

# MAIRE CLERKIN

## *Irish Dance Workshops*

### MEET THE ARTIST:

A choreographer, dancer, actor, writer and director from London, **Máire Clerkin** founded her own Irish Dance theatre companies Clerkinworks (1994 – 2001) and The Hairy Marys (1984 – 1993). Since moving to California in 2003, Máire directed Cadence Irish Dance Theater in Arizona and now specializes in choreographing work for Irish Dance Academies, five of which have won regional championships for Dance Drama, and twice placed 5<sup>th</sup> in the World Championships. Máire, a certified teacher and adjudicator with the Irish Dancing Commission, Dublin, judges Irish dance competitions across the U.S. and Canada, in the UK and Australia. Her teaching credits include University of Limerick, Loyola Marymount University, L.A., Scripps College, California Dance Educators Association, Peninsula Performing Arts, the Los Angeles Music Center and Orange County Performing Arts Center. Choreographic credits include *Dancing on Dangerous Ground* in New York's Radio City Music Hall, *Blind Fiddler of Glenadauch* for the Drill Hall, London and *The Bad Arm – Confessions of a Dodgy Irish Dancer*, written and performed by Máire and directed by Dan O'Connor. Previous dance theatre productions include at the Dublin Festival, Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Royal Festival Hall, Royal Opera House and on national tour. Ms. Clerkin currently leads the school assembly group *A Gaelic Gathering – Irish Music & Dance*, which was first created for the World City series at the Walt Disney Concert Hall in 2007. She also led the children's *Book of Kells* storytelling workshop at the LA Irish Film Festival 2009.



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### ABOUT THE WORKSHOPS:

Students will find Irish Dance accessible, relevant and fun in a 6-14 week series. Through participation and collaboration, they will discover a cultural tradition, as well as being challenged creatively. They will be able to: demonstrate basic steps and a traditional 'Ceili' dance; create a Reel step with a partner; identify key technique points; work collaboratively; recognize Irish music and name featured instruments; cite health benefits of dancing; describe the context of Irish immigration to America; locate Ireland on a world map; identify uses of technology in dance, and critique Irish Dance performance using appropriate vocabulary. The program enables students to develop social skills, raise rhythmic and musical awareness, gain insight into a people that have had an historic impact on American society and acquire skill in unique footwork discipline. Students will learn

of the Irish connection to American Tap and Appalachian Dance and will discuss career opportunities for dancers and dance enthusiasts.



### **BEFORE THE WORKSHOP:**

- Please have the students wear nametags for the workshop. It saves time if they are made beforehand!
- Review the importance of listening and observing. Ask the students what it means to be a good listener. What does it mean to be a good observer? Why is it important in daily life? Why is it important when the artist is here?
- Please encourage the students to dress appropriately -- in clothes that allow them to move comfortably.
- Have a VCR and monitor, as well as a chalkboard and chalk or a paper pad and marker ready for her workshops.
- Review students' ideas about dance, underscoring the idea that it is both personal and universal, and that everyone's ideas will be both different and related. Discuss the importance of being able to express oneself through movement and dance. Where can they use this skill in their lives?
- Discuss the professions that utilize the skills learned in a dance class (e.g., focus, discipline, creative problem-solving, controlling the body and challenging energy into expressive communication, etc.).

### **AFTER THE WORKSHOP:**

- Review the major points presented in the workshops. What were the most important ideas? What parts of the workshop did the students like best? What did they learn about dance? What did they learn about themselves?
- Practice the warm-ups, skills and creative explorations done in class so students can attain more comfort, ability and involvement in movement and dance.
- Apply the techniques and strategies for making dances, presented by the artist, to other poems, books, music, painting and areas of the curriculum.