

THEATRE

The Mom Project

Locals dramatize experiences with motherhood

Photos by Suzanne Fogarty



STORY BY CAROLYN MCCARTHY

PAM KUNTZ is planning a career change. After 25 years as a professional dancer, choreographer and teacher of dance, Kuntz is trading her day job for diapers and settling down to become a full-time mom. Faced with her new incarnation as Mother, Kuntz went searching for other, more experienced moms, hoping to glean some of their wisdom. "I wanted to see if I couldn't get smarter about this new job," she says. Lucky for us, she's sharing what she's learned through The Mom Project, a performance piece opening Friday, Sept. 30 at the Firehouse Performing Arts Center in Fairhaven.

Kuntz has assembled a diverse and engaging group of stories about mothering from women in Seattle, Anacortes, Wenatchee, and throughout Whatcom County, including Bellingham, Sudden Valley, and Everson. Each woman, a dozen in all, tells her own story in her own way. One mother survived abdominal surgery during her pregnancy. Another lost a daughter to cancer. We hear from a teenage mom and a woman who struggled for years to become pregnant. A lesbian couple revels in the absurdity of artificial insemination, and a local mother talks about her son's future as a soldier in Iraq.

Some mothers will be on hand to tell their stories in person, presenting monologues based on their own experience. Others' words have been captured on tape and interwoven with original

music to create a sound score for dance. Kuntz worked with five others to create a dance piece inspired by these stories.

In addition to live dance, husband and wife team Andy and Dionne Noble have choreographed a dance for a film on the subject of motherhood. Both professional dancers and teachers, the couple created a short movie that includes footage of Dionne dancing during her pregnancy, as well as four days after the birth of their child.

THEATRE

The Mom Project plays at 7:30pm Sept. 30 and Oct. 1, 7 and 8 at the Firehouse Performing Arts Center (1314 Harris Ave. in Fairhaven). Tickets, at \$10 for adults and \$8 for students, are available at the Community Food Coop and Village Books, and at the door the evening of the performance. Call 734-2776 for more information.

Anacortes-based photographer Suzanne Fogarty has also contributed her talents to the project, documenting the participants as they got together, told their stories, choreographed

dances and rehearsed for performance. These images will be projected onto a screen, providing a backdrop for the dance and theatrical pieces.

By tapping into a subject as universal as motherhood, Kuntz hopes the project will draw new audiences to dance in Bellingham. "I'd like for the dance audience in Bellingham to grow," she says. The choreography in the Mom Project ranges from abstract, interpretive movement to "quite pedestrian, literal gestures." None of it, Kuntz says, will alienate someone new to dance.

Not even dads? "It's not a chick night," Kuntz says, pointing to the humorous and universal aspects of the show's content. It's also not predictable. "There'll be surprises," she grins, even for those who think they know it all. By drawing from such a wide variety of women's experience, the show promises to be fresh and unexpected. **N7**