

## GLASGOW FESTIVAL OF NEW IRISH THEATRE

# Playing a part to strengthen ties

A CENTRAL reality of modern Scotland is the cultural distinctiveness of Glasgow in comparison to the rest of the country.

Outside of Glasgow and its Strathclyde satellites there is a pleasant land of ravishing views and twee toons.

Glasgow, forever miles better than anaemic Aberdeen and British Edinburgh, looks at the world in a cocky, quick-tempered way that can only be explained by plotting the surnames in the Glasgow phone book — the city is one big Irish centre!

Some even claim that Glasgow is as much an Irish as a Scottish city. That to one side, few would be foolish enough to attempt to deny the Irish contribution to the city over the years.

## Augmented

Without doubt, the ties between Ireland and Glasgow will be healthily augmented by an ambitious and forward-looking Festival of New Irish Theatre, which opens this Wednesday, October 14.

Masterminded by the Tron Theatre, this groundbreaking festival can boast a clutch of British premieres and some of the best contemporary Irish theatre. Thirteen companies are participating — two from Scotland, with the rest from Ireland.

The Irish contingent are from the length and breadth of the country and come from a variety of artistic backgrounds. Four are from Dublin, three from Belfast and two from Galway. The Irish Post has been speaking to the people at the Tron Theatre in Glasgow who are behind this month-long celebration of Irish drama. Annie Houston Reddick, Marketing and PR Manager, explains: "It's the first time anything of this size has happened in Glasgow. We've had one or two day Irish theatre events before, but not four and a half weeks over six venues!"

## Wide audience

The festival will not only be housed in the Tron, but will stage productions in a Tennant's hall in Castlemilk — a huge post-war peripheral housing estate that took much of the displaced Gorbals Irish community after redevelopment — and in schools, a community arts centre and in the theatres of new towns East Kilbride and Cumbernauld, all in all reaching as wide an audience as possible.

The Glasgow Irish connections are evident in the production of Dixie by Sean McCarthy, directed by Mary Elizabeth Burke Kennedy with Terry Neason as Dixie.

Dixie met Cathal Fogarty through their mutual devotion to an ancient and hallowed Irish institution — Glasgow Celtic Football Club.

Set in east Co. Cork in the 1980s, Cathal struggles to run the family farm. Together they forge their own winning team and, through Cathal's honest hard work and Dixie's energy and acumen, they make a success of the Fogarty family farm. What happiness though, when this home-grown team are pitched against the big boys of the multi-national super league?

Gorbals-Irish Dixie drives the drama with a hilarious, anarchic sense of humour when she leads her clan into legal battle against a local chemical plant which

## PHIL MacGIOLLABHAIN dips into the mixed bag of Irish performances taking part in the Festival of New Irish Theatre in Glasgow.

pollutes their land, kills their livestock and threatens the unity of the family and community.

This sounds like an environmentalist's old firm game, and I'm sure Dixie and the Cork folk are all blood 'n' bandages for their cause — this one sounds a must!

The black humour of modern Belfast gets an airing in Justice

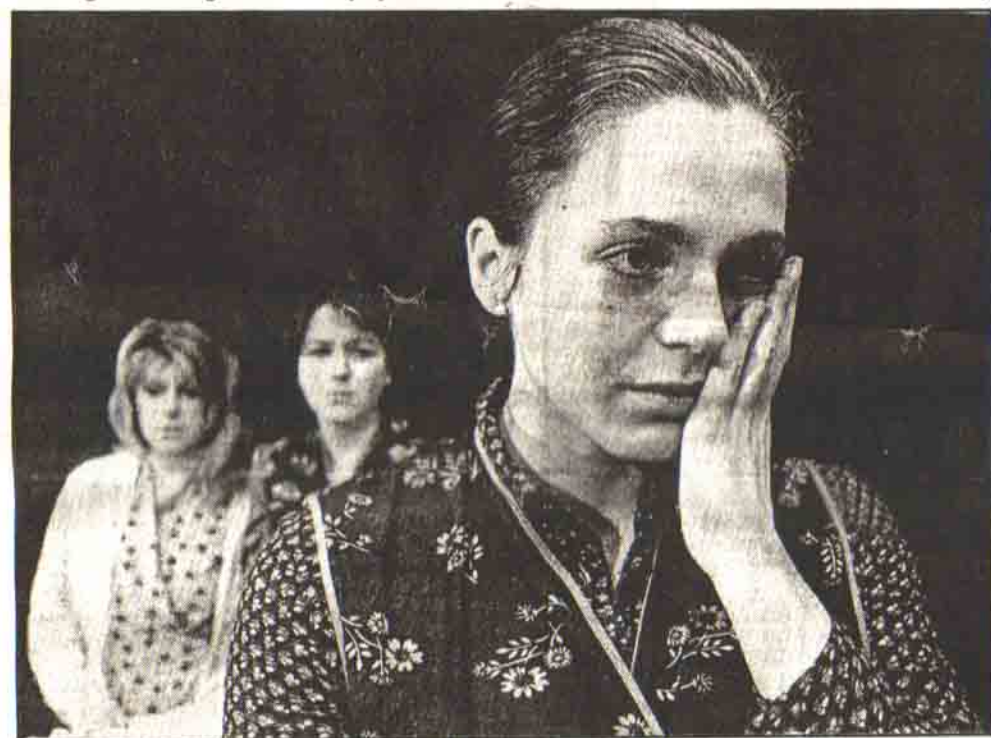
Premiered at EXPO 92 earlier this year in Seville, it is based on the eighth century Irish legend. It tells the story of Medb and Ailill, a story of jealousy, betrayal and honour. Despite being set 2000 years BC it tragically mirrors the modern Northern Irish cycle of atrocity and counter-atrocity. With 16 players and 6 musicians the

Valera's Ireland of comely maidens dancing in village greens and aloof, monastic scholars retreating to rocky redoubts from the sins of the flesh in The Emergency Session.

A one-man show, it is written and performed by Arthur Riordan bringing his characterisation of Dev from his RTE Nighthawks show to the live arena. Dev will call the nation together with a night of Hibernian hip-hop hits including Gung-Ho Gael A Go-go and Funky Fenian!

Articles 2 and 3 and the rest of the Constitution will never be the same again ...

Attempting to provide an over-view of this wonderfully



**SOCIALLY AWARE:** A scene from Patricia Burke Brogan's *Eclipsed* which addresses disturbing social issues in sixties Ireland. A critical success at this year's Edinburgh Fringe Festival, the production by Galway's Punchbag looks set to be a winner in Glasgow.

by Hugh Murphy, directed by Joe Devlin. Like Dixie, a British premiere for the festival, it was lauded by the Belfast Telegraph as "breathing the fresh air of originality".

It's an emotionally-charged play about a man falsely confined in Crumlin Road gaol and there will be a post-show discussion on Friday, October 30.

Still in the North and another British premiere. Moths, set in a Belfast graveyard, takes a lively look at the consequences of the war on six very different victims.

Based on the Celtic legend that when we die we turn into moths, the production is the result of a project which involved 20 unemployed young people from both traditions in the North. The Ulster News Letter described it as "an experience not easily forgotten."

By Martin Lynch, this production by Citywide Community Theatre Company, Belfast, can be seen at the Arches Theatre, Midland Street, Glasgow, on Friday, October 23 and Saturday 24.

Another allegory on the Northern agony is *Táin* staged by Macnas from Galway.

Tramway Theatre's unique setting should make this unmissable.

The social issues that affect the other Ireland are disturbingly addressed in *Eclipsed* by Patricia Burke Brogan.

Directed by David Quinn this offering from Punchbag of Galway is set in 1963 and charts the stories of unmarried mothers who were forced to work in convent

laundries under lock and key as punishment for their "sins". The nuns turn the institution from a supposed sanctuary into a virtual lunatic asylum. The play has already been staged in Scotland this year at the Edinburgh Festival, where it won a Scotsman

Fringe First Award.

In a city whose no mean image has staggered centre stage onto many a city council PR man's nightmare, Davy Mental looks at teenage alcohol abuse. The work of award-winning Northern poet and playwright Damian Gorman, it is staged by Relay Theatre (Belfast) with music by Nico Brown.

Rough Magic of Dublin serve up a Black Friday helping of ruthless satire of Eamon de

rich, mixed bag is a conference on Saturday, October 17. Entitled Arts and Nationhood III, it follows on from the success of two conferences held at the Tron in 1989 relating the culture of Scotland to that of Quebec and Lithuania.

## Exploring the role

This year's event will have a morning session by Theatre Island: Theatre In The City: Reinventing Identity. This session will explore the role of the theatre arts in the new lives of Belfast, Glasgow and Dublin. The afternoon session is a collaborative offering from the arts councils of Scotland, Ireland and Northern Ireland.

It's a well-worn cliché but if the above can't be described as a feast of live drama then I'd like to see the real thing.

The people at the Tron hope that not only will this festival provide a large amount of people with a rich snapshot of where contemporary Irish theatre is at the moment, but will also, by bringing so many artists from both sides of the water together, ensure that future collaboration and joint ventures may well be the result.

Personally, I can only see good coming from the re-forging of links in a city that owes much to Ireland for its role as the New York city of Scotland — bustling, blunt and looking forward and westward.

For daily information on the festival, call freephone 0800 526 216.

# BRIEFING

## Guide to the week's entertainment

### Television

**THE SOUTH BANK SHOW**  
Sunday 18, ITV, 10.35 p.m.  
Peter O'Toole is the subject for Melvyn Bragg this week. The legendary actor has just written the first volume of his autobiography. Loitering With Intent, which concentrates on his childhood, dominated by two figures, his father and Adolf Hitler.

**THE LATE LATE SHOW**  
Monday 19, Channel 4, 5.00 p.m.  
Always entertaining, Gay Byrne hosts Ireland's favourite chat show and public forum.

**SPORTSNIGHT**  
Wednesday 21, BBC1, 10.20 p.m.  
World Cup winners Australia take on Munster in their second tour game. Munster's finest hour came in 1978 when they were the only Irish side to beat the All Blacks.

### Radio

**ACROSS THE LINE**  
Sunday 18, BBC Radio 5, 10.10 p.m.  
Mike Edgar presents the usual mix of music, satire and politics live from Belfast.

**JOHN McGAHERN STORIES**  
Tuesday 20, BBC Radio 3, 9.05 p.m.  
Stephen Rea reads from the work of one of Ireland's finest contemporary writers. Tonight's story is Swallows, where a Dublin surveyor visits a police sergeant in remote Co. Leitrim — urbane sophistication encounters a complex humanity. On Wednesday 21 at 9.55, Rea reads A Slip Up, on Thursday Faith, Hope and Charity, and on Friday, Parachutes.

### Theatre

**EXILE**  
London's Bush Theatre continues its fine record of showcasing Irish and Irish-related plays with this prize-winning work by Glaswegian David Neville. Exile tells the story of three lives torn apart by an act of political violence in Northern Ireland. Neville has touched on the Troubles before. Two of his earlier works were adaptations of Joan Lingard's novels, The Twelfth Day of July and Across The Barricades. Exile runs until October 24, at 8.00 p.m. The box office is on 081-743 3388.

### PHILADELPHIA, HERE I COME!

Brian Friel is undoubtedly Ireland's leading contemporary playwright. Here we have his early classic dusted down with a cast including Eamon Kelly and Pauline Delaney. The play is on at the Wyndham's Theatre in London's West End. The box office is on 071-867 1116.

### SOMEONE WHO'LL WATCH OVER ME

Frank McGuinness' new play about three western hostages in Beirut, starring Stephen Rea as a captive Irish journalist, is on at the Vaudeville Theatre in London's West End. This powerful play explores how the captives retain their dignity and sanity, while much humour is produced by the



Saskia Reeves (above) stars alongside the ubiquitous Donal McCann, Claran Hinds and Patrick Malahide in **DECEMBER BRIDE** (Tuesday 20, Channel 4, 10.00 p.m.) a fine film set unusually in a closely-knit Presbyterian farming community on the Ards peninsula.

cultural differences of an Englishman, an Irishman and an American, even in such trying circumstances. The box-office there is on 071-836 9987.

### THREE SHOUTS FROM A HILL

Three Sean O'Casey one-act farces, ably directed by his daughter Shivaun and starring Gerard McSorley and Pauline Flanagan, are currently on tour in Britain. It plays London's Lilian Baylis Theatre, Sadlers Wells, Arlington Way, EC1, at 8.45 p.m. until Saturday, October 17, then Glasgow's Ramshorn Theatre from Monday 19 to Saturday 24 at 8.00 p.m. The London box-office is on 071-278 896 and the Glasgow box-office is on 041-552 3748.

### YOUR HOME IN THE WEST

Described as dark, powerful and bleakly funny, this prize-winning play by Rod Woodden looks at the lives of a family who have been "left behind by the consumer society bus". It stars Jim Corry from Belfast, who recently took the lead role in Channel 4's Bossa Nova Blues. The play runs at the Live Theatre, Broad Chare, Newcastle quayside from October 12 to 24. The box office is on 091-261 2694.

### Music

**THE FRANK AND WALTERS**  
Cork's answer to The Monkees release their debut album on the Setanta/Go! Discs label, Trains, Boats and Planes. It ranges from the fun energy of I'm A Believer to the atonal, adenoidal awfulness of This Is Not A Song. Frank Sinatra's son? Not! The band play Cardiff University union this Friday, October 16.

### GOATS DON'T SHAVE

Donegal dudes plus guests will be having a hoe-down this Saturday, October 17, at London's Town and Country Club. Tickets £8.50.

### SULTANS OF PING F.C.

Quirky Cork crusaders with methylated spirits in their madness visit the Cheltenham Shaftsbury Hall this Thursday 15 and then the following: Glamorgan University (16); Sheffield Leadmill (17); Nottingham City University (18); Oxford Venue (19); Birmingham University (20); and the Stoke Wheatseaf (21).



**LIMERICK, YOU'RE A LADY:** Dolores O'Riordan, vocalist with Limerick band The Cranberries, has a voice that is a joy to behold. You can behold it this Thursday, October 15, when the band (pictured above) appear at the London Marquee, and at the following venues: Worcester Arts Centre (16); Exeter Cavern (17); Glasgow Apollo (19); Aberdeen Lemon Tree (20); Edinburgh Venue (21). Their new single, Dreams, is out now.