

Lecture Notes

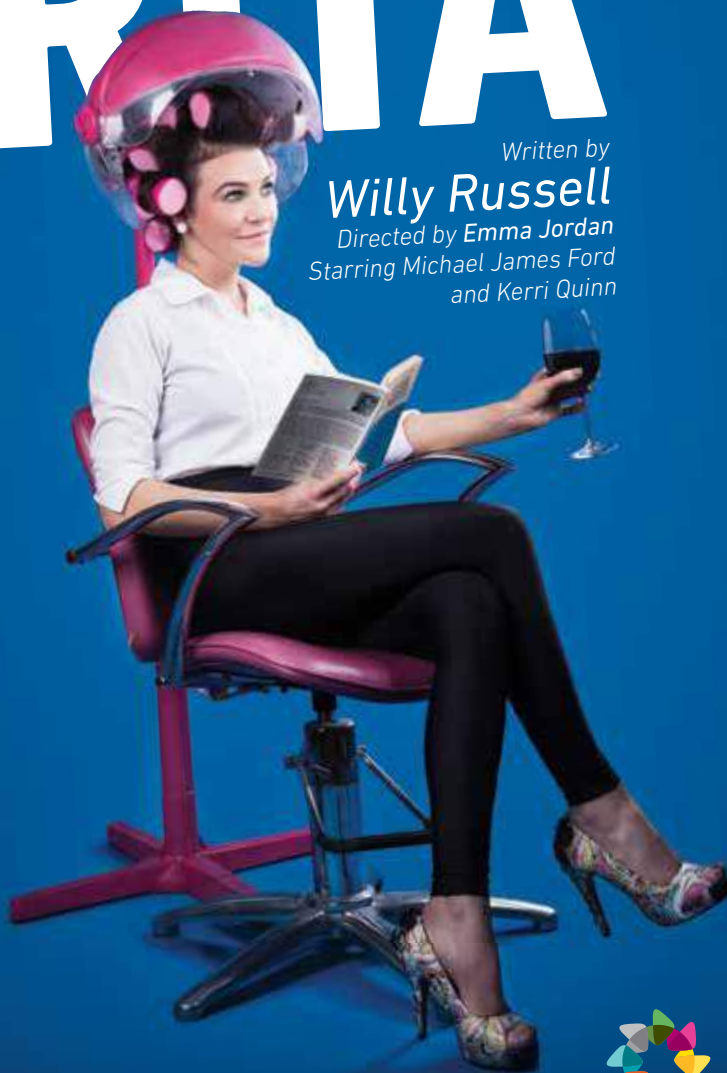
Rita White



— 30 JAN – 5 MAR 2016 —

# EDUCATING RITA

Written by  
**Willy Russell**  
Directed by Emma Jordan  
Starring Michael James Ford  
and Kerri Quinn



Belfast  
City Council



— 29 MARCH – 16 APRIL 2016 —

**BRUISER THEATRE COMPANY & THE LYRIC THEATRE**  
BY ARRANGEMENT WITH EDWARD SNAPE FOR FIERY ANGEL LIMITED  
**JOHN BUCHAN AND ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S**

# THE 39 STEPS

ADAPTED BY PATRICK BARLOW FROM AN ORIGINAL CONCEPT BY  
SIMON CORBLE AND NOBBY DIMON

Directed by  
Lisa May

Cast  
Hannah Brackstone-Brown  
Michael Condron  
Shai Forester  
Liam Jeavons



Belfast  
City Council



PRESENTED BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WITH SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD

Theatre Royal Waterford & Geva Theatre Rochester  
present an international co-production of

— 15 - 19 MAR 2016 —

# A MOON FOR THE MISBEGOTTEN

By Eugene O'Neill - Directed by Ben Barnes  
Starring Kate Forbes, Mark Lambert, Don Mackay and Michael Quinlan



# WINTER / SPRING AT THE LYRIC



JAN 31 & FEB 7



## JAKE O'KANE: GAGGIN' ON IT

Hot on the heels of last year's sell-out tour, Mouthful, Northern Ireland's finest comic, Jake O'Kane, is back! Those of a sensitive disposition, and politicians of all shades, should be afraid – very afraid.



FEB 6



## LOCKDOWN

The New Theatre Dublin presents Lockdown, a satirical comedy by Gerard Humphreys, directed by Anthony Fox. War and Remembrance: A clash of politicians, spin doctors and soldiers.



FEB 14



## EDDI READER

With a career spanning over 3 decades, former Fairground Attraction front woman Eddi Reader has effortlessly developed into one of popular music's most thrilling and affecting performers. An instantly-recognisable figure in contemporary British music.

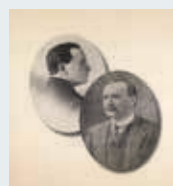


FEB 20



## PULL DOWN A HORSEMAN

The Dublin Lyric Players present Eugene McCabe's play about a secret meeting, between Patrick Pearse, James Connolly and the Irish Republican Brotherhood in January 1916 to plan the Easter Rising.



FEB 21



## IRELAND'S GREATEST VOICES: THE THREE TENORS & STAR VIOLINIST MARIA MASON

Ireland's hottest trio – Ray O'Hare, Dominic McGorian and Glenn Murphy – promise you a night to remember! This thrilling fast-moving concert is packed with the world's most beautiful, magical, feel-good, uplifting songs.

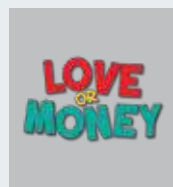


FEB 23 - 27



## LOVE OR MONEY

Banks, bras, boom and busts - c21 Theatre Company, who brought you last year's hit *Stitched Up*, presents a biting new comedy by Rosemary Jenkinson about the underside of the recession.



FEB 28



## THE NUALAS: THE GLITTERBOMB TOUR

The Nualas are celebrating their 21st birthday! With scorchingly brilliant new songs, red hot new chat and blistering new shoes, The Nualas are jetting in for one night only.

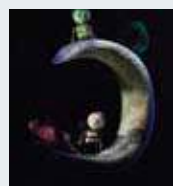


MAR 4-8



## BELFAST CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL 2016: THE WAY BACK HOME

Based on Oliver Jeffers' book, this wonderful story explores the boundless imagination of children through puppet animation and music. When a boy discovers an airplane in his closet, he does what any young adventurer would do: he flies into space...



MAR 6



## SUNDAY SERVICE WITH GRIMES & MCKEE

Topical sketches, songs, stand-up and improv, led by the Revds Conor Grimes and Alan McKee. If it's in the news it will be on the stage, with sketches being written and (barely) rehearsed right until curtain up.



MAR 11-12



## THE TURN OF THE SCREW

Northern Ireland Opera revive their spine-tingling production of Benjamin Britten's opera. A gripping story based on the classic tale of the supernatural by Henry James, this highly acclaimed production is directed by Oliver Mears with the Ulster Orchestra conducted by Nicholas Chalmers.



MAR 15-19



## A MOON FOR THE MISBEGOTTEN

The jaded James Tyrone is on the edge of despair, and the fiercely passionate Josie Hogan is lonely beyond endurance. But on this night, when they meet on a barren patch of earth in the glow of an autumn moon, hope sparks between them. Eugene O'Neill's acclaimed play is co-produced by the Theatre Royal Waterford & Geva Theatre Rochester.



MAR 20



## MOYA BRENNAN

The Voice of Clannad, Moya Brennan makes a welcome return to the Lyric. Her effortless vocals and timeless music pay homage not only to her vibrant traditional Irish heritage but also her grasp of contemporary forms.



MAR 29 - APR 16



## THE 39 STEPS

Bruiser Theatre Company and the Lyric Theatre are proud to present a new production of Alfred Hitchcock's classic spy thriller, *The 39 Steps*, brilliantly and hilariously recreated for the stage as the smash hit Olivier Award Winning Comedy. Directed by Lisa May, *The 39 Steps* comes to the Lyric Theatre following an incredible nine-year run in London's West End.



MAR 29 - APR 2



## THE VIRGIN FATHER

"Interrogation, that's what they'll do first. They'll do it all here. They'll kill me here". Tinderbox Theatre Company presents Jimmy McAleavey's powerful one-man play about Joseph - a hunted man, a carpenter on the run - whose wife Mary has gone missing.



APR 5-6



## MADAME DE MARKIEVICZ ON TRIAL

Set in a courtroom and a prison cell during the autumn of 1917, Ann Matthews' play focuses on the trial of Constance Markievicz, a revolutionary nationalist involved in the Easter Rising. Presented by The New Theatre, Dublin, and directed by Anthony Fox.



APR 17



## FOUR MEN AND A DOG

Four Men and a Dog is an Irish traditional band that burst onto the scene in 1990 during the Belfast Folk Festival. This exciting band plays Irish traditional music with a mixture of other different genres.



# LECTURE NOTES

Jimmy Fay (Executive Producer)



Hello and welcome to our opening play of 2016. We are delighted to be presenting a brand new production of Willy Russell's *Educating Rita* with a wonderful team of people led and directed by Emma Jordan and starring Kerri Quinn and Michael James Ford.

With Willy's blessing and advice we have been allowed to relocate the action from Liverpool 1980 to Belfast 1980. This felt important to me so that the issues the play deals with are not blurred by location. The self-transformation Rita sets out on is a very similar journey that other working class people set out on here in Belfast. I would like to commend our Assistant Director Oisín Kearney for his skill and delicacy in working with Willy on realigning the play to achieve this.

"I am not interested in talking about road directions, cars or sport for more than five minutes," Willy Russell warns in an interview with the Daily Telegraph. "It's why I cannot abide being in all-male company. I want to talk about things that matter".

Willy Russell has been writing about things that matter for going on five decades now. He is one of the UK's most successful playwrights and, arguably, the most successful playwright to emerge from Liverpool. His work is witty, intelligent and hugely inspiring. He gives his characters reasons to exist and therefore these incredible creations spring from the page. Rita, Shirley Valentine, Mrs Johnstone the extraordinary mother in *Blood brothers*. They are actors' dream parts.

2016 will be an interesting year at the Lyric, as we aim to weave together a program that is entertaining, thought-provoking and engaged in a theatrical way with the big centenaries of the Easter Rising and the Somme. *Educating Rita* which is about the transformation of self through the act of questioning your environment and circumstances and seeking a better way, embraces and is part of this theme.

Enjoy.

# THE BLOSSOM

BY WILLIAM BLAKE

Merry, merry sparrow!  
Under leaves so green  
A happy blossom  
Sees you, swift as arrow,  
Seek your cradle narrow,  
Near my bosom.  
Pretty, pretty robin!  
Under leaves so green  
A happy blossom  
Hears you sobbing, sobbing,  
Pretty, pretty robin,  
Near my bosom.



# HOWARDS END

BY E. M. FORSTER

Only connect! That was the whole of her sermon. Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its height. Live in fragments no longer. Only connect, and the beast and the monk, robbed of the isolation that is life to either, will die.

## PEER GYNT

BY HENRIK IBSEN

EBER

You have a view of life's great stage  
that lifts you to the rank of sage.  
Whereas we all, in our delusion,  
regard life as disjointed scenes,  
and end up groping in confusion,  
you've formulated what it means.  
You've shown the underlying norm,  
you've focussed random speculation  
so that it casts illumination  
irradiating life's true form. —  
And you've never been to college?

PEER

I said, just now, I am in fact  
a simple, plain, autodidact.  
My study's not methodical,  
but still I've gained a sort of knowledge,  
and thought and read about it all.  
I started late, and then it's normal  
to find it boring, rather formal,  
to plough through volumes page by page  
and take in all that verbiage.  
I've tackled history — bits and parts,  
not having had the time for more.  
And since at times of stress men set a  
high price on something known and sure,  
religion, too, by fits and starts.  
That way it seems to slip down better.  
One reads, not to gulp all, but choose  
the bits of it that one can use —

## LECTURE NOTES

Emma Jordan (Director)



When Jimmy Fay asked me to direct this production of *Educating Rita*, I jumped at the opportunity. This is a story that everyone knows thanks to the Julie Walters and Michael Caine film, and consequently people come to it with a lot of preconceived ideas: it's a classic Pygmalion story about an erudite teacher breathing new life into a working-class girl; it's a comedy about the relationship between two very different people thrown together by fate (a non-rom com); it's a morality tale about the virtues of striving to be the best you can be, set against the dangers of sinking into a pit of booze and despair.

Well, yes and no. The play certainly contains these themes, but it's so much more than this, even before adding the adapted context of 1980s Belfast. For me, there's a real soul to the piece, and a profoundly human message in the story of transition. The transition works in both directions – what we're trying to explore in the play is how Rita and Frank change each other. The two outcomes are very different, but this engagement with each other irrevocably changes both of them. Rita's tutorials with Frank offer both characters the opportunity to recalibrate their sense of self, and their sense of purpose. Rita seizes this opportunity with both hands whilst Frank is incapable of embracing profound change, yet I suspect their influence on each other will affect them for the rest of their lives.

This is also a story about alienation. Both Rita and Frank are outsiders in their own way: Rita, as a working class woman doesn't feel she 'belongs' in the ivory tower world of Queen's University, but Frank – shunted into the attic by the university authorities who are no doubt bemused and embarrassed by his alcoholism and refusal to fall into line – is no less an awkward fit. The fact that the city outside Frank's window is falling apart at the seams serves to heighten his isolation. His feeling that his poetry has no value and no meaning in the context of the Troubles leads to a sense of self-loathing, and allows him to retreat into the ethereal world of romantic poetry.

As is often the case in stories of alienation, both characters are trying to escape from the confines of their lives, but the place from which Frank is trying to break free is the very place to which Rita seeks admission. Rita is sick and tired of her marriage, her job and her lack of cultural knowledge and understanding, and so tries to escape to Queen's.

Frank is equally sick and tired of the pretensions of academic life and his own perceived failings as a poet, and so tries to escape from his own story via the whiskey bottle. The door to Frank's study becomes a physical and metaphorical symbol of this movement: at the beginning of play Rita struggles to open the door, and at the end we see Frank about to walk through it to begin a new life in Australia.

The transposition of the story from Liverpool to Belfast gives this production an added twist, because it sets Rita's view of education as escape, retreat and renewal against the reality of the pre-hunger strike Troubles. Coming from a working-class area of Belfast Rita would have been all too familiar with the impact of terror and violence on a community, and this comes across strongly in the play. When Rita talks about life 'round our way' she unknowingly demonstrates an astute understanding of the social and political realities of the time. She has her finger on the pulse of Belfast in a way that Frank never could, despite the constant noise of soldiers and helicopters outside his study. An interesting corollary of this is to wonder what Rita makes of her life after the play. With the original Liverpool setting the audience perhaps leaves with a sense of optimism about the choices Rita has, but her ability to move on beyond the parameters that had previously constrained her in Belfast may be more limited given the political and cultural explosion that happens in 1981 and beyond.

Regardless of this, *Educating Rita* is, in many ways, a feminist play which explores the perennial struggle of a woman trying to balance personal ambition and personal relationships, attempting to catapult herself out of a stultifying working-class environment where she is expected to be a good wife and have children, be grateful to have any form of work, and aspire towards looking pretty and having a new dress. Rita's determination to break through the expectations and conventions of a patriarchal society and take control of her own life and her own future is a universal experience that resonates just as strongly in 2016 as it would have done in 1980.

Willy Russell has written a wonderfully multi-faceted work, and I hope that the richness of the play comes through in this production. *Educating Rita* is not simply the story of a working-class Belfast girl. It's much more complex than that.

## TRAIN TO DUBLIN

BY LOUIS MACNEICE

Our half-thought thoughts divide in sifted wisps  
Against the basic facts repatterned without pause,  
I can no more gather my mind up in my fist  
Than the shadow of the smoke of this train upon the grass –  
This is the way that animals' lives pass.

The train's rhythm never relents, the telephone posts  
Go striding backwards like the legs of time to where  
In a Georgian house you turn at the carpet's edge  
Turning a sentence while, outside my window here,  
The smoke makes broken queries in the air.

The train keeps moving and the rain holds off,  
I count the buttons on the seat, I hear a shell  
Held hollow to the ear, the mere  
Reiteration of integers, the bell  
That tolls and tolls, the monotony of fear.

At times we are doctrinaire, at times we are frivolous,  
Plastering over the cracks, a gesture making good,  
But the strength of us does not come out of us.  
It is we, I think, are the idols and it is God  
Has set us up as men who are painted wood,

And the trains carry us about. But not consistently so,  
For during a tiny portion of our lives we are not in trains,  
The idol living for a moment, not muscle-bound  
But walking freely through the slanting rain,  
Its ankle wet, its grimace relaxed again.

All over the world people are toasting the King,  
Red lozenges of light as each one lifts his glass,  
But I will not give you any idol or idea, creed or king,  
I give you the incidental things which pass  
Outward through space exactly as each was.

I give you the disproportion between labour spent  
And joy at random; the laughter of the Galway sea  
Juggling with spars and bones irresponsibly,  
I give you the toy Liffey and the vast gulls,  
I give you fuchsia hedges and whitewashed walls.

I give you the smell of Norman stone, the squelch  
Of bog beneath your boots, the red bog-grass,  
The vivid chequer of the Antrim hills, the trough of dark  
Golden water for the cart-horses, the brass  
Belt of serene sun upon the lough.

And I give you the faces, not the permanent masks,  
But the faces balanced in the toppling wave –  
His glint of joy in cunning as the farmer asks  
Twenty per cent too much, or a girl's, forgetting to be suave,  
A tiro choosing stuffs, preferring mauve.

And I give you the sea and yet again the sea's  
Tumultuous marble,  
With Thor's thunder or taking his ease akimbo,  
Lumbering torso, but finger-tips a marvel  
Of surgeon's accuracy.

I would like to give you more but I cannot hold  
This stuff within my hands and the train goes on;  
I know that there are further syntheses to which,  
As you have perhaps, people at last attain  
And find that they are rich and breathing gold.

## CREDITS

### CAST

FRANK  
RITA

MICHAEL JAMES FORD  
KERRI QUINN

### CREATIVE TEAM

WRITER  
DIRECTOR  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR  
SET DESIGNER  
COSTUME DESIGNER  
SOUND DESIGNER  
LIGHTING DESIGNER

WILLY RUSSELL  
EMMA JORDAN  
OISÍN KEARNEY  
STUART MARSHALL  
ENDA KENNY  
PHILIP STEWART  
SARAH JANE SHIELS

### PRODUCTION TEAM

PRODUCTION MANAGER  
TECHNICAL MANAGER  
TECHNICIANS

JEN SHEPHERD  
KEITH GINTY  
DAMIAN COX,  
MICHAEL HARPUR,  
TIGHEARNAN O'NEILL  
KATE MILLER  
TRACEY LINDSAY  
LOUISE BRYANS  
STEPHEN DIX  
KIRI NEWBERY

COMPANY STAGE MANAGER  
DEPUTY STAGE MANAGER  
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGERS

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER  
(WORK EXPERIENCE)  
WARDROBE SUPERVISOR  
WARDROBE ASSISTANT  
DRESSER  
HAIR & MAKE-UP  
SET CONSTRUCTION  
SCENIC ARTISTS

PAT MUSGRAVE  
ERIN CHARTERIS  
SUSANNAH WILSON  
CONNIE McGRATH  
JIM CARSON  
ANNA DONOVAN  
SIOBHAN BARBOUR

### THE LYRIC THEATRE WOULD LIKE TO THANK

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST, BELVOIR PLAYERS, WEATHERSPOON'S,  
DUKE OF YORK, HOUSE BAR, ANDREW FORSYTHE, MORAG KEATING,  
DAVID PAULIN, NATHAN MURTAGH, ADAM TURNS, DANIEL SMITH,  
JAMES UPRITCHARD, FINNIAN GARBUTT, EMMET BYRNE, SAM BROWN,  
ABIGAIL PARKINSON, SHANNEN McNEICE AND THE LATE RICHARD RYAN.

THERE WILL BE AN INTERVAL OF 20 MINUTES AFTER ACT 1

#EDUCATINGRITA



— 30 JAN – 5 MAR 2016 —  
**EDUCATING**  
**RITA**

Written by *Willy Russell*

Directed by *Emma Jordan*

Starring *Michael James Ford and Kerri Quinn*



Belfast  
City Council



# LECTURE NOTES

Oisín Kearney (Assistant Director)



Back in September, Jimmy Fay asked me if I would revise *Educating Rita* to be set locally. We discussed how the play would need to be changed slightly to make the character of Rita sound authentic to this place. An equally important issue for this revision would be that the play should reflect the social and political context of the time it was written – 1980.

On the plane to Liverpool to meet the playwright Willy Russell, I read the piece again and again, and when I arrived, Willy humbly greeted me and was quick to offer me a drink... of tea. We ascended to his loft and sat down to read through the script, Willy stopping every so often (like Frank) to explain a literary reference and to discuss with me the issues around relocating the play. It was a conversation about literature, scriptwriting, and society that sent my head whirling as I immediately felt like Rita, in an unfamiliar setting, inadequate, but determined to give it a go. He explained how *Educating Rita* has been adapted before, in South Africa and in the United States, but we agreed that placing the characters and their story in Northern Ireland provided its own unique challenges. I was grateful that he trusted me with it.

When back in Belfast, I found myself listening to how people spoke, in shops, in cafes, in offices. As a Warrenpoint man, I'd grown up surrounded by what Belfastians would regard as a South Down 'cultchie' accent and it was not until I lived in the city that I became familiar with the colloquialisms, the crudeness, and the charm of the Belfast vernacular. I set to work identifying the obvious lines that could be easily changed: 'bleedin' to 'bloody' / 'Formby' to 'Holywood', but I was conscious not to overdo it. Rita and Frank are characters defined by the language they use, the rhythm, the phrasing, and conversational tit-for-tat – this needed to be respected. Once spoken in a Belfast accent, most of Rita's speeches work quite well, but through a number of slight linguistic tweaks, and a couple of carefully chosen omissions, Belfast Rita could be born on the page. However, it was only in the rehearsal room that she truly came to life, when Kerri made the role her own.

Given that the play is brimming with literary references, it was important for this production to also include local poetic texts. When Rita quotes a poem in her first encounter with Frank, he ironically does not recognise the particular piece. Whilst Russell's original reference was to Roger McGough, I chose Robert Atkinson, a lesser-known Belfast working-class poet who felt enforced idleness

through unemployment and wrote about individual fortitude. The joke where Rita confuses W.B. Yeats with Yates Wine Lodge was too specific to the North of England, so it was an opportune point to fit in Northern poet Louis MacNeice, with an equally simple gag.

I shifted my attention to the political context, chatting to my relatives who had lived in Belfast all through the period and could identify with Rita's quest to transcend the restrictions of her society. When Rita speaks of 'culture', what could this mean at that time of vying prescribed cultures? How far did what was happening in 1980 permeate daily life? Could Frank's room be a sanctuary not only from the harshness of sobering reality, but from the brutal conflict on the other side of his window, which he and his poetry could not come to terms with?

I spent months researching academic works, interviewing ex-prisoners, and poring over archive of that dark time. To ensure authenticity, I also met with staff at the Open University who had worked throughout the 1980s and could inform me of the structure of the courses, the types of students and Tutor-Counselors, and the nature of studying at the height of the Troubles.

Stop-searches, raids, riots and bomb alerts induced fear and a lack of connection. Many people had hidden identities, unwilling to reveal their names, where they lived, or what their opinions were. Some felt hermetically sealed in to their communities, unable to move about or explore new interests. Set in this climate, Rita's struggle for freedom and change is even more extraordinary. By the time the play is set to begin in late January 1980, over 2,100 people had lost their lives in the Troubles, and with the hunger strikes on the horizon, the situation wasn't getting any better.

Throughout the revision process, I reminded myself that the Belfast audience is very discerning, and that subtlety and sensitivity are much better than whacking people around the head with unwarranted exaggerations. The ease with which we could relocate *Educating Rita* to Belfast 1980 is a testimony to the strength of the writing, and the universality of the themes of self-improvement in the face of societal stagnation, hope vis-à-vis disenfranchisement. The play is as relevant today as it was then, in Liverpool, in Belfast, and beyond, as it raises questions about the choices we have and how we can bravely better ourselves despite the current seemingly insurmountable limitations of our environment.

# A QUARE FELLOW

BY ROBERT ATKINSON



Who is it no-one wants to own,  
Whose very name makes  
some folks groan,  
Who always was convention's bone?

Who is it no-one cares to know,  
When walking by with so and so,  
And quickly past him try to go?

Who is it wears his trousers slack,  
His hair well greased  
with fixture tack,  
A coloured muffler  
round his neck?

Who is it when at close of day,  
Makes crowded streets  
his fields of play,  
And gets in everybody's way?

Who is it when we watch a game,  
Whose play has earned  
him sporting fame,  
Who answers to his Christian name?

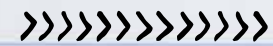
Who is it, when they wanted ships,  
To break fresh records  
with their trips,  
Built hundreds of them  
on the slips?

Who was it when – the  
fight begun –  
Threw down his tools  
and grabbed a gun,  
And fought until the  
fight was won?

Who was it when on  
knowledge bent,  
Became more learned  
on text-books lent,  
And won his way to Parliament?

Who helped our city rise to fame,  
And won for it an  
honoured name,  
But wouldn't say it just the same?

Who is it wants to pull his weight,  
Take off his coast and  
put things straight,  
Forget there's such a thing as fate?  
The corner boy.





## CAST & CREATIVE TEAM BIOGRAPHIES



Michael James Ford

### FRANK

Michael James Ford previously appeared at The Lyric in Philip Wilson's production of *How Many Miles to Babylon* in 2014. He is based in Dublin, and his extensive work at the Gate Theatre includes *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Woman of No Importance*, *Little Women*, *Present Laughter*, *The Deep Blue Sea*, *Anna Karenina*, *The Constant Wife*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Blithe Spirit*, *Salome*, *Arcadia*, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *The Double Dealer*, and *The Rivals*. He has also appeared at The Abbey Theatre in *Translations*, *Sixteen Possible Glimpses*, *Observe the Sons of Ulster*, *Souper Sullivan* and *Blinded by the Light*.

His most recent stage work includes *Borstal Boy* (Gaiety Theatre), *Macklin: Method and Madness*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Poe Show* (Bewley's and Viking Theatre). His film and television appearances include *Citizen Charlie*, *Ripperstreet*, *Frank*, *Vikings*, *Penny Dreadful*, *Mrs Brown's Boys D'Movie*, *Becoming Jane*, *Dark Angel*, *Kidnapped*, *The Boxer*, *Michael Collins* and *Widow's Peak*.

From 1999 to 2005 Michael was Artistic Director of Bewley's Café Theatre in Dublin for whom he directed many plays including *Village Wooing*, *So Long Sleeping Beauty*, *Too Much of Nothing*, *The Star Trap*, and *Buridan's Ass*.

His one-man versions of Wilde's *The Happy Prince* and *The Remarkable Rocket* have been widely acclaimed and have toured throughout Ireland and overseas.



Kerri Quinn

### RITA

Kerri began her acting training in theatre studies at BIFHE and continued on to achieve a BA honours degree at Queen's University.

Recent theatre roles include *Shibboleth* at The Abbey Theatre, and Angie Best and Mrs Fullaway in the revival of the hit musical *Dancing Shoes The George Best Story* at the Grand Opera House. Prior to that she took on the iconic role of Sally Bowes in *Cabaret* at The Mac.

Other theatrical roles include Lisa/Tracey in the all-female production of *Flesh and Blood Women* (GreenShoot Productions), Mother/Princess in *Nivellis War* (Cahoots NI), Roberta in *Belfast by Moonlight* (Kabosh), Beauty Queen in *Hatch* (P.J O'Reily/The Mac), Patsy in *Baby its Cold Outside* (Greenshoot Productions) Ma in *Weddins Weeins and Wakes* (Lyric Theatre), Dee in *Huzzies* (Tinderbox), Emily in *Titanic Boys* (GBL Productions), Susie Ego in *The Weein* (Red Lemon), Woman Two in *Three Women* (C21) and Anita in *West Side Story* (Jim Molloy Promotions).

Her TV credits include *Fishbowl City* (Martin McCann), *Betrayal of Trust* (BBC) and *The Last Story Teller* (RTE). Kerri has recently finished filming *The Frankenstein Chronicles* for ITV in the role of Mrs Bowyer.



Emma Jordan

### DIRECTOR

Emma is Prime Cut's Artistic Director and her directing credits for the company include Stacey Gregg's *Scorch* (2015), Yasmina Reza's *The God Of Carnage* (2015), *The Conquest of Happiness* for Derry-Londonderry City of Culture and European Tour (2013), *I Am My Own Wife* by Doug Wright (2012), David Harrower's *Blackbird* (2011), Owen McCafferty's *Shoot The Crow* (2011 & 2012), Fiona Evans' *Scarborough* (2010), Marina Carr's *Woman and Scarecrow* (2009), Denis Kelly's *After The End* (2008), and a staged reading of Fermin Cabal's *Tejas Verdes* (Old Museum Arts Centre).

Emma's acting credits include work with numerous theatre companies including Charabanc, Tinderbox, The Lyric Theatre, Replay, Dubblejoint and Young at Art.

Her producing credits for Prime Cut include *Three Tall Women* (Assistant Director), *The Coronation Voyage*, *Shopping and Fucking*, *American Buffalo*, *Macbeth*, *The Chance*, *After Darwin*, *The Mercy Seat*, *Ashes To Ashes*, *A Number*, *Cold Comfort*, *The Trestle At Pope Lick Creek*, *Scenes From The Big Picture*, Owen McCafferty's version of *Antigone*, *Vincent River*, *The Chilean Trilogy* and most recently Jack Thorne's *Mydidae*.

In 2014 Emma was the recipient of the Paul Hamlyn Cultural Entrepreneurship Breakthrough Award and in 2015 the Spirit of Festival Award at the Belfast International Arts Festival.

In Spring 2016 Emma will direct *After Miss Julie* for Prime Cut (Island of Ireland Tour).



Oisín Kearney

### ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Oisín studied Politics at the University of Cambridge before training in film and TV production with the BBC and Northern Ireland Screen, and moving on to research political documentary films. He has produced and directed a number of plays, including *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me* by Frank McGuinness, *I, Banquo* by Tim Crouch in the Lyric Naughton Studio, and *How These Desperate Men Talk* by Enda Walsh at Belfast Culture Night. He worked on the revision of the script for *Educating Rita* to be set in Belfast 1980, and took up the role of Assistant Director on the production.



Enda Kenny

### COSTUME DESIGNER

Enda has been working in costume departments in film and theatre since graduating from the Arts Institute at Bournemouth in 2003. He specialises in costume design, textile art, millinery and prop costume. This is Enda's first time designing for the Lyric, having worked for the theatre on previous productions as a milliner and breakdown artist. He has also produced work for various west end shows in London for the National theatre, ENO and the Royal Opera House Covent Garden. Other costume design credits include *Scorch* for prime cut productions and *At Home with Oscar* for David Grant productions.

His previous film and TV credits include HBO's *Game of Thrones*, *Pirates of the Caribbean 2*, *The Golden Compass* and *King Arthur* to name a few.



Stuart Marshall

### SET DESIGNER

Stuart's many previous designs at the Lyric Theatre include *The Crucible*, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Christmas Eve Can Kill You*, *A Night in November*, *Macbeth*, *Charlotte's Web*, *The Hypochondriac*, *The Absence of Women*, *As The Beast Sleeps*, *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire*, *Brendan at the Chelsea*, *Our Country's Good*, *The Civilization Game*, *55 Days*, *Eternal Love* and *Can't Forget About You*.

Other designs include *Playhouse Creatures*, *Cabaret*, *The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* and *The Nose* (Bruiser, MAC Belfast); *Carthaginians*, *Translations* and *Teenage Kicks* (Millennium Forum, Derry); *Pits and Perverts* (Sole Purpose Productions); *Top Girls*, *Vernon God Little*, *The Gut Girls* and *The Old Lady Says "No!"* (Brian Friel Theatre, Queen's University); *A Number*, *American Buffalo*, *Dealer's Choice*, *Shopping and Fucking*, *Gagarin Way*, *Vincent River* and *Blackbird* (Prime Cut Productions); *All Through the House*, *Pentecost* and *The Chairs* (Tinderbox); *Guys and Dolls*, *Annie* and *Honk!* (Grand Opera House Belfast); *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *The Field* and *Sive* (Bardic Theatre); *Over the Bridge* (Green Shoot Productions, Waterfront Hall Belfast); *Bog People* and *The Country Boy* (Big Telly); *Sisters* (City Theatre Dublin, Edinburgh Festival and 59E59 New York); *My Name is Rachel Corrie* and *This is What We Sang* (Kabosh).

# CAST & CREATIVE TEAM BIOGRAPHIES



Willy Russell

## WRITER

Willy Russell's career spans more than four decades; born in Liverpool in 1947, he left school at 15, became a women's hairdresser and part-time singer/songwriter before returning to education and becoming a teacher. Russell's breakthrough work, commissioned by Liverpool Everyman, *John Paul George Ringo...and Bert* transferred to the West End winning Best Musical - Evening Standard and London Theatre Critics Awards.

Two of Willy's best-known plays have female protagonists, *Educating Rita* (Olivier Award for Best Comedy) and *Shirley Valentine* (Olivier Award - Best New Comedy & Best New Actress; Tony Awards, Broadway - Best Actress). Both became successful films - Julie Walters and Pauline Collins who played the roles on stage received Oscar nominations as did Willy Russell for the screenplay of *Educating Rita*.

*Blood Brothers* (Laurence Olivier Award, Best New Musical, 1983) played for 24 years becoming the 3<sup>rd</sup> longest running West End musical. Major foreign productions include a 2 year run on Broadway, with recent productions in South Africa and Korea and current productions in Australia and Japan. The UK tour is still playing to packed houses. *Our Day Out*, originally written for TV, has been adapted for the stage as *Our Day Out - The Musical*. Premiered at Liverpool's Royal Court in 2010 to rave reviews it was revived a year later for another sell out season.

The critically acclaimed novel *The Wrong Boy* was published in 2000 and translated worldwide.



Sarah Jane Shiels

## LIGHTING DESIGNER

Sarah began lighting in Dublin Youth Theatre, completing a BA in Drama and Theatre Studies (Trinity College Dublin), and the Rough Magic Seeds3 programme.

Previous work in the Lyric includes *Shadow of a Gunman* (Abbey Theatre/Lyric Theatre), and *Blackbird* (Prime Cut Productions).

Other designs include *The Cradle Will Rock* (Lir), *She Knit the Roof* (Earigail Arts Festival), *Lessness* (TheEmergencyRoom), *BEES!*, *Jockey, Care, Farm, Follow* (WillFredd Theatre), *Everything Between Us*, *The Critic*, *The House Keeper*, *Plaza Suite* (Rough Magic), *PALS*, *The Boys of Foley Street*, *Laundry*, *World's End Lane*, *Basin* (ANU Productions), *Dublin Oldschool* (Project Arts Centre), *How to Keep an Alien* (Sonya Kelly/Rough Magic), *With Raised Arms/Here Me Sing Your Song* (Liv O'Donoghue), *Tundra* (Emma Martin), *Dusk Ahead* (Junk Ensemble), *Shibari* (Peacock Theatre), *Have I No Mouth*, *The Blue Boy*, *Silver Stars* (Brokentalkers).

Sarah Jane is co-artistic director of WillFredd Theatre.



Philip Stewart

## SOUND DESIGNER

Philip has written music and sound design for a broad range of media including theatre, sound installations, dance, shorts and documentary film making. He studied composition under Donnacha Dennehy and Roger Doyle.

Recent theatre credits include *Our Few and Evil days* by Mark O'Rowe (Abbey Theatre), *Breaking Bad* by Paul Howard (Landmark Productions), *Conservatory* by Michael West (Peacock Theatre), *Major Barbara* by Bernard Shaw (Abbey Theatre), *Howie the Rookie* by Mark O'Rowe (Landmark Productions) and *Quietly* by Owen McCafferty (Peacock Theatre).

He has been nominated for an Irish Times Theatre Award for his work on *The Early Bird* by Leo Butler (Natural Shocks) and *An Enemy of The People* adapted by Arthur Miller (Gate Theatre).



# LYRIC THEATRE

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## THE OPEN UNIVERSITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND



Oisín Kearney, Christine McCavana, Claire O'Kane and John D'Arcy

Willy Russell's acclaimed play *Educating Rita* has a special place in the hearts and minds of Open University staff and students, past and present. His play and the film, based on it, highlight the mission of The Open University in being open to people, places, methods and ideas. Specifically, how becoming a university student, regardless of your background and previous educational experience, can change your views and experiences of the world.

The Open University has been part of the fabric of Belfast since our foundation in 1969. At that time, Harold Wilson's Labour Government developed the vision for a 'University of the Air', using television and radio as key channels to get lectures and courses to students across the United Kingdom. I'm sure many people will recall those late night BBC television programmes, in grainy black and white, providing lectures in everything from literature to the physics.

This version of *Educating Rita* is set in Belfast in 1980. Then our headquarters were on University Road, just across the road from Villa Italia. This is where Rita would have registered for her studies, contacted our staff and tutors and received help and support as she got to grips with her course.

At that time in Belfast's history, students like Rita would have faced many challenges as they set about their Open University studies. Getting to tutorials might have been impeded by disruption across the city, whether through unrest on the streets,

transport difficulties or having a concern about leaving your home to get into the city centre and then on to the tutorial venue. Put that on top of the 'normal' challenges facing Open University students in England, Scotland and Wales - balancing part-time university study with work, family life and all the other challenges that life throws at you - and you can begin to put yourself in Rita's shoes.

Since 1969, The Open University has taught over 41,000 students in Northern Ireland and currently has around 4,000 students, almost three-quarters of whom are in work and 53% are female. We are now based in 110 Victoria Street, Belfast beside St George's Market - so why not call in for a look at our courses or check out our website [www.open.ac.uk/northern-ireland](http://www.open.ac.uk/northern-ireland) or follow us on Twitter on @OUBelfast.

I'd like to thank *Educating Rita*'s Director, Emma Jordan, and her team for engaging so proactively with The Open University in contextualising the play in Belfast. In particular, I'd like to commend Oisín Kearney who worked with Claire O'Kane and Christine McCavana, two of our long-serving staff members in Belfast, who helped describe how students back in 1980 would have studied with The Open University.

**John D'Arcy**  
Director  
The Open University, Northern Ireland

# THE SEAGULL

BY ANTON CHEKHOV

Dorn's views on writing:

"A work of art must express a clear, definite idea. You must know what you are aiming at when you write, for if you follow the enchanted path of literature without a definite goal in mind, you'll lose your way and your talent will ruin you."



# THREE SISTERS

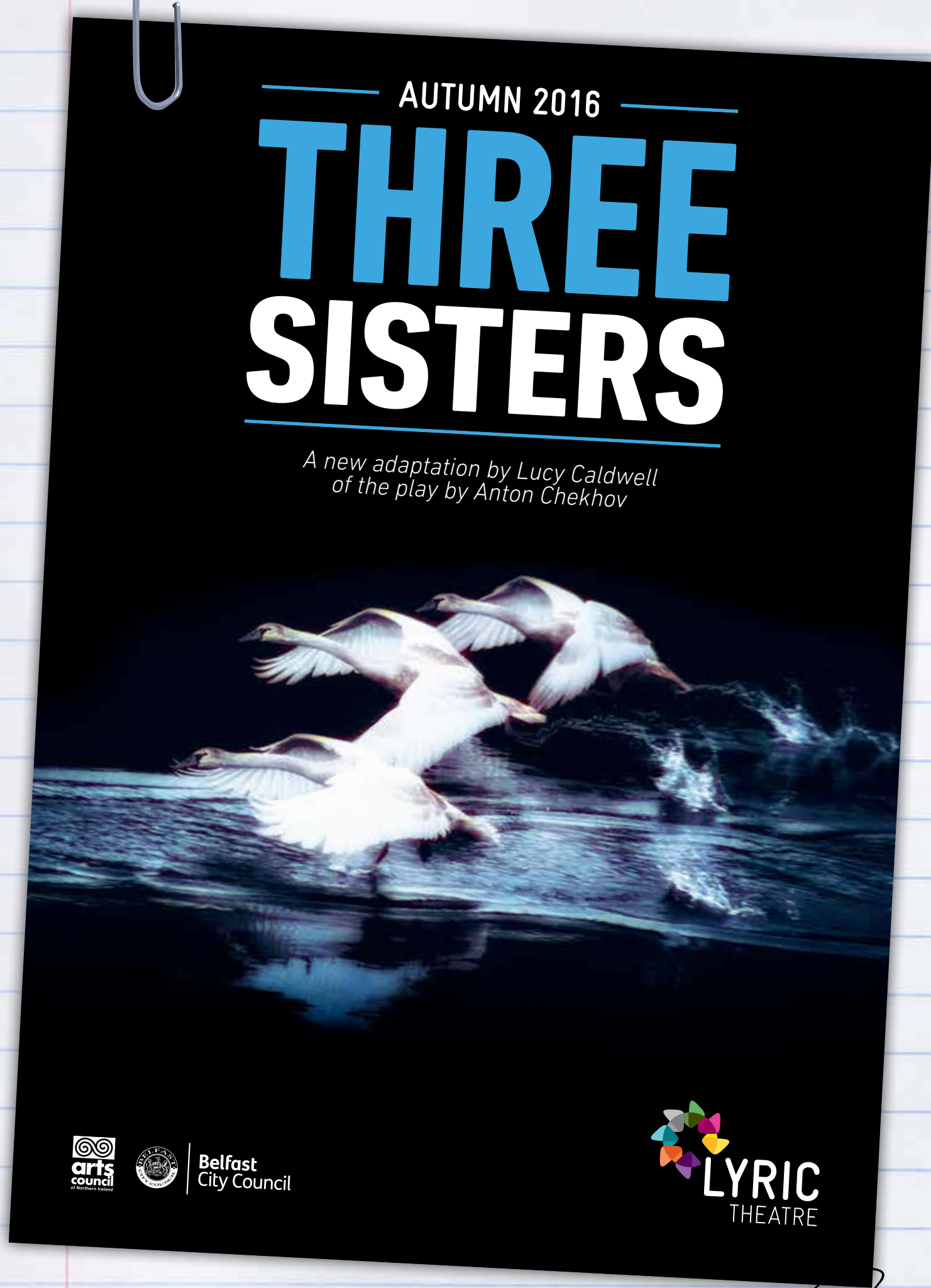
BY ANTON CHEKHOV

VERSHININ

"How can I put this. I believe that every day, every moment, things are changing for the better. Even when it doesn't always seem that way to us. In two, three hundred years – in a thousand years – there'll be a whole new world, and life will be happy. We won't be there to see it, of course – but we are living for it now, living and dying for it, suffering for it, imaging it bit-by-bit into being. Happiness. That's the point of all of our suffering."

I'm dead familiar with Chekhov now!

Rita 😊





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