

Dance

Parental guidance

What happens when a son asks his mum to come and dance on tour with him?

Lyndsey Winship discovers that the family that dances together stays together

In a compact redbrick semi in Manchester, Susan Pritchard is in her pink fluffy slippers, handing out chocolate digestives and pineapple juice. There's reggae on the stereo, rain drizzling outside, son Darren in the kitchen—an ordinary scene, except that also crammed into the living room are a journalist, a photographer, a press officer, a choreographer, a producer and a pair of theatre directors, all nibbling on the choccy biccies.

We're here because Susan is dance theatre's latest star. An unlikely one, perhaps, seeing as she usually works as a cleaner. But it was all her son Darren's idea.

"I was away in Tenerife and Darren phoned me and asked me, 'Do you fancy doing a show with me?' I was getting ready to go out partying at the time; I just said, 'Yeah'. But he rang me again and said, 'No, I'm serious. I want to do a show with you.' I asked what about. He said, 'Our life'. I went, 'Oh my God, that'll bring some skeletons out of the closet.'"

Darren is a dancer and choreographer who runs his own group, Company Fierce. Susan, on the other hand, has never done any performing in her life. Not even karaoke. So what was it like getting into the process? 'Very traumatic!' she laughs. 'It was daunting going from leaning to doing this; I was out of my comfort zone. The whole thing of having to learn lines—I thought: I'm never going to do it.' But she has, with the gentle guidance of directors Richard Gregory and Renny O'Shea from Quarantine, plus choreographer Jane Mason.

The living room where we're all sitting now is where the show begins, a room crammed with photos, mementos and trinkets, with a story behind each one. Susan and Darren tell those stories, chronicling the banal quirks of the everyday and the traumatic turns life can take—like the death of Darren's father—along with comical tales of



Mum-dance Practising a waltz: At home with the Pritchards (left)



'A lot of them were non-theatre-goers so they felt they had the right to tell me off'

Susan's hard partying days with 'dishy seamen' on the Salford docks. There's some dancing too, and at the end, a party where the audience can join in the chat.

Darren was clear from the beginning that the show would never be patronising. It's not "an insight into the

working-class lives of Susan and Darren", he says. 'It's a conversation you could have with anybody.

Wherever you go there'll always be something that connects with the audience's lives. You've got more in common with people than you think.'

They do admit, however, that the best show, and definitely the most interactive, was the night all their neighbours came. 'A lot of them were non-theatre-goers so they just felt like they had the right to tell me off,' says Darren. 'They were shouting out at him: "Don't contradict your mum, young man,"' laughs Susan.

While some of us have difficulty spending any length of time with our families, Darren and Susan are such close friends it sounds like the whole thing's been a hoot. 'It was weird at the beginning,' admits Darren, 'because I felt a heavy weight of responsibility. I thought: What have I got my mum into? But then it all turned around. Now she's more on it than me. I remember we were in Newcastle and I had the flu. I almost collapsed under the lights and we almost cancelled the show, but my mum totally rose to the occasion and carried the show. I've worked with professionals who don't even do that.'

Susan's got a taste for performing now. 'I fancy being in "Coronation Street",' she muses. 'You're more "Shameless", I reckon,' retorts Darren, to a peal of laughter from his mum. 'Susan & Darren', *Lilian Baylis Studio*, Tue May 11-May 15. See listings.

timeout.com/dance

Shows

How to use the listings

Daily listings are organised alphabetically. Dance classes, news and dance-related events are found under Noticeboard.

* Denotes an event we particularly recommend.

FREE Means that admission is free.

► Before a day, denotes a closing date.

How to be listed

Listings must arrive in writing by Tuesday, eight days before publication. Please include admission prices, times, nearest train/bus and a contact phone number. Send listings by post or email: dance@timeout.com. Listings are free, but due to limited space inclusion is not guaranteed.

Thursday 6

CRICUSFEST: Circolumbia
Roundhouse, Chalk Farm Rd, NW1 8EH. 0844 482 8008. Chalk Farm, 7.30pm. £10-£15. roundhouse.org.uk ► May 9: Circolumbia are a company of energetic young Colombian circus artists, many drawn from deprived backgrounds and trained at the country's national circus school, Circo Para Todos (Circus for All). This show is a double bill with the Roundhouse Circus Company, a new collective of acrobats, actors, dancers and circus artists, aged 16-25.

Les Ballets C de la B / Lisi Estaras
Lilian Baylis Studio, Sadler's Wells, Rosebery Avenue, EC1R 4TN. 0844 412 4300. Angel, 8pm; £15. sadlerswells.com ► May 7: Argentinian dancer Lisi Estaras has worked with Belgian company Les Ballets C de la B for 12 years, and now she's making her own work in a similar vein.

'Primer' is a piece about childhood.
5 DAYS IN MAY: A Meeting Place
Queen Elizabeth Hall, South Bank, SE1 8XX. 0844 847 9910. Waterloo, 7.30pm; £12-£20. southbankcentre.co.uk

A performance/discussion asking eight international artists about their current dance practice. From the UK, Lea Anderson, Siobhan Davies, Sine Nilsen and Gauri Sharma Tripathi will be taking part, with Thomas Lehman (Germany), Boris Charmatz (France) and Eszter Salamon (Hungary).

Pierre Rigal: Micro Gate Theatre, 11 Penbridge Rd, W11 3HQ, 020 7229 0706. Notting Hill Gate, 7.30pm Mon-Sat; £16; £11 concs. gatetheatre.co.uk. Pierre Rigal

Critics' choice

Compagnie Marie Chouinard
Sadler's Wells, Fri-Sat
Musings on the body from one of Canada's top dance exports.

5 Days in May
Southbank Centre, to Sat
Intriguing international performance-makers, including Rachid Ouramdane.

Susan & Darren
Lilian Baylis Studio, from Tue
A sweetly affecting piece of theatre involving stories, dancing and a party.

Royal Ballet: Triple Bill
Royal Opera House, to May 16
A solid bill of modern ballet works, including a new one from Liam Scarlett.

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