# Familiarisation Guide
# Dancehall

Presented by Luail – Ireland's National Dance Company
By Emma Martin, with composer Andrew Hamilton

the arts council an chomhairle ealaíon | funding dance

luail IRELAND'S NATIONAL DANCE COMPANY

# Overview

This is an guide to provide you with some information on *Dancehall* presented by Luail – Ireland's National Dance Company by Emma Martin, with music by Andrew Hamilton performed by Crash Ensemble.

Dancehall is a dance and live music performance. There will be three live musicians and eight dancers onstage.

This piece is a revival work that Emma and Andrew collaborated on 10 years ago. It is an intense pieces with lots of energy. There is no clear story throughout the performance. The dancers move with incredible skill and energy and the music is at times intense and overpowering. Sometimes it can even feel a bit uncomfortable. This is intentional, as the artists wanted to create a feeling of the awkwardness or nervousness that people feel when we step into the dancehall.

# Background information

Dancehall is a tribute to the dancehalls of times gone by… reimagined in a contemporary way. What we mean when we say ‘contemporary dance’ is dance that uses styles and influences from current culture and society.

There is no dialogue or storyline in *Dancehall*, but there is a short singing section at the very end of the performance. You do not need to feel like there is something to ‘get’ or ‘follow’. The show intends share something intense, visual and physical, to create a feeling of excitement and energy for the audience. The show may make you feel lots of different emotions when watching it, and that is encouraged. There is no one way to feel about the show.

*Dancehall* is inspired by a time when the Church had a lot of control over the Ireland, and people were banned from dancing in a way that was seen as ‘unpure’ or too ‘wild’. This performance of Dancehall shakes off some of this past, and we see the dancers becoming wild and free, falling in love, falling out of love, showing off, comforting one another, arguing, being silly – all the things that represent being alive!

We think you will might see some of yourself in this piece, because we have all been on a dancefloor, we have all felt awkward, or timid, or silly or carefree. So look out for some of yourself in this performance.

# Set design and costume

The set has been created by Emma Martin. There are crushed cans scattered on the floor when you first see the performers on stage. It appears as though they have been trampled on by another wild dancing party.

When the musicians walk onto stage to take their seats, they are dressed in light blue tuxedos with ruffled shirts, velvet dickie bows and silver shoes, they look like a 1960s showband. There is a drummer, a keyboard player and cellist.

The dancers run onto stage as a group. They are dressed in a collection of suits and dresses that feel like they are from the 60s and 70s. There is a lot of muted colour, velvet, flared trousers, pastel-coloured shirts and patent shoes

# Lighting design

Sometimes the lighting on stage is shadow and darkness, with small highlights on the dancers faces and bodies, other times it is colder with blue tones, and at times it is rich and vibrant and golden against the curtains on stage.

Stephen Dodd the Lighting Designer wanted the lighting to feel like a transformation from an empty space to a full a vibrant space.

When we are nearly at the end of the show, there will be **strobe lighting** and it is very dramatic and intense, it feels a bit like a being in a nightclub. **We recommend you cover your eyes at this point if you find this distracting.**

# Music

At the start of the show, the musicians on keyboard and cello will play music as the performers hum along. It's light and airy and sounds dreamy. It would remind you of a school choir practice, it builds in intensity with the cello and then finishes.

A moment later, we hear the music start suddenly and dramatically. It sounds like someone pressing down on an organ key, they play this one key for almost a minute before changing key. This is to create feeling of awkwardness for the audience – the way you might feel when you first step onto a dancefloor.

During this section of music with the organ sound, the dancers move in different ways, some of them look like they are trying out some of their own groovy new dance moves in front of a mirror at home, some are doing a slow set, others are shuffling around as though getting ready for a night out or looking around for a dance partner. The music is quite intense here.

At other times, the music sounds a bit like feedback or like an amp being pulled from a speaker. You might have heard this sound at a nightclub or in dancehall. The percussion sometimes becomes so loud, it sounds a bit like thousands of feet banging on the wood floor of the halls.

Here is a link to the music for this performance listen to so you can familiarise yourself ahead of the show.

# Cast and Creative Team

**Set Design -** Emma Martin
Composer – Andrew Hamilton
**Costume Design -** Katie Davenport
**Lighting Design -** Stephen Dodd

**Luail Company Dancers:**

Robyn Byrne
Jou Hsin Chu
Clara Kerr
Sean Lammer
Tom O'Gorman
Hamza Pirimo
Rosie Stebbing
Meghan Stevens

**Crash Ensemble Musicians:**
Caitríona Finnegan - cello
Máire Carroll - keyboard
Scott Foster/Brian Dungan - percussion

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