

Cheryl Flaharty

Artistic Director, IONA Contemporary Dance Theatre

“Dancer/choreographer Cheryl Flaharty has evolved a hybrid style that resonates with the tension between her Western-trained body and her Eastern-trained mind. Her works are as provocatively original a fusion of Western exhibitionism and Eastern introversion as one can possibly imagine”

Sheryl Dare,
Honolulu Advertiser



Cheryl Flaharty is a visionary artist whose work seeks to unveil the mystery of the human spirit. Raised in Hawaii, she received a B.A. in Dance from the University of Hawaii and performed as a principle dancer with Betty Jones' and Fritz Ludin's Dances We Dance Company. Flaharty is the recipient of six Hawai'i State Dance Council choreographic awards, the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts' Individual Artists Fellowship, and the Baciu Award for cutting edge work.

Flaharty's choreographic vision has been equally influenced by her work with Japanese butoh master Poppo Shiraishi, with whom she performed as a principle dancer in New York from 1985-1990, in his Go Go Boys company. Under the tutelage of Shiraishi, Flaharty was profoundly affected by the experimental movement language of butoh. The deeply emotional and physically subtle characteristics of butoh resonated with Flaharty's innate sense of dance as an expression of all that transcends the body.

From its very inception in 1990, Flaharty's IONA Contemporary Dance Theatre began to develop a visual vocabulary all its own. Departing from the somber underpinnings of classic butoh, Flaharty sought to elevate the awareness of audiences to beauty, reverence, and uplifting components of existence. Flaharty's affinity for story, allegory, psychology and world mythology shaped IONA's work as narrative yet non-literal, ancient in content but contemporary in interpretation, and ultimately poetic.