

half/angel

half/angel is a performance production company based in Ireland and England. The company was formed in 1995 by Jools Gilson-Ellis and Richard Povall. half/angel has developed a distinctive body of work through the long term interdisciplinary partnership of its co-directors. This is characterised by a poetic use of new and emerging technologies, with platforms including CD-Rom, installation and performance. Povall's work as a sound and video artist, includes the development of intelligent performance environments, closely tuned to the poetic gesture of Gilson-Ellis's writing. Gilson-Ellis is a choreographer and writer, with a strong sense of the poetic possibilities of emerging technologies. Their work is notable for its unsettling use of voice, movement and sound. half/angel has been a resident company at STEIM (Amsterdam), Institute for Choreography & Dance (Cork), and The Banff Centre for the Arts (Canada). Their research into performance environments which connect physical, vocal and sonic gestures has been critically as well as artistically important in the field of performance studies.

half/angel's CD-ROM *mouthplace* (1997) was exhibited at international festivals in five countries. The work developed the troubling connections between femininity and orality. The dance theatre production *The Secret Project* (1999) was co-produced by The Banff Centre for the Arts and the Institute for Choreography & Dance, and was performed in three countries. *The Secret Project* implemented several years of performance research at The Banff Centre, and focused on the idea of the 'secret.' Our new work *Spinstren* (2002) follows the turning metaphor of spinning. It combines new and old technologies – the spinning of thread as well as voices. *Spinstren* received showcase performances in the spring of 2002 in Ireland and the UK. half/angel is also working on a major installation project, *the earth diaries*.

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Spinstren

dance-theatre from half/angel



Spinstren

Enchantment. Here is a story about a girl who steals a top. A wooden top, precious to its owner, who has carved it by hand. This is a story about a girl who fell in love with spinning, not because of movement, but because of stillness. This is a story about a girl who stole spinning, because she thought she could possess it. This is a story about a girl who learnt a difficult difference between stealing stillness and stealing movement.

This is a story about a girl.

The trouble with Arachne, mused Athena, kicking one of the spindles under the loom, was that she was too cocky for her own good. The fact that she was better at spinning than herself, was hardly the point.

Spinstren spins together the story of Carla — a girl who steals a spinning top, with the story of The Spinstren – a breed of magical women. Spinstren teases myths into a single thread — the story of Sleeping Beauty with the story of Athena and Arachne. These are both myths about spinning; a princess who doesn't know how to spin, and Arachne who is so skilled at spinning she competes with Athena to prove it. One sleeps for a hundred years, the other is turned into a spider. As you can see, spinning is a dangerous business.

Spinstren seeks to tease out the connections between spinning threads, and spinning tops. Spinstren is an exploration of a metaphor; about the difference between spinning and staying still. Spinstren is a spinning spell, a haunted space where spinning tops prick fingers, and spinning wheels weave webs.

She told me that if I bathed the distaff with blood, strange alchemies would come upon me. She told me that if I span and pricked her finger, I could exchange blood for knowledge. She told me this gently, holding me close to her.

Spinstren is a dance/visual theatre work that extends half/angel's reputation for making magical spaces of performance. It combines rich veins of poetic text, sound and video with a visual and choreographic use of its three performers. It requires a conventional theatre space, with a sprung stage floor, at least 100 lighting circuits, and a four-channel house sound system. Pricing is dependent on the number of performances; workshops can be offered on non-performance days. The piece is eighty minutes long, and runs without an intermission.

Following showcase performances in the UK and Ireland in the Spring of 2002, Spinstren is now available for touring.



Project Directors

Jools Gilson-Ellis & Richard Povall

Production Management

Paul McCarthy

Performers

Cindy Cummings, Jools Gilson-Ellis, and Jane Kellaghan

about half/angel...

A new company stretching the frontiers of dance to incorporate poetry and technology.

Gerry McCarthy, Sunday Times, October 1999

A quiet revolution in new media work... it has been applauded wherever it has previewed even before such expert audiences as those gathered at the International Dance and Technology Conference (IDAT) in Arizona this year.

Sophie Hanson, animated, Autumn 1999

A haunting, yearning quality to it that is quite beautiful...

The Cork Examiner, November 1999

Linking computers (mind) to dance (body) throws up interesting questions about our values on both... the links in the physicality of the writing and dance is yet another interesting strand of half/angel's work.

Irish Times, November 1999

The delicacy of Jools Gilson-Ellis's performance in The Secret Project...suggested that motion sensing technology could create effects as subtle as live dance.

The New York Times, March 1999

Up to now, dance has lost out...Although I attended just one performance I can still sense moments in the performance. Not just remember, but actually sense. This is probably because the audience are given the space to feel...

**Michael Seaver, February 2000
(writing for The Project, Dublin)**