



 LANDMARK PRODUCTIONS

BLACKBIRD

BY DAVID HARROWER



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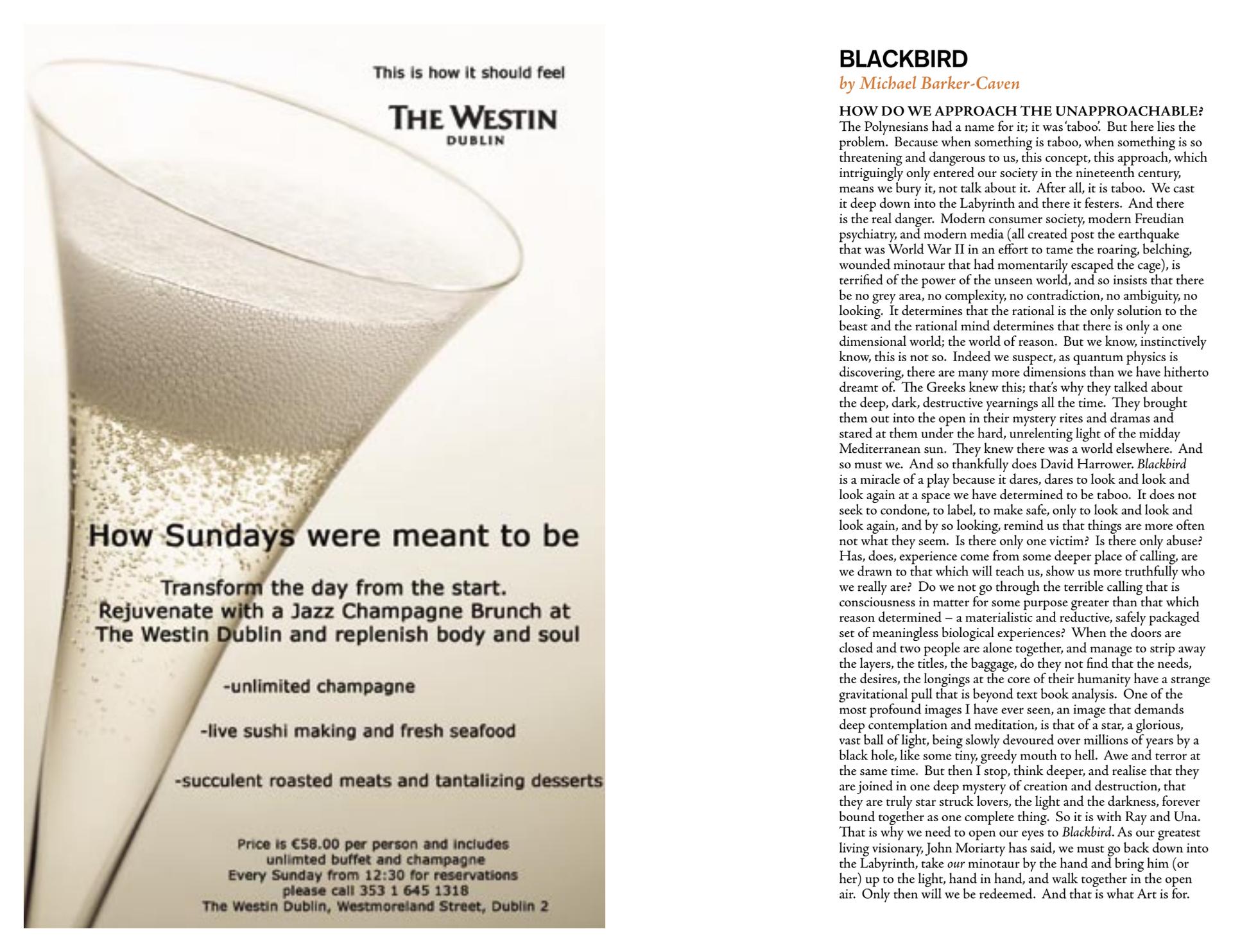
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BLACKBIRD

by Michael Barker-Caven

HOW DO WE APPROACH THE UNAPPROACHABLE?

The Polynesians had a name for it; it was 'taboo'. But here lies the problem. Because when something is taboo, when something is so threatening and dangerous to us, this concept, this approach, which intriguingly only entered our society in the nineteenth century, means we bury it, not talk about it. After all, it is taboo. We cast it deep down into the Labyrinth and there it festers. And there is the real danger. Modern consumer society, modern Freudian psychiatry, and modern media (all created post the earthquake that was World War II in an effort to tame the roaring, belching, wounded minotaur that had momentarily escaped the cage), is terrified of the power of the unseen world, and so insists that there be no grey area, no complexity, no contradiction, no ambiguity, no looking. It determines that the rational is the only solution to the beast and the rational mind determines that there is only one dimensional world; the world of reason. But we know, instinctively know, this is not so. Indeed we suspect, as quantum physics is discovering, there are many more dimensions than we have hitherto dreamt of. The Greeks knew this; that's why they talked about the deep, dark, destructive yearnings all the time. They brought them out into the open in their mystery rites and dramas and stared at them under the hard, unrelenting light of the midday Mediterranean sun. They knew there was a world elsewhere. And so must we. And so thankfully does David Harrower. *Blackbird* is a miracle of a play because it dares, dares to look and look and look again at a space we have determined to be taboo. It does not seek to condone, to label, to make safe, only to look and look and look again, and by so looking, remind us that things are more often not what they seem. Is there only one victim? Is there only abuse? Has, does, experience come from some deeper place of calling, are we drawn to that which will teach us, show us more truthfully who we really are? Do we not go through the terrible calling that is consciousness in matter for some purpose greater than that which reason determined – a materialistic and reductive, safely packaged set of meaningless biological experiences? When the doors are closed and two people are alone together, and manage to strip away the layers, the titles, the baggage, do they not find that the needs, the desires, the longings at the core of their humanity have a strange gravitational pull that is beyond text book analysis. One of the most profound images I have ever seen, an image that demands deep contemplation and meditation, is that of a star, a glorious, vast ball of light, being slowly devoured over millions of years by a black hole, like some tiny, greedy mouth to hell. Awe and terror at the same time. But then I stop, think deeper, and realise that they are joined in one deep mystery of creation and destruction, that they are truly star struck lovers, the light and the darkness, forever bound together as one complete thing. So it is with Ray and Una. That is why we need to open our eyes to *Blackbird*. As our greatest living visionary, John Moriarty has said, we must go back down into the Labyrinth, take *our* minotaur by the hand and bring him (or her) up to the light, hand in hand, and walk together in the open air. Only then will we be redeemed. And that is what Art is for.

BLACKBIRD

by Marie Murray, Clinical Psychologist, Author, Irish Times Columnist

IDENTITY IS AN ONGOING PROJECT AS ONE MOVES THROUGH LIFE.

It is shaped from childhood by our self-definitions, which change with time, by the perception that other people have of us and convey to us and by life circumstances and events. Certain life events are enabling and empowering, they enhance self-esteem and increase self-worth. Others have the opposite effect. When what happens to someone is unexpected, when it is outside the norm, dramatic or traumatic, then the image of self is altered radically. Sexual abuse, in whatever form it takes, is one such experience.

Blackbird explores the issue of personal identity in the aftermath of sexual abuse in a particularly potent manner. It provides stark insight into what happens people, their lives, their families, their friends and their self-definitions when abuse occurs. It shows how the sexual abuse of children is rarely an isolated incident but an insidious sequence of destructive actions and just how dominant they remain in the lives of those involved for years afterwards. It shows how memory is distorted and identity thwarted by abuse and how people struggle to recreate an acceptable sense of self subsequent to it.

The new identity imposed on people who have been sexually used as children, by consigning them to the category of 'abused', ascribes to them all the complex, contradictory, societal ideas and discourses that attach themselves to that category. It dominates descriptions of them, as it becomes the primary way of defining them. It is the lens through which others view them and through which they see themselves. Former "identity" becomes swamped by this dominant descriptor. Relationships with family may alter. Prior self-esteem and self-worth are silenced and overpowered by what was done to them and which, unless confronted, can continue to abuse the abused to the core of their being and to be re-lived every single day.

But added to the initial violation, there is often a second abuse. The interrogations required when criminal proceedings are brought against perpetrators frequently expose victims to a construction of themselves as somehow guilty or complicit in the crime committed against them. The trauma of this may last for decades, particularly as an abused child grows into adulthood and begins to understand the dimensions of what occurred through adult eyes. But the desire to revisit what happened from the

power and perspective of adulthood, to confront perpetrators and to try to make sense of the past can mean yet more painful exposure. It is a quest that many people undertake.

This is, perhaps, what sends twenty-seven year old Una, in this startling play by David Harrower, to seek out the man who took emotional and sexual advantage of her innocence when she was twelve years old. Ray was forty then. He is fifty-five years old now and he has created a new persona, new name, job, address and identity for himself when Una finds him. In his eyes what occurred between them was "a mistake" for which he has served his prison time and now has "rights": the right not to revisit the past, his former victim or his former self, for he has somehow reconstructed himself in the intervening time as not an abuser, as "not one of them."

Both Ray and Una have read the literature, consulted the symptom checklists and learnt the "facts" of sexual abuse. In Ray's mind he has managed to convert Una's childhood crush on him into a seduction of him. "You don't remember yourself" he tells her, "you don't know what you were like."

Neither Ray nor Una when they re-encounter each other can accept the descriptions they offer to each other of their former selves. Not only are they left not knowing who or what they were fifteen years ago, but they are equally unsure of who they are today. Their encounter invites the audience into the darker enclaves of childhood sexual abuse: purgation by repetition, its denial and its aftermath: how people change and remain the same, how responsibility is projected and rejected, distorted and denied. But most of all it shows the facility with which people reconstruct themselves, re-imagine the past, re-invent themselves in the present and come to believe the versions of themselves that they invent.

Therein lies the dark tragedy revealed by this drama to the audience, not just about sexual abuse but about life. It shows that each and every one of us is condemned not to remember ourselves in the past, not to recognise ourselves in the present and not to know ourselves in the future. It shows how we are forced to rely on frail memories or the accounts of others for descriptions of our former selves and this power can be abused repetitively.

mmurray@irish-times.ie

ROUGH MAGIC



SCHILLER Don Carlos

IN A VERSION BY MIKE POULTON

DIRECTED BY LYNNE PARKER
DESIGNED BY PAUL O'MAHONY
COSTUMES BY EIMER NÍ MHAOLDOMHNAIGH
LIGHTING BY SINEAD WALLACE
MUSIC BY DENIS CLOHESSY
CAST: KATHY KIERA CLARKE + NICK DUNNING
PETER DALY + MATTHEW KEENAN + RORY
KEENAN + DARRAGH KELLY + SIMONE
KIRBY + PAT LAFFAN + GERARD JORDAN
FERGAL McELLHEARN + ELEANOR METHVEN
RORY NOLAN

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RUPERT MURRAY

3rd February 1951 – 17th August 2006

Rupert Murray lit all of Landmark's shows until his death in August of last year. In particular, he collaborated with Michael Barker-Caven and Joe Vaněk on the company's two previous shows at Project Upstairs – David Hare's *Skylight* and Edward Albee's *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?*

He was an inspirational colleague, and a dear friend.

This production is dedicated to him.

DAVID HARROWER



David was born and brought up in Edinburgh; he now lives and writes in Glasgow.

Knives In Hens (Traverse Theatre 1995) was his first professional production: a brilliant theatrical debut that proved a critical and popular success, the production transferring to the Bush Theatre later the same year. *Knives In Hens* was revived at the Traverse in 1997 and received its German premiere at Berlin's Deutsches Theater, directed by Thomas Ostermeier. Running for three years, it won Theater Heute Best Foreign Play (Critics Award) 1997. It has been translated for performance in more than twenty countries across the world including France, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Colombia, Australia and America.

Other work includes an adaptation of John Wyndham's *The Chrysalids* (RNT / BT Connections) and a play for BBC Radio 4, 54% *Acrylic*, which aired in Spring 1998 and was nominated for a Sony Radio Award.

David's second original stage play *Kill The Old Torture Their Young* was performed in August 1998 at The Traverse Theatre Edinburgh, again receiving great critical acclaim. For this play he was awarded the Meyer Whitworth Prize 1999.

In 2001, his adaptations of Pirandello's *Six Characters In Search Of An Author* and Büchner's *Woyzeck* were produced at the Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh and the Young Vic respectively and his new original play *Presence* was produced by the Royal Court Theatre, London.

His translation of Chekhov's *Ivanov* opened at the National Theatre in September 2002, directed by Katie Mitchell. His play *Dark Earth* was presented by the Traverse Theatre at Edinburgh Festival 2003. David's version of Horváth's *Tales From The Vienna Woods* opened at the Olivier Theatre, Royal National Theatre London in autumn 2003, directed by Richard Jones.

His widely acclaimed play *Blackbird* was commissioned by the Edinburgh International Festival and premiered at the King's Theatre, Edinburgh in August 2005, directed by Peter Stein. The production then transferred to the Albery Theatre, London in February 2006. *Blackbird* was on the final shortlist for the Saltire Society Scottish Book of the Year Award and won Best Play in the Scottish Theatre Critics Awards. It is currently nominated for Best Play in the 2007 Olivier Awards. It has been performed in Germany, Austria and Scandinavia, with its New York premiere opening in Spring 2007.

His adaptation of Schiller's *Mary Stuart* for the National Theatre of Scotland opened at the Citizens' Theatre, Glasgow in October 2006.

David is currently working on screen and tv projects as well as being under commission to the Royal Court, the Royal National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company.

MICHAEL BARKER-CAVEN DIRECTOR



Together with the world premiere of *Dandelions* by Fiona Looney at the Olympia Theatre in 2005 and its successful revival in 2006, Michael Barker-Caven's previous work for Landmark includes the acclaimed Irish premieres of *Skylight* by David Hare and *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?* by Edward Albee, both at the Project Arts Centre, as well as *The Secret Garden* by Neil Duffield, in a co-production with The Helix Theatre.

Credits at the Gate Theatre, where Michael was Head of Creative Development from 2002-2003, include *Thérèse Raquin* by Emile Zola, *The Shape of Things* by Neil LaBute (nominated Best Director 2002 Irish Times Theatre Awards), *Old Times* by Harold Pinter, *Play* by Samuel Beckett (as part of the centenary celebrations in 2006) and, most recently *Anna Karenina* by Helen Edmundson.

For The Theatreworks Company, for whom Michael was Artistic Director between 1995 and 2004, credits include *Amadeus* by Peter Shaffer; the adaptation and direction of *Tales From Ovid* by Ted Hughes (nominated Special Judges Award 2002 Irish Times Theatre Awards); the Irish premiere of *Mutabilitie* by Frank McGuinness; *The Fetishist* by Michel Tournier; and *Macbeth* (in association with Second Age); *Richard III* (nominated Best Director 2001 Irish Theatre Awards); *Troilus and Cressida* and *Venus and Adonis*, all by William Shakespeare.

For Wexford Festival Opera, he directed *Transformations* (music by Conrad Susa, libretto after the poems of Anne Sexton), which received three nominations at the 2006 Irish Times Theatre Awards, including Best Production.



JOE VANĚK DESIGNER

SINÉAD MCKENNA LIGHTING DESIGNER

Blackbird marks the fourth production for Landmark which Joe has designed, beginning with David Hare's *Skylight* at the Project Arts Centre in January 2004. This was followed by Edward Albee's *The Goat*, again at the Project, and by Fiona Looney's *Dandelions* at the Olympia in 2005.

He is currently Design Associate for the Wexford Festival Opera and in 2006 was responsible for redesigning the auditorium and public spaces of the Dún Mhuire Theatre for the autumn season. He also designed *Transformations* by Conrad Susa, based on the poems by Anne Sexton.

With the Opera Festival moving to Johnstown Castle in 2007, Joe is creating a 700-seat temporary theatre in the grounds, annexed to the castle itself. He will also be designing Antonin Dvorak's *Rusalka*, to be directed by Lee Blakeley.

In 2005 he designed Tom MacIntyre's *What Happened Bridgie Cleary* at the Peacock, which received the Irish Times Theatre Award for Best Play and Best Actress (Catherine Walker). He also received the Irish Times Best Set Design nomination for *The Goat* in 2006 and this year he is nominated in the Best Costume Design category for *Transformations*.

Amongst a considerable number of productions designed for both the Abbey and the Gate, he is best-known for his Tony-nominated designs for *Dancing at Lughnasa*.

Blackbird is Sinéad's first production with Landmark Productions. For Rough Magic she has designed *Dream of Autumn* and *Improbable Frequency* (Dublin Theatre Festival and Abbey Theatre Dublin, and at the Edinburgh Festival). She designed *God's Grace*, *Adrenalin* and *Ladies and Gents* for Semper Fi, for which she won the Irish Theatre Award for Best Lighting Design. Other recent theatre designs include *Howie The Rookie* and *Finders Keepers* (Peacock Theatre); *Othello* and *How Many Miles to Babylon* (Second Age); *Wunderkind* (Callipo); *Henceforward* (Derby Playhouse); *How High is Up* (Team Theatre/The Ark); *The Gist of It* (Fishamble); *Shooting Gallery* (Bedrock); *The Snow Queen* and *Merry Christmas Betty Ford* (Lyric Theatre); *No Messin' With The Monkeys* and *Rudolf The Red* (The Ark); *Boston Marriage* (b'spoke); *Hard to Believe* and *Hansel and Gretel* (Storytellers); *The Woman who Walked into Doors* (Upbeat Productions) and *Diarmaid and Grainne* (Passion Machine). For Gúna Nua she designed *Skindeep*, *Scenes from a Watercooler*, *The Real Thing* and *Dinner with Friends*. For The Performance Corporation she has designed *Candide* and *The Butterfly Ranch*. She was associate designer for the Beckett Festival (*Play*, *Catastrophe*, *Godot*, *Footfalls* and *Come and Go*) at the Gate Theatre and the Barbican.

Dance and opera designs include *Swept* (Coiscéim Dance Theatre); *As a Matter of Fact* (Dance Theatre of Ireland) and *La Bohème* (Co-Opera). She also recently designed the lighting for Des Bishop's *Fitting In Tour* and *Ha Ha Yum* for Maeve Higgins.



LANDMARK PRODUCTIONS

presents the Irish premiere of

BLACKBIRD

BY DAVID HARROWER

CAST

Una Catherine Walker

Ray Stephen Brennan

with
Yasmine Missaoui / Mollie Molumby

Blackbird was first commissioned and produced by the Edinburgh International Festival at the King's Theatre, Edinburgh in August 2005, and was subsequently produced at the Albery Theatre in the West End by Michael Edwards and Carole Winter for MJE Productions Ltd.

Director Michael Barker-Caven

Designer Joe Vaněk

Lighting Designer Sinéad McKenna

Assistant Director Edwina Casey

Dialect Coach Cathal Quinn

Sound Effects Vincent Doherty

Fight Director Paul Burke

Production Manager Eamonn Fox

Stage Director Stephanie Ryan

ASM Elaine Walsh

Set Construction TPS

Hair The Natural Cut

Producer Anne Clarke

Associate Producer Carina McGrail

Publicity Kathy Scott

Marketing Dairne O'Sullivan / Ross Ó Corráin

Graphic Design Gareth Jones

Photographer Patrick Redmond

Time: Now

Setting: An industrial estate, England.

The performance runs for ninety minutes without an interval.



**STEPHEN
BRENNAN**
(RAY)

Stephen began his career in radio, aged eight, before joining the Noel Pearson musicals *Joseph* and *Jesus Christ Superstar* in the early seventies. He first worked at the Project Arts Centre as principal dancer in a modern ballet, *Door to Door to Door*, in the old South King Street premises. These were the days when a young lad could try his hand at all aspects of the work, as Stephen did, in lighting, design, production, acting, singing and dancing.

He found his metier in memorable Project classics such as *Lunch Brecht* and *Archie and Mehitabel* with Agnes Bernelle, *Romulus the Great* and *Behind the Green Curtains*, before being discovered by Tomás MacAnna. He then spent eight years at the Abbey Theatre, playing over sixty leading and supporting roles including the title role in *Hamlet*. Having spent a year at the Royal National Theatre of Great Britain, Stephen spent a further four years in London before returning to Ireland in 1988. Since then he has had a strong association with the Gate Theatre, appearing in a number of roles such as Serge in *Art*, Mr Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr Rochester in *Jane Eyre*, Henry Higgins in *Pygmalion*, Lucky in the Gate's acclaimed *Waiting for Godot*, and title roles in *Tartuffe* and *Cyrano de Bergerac*. His most recent appearance at the Project was the title role in *The Life of Galileo* (Rough Magic) in 2005.

Catherine trained at the Gaiety School of Acting, Dublin. Her theatre credits include *What Happened Bridgie Cleary* at the Peacock Theatre, for which she won The Irish Times Best Actress Award. Catherine also appeared in *Play* in the Beckett Centenary Festival at the Gate and Barbican theatres.

Her work for the Royal Shakespeare Company includes *Henry V*, *Richard II*, *A Month in the Country* and *Troilus and Cressida*. Other theatre credits include *Twelfth Night* (English Touring Theatre), *John Bull's Other Island* and *Sive* (Tricycle Theatre), *Wild Orchids* (Chichester Festival Theatre), *Stairs to the Roof* (Minerva Theatre, Chichester), *Blackwater Angel* (Finborough Theatre), *King Lear* (Second Age) and *Diary of a New York Lady* (Samuel Beckett Centre).

Catherine's television credits include *Northanger Abbey* (ITV), *Waking the Dead* (BBC), *Animals* (Channel 4), *Perfect Day* (Channel 5) and *Holby City* (BBC).

Her film credits include *Losing Her*, *Conspiracy of Silence*, *Passenger on Board*, *Sweeney Todd* and *The Favorite*.



**CATHERINE
WALKER**
(UNA)

EDWINA CASEY ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Edwina is delighted to be working with Landmark Productions for the first time.

She trained for seven terms with the Gaiety School of Acting Youth Theatre Company, spending two consecutive terms as the company's representative. While completing a degree in English and Classics at UCD, she was an active member of the college's dramatic society, Dramsoc. Her directorial debut with the society was *Krapp's Last Tape* by Samuel Beckett. The production was an unprecedented success and was selected to represent the society at the Irish Student Drama Association Festival. It was nominated for Best Actor and Best Overall Production winning Best Sound. Edwina has also directed an original piece *Character*, which she wrote (nominated Best Play at UCD Dramsoc's Original Writer's Festival), as well as August Strindberg's *Miss Julie* (a version by Frank McGuinness). She most recently directed *The Lonesome West* by Martin McDonagh with the production company she co-founded, Further-On Productions. Previous assistant directing work includes *Festen* and Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, both of which were produced by the Gate Theatre.

YASMINE MISSAOUI (GIRL)

Yasmine was born in 1993 and lives in Drumcondra. She has studied drama with the National Performing Arts School since she was seven and has performed in three of their school productions, *Amy's Angel*, *The Dreamcatcher* and *The Power of 3* in the Olympia Theatre. Yasmine has successfully completed her Irish Board of Speech and Drama exams. She has been a student of the Billie Barry Stage School since she was five, has trained in a variety of dance styles and is a member of the Billie Barry Choir. She has performed in three of their school productions in the Gaiety Theatre – *The Millennium Beat*, *All I Wanna do is Dance* and *Rhythm in our Shoes*. She also performed in three pantomimes at the Gaiety Theatre – *Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella* and *Jack and the Beanstalk*. She has taken part in Christmas festival shows in the Concert Hall and the Point Depot and recently performed in *The Young Voices* Christmas show in the Royal Albert Hall in London. She is delighted to be given the opportunity to join the cast of *Blackbird*.

MOLLIE MOLUMBY (GIRL)

Mollie was born in New York in 1993. She moved to Ireland with her family when she was three months old. Mollie started modelling as a young child and featured in TV commercials, print advertisements and catalogues. She currently models for Morgan, the Agency. She starred as Sarah in the short film *Letting Go* (director Conor Murphy), which was entered in the Galway Film Fleadh, Kerry Film Festival and the Children's Film Festival of St Livrade, France. Mollie has been an acting, dancing and singing student at the Independent Theatre Workshop since 2001. She won Best Actress in her category in the ITW short play competition in 2005. She participated in the ITW productions of *Grease* and *Once Upon a Time*. She played the part of one of the King's children in the 2003 Festival production of *The King and I* in the National Concert Hall. When Mollie is not performing she enjoys basketball, swimming and movies.

EAMONN FOX PRODUCTION MANAGER

Eamonn is a native of Galway. He has spent his years since college plying his trade in theatre, arts and television as an escape from reality. He has been Production Manager on *The China/Ireland Cultural Exchange* in China and Ireland (2004); *St. Patrick's Festival* (2002 – 2006); *The Galway Arts Festival* (1999-2004); *Festival Village* for the 2003 Special Olympics World Games and the *Dublin Theatre Festival* (2001-2002). He has worked extensively with *Druid Theatre Company*, most recently on *DruidSynge* in Galway, Dublin, Edinburgh, Inis Meain, Minneapolis and New York. He is travelling to Tokyo with *The Playboy of the Western World* in March 2007. Eamonn has also worked as a lighting designer in television and theatre. He is delighted to be working with Landmark Productions again on *Blackbird*, having previously production managed *The Goat* and *Dandelions* for the company.

STEPHANIE RYAN STAGE DIRECTOR

Stephanie has worked in theatre for thirteen years and has been involved with numerous companies and productions in that time. Beginning with *Passion Machine Theatre Company* many years ago, Steph then worked with a variety of companies including *Barabbas*, *Rough Magic*, *Second Age*, *Opera Ireland*, *Opera Theatre Company*, *Arts Northern Ireland* and the *Abbey Theatre*. Having worked on *Dandelions* in the Olympia Theatre with Landmark Productions in 2005, she is delighted to be involved in this production of *Blackbird*.

ELAINE WALSH ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Elaine has worked extensively in theatre Ireland since completing her training at *Coláiste Stiofáin Naofa* and *LAMDA*. Her previous work with Landmark Productions includes *Dandelions* at the Olympia Theatre and *Cork Opera House*. Her other theatre credits include *The White Lady* (*Meridian Theatre Company*); *Babes in the Wood* (*Cork Opera House*); *Penelope* and *La Vestale* (*Wexford Festival Opera*); *The Coronation of Poppea* (*Opera Theatre Company*); *The Magic Flute* (*Castleward Opera Festival*); *La Bohème* and *Fidelio* (*Opera Theatre Company*); *The Pied Piper* (*Cork Opera House*); *Croon* and *The Exit Wound* (*Meridian Theatre Company*); *Sunset Boulevard* (*BBC*); *Transformations* (*Wexford Festival Opera*) and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, *Romeo & Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Aladdin*, all at the *Cork Opera House*.

THANK YOU

This production would not have been possible without the goodwill and practical support of many people and organisations, including the following :

Abbey Theatre, Colin Baird, Shane Boyd, Maura Carty, Yvonne Donohue, Susan FitzGerald, Jack Gilligan, Paul Haycock Office Supplies, Ann Kavanagh, Ross Keane, Mel Kenyon, Sarah King, Mairtin Lane, Kim Madill, Ian Melady, Stephen Molloy, Niall Mulcahy, Cian O'Brien, Gillian Oman, Claire O'Neill, Pembroke Vending Machines Santry, Pestguard, Trevor Price, Sarah Quinlivan, RC Office Furniture, Donal Shiels, Sarah-Jane Shiels, Jakub Sobczak, Theatre Forum and Jonathan White as well as Willie White, Niamh O'Donnell, David Quinlan, Siobhan Shortt, Carmel Mackey and all the staff of Project.

This production is presented with the kind permission of Michael Edwards and Carole Winter for MJE Productions Ltd.

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