

VOICE PHOTOS/LYNSAY BARTOS

CHRIS RICH PACKS A POWERFUL PUNCH LINE

WOMEN'S SOLO
PERFORMANCE FEST
SEPT. 11-14

By COURTNEY DUNN
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The Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble proudly hosted the Second Annual Women's Solo Performance Festival this past weekend (Sept. 11-14) at the Alvina Krause Theatre in downtown Bloomsburg. Four women delivered four unique performances over three days, ranging in distinction from musical to poetic as part of BTE's 37th season. Performers included Ann Bonner, Vivian Nesbitt, Chris Rich, and Kali Quinn.

Saturday evening's performance featured Chris Rich, an award-winning and internationally acclaimed comedian,

writer, and speaker. She has been featured on numerous television shows including Comedy Central, MTV, and Lifetime Networks. She has also opened for popular comedians such as Roseanne and Jerry Seinfeld.

Rich's lively and good-humored personality was apparent from the very moment she stepped onto the stage. Born into an Irish family rich with stories, it was obvious that comedy was an inherent language for this naturally-talented red-head.

Her act, performed for the first time, centered on Hope

Street, a narrow, suburban street lined with Irish households and the backdrop for many of Rich's family stories. Focusing her act around the past experiences of her grandfather and distant relatives, the audience watched as each new character was brought to life in the spotlight of the Alvina Krause Theatre.

The audience watched as Rich's grandfather and his best buddies ran to New York City for a moment of blissful freedom, laughed when Eddie went on yet another three-day adventure, and felt the serenity of the dance floor when

her grandparents first joined hands.

With each of these tales, a different character appeared on stage, breathing life and spirit into the talented Rich. Although a comedic act, each story offered a unique combination of emotions, ranging from humor that left Rich doubled over to the most beautiful moments of sadness that left both comedian and audience teary-eyed. The clarity of each character, and each moment, was a testament to the theatrical skills of Rich, and kept her audience alert and wanting more.

For Rich, these family members remain a source of unfaltering respect. Amongst their daily struggles and responsibilities, they continuously managed to muster a smile and crack a joke. They were able to raise her with the notion that life is good.

Rich ended the performance with a single message: that life has changed. No longer do we live in close proximity to our surroundings and our neighbors. No longer do we rely on a small living room and family members to keep us entertained. And no longer do we come into direct

contact with daily life the way our relatives did in a developing America. And for that, we envy them.

As the applause came to momentary end and Rich began answering audience questions, I found myself looking down at an empty lap. Long before that moment, I had tucked my notepad into my bag, an unnecessary accessory to this performance. Notes weren't needed for a powerful life lesson, or should I say punch line, like the one delivered by the genuinely comedic, Chris Rich.