

Reviews

THE IRISH TIMES, Thursday, June 28, 2001

Safe Harbour
Firkin Crane

THE five-hour long series of street-based entertainments which culminated in a dance production at the Institute for Choreography and Dance at the Firkin Crane on Saturday made *Safe Harbour* one of the most obvious community-bonding elements in Cork's Midsummer Festival. It was devised as a celebration of the Shandon area by choreographer Martha Bowers and features American dancers Olase Freeman and Shannon Hummel, with a score written and performed by Musical Director Tiye Giraud and a small but efficient group of musicians. The work offered an unusual fusion of procession, pageant and performance.

The linking of local groups – such as the Butter Exchange Band, Boomerang Theatre Company, the Cork City Ramblers, Meitheal Mara Curragh club and school and karate clubs, with the wider dimensions of the World Children's Choir and the American participants – provided a diverting multi-cultural atmosphere. Even the blessings were carefully selected for the event, with the administrator of the North Cathedral invoking the community spirit of Shandon, the Dean of St Fin Barre's Cathedral quoting the playful Leviathan of the psalms, and Pastor Kola Oladejo of London getting the crowd to sing an African chant. Not only were tents and stalls laid out, but the Butter Museum and St Anne's Shandon were open all day – although, disappointingly, the cafe in the Shandon Centre was closed.

The on-street affirmation of this unique neighbourhood ended with the progress around the squares and streets of a 25-foot replica of the golden fish on Shandon steeple's weather-vane, followed by a retinue of fishing-nets, shoals, river cloths and mermaids. In the auditorium, the more formal dance disciplines were used as a

narrative of origin, emigration and establishment, with the cast of dancers and musicians bringing this collaboration between Bowers, ICD and Michael O'Byrne to a very committed realisation.

Mary Leland