



The Mom Project

Lummi Islander organizes Fairhaven theater show about motherhood, C3

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PEOPLE

Moms' experiences shared through art

Dancer and mother Pam Kuntz creates a multimedia presentation

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FOR THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

Pam Kuntz believes every mother has wisdom worth sharing with other mothers.

She is pregnant with her second child and gave birth to her first child, Jack, a year ago. She lives on Lummi Island with her husband, Mark.

Kuntz, 35, danced professionally in Boston and New York before moving to Bellingham, and has taught dance at Western Washington University for the last six years. She recently created "The Mom Project," a multimedia theater piece that tells the experiences of several local mothers with dance, storytelling, and photographic and video images.

The project starts today in the lobby of Firehouse Performing Arts Center with an exhibit of photographer Suzanne Fogarty's images of the mothers involved in the project. The exhibit runs through Oct. 9.

Evening performances of the theater piece will be at the Firehouse center Friday and Saturday as well as Oct. 7 and 8.

Question: How would you describe the piece?

Answer: There are various sections. Five sections started

with the recorded stories of mothers. I gave those recordings to composer, Nate Harpel. He composed original instrumental music to intertwine with these recorded voices. The dancers and I created movement to accompany this new sound score. Other sections include mothers' stories told live at the performance, a section where dancers tell, sing and demonstrate advice given to them by their mothers, and interludes that include humorous advice tidbits from parenting books. All of this is accompanied by Suzanne's photographs projected on the backdrop. The performers range from moms who have never performed before to highly trained dancers.

Q: Your training is impressive as well.

A: I am a modern dancer and started dancing when I was 12. I grew up in Billings, Montana, and went to college in Utah and Montana. I majored in dance and received a scholarship to study at the Martha Graham School of Dance right out of college. I received my MFA from the Boston Conservatory.

Q: How did you get this project started?

A: I put up posters at the

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What: "The Mom Project," a multimedia presentation.

When: 7:30 p.m. Friday, Saturday and Oct. 7 and 8.

Where: Firehouse Performing Arts Center, 1314 Harris Ave.

Tickets: \$10 general, \$8 students, at Village Books, Community Food Co-op and the door.

More: An exhibit of related photographs by Suzanne Fogarty runs today through Oct. 9 in the Firehouse center lobby.

Food Co-op and at the Mother Baby Center and asked for mothers. I talked with 12 moms in the area, most from Whatcom County, but two from Seattle and one from Anacortes. I wanted to learn from other mothers about how to do this new job I had all of a sudden. I found a mother play group that had been organized in the north part of Bellingham, and they spread the word. There are other mother play groups in the south part of Bellingham, and maybe in other parts of the county as well.

Q: What's a mother play group?

A: Where moms bring their kids to play and learn to socialize. It's an opportunity for moms to socialize as well. They visit and talk about everything from potty training to recipes to work.

Q: What other help did you have in preparing "The Mom Project?"

A: My husband, Mark, is a theater professor at WWU. He is doing the lighting design for this piece. He also worked with and gave direction to three moms who are telling their stories live.

Q: Besides answering your own questions about motherhood, did you have other purposes for this project?

A: I wanted to give mothers an opportunity to share their stories. I feel that all of these moms have some gem of wisdom that we can all learn from. I wanted to bring dance to people who wouldn't ordinarily go see a dance performance. "The Mom Project" is something that will hopefully welcome newcomers to the dance experience because the topic is so accessible. I'll see how it's received here, but I'm also interested in taking the piece elsewhere.

Linda Kendall Scott is a freelance writer. For questions or story ideas, contact Dean Kahn at dean.kahn@bellinghamherald.com or 715-2291.