also utilise sounds from their own body throughout the performance. In the opening scene, a line of menacing figures is slapping, stamping, clapping and clicking – highlighting the noises (as well as movements) that our bodies can make.

MOVEMENT

The dance style is contemporary, though there are motifs and movements from Irish traditional dances. There are brief solo and partner pieces that melt back into the group swiftly. Dance motifs are repeated and mirrored throughout the performance. As the dance continues movements become more violent and wild – dancers spinning, grabbing and holding each other.

LIGHTING

The lighting starts out dark and misty, with a bright light highlighting a girl in a white dress. Once the first curtain drops, the lighting becomes brighter and starker, giving us a clear view of all the choreography.

SET AND PROPS

“Mám takes the traditional set-up of a formal dance – musicians on a raised platform, dancers down below – then blows the whole thing apart.” The Stage

The set is minimal, consisting mainly of a table and mismatched chairs, and a long simple stage backed by a curtain. These objects give the feel of a community hall, where after the formalities of a social gathering chairs are pushed to the side and the dancing begins.

The stage recedes back, sliced into layers by long curtains. Each layer is revealed by a curtain dropping (rather than traditionally raising up) at key moments, revealing more and more each time.

COSTUME

Black dresses and suits evoke a formal event, a wake or funeral perhaps. The small girl dressed in the white dress evokes a Catholic Holy Communion dress. The formality of the costumes is stripped away as jackets are discarded and shoes come off, sweat sticking shirts to dancers' backs.

THEMES

The techniques used in MÁM evoke both a family gathering and something more ritual and ceremonial. Inspired by the folklore and language of Ireland, MÁM uses movement and music to interpret and communicate the power of the Gaeltacht regions (Irish speaking) they have been immersed while developing the work.

Made in Wellington: Rehearsal Images



“We talked about a how a sense of place can influence an artist and their work. How important indigenous culture and language are to one’s capacity to fully appreciate and understand a place”
Michael Keegan-Dolan, Six Weeks in Aotearoa, teacdamsa.com/writings/

Michael and his artist collaborators spent six weeks in Wellington as part of the Made in Wellington Residency. The Residency was created by the New Zealand Festival of the Arts as a way for new artistic works to be significantly influenced by the people, land, artists, sounds, history and atmosphere of Aotearoa. While here, the company attended the Te Matatini Festival and experienced everyday life in Wellington. Can you see how the work was influenced by Wellington?

These are some images from the workshops in Aotearoa. Can you recognise any movements and shapes from the performance of MĀM you saw?

FURTHER RESOURCES AND READINGS

READ

Michael Keegan-Dolan's on the Made in Wellington residency: teacdamsa.com/writings

An interview with Set Designer Sabine Darget about working on MAM: rte.ie/culture/2019/0924/1077717-mam-notes-on-designing-michael-keegan-dolans-new-show/

A review from the performance at Dublin Theatre Festival: theartsreview.com/single-post/2019/09/29/Dublin-Theatre-Festival-2019-M%C3%81M

"There's a ritualistic aura to the child-like shedding of inhibition, the syncopated thudding of feet, and the rapid switching between hilarity and terror." A review of MAM at Dublin Festival thestage.co.uk/reviews/2019/mam-review-at-oreilly-theatre-dublin-the-energy-of-an-ancient-rite/

WATCH

Watch the rehearsal trailer for MAM for a behind the scenes peek: youtube.com/watch?v=HGKJ6eg3X6E

Watch the full trailer for MAM: vimeo.com/377755008

Explore Michael Keegan-Dolan's previous work:

Swan Lake/Loch na hEala: youtube.com/watch?v=B8AM-_KASr0

Giselle: youtube.com/watch?v=RsT6e7iMj_M

The Rite of Spring/Petrushka: youtube.com/watch?v=oUaObuCOv5c

LISTEN

Listen to choreographer Michael Keegan-Dolan talking to Lynn Freeman about the concepts behind the work: rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/standing-room-only/audio/2018684894/michael-keegan-dolan

Listen to an RNZ interview with young NZ dancer Tyler Carney on their role in MAM: rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/standing-room-only/audio/2018721526/bright-futures-for-dancers-joshua-faleatua-and-tyler-carney

Listen to stargaze: we-are-stargaze.com/audio-and-video-recordings/

Listen to Cormac Begley: cormacbegley.bandcamp.com/album/cormac-begley

GO FURTHER

Explore the Irish Traditional Music Archive for more information on Irish Music and Dance: www.itma.ie

"Alternately playful and provocative, funny and frightening, MAM is a stirring, sensuous showcase of the emotional power of the physical form." THE IRISH TIMES

"With such imagination, such thrilling, thunderous physicality, such beauty and evocative power, what more could anyone want?" IRISH EXAMINER

PROVOCATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

PRE-FESTIVAL

What do you know about Irish Culture? What can you find out?

Mám 1: Mountain pass. **Mám 2:** Yoke. *Faoi mhám an pheaca, under the yoke of sin. 2. Lit: Obligation, duty, function. **Mám 3:** Handful. ~ *mhilseán, of sweets. Scaipeann sé ina mhámanna é, he throws it away in handfuls.**

Read the description of the Irish language word Mám. What does this make you think the performance is about? How does this effect your expectations of what you are going to see?

Look at some of the choreographer's previous work. There are trailers in the on the previous page. What themes can you see across them?

AT THE FESTIVAL

What sense of energy do you feel in the space?

What captures your attention in the space? The dancers? The set? The music? Why?

What questions do you have about the piece? What are the dancers trying to communicate?

AFTER THE FESTIVAL

What was the dance piece about? Was there a story?

How did the overall performance make you feel? What elements of the production and choreography made you feel that way?

Did any performers stand out? What made them stand out within the performance.

How did the performers use their bodies to create different moods and emotions within the pieces?

What did you notice about staging, lighting, sound, music, costume and other production elements? How did this tell the story?

Were there parts of the performances you feel you didn't understand?

Music is a very important element of the work. Did you enjoy the music? How do you think this integrated with the movements of the dancers?

Michael Keegan-Dolan is known for his reimagining of famous performances through utilising traditional Irish myths and folklore. How would you re-imagine an iconic dance, play or story utilising stories from Aotearoa?

Write a review about the performance. What elements of the show were successful? What parts were unsuccessful? What were the main themes? Why should people go see it?

Need something more? Contact your SchoolFest team with any questions about the performance.

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