

Tír na nÓg

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF  
HAWAII AT MĀNOAIN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

IN

DANCE

MAY 2017

By

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## Part I: Thesis Proposal

MFA THESIS PROPOSAL  
Michael Romney  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Proposed Thesis Committee Members: Gregg Lizenbery (Chair), Amy Schiffner, Paul Mitri

Proposed Thesis Concert: Spring Footholds 2017 in UHM Dance Building Studio

Approximate Length: 18 minutes

Intention

For my thesis, I propose to do a choreography based on folk tales, poetry, and other writings surrounding the Irish mythological land of Tír na nÓg (Land of Perpetual Youth). I will use traditional and contemporary Irish dance, contemporary ballet, modern dance, and partnering techniques for movement vocabulary. The piece will contain three major sections with a few smaller scenes within each section. The first section will take place in ancient Ireland, where the human characters will be introduced and traditional Irish dance movement (solo soft shoe, Cèili, and figures) will be incorporated. Soft shoe solo styles concentrate on the intricate footwork and technique a dancer can perform. Cèili dances are traditional “party” type dances that are very social and group oriented. Figure dances focus on intricate formations and figures while performing basic footwork.

As the story continues to the second section, the land of Tír na nÓg and “Otherworld” characters will be revealed. Contemporary Irish dance, ballet, and innovative partnering will be incorporated to help create the ethereal world.

The third section will be in modern-day Ireland. Modern dance movement that has been influenced by Irish dance motifs will be used. The final scene will show both modern-day Ireland and Tír na nÓg at the same time, with the aid of lighting. I will also be using one song in the

Gaelic language which will be performed by myself and the entire cast at various moments in the piece.

## Description

- Cast

Oisín: Mike Romney

Niamh: Ariel Gazarian

Enbarr: Isaac Johnson

Ensemble: Maseeh Ganjali, Ariel Gazarian, Isaac Johnson, Emma Majewski, Christiana

Oshiro, Robin Worley

- Costumes

- For the first section, traditional Medieval Irish costuming would be preferred. For the women, this could include loosely pleated or gathered  $\frac{3}{4}$  length skirts, gathered blouses, vests, shawls, and soft leather shoes or bare feet. For the men, this could include solid colored kilts or tunics, loose shirts, vests, long socks, and soft leather shoes. Fabrics will be heavier and in rich earth-tone colors.
- In the second section, the people of Tír na nÓg will be in simple costumes, inspired by traditional Irish shapes (long narrow sleeves, short A-line skirts, some sort of shawl from shoulder to opposite hip) with lightweight fabrics in light blues and purples. This will help to create the imagery of the ethereal world. I will stay in the costume from the first section. This will create a stark difference between the two worlds.
- In the third section, the ensemble will be in contemporary pedestrian clothing (long pants, long sleeved shirts or jackets, and a beanie for Maseeh) to give illusion to modern-day Ireland. I will remain in Medieval clothing and Isaac will

be in his Tír na nÓg costume which will highlight the fact that we are hundreds of years apart from the rest of the world.

- Sets
  - There will be no stationary set for this piece. If it is possible in the performance space, I will be using lighting to suggest the passage of time and the changing of realms and times.
  - There will be a long piece of fabric that will be used for Isaac's character. This will allow Ariel and I to stay connected to him and still use the stage.
  - I would like to use a fan in the wings for the second section and part of the conclusion to create constant movement in Ariel's costume.
- Lighting
  - Lighting for the first section will be minimal and natural. If it is possible, I would like to have lighting subtly shift to show the passing of time.
  - Lighting for the second section will be a little more complicated. I would like the audience to feel as though they entered a new place along with the characters. This will be accomplished by the combination of lighting, costuming, and change of movement style.
  - For the conclusion scene, I would like the lighting to reflect both worlds shown in different places on the stage.
- Sound
  - The song I will be using for the cast to sing is titled, "Mo Ghile Mear" (My Gallant Hero/Darling). When asked about songs that represented the heart of Ireland, my Irish friend shared this song with me. It will be sung in the first piece



by the whole cast to celebrate the victory of the warriors. An instrumental version will be used as the “love theme” between Oisín and Niamh in Tír na nÓg. Ariel and I will sing it in the final scene of the piece to represent loss and longing.

- For the music, I will be using contemporary recordings of traditional Irish tunes. I am searching for the oldest tunes I can find so the music can better reflect the ancient legend of Tír na nÓg and its inhabitants. There will be a variety of time periods represented with the music because the village, Tír na nÓg, and Ireland in the conclusion will be in different times. The village will be medieval, Tír na nÓg is very ancient and timeless simultaneously, and the conclusion will give a glimpse of a more modern Ireland. The music choice will subtly enforce that.

- “Mo Ghile Mear” Traditional, Orla Fallon, Album: My Land (2011),
- “After Hours at McGann’s” Gaelic Storm, Album: Special Reserve (2003)
- “Rocky Road to Dublin” Alban Fuam, Album: Saint Patrick’s Day Collection
- “Cregg’s Pipes Set: The Gneeguillia Reel” Tabache, Album: Are You Willing? (1996)
- “Mo Ghile Mear” Traditional, Aine Ni Dhubhghaill, Album: Celtic & Early Music: Medieval England, Scotland & Ireland, Vol. 5
- “Devil Down Below” Gaelic Storm, Album: Bring Yer Wellies (2014)
- “The Foggy Dew” Traditional, Howard Baer, Album: Celtic Mystique (2002)

- Storytelling

- This piece will be a narrative retelling of stories surrounding the legend of Tír na nÓg. Through movement, music, and song the performers will portray the story. The dancers will need to be able to use facial expression, body expression, and emotion to emphasize the narrative plot of the piece.
- My choreographic process will also include elements of theatrical blocking which will highlight the story through positions on the floor, movements through and across the space, and connections between characters.

Below are two versions of the legend of Oisín and Niamh in Tír na nÓg. These are the references I have used to create the version I will portray in my choreography. I have had to adjust some of the details to make it work on stage in a dance setting.

*List of Characters/Places:*

Oisín: a warrior of the fianna and a poet responsible for recording the fianna's acts of battle.

Fianna: a small independent band of warriors.

Fénnid: the title given to warriors of the fianna.

Tír na nÓg: the otherworld/land of perpetual youth. It is the home of the Tuatha Dé Danann, the gods of pre-Christian Ireland. It is a supernatural realm of eternal youth, beauty, health, abundance and joy.

Niamh: a Tuatha Dé Danann and one of the queens of Tír na nÓg.

Enbarr: a magical horse used by the Tuatha Dé Danann to cross over land and sea allowing them to safely visit the human world.

Legend #1:

There was nothing the great Finn Mac Cumhaill liked more than a feast with a story and song, except for a hunt with his hounds and his men. He was out one day hunting, enjoying the freedom of running through the land, with his hounds Bran and Sceolan by his side, and the rest of the Fianna and their dogs running behind. The dogs caught the trail of a doe, and they began to chase. Normally, the hounds of the Fianna would play with a doe a little, and take pleasure in the hunt, before bringing her down, but this time, the doe seemed to be the one in charge. She led them on a game, weaving through the forest, dancing hither and thither, and seeming to tease the hounds.

Finn was puzzled by this – he could see this was no ordinary doe – and he followed all the more eagerly, keen to catch such a prize. The doe ran so swiftly that soon the rest of Finn’s men began to fall behind, till at length there was only Finn and his two hounds keeping up with her. Then Bran and Sceolan ran out in front of him, and he saw that instead of chasing the deer, they were running by her side, gamboling playfully. He thought again that this was no ordinary deer. The deer stopped and waited for Finn to catch up to her, and when she turned to look at him with a very human look in her eyes, he thought for a third time that there was something special about her.

Then the deer turned into a beautiful young woman. She told him her name was Blaith Dearg, the daughter of Finn’s great enemy, Dearg. She had been enchanted to take on the form of a doe. She invited Finn to step onto the hill of Allen with her and join her for the night. So, he did, and he gave her his love, but when Finn woke up the next day, Bran and Sceolan were whining in sadness, and Blaith Dearg was nowhere to be seen.

Finn spent a long time looking for her, but there was never any trace of her to be found, and he never found any tracks around the hill of Allen. His heart was empty, and he never forgot the great love he had for her. A year and a day later, he was on the hunt again, and once again Bran and Sceolan leapt out in front and ran ahead. Finn pursued, leaving the rest of the Fianna behind, and caught up to them at last. They were smiling the way dogs smile, and playing in front of a rowan tree, where he saw a baby sitting in the grass. He picked the baby up, and saw a doe's tail flash as she ran into the forest. He realized that this was Blaith Dearg's baby – his baby – so he took him in and raised him as his own son.

Finn named the boy Oisín, which meant little deer. He fostered Oisín out, and Oisín grew up to be a most beautiful man, with the purest heart and the bravest deeds, and a great love of poetry. In time, he passed the tests to join the Fianna, which were:

To tie the hair into seven braids, and run through the forest with all the Fianna in pursuit, and to come out the other side without breaking a single twig, or disturbing a single bird, or loosing a single hair from the braids. To be buried up to the waist and fend off all the Fianna. To learn off eight books of poetry and be able to sing them with such beauty that all would be moved to tears. To run under a branch set at the height of your knees and jump over a branch set at the height of your heart, without slowing pace. And no man since Finn Mac Cumhaill performed these tests so well as did Oisín.

Oisín became the leader of one of the clans of the Fianna, and everyone thought him a match for his father, who promised to become even better. They loved him, and his fame was sung throughout the land.

Now, one morning at sunrise, Oisín was sitting on the beach, staring out to sea and watching the sun rise, and he saw the sunlight as it travelled across the water towards him, and marveled at the illusion it made, seeming like a road on the water. And suddenly the sunlight turned into a vision of a woman riding on a white horse down that golden path on the sea. She came closer and closer, and he saw that she was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, with hair like burnished gold.

The woman approached him on her white horse, and sang to him in the sweetest voice. Oisín was enchanted. The woman told him her name was Niamh Chinn Ór from Tír na nÓg. She had heard tales of his prowess and his beauty, of his pure heart and poetry, and she desired him. She told him she came from a land where there was no sorrow or death, and where time had no dominion and a hero could remain strong forever. She asked him to come with her there and live with her as her husband.

With a heart full of love for Niamh and love for adventure, Oisín leapt up onto the back of the white horse and off they went across the waves to Tír na nÓg. There he lived as her husband, in perfect happiness. They had three children together, and every time Oisín began to miss his home or his family, Niamh would come up with some hunt or feast or entertainment to distract him from his homesickness till he was content again.

But after what seemed like three years, the pangs in his heart could not be ignored. He missed his comrades in the Fianna, and he missed his father. He asked Niamh if he could go back to Ireland for a visit. Sadly, Niamh told him that time passed slowly in Tír na nÓg, and the land that he wanted to return to no longer existed. Oisín was devastated to hear this, but insisted that he had to see it with his own two eyes before he would accept it. So, Niamh put him up on her

white horse, and told him that it was very important that he not set foot on the land of Ireland, or he would never be able to return to her and their children.

So off he went, and the horse carried him across the sea. He came to a land that had been changed beyond recognition. All the forests where he and the Fianna had loved to hunt had been chopped down, and turned into pasture. As he travelled around Ireland, he saw people no bigger than children, small and grey and weak. All the forts were tumbled stone overgrown by weeds and grass. He saw nothing he recognized anywhere. He travelled across Ireland and back again, his heart breaking, realizing that the time of the heroes had passed. He asked people about Finn and the Fianna, and they laughed at him for believing such silly stories had ever been true.

His heart broke again, and he turned the horse around to take him back to Niamh and his children where he could forget his heartbreak. As he was leaving, he saw four men in a field trying to move a boulder with a lever, but it was too big for them, and though they were sweating and straining they were making no headway. Kind-hearted as ever, Oisín told them to stand back, and he leaned over in his saddle and lifted the stone with one hand. As he threw the stone, the girth of the saddle snapped, and he fell from the horse's back and touched the ground.

The minute he landed, all the hundreds of years that had passed caught up with him and he grew into an old man. The horse sprang away, and galloped across the sea. Oisín's teeth fell out, his hair whitened, his muscles shriveled and his skin wrinkled. The people around marveled at the sight of this strong, beautiful young man turning into a withered ancient in front of their eyes.

Oisín told them his story, telling them of Finn and the Fianna, and they couldn't decide if he was mad or a liar. They decided that they had better bring him to the holy man, Saint Patrick. So Oisín was brought to the saint, and told him all his stories of the olden days, which St. Patrick

wrote down carefully. In return, St. Patrick told Oisín of Christianity, and the promise of eternal life. But Oisín couldn't see the use of the rules of the Christian god, when he and his friends had lived by honour codes. St. Patrick couldn't find an argument to convince him. He offered to baptize Oisín into Christianity, and Oisín asked if Finn mac Cumhaill had been baptized? St. Patrick said he was not, and was no doubt in hell for all eternity, because he was a pagan. He told Oisín that this would happen to him, too, if he did not convert. But Oisín said there was no army of demons that could keep Finn Mac Cumhaill anywhere he didn't want to stay, and he would rather stay a pagan and join his father and the Fianna, wherever they were, than to go to a heaven that would not let his father in. So Oisín died unbaptized, and was buried by St. Patrick.

#### Legend #2:

Long, long ago in Ireland, from the time of Conn Céadchathach in the second century after Christ until the death of Cairpre Liffechair in the third century, there was a band of warriors called the Fianna, who defended Ireland against invasion.

Their leader was Fionn mac Cumhail, and his son was Oisín the poet. It is from Oisín that the stories of Fionn and the Fianna have been passed down through the ages to modern day poets. And of all the stories of battles they fought in this world, and the adventures they had in the Other world, and all the turnings and twistings of the heart they endured in both worlds, one story will never be forgotten, and that is the story of the day Oisín met Niamh.

One day, Fionn and the Fianna were hunting around the Ring of Kerry, and they stopped to rest on a hill overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, the way they could see if any invaders were coming. And they saw one. Now, it wasn't often an invader came to Ireland without a fleet of boats and a whole army behind him, but this one didn't have even one boat.

This invader was riding a majestic white horse across the tops of the waves, and as Fionn and Oisín and the rest of the Fianna stared in amazement, they could see that the invader was a beautiful young woman with long gold hair that flowed down past her waist and streamed out behind her in the wind.

"Spéirbhean ghléigheal álainn" -- a dream-vision woman whose beauty radiated from her like shafts of light.

The older heroes of the Fianna pulled in their belts, to redistribute some of the bulk back to where it had slipped down from their chests, and the younger heroes wished they had remembered to brush their teeth that morning. (Irish men never change eh?) Fionn looked at Oisín standing beside him, and he could see that this invader had already made a conquest, before she even reached the shore.

She was the most beautiful woman Young Oisín had ever met. At the first sight of her, Oisín's heart did a double-backflip and tied itself into a knot. He was gob-smacked, but this great hero -- who had battled many a mighty warrior of this world and fearsome creature from the Other world -- was too weak to even smack his gob.

As the woman rode her horse up the hill to where Fionn and Oisín were standing, Oisín's knees started to tremble.

She stopped in front of Fionn and Oisín, and Fionn said by way of opening the conversation, "You are very welcome to our country, young lady. I don't believe I've seen you here before."

"But I've seen you," she said, "when you couldn't see me, Fionn mac Cumhail. I've often come to Ireland to watch you and the Fianna ... and your son Oisín." At the sound of his name on her lips, Oisín's knees turned to jelly.



"What is your name and where do you come from and who is your father and what is your husband's name?" said Fionn.

"My name is Niamh Chinn Óir from Tír na nÓg, and my father is Manannán mac Lir, who is lord in that land."

Her name -- Niamh -- means "brightness." Niamh of the Golden Hair, from the Land of Youth, where no one ever grows old.

"You didn't mention the name of your husband back in Tír na nÓg," Fionn reminded her, and Oisín and every man of the Fianna held his breath.

"Many men in Tír na Óg have offered me their love," said Niamh, "but I have given my love to none of them." Oisín and the Fianna let out their breath in a sigh of relief. Fionn looked at her with an eye well practiced in judging the makings of a good wife.

"That seems very unfair of you, not to give your love to any man," he said severely, for he was a man with a keen sense of justice.

"Not to any man of Tír na nÓg," said Niamh, "because I'm in love with a man of Ireland, and I've come here to ask him to marry me and come back to Tír na nÓg with me." And then she smiled at Oisín, and the jelly in Oisín's knees turned to water. Oisín looked at his fellow heroes of the Fianna, and he saw several things at once in their eyes: jealousy that Niamh had not chosen them, and relief that she was taking some of the competition for the other women out of the way, but mostly he saw sadness at the parting of friends and comrades. And Oisín looked at Fionn and saw the look of satisfaction that a father feels when he sees his son well connected in marriage, but mostly sadness at seeing that son leaving him.

Oisín leapt onto the great white horse behind Niamh, and they galloped off across the waves to Tír na nÓg, where Oisín received a warm welcome from Manannán and his people.

And if Oisín had fallen completely in love with Niamh at first sight, he fell twice as completely in love every time he looked at her.

Now, if this were a fairy tale, I could say, "And they lived happily ever after." But it's not a fairy tale, and they didn't. They lived happily for three revolutions of the seasons -- or three years, as they would have said if they counted time in that land where time doesn't exist -- until one day, Oisín said to Niamh, "I keep remembering the look of sadness in my father's eyes and in the eyes of my friends in the Fianna as I was leaving Ireland. If they miss me as much as I miss them, they'll be as happy to see me again as I will be to see them. I'd like to borrow the white horse and go back to Ireland for a short visit."

"Don't leave this place," said Niamh. "Don't go away from me, my darling. If you leave Tír na nÓg, you will never return."

"Of course I will," Oisín said. "I love you and I could never be happy without you. I'll come back so fast you'll never know I left."

And Oisín said to Niamh what many men have said to many women down through the ages, and as far as I know, some men are saying it yet: "Silly woman, don't worry. Nothing is going to happen."

When Niamh saw that he was determined to go, she said, "Remember when I went to Ireland to bring you here, I stayed on the horse the whole time. Whatever you do, promise me you won't get off the horse. Don't even touch the ground."

"I promise," Oisín said. "I'll be back in the blink of an eye." And away over the waves he galloped on the back of the great white horse, and in no time at all he arrived in Ireland.

He went directly to Dún Áileann, where Fionn and the Fianna lived when they weren't out hunting or defending Ireland against invaders. This is a massive fort on the hill of

Knockaulin in County Kildare, which was built by Fionn's great-grandfather, Nuada Airgetlámh -- Nuada of the Silver Arm, king of the Tuatha Dé Danaan. But as Oisín galloped up the hill, he noticed that the road was overgrown and the fields were untended, and he heard no voices and saw no people. And when he reached Dún Áileann, he saw that the roof had fallen in and the walls were tumbling down. He couldn't imagine what had happened. The headquarters of the Fianna was deserted.

Oisín went back down the road and turned the horse's head toward Glenasmole -- the Glen of the Thrushes -- one of the Fianna's favourite hunting grounds near Dublin. It was in Glenasmole that he saw the first people. A group of men were struggling to move a large rock, and Oisín wondered at this. Any one of the Fianna could have picked the rock up with one hand, and Oscar, Oisín's son and the strong man of the Fianna, could have thrown it over the south side of Glenasmole and landed it on Seefin -- the Seat of Fionn -- or over the north side of the glen, where it would land on what is now a haunted house called the Hell Fire Club. And here were ten men pushing and pulling and prying at the rock, and not able to move it an inch. What had happened to the people since Oisín left Ireland for Tír na nÓg?

Oisín didn't recognize any of the men as he rode up to them. He noticed that they were small and puny, about the size of you and me and everyone else these days. There was amazement in the men's eyes as they looked up at Oisín on the great white horse. He greeted them and asked them where he might find Fionn mac Cumhail and the Fianna.

"Fionn mac Cumhail?" they said. "The Fianna? There's no one around here named Fionn mac Cumhail and never was. Back in the old days, people used to tell fairy tales to frighten children about a race of evil giants called the Fianna who went around eating people. But no one tells those stories anymore."

That's when Oisín realized -- 300 years had passed in Ireland, while he thought he had been away for three years, and his father and friends had been dead for a long time. "It's a good thing they don't tell those stories anymore," Oisín said. "They're lies. I'm Fionn's own son, Oisín, and I was a member of the Fianna myself. We weren't giants, but any one of us could have picked this rock up with one hand, and my son, Oscar, could have thrown it to the sidhe on the second hill that way or the sidhe on the second hill that way." And he turned the horse's head toward the West and Tír na nÓg, but one of the men said, "Prove what you say is true by lifting this rock for us, and then we'll listen to your stories of Fionn and the Fianna."

"I'll do that, so," Oisín said, "to set the record straight, and then I'll go back to Tír na nÓg, for there's nothing left for me in this country." Oisín remembered what Niamh had said about not getting off the horse, so he leaned down from the saddle and put his hand under the rock. But when he began to lift it, the girth of the saddle broke under the strain, and Oisín fell to the ground. And as soon as he touched the soil of Ireland, 300 years of this world's time caught up with his body, and he was instantly turned into a withered, blind, old man.

Niamh's great white horse galloped away. Some say it was because he was frightened at what happened to Oisín, but, no - he was wise enough to understand that Oisín could never return to Tír na nÓg.

## Timetable

- Projected Thesis Committee Formation.....Saturday, December 17, 2016
- Rehearsals.....Thursdays, 3-5 pm; Saturdays, 4-7 pm
- 1<sup>st</sup> Showing.....Saturday, March 11, 2017
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Showing.....Saturday, March 15, 2017
- Final Showing.....Saturday, April 15, 2017
- Other Production Dates.....To be determined
- Concert Dates.....Wednesday-Sunday, April 26-30, 2017
- 1<sup>st</sup> Draft Written Work.....Friday, May 5, 2017
- Final Video/Written Document.....Friday, May 12, 2017

## Part II: Evaluation of Preparation and Performance

## Opening

My goal for the opening section of my piece, Tír na nÓg, was to create a medieval Celtic peasant scene that introduced the context of the beginning of the legend of Tír na nÓg. To do this I wanted to use various traditional social forms of Irish dance and group formations. I decided to pull from some of the simpler traditional Ceili dances such as the 4-hand Reel and 6-hand jig to inspire the formations and figures in this opening section. I wanted to keep the piece lively and rustic, so I showed my dancers videos of old style “sean nós” dancing, which would give a little more of a relaxed, casual, and fun feel to the movement rather than the held, formal precision of the current style.

The most challenging aspect of this entire process was teaching my dancers (who were already at varying levels of dance ability) how to do Irish dance, a style that was completely new to each one of them. Most of them had some ballet training, which was helpful in some areas, but detrimental in others. One of the ballet stylings that was hard for them to break was the way they turned out their legs. In ballet, the turnout comes from the hip and is maintained throughout the entirety of each movement. In Irish dance, when the feet are on the ground, the turnout comes from the hip and the legs are crossed at the upper thigh, so no light comes through the upper leg. However, when the legs are bent in the air, the upper thigh is turned parallel while still being crossed over and the lower leg and foot maintain as much turnout as they can. This is one of the most difficult aspects of Irish dance, and was a continuous struggle for my dancers as well. However, they did not need to worry as much about that particular styling aspect during this opening piece.

I spent several of the early rehearsals focusing on technique and basic steps that would be used throughout my entire piece so my dancers would be able to quickly pick up the

choreography later. During this time, one of my dancers needed to drop out of the piece.

Considering this, I had to search for a new dancer and teach her everything we had done in one session because we needed to start the choreography at the next rehearsal. I quickly found a replacement, but she would be away for one week, so she could not be at the next rehearsal. I agreed to have her be in my piece if I could send her videos of the rehearsal and she would learn the choreography while she was gone. She agreed, but while she was away, she became injured and I had to find another replacement.

At this point, I had finished teaching the opening segment and never had the sixth dancer. I had almost exhausted all my resources to find a new dancer when a member of my cast remembered a wonderful dancer from previous ballet classes. She was able and willing to be in my choreography and ended up being perfect, an absolute blessing. She picked up the choreography within two rehearsals and was right on track with everyone else in no time. As much as I am grateful to end up with the final cast, it took up much of our rehearsal time to teach three different dancers the opening choreography.

This particular choreography, the opening section, was interesting because I was trying to combine traditional movement forms with elements of storytelling. I explored the idea of using completely traditional movements, but presenting them in a more contemporary and theatrical manner. I wanted the mood and feeling of the piece to be natural and rustic while still showcasing several choreographic elements. Working with my committee member Professor Paul Mitri was particularly helpful for this scene. He was able to work with me to find the right placement on the floor or facing to give an intimate, casual, lively, but professional performance.

One of the ways I took the traditional movements and made them my own was breaking up the sequence of traditional figures. Traditionally, a figure dance or a Ceili (traditional Irish



group dancing at large gatherings) is done all together and everyone knows the steps and sequences of the dance from beginning to end. To make the piece feel more organic, however, I interrupted the different figures with solo dancing, individual movement, and other unified movement that was not based in ceili dances.

For example, after the three women danced, everyone rose and did a traditional advance and retire figure, rotating  $\frac{1}{4}$  turn. Then we did a figure called square and diamond, which broke into a square with one couple spinning in the center of the square. After that, I broke away and danced a short solo before we all came together again and danced in unison with movement that was based on solo dancing. I wanted the next part to look like an improvised chaos section so I thought of my choreographic tools and used elements from chance dance, which is, as defined by Harriet Lihs, “a semi-improvisational form of choreography in which set movements were rearranged for each performance in terms of the sequence, location, and dancers involved.” I created one sequence for the women and another sequence for the men. Then I broke the sequence into 4-count sections and randomly assigned each dancer a new sequence by randomly choosing the order of the 4-count sections. What I did was only one element of chance dance, but I thought more would have been too demanding, so I adapted the concept. After I saw them perform their new sequences at the same time, I arranged their floor patterns so they would not run into each other and be able to interact with multiple people during that short period of time. We then came back to unison and did a partnering movement on the right side, then repeated and reversed the movement on the left side. Then we performed another traditional figure called “slip sides” which then moved into the  $\frac{1}{2}$  tempo section. This is just one example of how I broke up the traditional figures and movements with solo/individual dancing and choreographic tools that are not typically applied to this dance form.

One of the major changes and difficulties in the opening piece was understanding how to effectively use one of my male cast members. I was in dire need of male dancers, so he volunteered to be in my piece and help me with whatever I needed. I was grateful for his help, but concerned because he has trained extensively in theater, but has not been formally trained in dance. Teaching a non-dancer how to do Irish dance in a few months is a lot to take on. But because of his willingness and enthusiasm, I knew he would work hard and I accepted the challenge.

This cast member was so great to work with, came to extra one-on-one rehearsals with me, and improved immensely by the time the performance came. However, there were moments where the way he performed the movements did not match the look of the rest of the dancers. This became a little distracting, especially since there was no clear reason for him to look different. So, I looked back to the legend to see if I could make it work in the story. I was happy to find that, in the legend, Oisín's father actually had a very large role. I was surprised that I had not thought of it from the beginning. I decided to make this male cast member Oisín's father, Finn, and that solved all the major problems. It gave a reason for him to look different from the rest of the group, allowed him to not be in the final piece of choreography, and gave Oisín's character a greater reason to want to return in the end.

My overall process for this piece, as it is with all my pieces, was to quickly set the entire choreography on the dancers, which gives them a skeleton to work with at each rehearsal. We then spend time really solidifying the sequences and the order so they know the structure well. Once they know the basic structure of the piece, I go in and really work details, nuances, and character. This can be done as a group or individually.

One of the tools I used in the final weeks before production that was extremely effective was having the dancers watch a video of themselves immediately after performing the piece. I found that after several rehearsals where I would just tell them what I wanted to see and talk about where I wanted the piece to go, giving them verbal notes at the end of rehearsal was no longer effective. So, I gave them my verbal suggestions at the beginning of rehearsal right before they dance. I recorded that performance and then we watched the recording together. After watching the recording, I asked them what they saw and noticed they did well, as well as what they saw and noticed that they could improve on. I also asked them to look for places I had given notes on as well as moments where they were surprised at their own performance, either good or bad. This was one of the most beneficial tools during those final polishing weeks.

Looking back at all the work that my dancers put into this piece, I am extremely pleased with each of their final performances. They took responsibility for their own performance and never questioned anything I asked them to do. As a result, this opening piece became exactly what it needed to be for this venue. At the last minute, I removed the singing from this section because the music was too loud for my dancers to match. Which I think was the right decision for this venue. But I would like to revisit that idea if I were to restage it. I think that, in the end, I accomplished my goal of successfully creating a fun, lively, medieval Celtic peasant scene that created the initial context of the legend of Tír na nÓg.

## Niamh

Choreographing this piece, *Niamh*, was perplexing in ways I had not expected. I needed to introduce two new pivotal characters, Niamh (played by Ariel Gazarian) and Enbarr, the Guardian (played by Isaac Johnson) as well as tell the part of the story where Niamh wants Oisín to go with her to her world, his reluctance and eventual decision to go with her. If I were to do this piece again, this is one of the pieces I would expand to really highlight who Niamh is and spend more time explaining the importance of Enbarr and the fabric.

The character of Enbarr is one of the major adjustments to the original story that I had to make. In all the versions of the legend, Enbarr is a magical horse that is able to traverse the sea between the mortal world and Tír na nÓg. I could not think of an effective way to have a human being play a literal horse that I would be happy with in my piece. Therefore, I decided to make this character the Guardian of the Realm. He would hold the same power as the horse, but in a realistic human capacity. I made sure to costume Enbarr in a way that would give him the distinct look that is described in the legend (a solid white horse with golden hooves). I also gave him specific Irish dance movement that resembled horse-like motions. In this way, I could be true to the legend without having Isaac try to play a literal horse.

The music choice was important for this piece. I wanted to have something traditional and driving, but unique and mysterious. I chose to use slip jig timing (9/8) because it would add the unique and traditional feel to it. However, traditionally, the slip jig is solely a woman's dance. Adding men and partner work to this music style gave it another unique presentation from what would be done traditionally. I also chose this recording of the tune because it created a narrative in the way it was arranged. The beginning was soft and mysterious and it gradually

built to a more driving, march-like feel. That musical structure was the perfect accompaniment for this section of choreography.

Coming up with specific steps for this piece was based more on fitting with the timing of the music. The rest of the choreography was based on the pull between the two worlds, which I accentuated by the strong back and forth movements in space. Tír na nÓg was placed off stage right, and the medieval Irish village was placed off stage left. This allowed me to take the footwork I came up with and make it really travel from one side of the stage to the other. I wanted to focus more on the larger image of this piece and the pull of the two worlds.

There were a few issues with this piece that needed consideration, including working with the 7-yard-long piece of fabric, needing the guardian character to look powerful and graceful, and working around a two week festival for which one of my dancers would be out of the country.

Working with the fabric was very interesting. I used the fabric to represent the connection we had to keep with Enbarr in order to stay safe while we travel within the different realms. Therefore, it was an extremely important aspect of the plot. Because this section contained partner work between three people, each movement had to be carefully calculated with the fabric so we would not become entangled. There was also an issue with the initial entrance of Niamh. I originally had her just walk out with the music, which I thought would make an elegant and powerful entrance with the long white fabric trailing behind her. However, with the help of my committee members, Professors Gregg Lizenbery and Amy Schiffner, I decided to have her enter wrapped up in the fabric. This would create a little more visual interest as well as something I could tie in at the end when Oisín returns to Ireland.

Some of the movements I gave to the guardian came across more graceful rather than powerful. So, I worked with him individually to help him find a powerful posture to maintain throughout the piece. I also looked at each of his movements to see which ones I needed to keep and which ones I could discard. This would allow him to stand and lead Oisín and Niamh through some of the movements. This turned out to be very helpful and really solidified his character as the guardian and guide between realms.

One of the most difficult situations was having one of my dancers out of the country for two weeks. This was right during the time when I was working on nuances and details. This created more work for me to do when she returned, but she worked very hard and really stepped up to the challenge. The benefit of this situation was that I could really focus on the opening, Ladies of Tír na nÓg, and return to Ireland. This was very helpful because those sections really needed the time focusing on detail.

Overall, I think this piece was successful in creating an intriguing scene that introduced the new characters and moved the story along. It was clean and the work with the fabric was visually interesting and added an element of mystery to the story. I was pleased with how my dancers performed the piece and how the choreography came together. If I were to perform this again, I would want to extend this section and really develop the storytelling aspects.

## Ladies of Tír na nÓg

The overall image I wanted from this section was faeries frolicking in the forest. This section was one of the most problematic yet most rewarding pieces to work on. The difficulty in choreographing this piece was having the movement reflect my complex vision of Tír na nÓg without giving my dancers movement that they are not physically ready for, which would cause injury. However, I wanted to use more contemporary Irish dance style and movement to bring a different feeling to this section.

For the opening of this piece, I gave my dancers a few movements they could do and had them improvise. I wanted a realistic frolicking, so I had them actually “frolic” with specific movement ideas. Then I had them start dancing in cannon to create a spontaneous feeling to the actual dancing. Then I had them dance in unison but moving to different parts of the stage. Then I wanted them to come together as if they were doing a dance from their childhood. So, I had them do basic footwork with more precise partner work. Then they improvised another frolic moment before Niamh returned and joined in the dance of their childhood.

Once Niamh entered, the partner work became more complicated because it involved three instead of two. Once they finished their childhood dance, they broke away into another “improvised” moment. This was created using the same technique I used in the opening piece where I broke up one sequence and rearranged it. I used the first sequence of the dance and had them each start at a different part of the sequence and dance it through, repeating if necessary.

As I watched the performance, I was extremely pleased with this section. My dancers exuded joy and frivolity. They were able to execute some of the very difficult Irish steps I gave them with ease and they elevated the simpler steps with their use of arm movements and clarity of intention. While I do not think each of them matched in energy or exuberance, they were each

fully invested in their own version of joy and frivolity, which is exactly what it should have been. They needed to be individuals even though they were doing the same movement. This section ended up being one of my favorites and succeeded in creating an ethereal world where faeries frolic in the forest. If I were to restage my piece, I would not change much in this section. But I would like to add another section after this, revealing the rest of Tír na nÓg and welcoming Oisín to this new world. But I would need more people for that.



## Oisín and Niamh

This duet between Mike Romney and Ariel Gazarian was a pleasure to choreograph, but was complicated because it had to cover three years of relationship development between Oisín and Niamh in two and a half minutes. This section is also where I wanted to challenge myself and Ariel, in terms of the lifts.

The first thing I had to do was find the right music. I wanted to have one tune that was played throughout the piece as a theme and I ended up deciding on “Mo Ghile Mear” (My Gallant Hero/Darling). This is the music that played at the very top of the piece, which is where Niamh would notice Oisín. I used a simple harp arrangement of this same song to represent the development of love between Oisín and Niamh. Once I chose the music, I mapped it out so I would know where the major relationship developments would be in relation to the music. Then I spent time in the studio coming up with lifts and movements that were challenging to us as well as matched each of our characters. I wanted Oisín to come across strong but caring and I wanted Niamh to come across playful and loving. I also wanted the lifts to give the illusion that Niamh was flying or lighter than air.

Once we had the lifts put together and solidified, I decided where I wanted to put each one according to the relationship development, music, and movement complexity. The simple movements were used in the beginning as well as transitional moments during the softer music. The more complex movements were used for the climaxes of each period of relationship development during the louder and fuller music. I feel like doing it this way subtly created the illusion of the passing of time and the development of the relationship.

After I had put the lifts into the right place, I improvised with the music in the studio to transition between the lifts and major movements. I wanted it to feel natural for us to bring out

the caring and playful nature of the relationship between Oisín and Niamh, so I wanted these transitional movements to be based on our own relationship. Taking the time to play and improvise with the music was exactly what we needed to do to really solidify the mood of this piece. It came together quickly and easily and continued to develop and become more personal as we rehearsed more.

Overall, I am extremely pleased with this piece. I think it completely captured the happiness and love that I wanted to come out of this relationship. I also think that the movements were successful in subtly showing the deepening of their relationship. However, if I restage the piece, I want to make this section much longer, and really involve more storytelling elements, with lighting and set pieces to do a sort of montage of their three years together. But for where it is now, I am extremely pleased with its development and portrayal of the loving and playful relationship of Oisín and Niamh.

## Return to Ireland

The transition moment here was successful in the fact that it communicated the essential story points. However, looking at it, I think it needs to be developed more and the movements need to be clarified and performed with stronger and more obvious intention.

The final section was very interesting to choreograph. The music was the only piece of music that had a contemporary composer with lyrics in English. This is the part in the story when Oisín returns to Ireland, but it is hundreds of years in the future, which is why I wanted to use modern dance for this section. This scene needed to feel opposite to the opening section of the piece. The opening creating a warm, welcoming, social environment and this final scene creating a cold, hostile, solitary environment.

Within the modern dance movement, I wanted to have the movement be inspired by traditional Irish movement. I decided to utilize some fugue elements to the choreography. I gave my dancers 4 Irish dance movements and had them manipulate them using instrumentation (doing the movement on a different body part) and inversion (turning the movement upside-down). Whatever that meant to them was good enough for me, in the development stage. After giving them about fifteen minutes to develop some movement, I had them show me what they came up with and I chose which movements we would use and manipulated some of them further.

In another section of this dance I asked them to improvise and come up with movement based on the music and the words: struggle, pain, anger, perseverance. I let this sit with them for several rehearsals before solidifying the movement. Once they were more comfortable with what they wanted to use, I worked with each dancer individually to clarify which movements they would use when, and to tweak how they would perform the movements. While my dancers were

coming up with movement vocabulary, I was mapping out the music to know how I was going to arrange the movement in each section of the music. Once both parts were finished, it was simple to put it all together.

The complicated aspect of this section came with the dancers being able to create the desired mood and attitude of this section. All three of them were not used to doing dances that needed to have a harsh, angry feeling to it. It was very difficult to get them to understand what they needed to do to change the quality of their movement. Eventually, I decided to use the “give notes first, record, and watch” method for the last few rehearsals. This was the only way they were able to understand what I wanted from them and how they needed to fix it in their own bodies. Once we started doing the video reflections, it totally transformed their dancing.

The ending involving the white fabric was tricky. We spent several rehearsals finding the right way for each of them to interact with the fabric that was unique and interesting. We also had to work out how to pull and manipulate the fabric without tearing the Velcro connection too early. This was also, partially an issue of the size and strength of Velcro used to connect the two pieces of fabric. I had to change that several times to make it work with the type of movements we were doing with fabric. Looking at the performance video, I would change the formation we are in when the struggle for the fabric begins. It’s a little awkward.

Overall, I was pleased with the outcome and development of this section, especially with only three people to work with. They were able to get the mood strong enough that the audience was able to understand their significance, even if their actual role was misinterpreted. There were several interpretations of what this last piece represented. Some were correct and others were very far off, but in all of the interpretations the cold, hostile, and friendless world was clear. If I were to do this again, I would have at least twelve dancers in this final section and adjust the

choreography accordingly. This would create a greater feeling of confusion and give greater opportunity to clarify the intended hostility and cold environment.

## Part III: Reflection

This process has been extremely rewarding as well as extremely difficult. I have learned about who I am as a choreographer, teacher, and, in many ways, a person. The lessons I have gleaned from this experience will be a part of me for the rest of my teaching career and life.

When I first embarked on this journey of a project, I sought insight from a friend of mine. She is from Ireland and I asked her, “what songs and legends truly speak to the heart of Ireland?” She then shared with me The Legend of Oisín and Niamh in Tír na nÓg and several beautiful Celtic tunes and songs. My ultimate goal for this piece was to bring honor and respect to this legend and the place where many of my ancestors call home, as well as make my friend proud. Watching this piece brought my friend to tears. In this and many other ways, I believe my piece was successful in bringing honor and respect to the Irish culture, my family, the legend, and my friend. I am pleased with my dancers for tackling this immense challenge and ultimately succeeding. They took responsibility and ownership of this piece and it showed. Their attitude and reverence for the story and the piece itself elevated the performance and gave it the level of respect it deserves.

I want to expand and develop this piece into a full-length program. But to accomplish that effectively, I would need a full company of dancers, a full-size stage, and the ability for projection and small set pieces. I believe this is possible and hope that I will be able to expand and develop this choreography in the future.

## Appendix A: Technical Designs



## Lighting Ideas – Tír na nÓg (Michael Romney)

### Prologue (Medieval Ireland)

- Dusk. In a forest. Light slowly appears from upstage right and then fades with the change in music.

### Scene 1 (Medieval Ireland)

- Inside a pub. Fireplace going. Warm natural tones. Dark outside, firelight inside. Joyous celebration.

### Scene 2 (Medieval Ireland)

- Return to prologue place. Darker now. Light slowly appears from upstage right and Ariel enters from the light. Her presence kind of creates a bright moonlight effect on the rest of the scene.
- During the last part of the scene, we are traveling to Tír na nÓg. I would like to have some fluctuating lights to denote traveling to a different world, and travel in general.

### Scene 3 (Tír na nÓg)

- Mythical, fantasy land of perpetual youth. Odd but beautiful colors to create ethereal, magical world.
- Scene opens on “Faeries frolicking in the fantasy forest.”
- Ariel returns home and joins her faerie friends in the dance (there could be a subtle lighting change there....)

### Scene 4 (Tír na nÓg)

- Same place as scene 3. Oisín and Niamh are falling in love and going through the different stages and years of their relationship. I want magical love lighting and subtle passage of time.
- End of this dance, Oisín wants to return to Ireland. Enbarr enters and as we exit, I would like to have a kind of “time-lapse” effect to show hundreds of years passing quickly...

### Scene 5 (Modern-day Ireland)

- Dark and dank. “rainy day in London” type of feel. Exact opposite from Scene 1.
- There’s a conflict moment near the end... that could be fun to play with
- At the end of the scene I want the light to slowly focus to just around me (or my side of the stage).

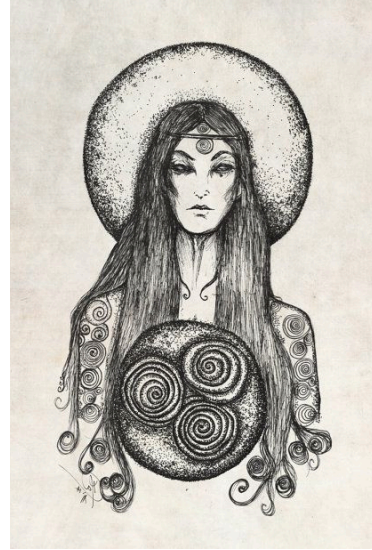
### Epilogue (Modern-day Ireland & Tír na nÓg)

- I want the stage to be split. Modern-day Ireland downstage left, Tír na nÓg downstage right. If possible, I would like a shadow between the two worlds...
- Lights will fade to black on Ireland first, before the song is over. Then Tír na nÓg lights will fade leaving the stage in black.

Costume Research/Inspiration – Tír na nÓg (Michael Romney)



*Image 1: Niamh/ People of Tír na nÓg. Google Images.*



*Image 2: Niamh. Google Images*



*Image 3: Niamh, Oisín, and Enbarr. Google Images.*

## Appendix B: Publicity Materials



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII  
MANOA

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII  
Theatre + dance  
PRESENTS

**SPRING  
footholds:**

**Best Foot Forward**

MFA Dance candidates strut their stuff with graduation on the line, joined by fellow dancers for a dance concert of excellence and whimsy

**APR 26, 27, 28, 29 at 7:30pm**

**UHM DANCE STUDIO**  
1820 Edmondson Rd. off Maile Way

**MORE INFO:** [manoa.hawaii.edu/liveonstage/best-foot/](http://manoa.hawaii.edu/liveonstage/best-foot/)

Tickets \$8-\$18  
**UHM STUDENT \$8  
SPECIAL**

Tickets on sale at: [etickethawaii.com](http://etickethawaii.com), (808)944-2697,  
Campus Outlets, and Kennedy Theatre Box Office

**PRIME TIME**

**KENNEDY  
THEATRE**

**2016/2017  
SEASON**

Image 1: Concert Poster.



# Kennedy Theatre

UNIVERSITY of HAWAI'I at MĀNOA

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Department of Theatre + Dance University  
of Hawai'i at Mānoa 1770 East-West Road  
Honolulu, HI 96822  
Web: [manoa.hawaii.edu/liveonstage/best-foot/](http://manoa.hawaii.edu/liveonstage/best-foot/)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**March 31, 2017**

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## **Kennedy Theatre Presents Spring Footholds Dance Concert**

*Student Choreographers Début Dynamic Contemporary Dance*

The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's Department of Theatre and Dance is proud to conclude its 2016/17 Primetime Season with *Spring Footholds: Best Foot Forward*. This dance concert brings together four Master of Fine Arts in Dance candidates, dance students, choreographers, technicians, and designers to create an intriguing performance of contemporary dance.

Performances take place April 26, 27, 28, and 29 at 7:30 p.m. in the beautiful UHM Dance Studio built in 2013, since much needed upgrades are in progress at Kennedy Theatre.

The title of the show, *Best Foot Forward*, symbolizes this moment in the academic and artistic achievement of four Master of Fine Arts degree candidates at the eve of graduating and

launching their professional careers. Each is producing highly involved dance pieces as their thesis, the culmination of their studies, practice and transformation in the UHM dance program. *Best Foot Forward* dance choreographer and MFA candidate Charlaine Katsuyoshi is a world class dancer with performance credits from around the globe. After growing up in Honolulu (Nu‘uanu), she graduated from U.C. Irvine and worked in the film and television industry. She continued her professional dance career with Momix Dance Company, danced for nine years with Hubbard Street Dance, and was a Lar Lubovitch Dance Company member who toured through Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Katsuyoshi was cast as the cheetah in the Broadway touring show of Lion King in 2006 and subsequently returned to Honolulu where she currently teaches dance at Mid-Pacific Institute while pursuing her MFA in Dance from UHM.

This particular *Footholds* also features choreographer and MFA candidate Mike Romney presenting *Tír na nÓg*, a piece inspired by the Celtic legend “Oisín and Niamh in Tír na nÓg.” Romney shares that “I was also inspired by my experience in Irish step dancing and theatre and wanted to do a sort of ‘story ballet’ using folk tales and folk dance” In the story, Tír na nÓg is the Otherworld, a land of everlasting youth, beauty, health, abundance and joy. When asked about his personal and artistic motivation Romney replied, “Why dance? Simply put, because dancing makes me happy and I want to share my happiness and help others find their own happiness.”

Another *Best Foot Forward* choreographer, MFA candidate Terry Lee Slaughter, premieres three movement pieces: *Peering In*, *Happy Birthday*, and *Overheard*. While these pieces don’t share the same subject, they do share a theme of voyeurism. “I was inspired by the curiosity to know more about one another's most intimate/personal moments,” Slaughter says, “I have always been a curious person. While at UH I have been finding the means in which to explore this curiosity.”



Choreographer and MFA candidate, Christine Maxwell, presents her culminating work *The Loraxian Effect*, a piece inspired by Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax*. "I wanted to create a narrative that could address environmental concern without the piece becoming too ominous," Maxwell says, "There is so much power in the arts - developing life skills, healing communities and individuals, preserving culture, engaging in social activism - the list goes on."

Tickets to *Spring Footholds: Best Foot Forward* may be purchased online at [www.etickethawaii.com](http://www.etickethawaii.com), by phone at (808) 944-2697, at official outlets, and at the Kennedy Theatre Box Office the week of the show. For more information, visit <http://manoa.hawaii.edu/liveonstage/best-foot/> Television News Broadcast Featuring dancer Charlene Katsuyoshi in 2007:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w\\_TLJKZPLfg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w_TLJKZPLfg)

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Kennedy Theatre | 2016/17 Season Spring Footholds Release

**EVENT :**

*Spring Footholds: Best Foot Forward*

**PRESENTED BY:**

UHM Department of Theatre + Dance

**WHEN:**

April 26, 27, 28, and 29 at 7:30 p.m.

**WHERE:**

UHM Dance Studio, 1820 Edmondson Rd. (off Maile Way)  
Honolulu, HI 96822

**TICKET PRICES:**

\$18 General Admission \$16 Seniors / Military / UH faculty and Staff \$13 Students/Youth \$8 UHM Students with valid UHM photo ID

Ticket prices include all service fees.

**PURCHASE INFO:**

Tickets are available online at [etickethawaii.com](http://etickethawaii.com), by phone at

(808) 944-2697, at participating outlets, and at the Kennedy Theatre box office; the box office is open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Friday during show weeks, with extended hours on performance dates.

###



Kennedy Theatre | 2016/17 Season Spring Footholds Release





MFA Dance Candidate Michael Romney (photo from *SHAZAM! Dance + Science*, April 2016). Featured dancer in UHM's *Spring Footholds: Best Foot Forward*, 4/26-29, 2017. PHOTO: Chesley Cannon

*Image 2: Photo used for publicity.*

## Appendix C: Concert Program

**Kennedy theatre staff**

Department Chair: Betsy Fisher  
Director of Dance: Gregg Lizenbery  
Production Manager: Rick Greaver  
Theatre Manager: Jessica L. Jacob  
Operations Coordinator: John Wells  
Technical Director: Gerald Kawaoka  
Assistant Technical Director: Montiana Rizzuto  
Costume Shop Manager: Hannah Schauer Galli  
Assistant Costume Shop Manager: Iris Kim  
Costume Shop Assistant: Amber Baker  
Office Staff: Lori Chun, Lindsey Rice

**front of house staff**

Box Office Supervisor: Mark Shiroma  
Box Office Staff: Christian Cesar, Adam Cook, Layne Higginbotham, Lexi Moreno, Lauren Vance  
Publicity Director: Kevin C. K. Berg  
Publicity Assistant: Jennifer Takahashi  
Graphic Designer: Michael Donato  
Photographer: Jessica Jacob, John Wells  
House Manager: Catherine Kindiger  
Assistant House Managers: Layne Higginbotham, Lauren Vance

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a musical by James Valcq & Fred Alley

**TAIKO DRUM AND DANCE: HANA HOU!**

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**PRIMETIME**

2016/2017 SEASON



**SPRING  
footholds:**



**Best Foot  
Forward**

April 26, 27, 28\*, and 29 at 7:30pm

\*Post-show rap

**UHM Dance Building**

UNIVERSITY of HAWAII  
MANOA

Department of Theatre + Dance  
College of Arts and Humanities

Image 3: Concert Program Front and Back Cover.



# spring footholds: Best Foot Forward

## artistic staff

Concert Director: Gregg Lizenbery  
Lighting Design: Chikako Omoso  
Sound Design: Brian Shevelenko  
Costume Coordination: Iris Kim,  
Marc Marcos, Cheri Vasek

## concert program

performed without intermission

### ALONE IN THE DARK, TOGETHER WE RISE

Choreographer and Projection Design: Chardaine Katsuyoshi\*  
Music: Huerto S., Terry Riley, Kronos Quartet, Ludovico Einaudi  
Dancers: Dayna Chun, Chardaine Katsuyoshi, Maureen Kearns, Kaylyn Kumashiro,  
Pam Shoebottom  
Projection Software: Lumo Interactive Inc. (Made possible by the College of Arts and  
Humanities Graduate Student Research Award)

### TIR NA NÓG

Choreographer: Michael Romney\*  
Music: Traditional, Stephen Twigger  
Dancers:  
Oisín: Michael Romney  
Finn (Oisín's Father): Masech Ganjali  
Niamh: Ariel Gazarian  
Ensemble: Emma Matewski, Christina Oshiro, Robin Worley  
By using a combination of traditional Irish dance, contemporary Irish dance,  
modern, and contemporary ballet, the Celtic legend of Oisín and Niamh in Tir na  
nÓg is brought to life.

### PEERING IN / OVERHEARD

Choreographer: Terry Slaughter\*  
Music: The Punch Brothers  
Sound Collage: Terry Slaughter  
Dancers: Marley Au, Ariel Gazarian, Lexi Gilman, Maureen Kearns,  
Chandler Louque, Terry Slaughter, Theo Steinman, Angela Valdez  
\*In partial fulfillment of the requirements of the MFA in Dance

### THE LORAXIAN EFFECT

Choreographer: Christine Maxwell\*

Part One: 32" Perspective  
Music: Miles Davis  
Dancers: Rachel Booze, Ariel Gazarian,  
Kristen Johnson, Alisa Olko

Part Two: From What's Left  
Music: Dave Ballou  
Dancers: Amy Butkaru, Maureen Kearns, Pamela Shoebottom

Part Three: Causal Sequence  
Music: John Coltrane  
Dancers: Rachel Booze, Ariel Gazarian, Kristen Johnson,  
Maureen Kearns, Alisa Olko, Grace Parson, Elizabeth Savage

Epilogue: Fallible  
Music: Bob Thiele and George Weiss, spoken word by Louis Armstrong  
Dancer: Christine Maxwell

"Some of you young folks been saying to me: 'Hey Pops, what you mean, 'What a wonderful world'? What about all them wars all over the place? You call them wonderful? And how about hunger and pollution? They ain't so wonderful either.' Well how about listening to old Pops for a minute. Seems to me it ain't the world that's so bad, but what we're doing to it and all I'm saying is see what a wonderful world it would be if only we'd give it a chance." —Louis Armstrong

### production staff

Stage Manager: Raquel Palisbo  
Stage Crew: Emily Hoadley, Samantha Iba-Precece, Christine Kanehira,  
Kenny Kusaka, Kela Neil  
Wardrobe Supervisor: Amy Johnson  
Faculty Consultants: Betsy Fisher, Peifeng Kao, Kara Miller, Amy Schifner,  
Cheri Vasek

### front of house information

The UHM ticket program is supported in part by a grant from the Student Activities and Program Fee Board.

For large print programs or any other accessibility requests please contact the House Manager.

After dark: to arrange a Campus Security Escort from any two points on campus please see a House Manager.

As a courtesy to your fellow audience members and to our performers, please remember that eating, drinking, video recording, photography and use of cell phones and other electronic devices is not allowed inside the theatre. Please take a moment to turn off any sound or light emitting devices now.

Image 4: Concert Program Inside.

## Appendix D: Audience Responses

“I was both moved by the dance and impressed by the skill of the dancers. It was very enjoyable to watch.” - Eli Litzelman

“I have been a long time appreciator of ballet and enjoyed its integration into Irish folk dance. It was actually surprising how well the two went together. This piece was so fun that it made me wish I could jump up and join them.” - Kaitlin Lopez

“Both mine and my daughter’s favorite piece, by far, was “Tir Na Nog”. I enjoyed the folk like story line and the joyful dancing that was a part of that piece. Also, being part Irish, I learned a little about the culture that I had not known. I thought the partnering was very beautiful and both Michael and the female lead were awesome. I loved the lifts, which were both strong and graceful. The folk dance was very lively and fun. Contrary to my feelings throughout the other pieces, this piece was emotionally provoking and relevant, leaving me sad when the connection was broken along the journey. I didn’t want it to end.” - Michaelyn Nakoa

“My favorite part of the show has to be something that I understand, which was the performance choreographed by Michael Romney. The story behind the dance was interesting and the dance was very articulately choreographed. It seemed like there were a lot of steps in the dance, but was synced almost perfectly between the dancers. I also enjoyed the light effects and the music of the dance. I appreciated the emotions that were portrayed through facial expression and swift movements. My favorite portion was the couple dance between the main two characters and the love the happiness that I felt. Throughout the entire performance with several parts, I could not stop thinking, ‘How on earth did they memorize all of that?’” – Jacky Chun