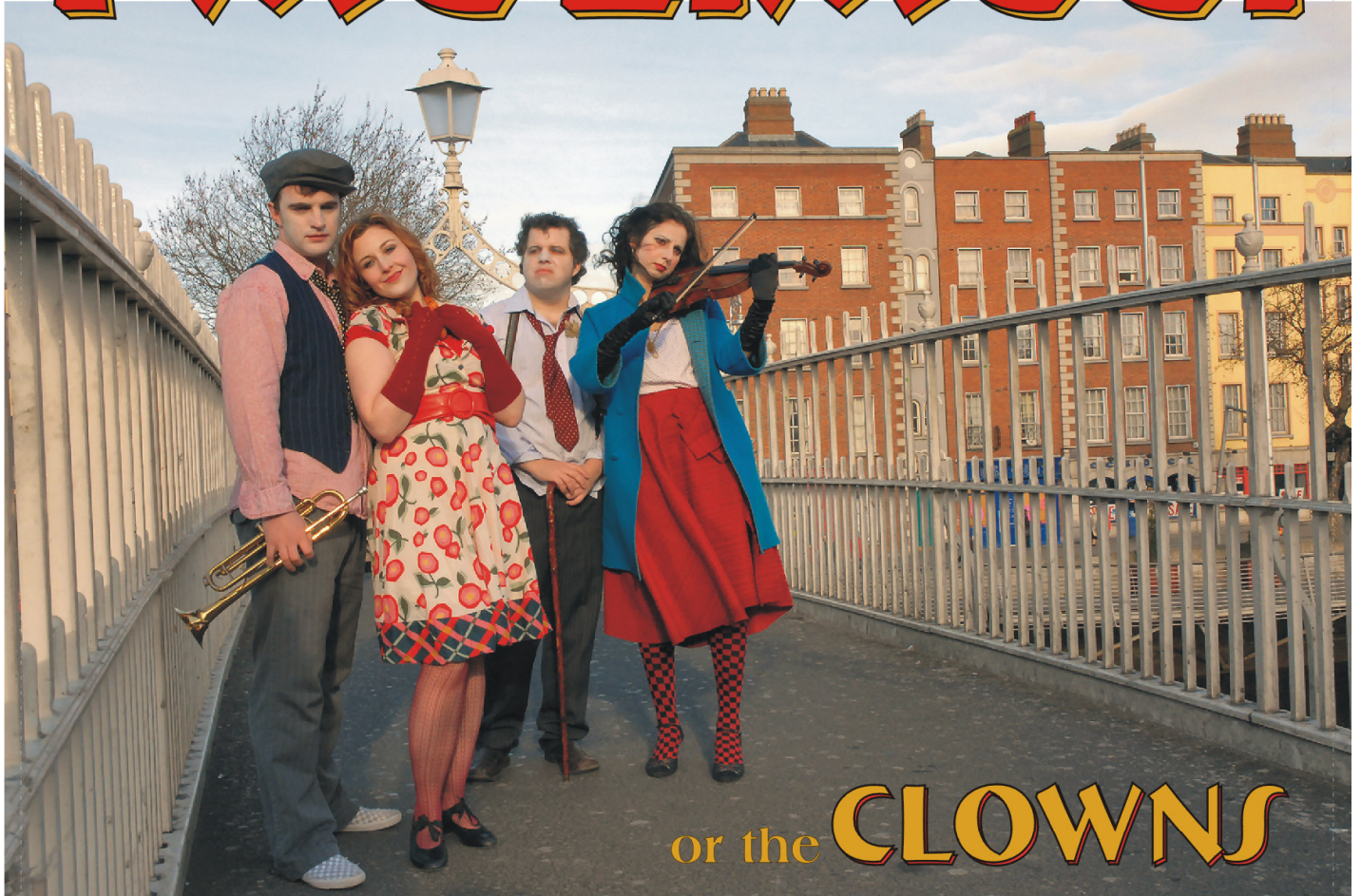


Wonderland Productions Ltd

# PAGLIACCI



or the **CLOWNS**

## Bewleys Café Theatre

**Opening:**

March 10<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup> Monday - Saturday @ 1.10pm

**Previews:**

March 3<sup>rd</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> Monday - Saturday @ 1.10pm

Extra Saturday shows @ 3pm on 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> with 2<sup>nd</sup> cast.

No shows on public holidays Monday 17<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> March

Bookings: 086 8784001 or [info@bewleyscafetheatre.com](mailto:info@bewleyscafetheatre.com)



– *Presents* –

## *The Sizzling Musical*



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**Tues 25<sup>th</sup> – Sat 29<sup>th</sup> March at 8 p.m.**

**Tickets € 15 & € 12 (Concession)**

**Bookings 086 8050 243**

# *Welcome to Wonderland's Pagliacci!*

## **An Introduction to Pagliacci**

by Sinead Bevan.

Pagliacci was first performed to critical acclaim in 1892 in Milan, and has continued to thrill and impress audiences for more than a century. According to Opera America, it continues to be one of the most popular and widely performed opera of all time. Indeed, a good indication of its success can be garnered from the fact that Pagliacci's most popular aria *Vesti la Giubba* became the first recording to sell a million copies in the States.

Described as "the apogee of verisimo", Pagliacci was written by its composer in an attempt to bring a realism of emotion to opera. Never before had opera-going audiences witnessed such intensity, even if today the characters fulfil many clichés.

Its creation was somewhat controversial, as its composer, Leoncavallo had a plagiarism lawsuit brought against him, after it was noticed it bore a resemblance to an 1887 play of Catulle Mendès entitled *La Femme de Tabarin*. Leoncavallo was living in Paris at the time of its premiere, and it is likely that he saw the play. However, Leoncavallo maintained that the opera was actually based on a real event he witnessed as a child in Calabria, when his nurse took him to see a carnival in the town and a murder occurred. He also claimed that his father, who was a judge, had led the criminal investigation, and that he had documents supporting these claims. None of this evidence has ever appeared. Today most critics agree that the libretto was inspired by the French play and by the earlier success of Mascagni's short opera *Cavalleria Rusticana*.

In truth, both operas are heavily influenced by 'verismo', and by the *comedia dell'Arte* style, and feature several storytelling devices that crop up time and time again throughout the history of music and theatre. This particular story features treachery and betrayal, mistaken identity and murder, thus highlighting what has made this opera so popular over time. In addition it features the concept of "the play within a play", a dramatic trope that emphasised the importance of role-playing in society.

Leoncavallo was unable to repeat the success he had achieved with Pagliacci. He continued to write for many years, but was a victim of his own accomplishments, and quickly became bogged down in trying to better his primary effort. By the time he died in 1919, he had composed no other significant musical offerings.

There have been many notable performances of Pagliacci, including those where Pavarotti has played the role of Canio.

## *Cast*

Nedda	JOAN O'MALLEY EMER BARRY on Tuesdays 18th and 25th March.
Canio	RALPH STREHLE Understudied by: COLM LALOR
Tonio	RHYS JENKINS Understudied by: CORMAC Ó CORCORÁIN
Silvio	SIMON MORGAN Understudied by: SIMON MACHALE
Beppe	WOJCIECH SMARKALA
Chorus Lady	DONNA GALLAGHER
Chorus Gentlemen	TRISTAN CALDWELL

## *Production team*

Director & Translator	ALICE COGHLAN
Assistant Director & Chorus lady 2	ORNA JOYCE
Assistant Director	SHEILA O'REILLY
Set & Costume Designer	ALICE BUTLER
Lighting Designer	SOPHY BRADSHAW POWER
Assistant to Set & Costume Designer	ANGELA CUTHILL OWEN LINDSAY LINDSAY PEARSON CHISATO YOSHIMI
Assistant to Lighting Designer	EILISH MURPHY
Makeup Artist	AISLING DONEVAN
Rehearsal répétiteurs & Accompanists	ELAINE BRENNAN MILES LALLEMANT JULIA LYNCH
Rehearsal répétiteurs	DEARBHLA COLLINS KEVIN KAUKL DAVID BREMNER
Stage Management	SOPHIE FLYNN FIONA KELLER
Administration & Production Management	ROBERT BRADISH MARTIN WUNDERLICH
Associate Producer	EMER MULLARKEY
Poster, flyer and website design	SHANE WHITE

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## *Acknowledgements*

Wonderland would like to extend a big thank you to (in alphabetical order) Alister Davies, Andrew Sinnot, Ann Marie Sheridan, Ashling Sullivan, Bewley's Café Theatre, Cathal Garvey, Charlotte Harrison, Christopher Carol, Clive Armstrong, Cliona Cassidy, Cloda O'Loughlan, Clodagh Reid, David Adams, David Coonan, Deborah Kelleher, Desmond Earley, Devany's Off License, Dieter Kaegi and all at Opera Ireland, Doyles Pub, Dublin Bus, Dublin Youth Theatre, Eamonn Kennedy, Eden Restaurant, Edward Kane, Elephant and Castle Restaurant, Ellie Higginson, Everybody at Dublin Fringe Festival, George Twamley, Gill Matthews, Gordon Gaffney, Grainne Fitzpatrick, Hannah Richard Levins, Hannah Partis Jennings, Hazelgrove Golf Club, Helen Byrne, Inchicore College of Further Education, Irene Dei, James Joyce Centre, John Scott, Katie Kelly, Kerry Mulligan, Laura Barnes, Lesley Cosgrave, Lizard Ray and Drawing Room Opera Company, Loughlin Coogin, Malahide Portmarnock Musical Society, Michael Quinn, Michelle Gilmore, Mona Lisa Restaurant, Morgan MacCreadie, Nimah Lawlor, Nuala Moran, Paul Lyttle, Rita Crosbie, Rowans Delicattessen, Sarah Reddin, Sean Doran, Sean Green and OTC, Simon Gorry, Sinead Bevan, Sinead Cuthbert, Sinead Flynn, The Abbey Theatre, The Civic Theatre, The Freemasons Hall for rehearsal space, The Helix, Outhouse, Richard, The Pioneer Club, Theatre Forum, The Savoy Cinema, The Tyrone Guthrie Centre at Annamakerrig, Thomas Buckley, Waltons World of Music.



# Cast

## *Emer Barry - Nedda*



Emer Barry has an honours degree in Music and Italian from UCD and holds a Masters in Music Performance from DIT where she studied under Irish soprano Regina Nathan.

Emer has participated in the Operaplus International opera school in Belgium where she performed the roles of First Lady (Die Zauberflöte – Mozart) and Lisetta (La Rondine – Puccini) in excerpts from the operas. Most recently she played the role of Fulvia in Rossini's La Pietra Del Paragone (RIAM, Jan 2008).

Bursaries and prizes include the John Mc Cormack and Oliver O'Brien bursaries from the John Mc Cormack Society of Ireland, the Stevenson award for overall vocal championship at Ballymena Music Festival and the RTE Lyric fm bursary for most promising singer at the Feis Ceoil, Sligo, 2007.

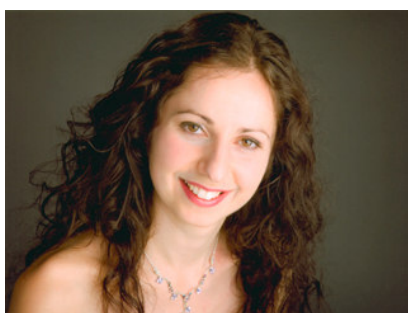
## *Tristan Caldwell – Chorus gentleman*

Tristan Caldwell studied business in Athlone Institute of Technology and moved on to work in the insurance sector. Tristan is now a final year student of the Bmus performance degree program in the DIT Conservatory of Music and Drama. He has been studying with Emanuel Lawler and repetiteur Mary Scarlett since 2002.

Tristan has performed in the chorus of Opera Ireland in their productions of Jenufa, Tosca and The Magic Flute. He has played many roles in the NCH in scenes from operas such as Bizet's Carmen, Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro, Puccini's La Boheme, Verdi's La Traviata and Rigoletto. He played the role of Bartolo and Antonio in The Marriage of Figaro, in association with Opera Ireland in the Gaiety Theatre. Tristan has performed many oratorios, including Schubert's mass in A flat, Beethoven's Mass in C, Faure Requim and Händel's Messiah.



## *Donna Gallagher – Chorus lady*



Dublin-born Donna has performed in Italy, Portugal and Germany, as well as regularly around Ireland. Roles include Geraldine (Hand of Bridge); Clorinda (La Cenerentola); Susanna, Barbarina (Figaro); Nella (Gianni Schicchi); Rosina (Barber of Seville). Concerts include Unchained Melody, Life & Times of Stephan Foster, Music of Thomas Moore in the NCH along with many concerts in various venues.

She performs regularly with Opera Ireland. Donna completed her Bachelor of Music Performance in DIT (First Class Honours) where she studied voice with Mary Brennan and Trudi Carberry. Masterclasses with top professional singers include Montserrat Caballe, Dennis O'Neill and Regina Nathan. She currently studies with Susan McCulloch.

***Rhys Jenkins – Tonio (1<sup>st</sup> cast)***

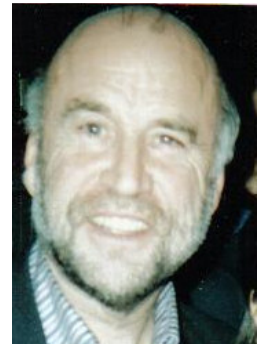


After reading Modern Languages in Edinburgh and Vienna, Rhys Jenkins trained at the RNCM followed by the RSAMD in Glasgow studying under Peter Wilson and Alan Watt. He is a Britten-Pears Young Artist, Samling Scholar and National Eisteddfod of Wales award winner.

His opera roles have included Figaro Il Barbiere di Siviglia (Dartington) the title role Gianni Schicchi and Sid Albert Herring (RSAMD); Dandini La Cenerentola (RNCM), The Sorceress Dido and Aeneas and Le Gendarme Les Mamelles de Tiresias (Edinburgh Studio Opera); Peter Hänsel und Gretel and Pistol Falstaff (Opera Garden); and Schaunard La Bohème, Scarpia (cover) and Sacristan Tosca (Opus One Opera).

***Colm Lalor – Canio (2<sup>nd</sup> cast)***

Colm was born and still lives in Dublin and came to the singing and stage late after injury ended an athletics career in which he had run 31000 miles. The competitive spirit (and lungs) having been established, he began voice training immediately with Edith Forrest. He has played such tenor roles as Camiile, Mr Snow, Phillipe, Frederick, Hilarión, Sid el Kar and others with more than 15 different musical societies in recent years. Colm has been a regular soloist with the Rathmines and Rathgar musical society, captaining their pinafore in the NCH and playing Mr Snow in Carousel at the Gaiety. Training with sister Peter Cronin, Colm won the tenor solo competition in the Feis Ceoil in the centenary year and made his operatic debut playing “il messaggero” in Aida with Lyric Opera, also at the National Concert Hall.



***Simon MacHale – Silvio (2<sup>nd</sup> cast)***



Simon MacHale is a BA graduate of University College Cork, and a BMus graduate of Cork School of Music where he studied voice and composition. Previous stage roles include ‘Simon’ in UCC’s production of Jesus Christ Superstar and also various chorus work in Purcell’s Dido and Aeneas, Händel’s Acis and Galatea and Weill’s Threepenny Opera (all CSM). Simon is a lay vicar choral with Christchurch Cathedral, Dublin with whom he has toured the United States. He is also a composer and has recently completed choral commissions for Christchurch Cathedral, Cork School of Music and the Cantorum vocal ensemble.

***Simon Morgan – Silvio (1<sup>st</sup> cast)***

Simon’s NCH roles include Ipparco in L’Egisto, Cox in Cox and Box, and Antony in Sweeney Todd at the Gate. Extended highlights include Danilo (The Merry Widow), Orestes (Iphegenie in Tauride), Guglielmo (Cosi Fan Tutte), Marcello (La Boheme), Hercules (Alceste), Tonio (Pagliacci), Scarpia (Tosca) and Eugene Onegin (Eugene Onegin).

Simon’s bass solo performances include Schubert and Haydn Masses, Bach’s B Minor Mass, Christmas Oratorio, The Mozart Requiem, Saint-Saens Oratorio De Noel, The Chitcheater Psalms (Bernstein) and Baritone Solo in Carl Orff’s Carmina Burana. He recorded extracts from Mirandolina by Martinu for Wexford Festival Opera, and has written and arranged music for RTE, the BBC, Placido Domingo, and The RTE Concert Orchestra, with whom he performed live on Lyric FM at the NCH.



### ***Wojciech Smarkala - Beppe***

Wojciech graduated from the Music Academy in Wroclaw ( Poland ) with a Master Degree of Vocal Performance - Vocal Faculty, Vocal Master Classes and Vocal Courses in Poland – Wratlavia Cantans He has performed at the Music and Art Festival in Wroclaw and Bayerische Musikakademie Marktoberdorf Munich, and worked with different companies and ensembles e.g. Wroclaw Opera, Evgen Onegin (Lenski), Polish Chamber Choir – Warsaw – oratorios concerts (Germany, France, Belgium), Musical Starlight Shows (Germany, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland, Austria) - ensemble member, Cooperation with Opera Ireland (La Cenerentola, Faust, La Boheme) and Opera Dublin (Lucia di Lammermoor, The Pearlfishers) - choir singer.



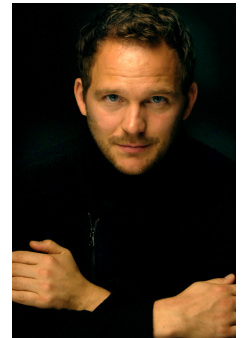
### ***Joan O'Malley – Nedda***



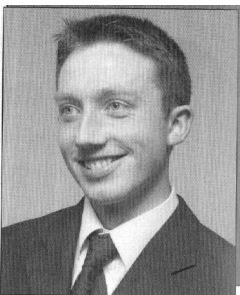
Joan has recently completed postgraduate vocal studies at DIT Conservatory of Music and Drama, where she graduated with a B. Mus., also receiving the McNamara Gold Medal for excellence. The highlight of her years at DIT was her participation in the Mozart/Da Ponte trilogy of operas (performing the roles of the Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro* and Despina in *Così fan tutte*) which were produced in association with Opera Ireland and performed in the Gaiety Theatre. Her recent engagements have included the role of Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro*, Taibhdhearc Theatre, Galway. She has performed for the last two seasons in Opera 2005 Cork's bite-sized touring productions, playing Rosina in *The Barber of Seville* and the Countess/Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro*.

### ***Ralph Strehle – Canio (1<sup>st</sup> cast)***

Ralph Strehle completed a doctorate in English and Philosophy before he studied at the RSAMD in Glasgow. He performs frequently with a variety of Opera and choral societies in Great Britain. His operatic roles include Cavaradossi (*Tosca*), Rodolfo (*La Bohème*), Alfredo (*La Traviata*), Adorno (*Simon Boccanegra*), Liverrotto (*Lucrezia Borgia*), Nemerino (*L'Elisir d'Amore*), Ferrando (*Così*), Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*), Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*). His most recent role was David in Richard Wagner's *Meistersänger von Nürnberg* with the Edinburgh Opera Players. Ralph was finalist in the José Cura Opera Project 2007.



### ***Cormac Ó Corcorain – Tonio (2<sup>nd</sup> cast)***



A member of the Patrician Musical Society in Galway, Cormac's previous roles include Count Ceprano in *Rigoletto*, Stewpot in *South Pacific*, Luiz / King of Barataria in *The Gondoliers* and Bill Calhoun / Lucentio in *Kiss Me Kate*. In recent years Cormac has been more involved in the backstage aspects of PMS productions, but still participates in their annual concerts. He also sings regularly with the Galway Cathedral Choir and the Galway based chamber choir *Audivi*. A past member of Maynooth College Chapel Choir, Cormac has done some training, primarily with Patricia Lillis but also with Gina Hanley and John O' Keeffe.



## *Meet the cast*

by Sinead Bevan

The Sydney Opera House, the Royal Opera house in London....here in Dublin, we feel a million miles away from these revered centres for the performing arts. But here we are, in the heart of the city centre, putting on a new performance of one of the best operas around. Can Dublin compete with its international counterparts? Is there such a thing as an Irish opera singer? In meeting the cast for *Pagliacci*, it seems the answer is 'yes', but they are few and far between. In casting *Pagliacci*, Wonderland Productions have picked some of the best young talent in Ireland, but they've also taken on board singers from the UK and from Poland. Quite simply, there are very few opportunities for singers in Ireland, and consequently, few singers.

Tristan and Donna are *Pagliacci's* chorus male and female, and have followed a similar path to their current roles. Both have studied on the DIT course in Music Performance, and both came to singing quite late in life.

Tristan had a business background, but gave it up to return to the singing he had enjoyed while in school. "I basically thought, 'If I don't give it a shot now I'll never get another chance.'" Similarly, Donna was halfway through a science masters when she discovered she could sing, took some classes, "and the rest is history!"

This doesn't mean that their current position is an easy one to maintain. Both bolster their income by singing at functions and ceremonies, or hiring themselves out to choir's across Ireland.

Donna says "Most opera singers in Ireland go abroad. In terms of female singers, I can only name one who has stayed in Ireland and done really well and made a name for herself and that's Sandra Oman. Almost everyone has to go abroad."

But this has not stopped Wojciech Smarkala coming to Dublin to fulfil his passion for singing and performance. He has been singing for years, and has trained from a young age. Singing has taken him travelling across Europe, first in Poland and in Germany, working for agencies that put on musicals. For him, "singing is like a drug! I love opera, I could talk about it for hours."

Wojciech has been in Dublin for three months, and playing the part of Beppe in *Pagliacci* is his first major role. It seems like a long time to wait, but as he points out with a smile and a shrug, "If you love to sing, then you need to be patient. The work will find you." He has been training with Ireland's leading voice coach Veronica Dunne, and clearly loves his time here.

Another fine import on the cast is Rhys, originally from Wales, who is playing the part of Tonio. Like Tristan, he came to singing later in life, when he became bored of his office job. “Voices for opera develop later in life anyway, as opposed to musical theatre where you can have a very short career. You’re past it at 22. I can thankfully continue until I’m really old and crusty!”

Like Wojciech, Rhys has also travelled around for his art, studying in Manchester and in Glasgow. However, this doesn’t bother him too much. “When I wake up in the morning, all I have to think is ‘Is there any other job in the world I’d rather be doing?’ And the answer is always ‘no.’ 99% of the days are really good.”

So it seems, that despite the lack of operatic opportunity in Ireland, our cast are simply delighted to be here. Hopefully, this performance of *Pagliacci* will encourage a new wave of interest in Opera in Ireland, and more roles for the hard-working cast.

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# *Production team*

## *Alice Coghlan*



Alice holds a Directing MA from GITIS Moscow and Middlesex University and graduated with First Class Honours in Drama & English from Trinity College Dublin and The University of California at Berkeley in 2001. In 2003 Alice founded Wonderland Productions. Writing/Directing credits with Wonderland include Life Shop till you Drop! The Spook Show and The Miser (translation from French) along with directing The Seagull after Chekhov, The Christmas Cabaret and Molière's L'Amour Medicin. Other recent directing credits include Sensual Food & The Red Shoes, both for The Patravadi Theatre, Thailand, and A Tourist's Guide to Terrorism for The Edinburgh Festival. Alice has worked as a Staff/Assistant director for Scottish Opera, Opera Ireland, Opera Academia Europea in Florence, Bourgas Opera Bulgaria, Opera North, California Shakespeare Festival and The Abbey Theatre where she is currently a script reader for the Literary Department. In 2007 she was a participant on The Next Stage - Dublin Theatre Festival's Emerging Irish Artists program.

## *Orna Joyce*

Orna is a final year Student of Music Performance at the Dublin Conservatory of Music, D.I. T. As part of her degree she spent her 6th semester studying on an Erasmus Scholarship at the Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst in Vienna, Austria. With voice as her first subject in college, she has performed extensively in both Ireland and across Europe both as a member of these Universities and a soloist. Despite her active love of opera this is her debut as an Assistant Director.



## *Sheila O'Reilly*



Sheila O'Reilly recently graduated from her Master's in Directing for Theatre from University College Dublin. Before that she studied Drama at The Queen's University of Belfast. In between she moved to Liverpool where she participated in the Young Directors Course at Liverpool's Everyman & Playhouse under Serdar Bilis (Arcola). She has directed and performed in numerous productions including, amongst others, The Vagina Monologues, Belfast Festival at Queens, Scratch (Unity, Liverpool) and Blue Showcase (Royal Exchange, Manchester). This is her debut production with Wonderland. Her next production will be directing the premiere of The Countess and The Lesbians for the Dublin International Gay Theatre Festival 2008.

## *Alice Butler*

Alice graduated from the Motley Theatre Design Course in London in 2007, which ended with an exhibition at the National Theatre Southbank. Since finishing her course she has designed set and costumes for The Slow Sword, directed by Noah Birksted Breen (The Old Red Lion Theatre, London) and for One In Five by Penelope Skinner (The King's Head Theatre, London). Most recently she has assisted designer Chisato Yoshimi on Deirdre's Sorrows; Two Versions by W.B. Yeats and Ulick O'Connor (National Library). She also previously assisted Chisato Yoshimi on her design for Submarine at Bewley's Café Theatre.

### ***Sophy Bradshaw Power***



Sophy is currently studying Technical Theatre at Inchicore College of Further Education. She has worked as Lighting Designer on 'Blithe Sprit' - Limelight Productions and 'Love's old sweet song-1907' Inchicore College. She has also worked as a lighting assistant on 'Splendour' by RAW in association with Project Arts Centre, 'Gaiety School of Acting Showcase 2007', 'Input/Output' by Roy Carroll in association with Project Arts Centre, 'Same, Same but Different'-Locus Theatre Company / Teater Ta Tar. Sophy worked on this year's Dublin Theatre festival and was involved in such productions as 'Ivanov-Katona Jozsef Theatre', 'BLACKland' - Kretakor and 'Road to Nowhere', Young@Heart. She worked on numerous productions for this year's Dublin Fringe Festival. She also worked on 'The Last Days of the Celtic Tiger' by Ross O Carroll-Kelly.

### ***Elaine Brennan***

Elaine Brennan is a first-class honours graduate of Trinity College Dublin and the DIT Conservatory of Music and Drama. She gained a Masters Degree in Advanced Accompaniment from GSMD London, and was subsequently made Broadwood Fellow of Accompaniment at RSAMD Glasgow. Recent concert performances have included the NCH and John Field Room, Dublin, the Edinburgh Festival, both the BBC City Halls and Royal Concert Hall, Glasgow, St. Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh, Glamis Castle and St. Martin in the Fields, London. She has performed on Lyric FM, RTE Radio 1, Deutsche Welle Television and the PBS network. She is based in Dublin.



### ***Miles Lallemand***



Miles was born in Swansea and became a Cathedral chorister at Llandaff Cathedral in Cardiff at the age of nine. Afterwards he won a music scholarship to Monmouth School where he studied piano with Richard McMahon at the Welsh College of Music and Drama. He then went to read Classics at Cambridge, where he also sang with Jesus College Choir under Tim Byram-Wigfield, as well as studying piano with Peter Katin. After Cambridge, he spent a while travelling and hosting parties before becoming a Latin teacher in a small boys boarding school in the Yorkshire Dales. Most recently he lives in Dublin where he is a Lay Vicar at St Patrick's Cathedral.

### ***Sophie Flynn***

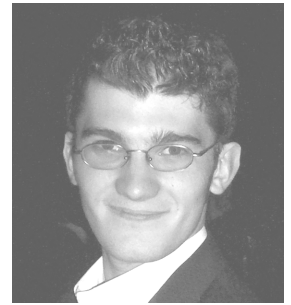
Sophie is a recent graduate from the University of Hertfordshire where she received a BA in Performing Arts. She also studied Theatre Studies at Colaiste Dhúlaigh. Previous productions she has been involved in are, Stage Manager, 4.48 psychosis. Director, The Merchant Of Venice. Director, The Vagina Monologues. Publicity Officer, Oh What A Lovely War. Publicity Officer, Everyman. Lighting Designer/ Technician, Red Roses & Petrol. Lighting Designer/ Technician, Steaming. Sound Technician, Geasa.

### ***Fiona Keller***

Fiona has just completed a BA (Hons) degree in Theatre and Performing Arts with Middlesex University, and she also studied in Colaiste Dhúlaigh College of Further Education. This is Fiona's first production with Wonderland and her first role as Stage Manager. Her previous credits include: 4.48 Psychosis, The Merchant of Venice, Director, The Black Box Theatre, Hitchin. As Lighting Technician for Dry Ice Theatre Company she worked on Cell, Civic Theatre, Tallaght; Urbs Intacta Manet, Filmbase; Hello Dolly!, The Vagina Monologues, Best Little Whorehouse In Texas, Mount Temple Theatre. And as Production Manager for Urbs Intacta Manet, and The Travelling Christmas Panto, both Dry Ice Theatre Company.

### ***Robert Bradish***

Robert's most recent theatre credits include: stage management/stage director Stuck Project Arts Centre, Fewer Emergencies Project Arts Centre, Totally Over You Players Theatre, and Loves Old Sweet Song – 1907. As assistant stage manager, Once A Catholic Smock Alley, and Picasso's Women The New Theatre & The Mill Theatre Dundrum. Robert has also just finished designing his first set for a new production of Much ado about Nothing!



### ***Martin Wunderlich***



Martin has been involved in several theatre productions in Ireland, the Ukraine and Germany, both on stage and behind the scenes. On stage his appearances include Franz Liebkind in The Producers, Gaius Cassius in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, Clifford Anderson in Ira Levin's Deathtrap and Sir Malcolm Squire in Ian Hornby's Hello, is there any body there. He is the co-founder of an English language theatre group in Jena, Germany, by the name of "The Prompted Players".

### ***Emer Mullarkey***

Emer Mullarkey has a Cultural Management MA from the Sorbonne University in Paris and an honours degree from Trinity College Dublin. She has worked on the production of the Celtic World and Music Festival in Chambéry France, she was one of the founders of the Irish Festival at Nanterre University (Cinema, Music, Visual art) and has been a member of the Management team for the Irish delegation at the Lorient Interceltic Festival for four years . She presently works with Screen Producers Ireland, a representative body for producers of Film, Television and Animation in Ireland. She organises their events both nationally and internationally.



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# THE HISTORY OF ITALIAN OPERA

By Emer Mullarkey

## 16th Century

The emergence of Italian Opera resulted from various different factors including discussions led by Bardi's 'Camerata' - an Italian group of artists and dilettantes who met up in 1570's and the 1580's to discuss the state of the arts. This group articulated a general dissatisfaction with the failure of modern music to achieve the emotional power of music from the classical antiquity. From this group the poet Ottavio Rinuccini (1561-1621) and the musician Jacopo Peri (1561-1633) applied music to drama in the manner of Greek tragedy and the first opera appeared in Florence in the mid-1590's. This opera *Dafne* (1597) is commonly regarded as the first opera, but it is generally agreed that first great composer of the new art form was Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643).

The subject matter of this first opera is significant. The Florentines turned to classical myth both as a source of inspiration and as an attempt to make their music more powerful. This was part of a wider revival of antiquity characteristic of the Renaissance. The protagonists of the first operas, Apollo and Orpheus, were renowned for their musical prowess. This was important as at first, many people frowned upon the fact that characters sang rather than spoke. Verse not prose and music not speech was viewed by the majority of people at the time as forming the natural language of the gods.

## 17th Century

The first operas were often put in place by large and wealthy families who wished to celebrate their social status. In 'opera de cour', a poet was commissioned by a prince to write a piece of work. The opera was then presented in a room in the palace. In 1637, the first public commercial theatre was put in place in Venice. Commercial theatres were run by entrepreneurs who would invest in the theatre and commissions from poets. These entrepreneurs often came from large and well established Italian families.

In the 17th century new social and economic contexts for 'public' opera established different mechanisms and different priorities for opera production. Opera still catered for the upper echelons of society; it was by no means as 'popular' as some may have assumed. The rise however of the 'impresario' (sometimes a theatre owner, sometimes a freelance agent) was symptomatic of a new commercial orientation, as was the emergence of the 'star system' for virtuoso singers. There was also a movement away from classical themes and from myths and the concerns of the characters became more human than divine, exploring emotional issues. In one sense, Venetian opera of the late 1630's and 1640's marked a reduction in musical possibilities for the composer. The commercial demands of the public opera prohibited the extensive choruses and large-scale instrumental participation. Both commercial and 'opera de cour' however were considered aristocratic pastimes as a result of their price.

In the early Baroque operas, broad comedy was blended with tragic elements in a mix that some found unpleasant. This sparked the first of opera's many reform movements. The poet Metastasio, sponsored by Venice's Arcadian Academy, created *liberetti* which helped to crystallize the genre of *Opera Seria*, which in turn became the leading form of Italian opera until the end of the 18th Century. Once the Metastasian ideal was firmly established, comedy in the Baroque-era was reserved for what came to be called *Opera Buffa*. *Opera Seria* was elevated in tone and highly stylised in form.

The modifications of the seventeenth-century operatic practices in Italy that created *opera seria* as a literary, musical and institutional phenomenon included the banishing of comic episodes. These had by convention involved a sub-plot carried on among a few servants. The plot in these 'scene buffe' tended to have little connection if any with the main story and eventually became detached in performance as well. The chief literary architect of 'opera buffa' was also the main figure

in the elevation of Italian spoken comedy during the same era, Carlo Goldoni (1707-93). The spread of opera through Italy from the mid 17th century on, bears witness to the versatility of a genre that could now adapt itself to very different social and political environments.

### **18th Century**

For much of the eighteenth century, Opera Seria as an institution was maintained by court cultures, from Naples to St Petersburg and from Lisbon to Vienna, or by associations of aristocrats at centres such as Venice, Milan or London. Opera Seria was seldom subject to the censorship that worried rulers imposed on the spoken stage and on the printing press.

There were problems posed at the end of the seventeenth century by the excesses of Italian opera-low farcical comic scenes, plots complicated to incomprehension, reliance on the supernatural or the marvellous and anything that might serve as an excuse for a spectacular visual effect occupied a prominent place in the opera of this time. Under pressure from singers and audiences, composers had forsaken the balance between poetic and musical syntax that had been the hallmark of Vinci's generation. Acting standards, particularly in Italy, were very poor. Attempts at a literary reform of opera soon emerged from a generation of librettists headed by the Venetian scholar Apostolo Zeno (1668-1750). Plots, drawn from ancient history rather than mythology, proceed along rational lines and involve a cast reduced from earlier operas to around seven.

A larger gulf separated comic opera from serious opera however, one that was only partially bridged by 1800. The distance between these genres made itself felt on nearly every front - their subject matter and literary tone, the skills and training of their executants, their audiences and relative engagement with contemporary society, the cost and institutional structure of each and not least their diverging dramaturgical ideals and musical means. Whereas serious opera was more inspired by ancient history, comic opera sought out a typology of human nature in the more familiar surroundings of contemporary domestic life and rooted in the present.

### **19th century**

The battle of Marengo (14 June 1800) can be taken in a rather crude way to establish one set of parameters for viewing Italian opera in the nineteenth century. Napoleon's victory, less than two weeks after the capture of Milan unsettled, temporarily at least, the established dynasties of the courts throughout the Italian peninsula. Napoleon's intervention led to the creation, temporarily again, of some improvised governments up and down Italy, creating a sort of paradigm for the improvisations and intrigues central to opera buffa plots.

The bel canto opera movement flourished in the early 19th century and is exemplified by the operas of Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, Pacini, Mercedante and many others. Literally "beautiful singing", bel canto opera derives from the Italian stylistic singing school of the same name. Bel canto lines are typically florid and intricate, requiring supreme agility and pitch control.

Following the bel canto era, a more direct, forceful style was rapidly popularised by Giuseppe Verdi, beginning with his biblical opera Nabucco. Verdi's operas resonated with the growing spirit of Italian nationalism in the post-Napoleonic era, and he quickly became an icon of the patriotic movement. After Verdi, the sentimental "realistic melodrama of verismo" appeared in Italy. (The Italian word verismo, from the Latin veritas, means 'true to life' in this instance.) This was a style introduced by Pietro Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* and Ruggiero Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* that came virtually to dominate the world's opera stages with such popular works as Giacomo Puccini's *La Bohème*, *Tosca* and *Madama Butterfly*.

The mid to late 19th Century is considered a golden age of opera, led by Wagner in Germany and Verdi in Italy. The golden age continued through the Verismo era in Italy and contemporary French opera through to Puccini and Strauss in the early 20th century.

## 20th Century

Perhaps the most obvious stylistic manifestation of modernism in opera is the development of atonality. The move away from traditional tonality in opera had begun with Wagner, and in particular the Tristan chord. Composers such as Richard Strauss, Claude Debussy, Giacomo Puccini, Paul Hindemith and Hans Pfitzner pushed Wagnerian harmony further with a more extreme use of chromaticism and greater use of dissonance. Operatic Modernism truly began in the operas of two Viennese composers, Arnold Schoenberg and his acolyte Alban Berg, both composers and advocates of atonality.

A common trend throughout the 20th century, in both opera and general orchestral repertoire, is the downsizing of orchestral forces. As patronage of the arts decreases, new works are commissioned and performed with smaller budgets, very often resulting in chamber-sized works, and one act operas.

Another feature of 20th century opera is the emergence of contemporary historical operas. The Death of Klinghoffer and Nixon in China by John Adams, and Dead Man Walking by Jake Heggie (which was produced by Opera Ireland last Autumn) exemplify the dramatisation on stage of events in recent living memory, where characters portrayed in the opera were alive at the time of the premiere performance. Earlier models of opera generally stick to more distant history, re-telling contemporary fictional stories (reworkings of popular plays), or mythical/legendary stories.

## Commedia dell'arte

Commedia dell'arte was a popular form of improvisational theatre that began in Italy in the 16th century and maintained its popularity up until the eighteenth century, although it is still performed today. All their performances featured stock characters such as Harlequin, Colombine or Pantolone and were performed outside with a few props and were funded by donations from the crowd. They were improvised along comic scenarios such as the cuckolded husband and his wayward wife or the young lovers who try to outwit their old parents or guardians with their cunning servants help. A troupe consisted of ten people; seven men and three women. Outside Italy, it was also known as "Italian Comedy". In Britain and Ireland it fathered our christmas pantomime and Punch and Judy traditions

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# About Wonderland

Wonderland Productions Ltd is a Dublin based Theatre Company, founded in 2003 by Writer/Director Alice Coghlan to make great theatre. To date its core focus has been making musical, comedy and entertainment theatre. *Pagliacci* is its first opera and ninth production.

Most recently Wonderland staged Molière's classic comedy *The Miser* for The Dublin Fringe Festival in a new translation by Alice Coghlan. *The Miser* was site-specifically staged in and around the audience in a Georgian home setting (The James Joyce Centre) in full Georgian costume, so that the audience eavesdropped on the characters in their natural setting. It was a great hit with the critics garnering a 5 star review in the Irish Times – and played to packed houses throughout the Fringe.

January 2007 saw the world premiere of the self-help spoof *Life Shop till you Drop!* by Alice Coghlan in collaboration with Clodagh Reid at Bewleys Café Theatre, which will tour extensively in Ireland this Spring and Summer. This show was also praised widely by critics and enjoyed a packed out and extended run in Bewleys before touring. Before *Life Shop till you Drop!*, Wonderland debuted in Bewleys with a Christmas Cabaret - which came complete with singers, dancers, comics, comedy sketches and an Emcee, and also sold out.

Wonderland also has an International Theatre Workshop series and has hosted two courses in clowning techniques for professional actors and comics, with circus clowns from Majorca and Mexico. More workshops in long form improvisation are planned for 2008. October 2005 saw the successful launch of our Dundrum based workshops for primary and secondary school children with a core focus on personal development through drama, music and dance training and performance opportunities. For more information on the coming program please email [sarajane@wonderlandtheatre.com](mailto:sarajane@wonderlandtheatre.com).

If you are interested in keeping abreast with our new and touring work and workshop and audition opportunities, then please feel free to join our mailing list at [www.wonderlandtheatre.com](http://www.wonderlandtheatre.com). Wonderland has an open auditions policy.



*The Miser in action*

At the time of going to print, *Life Shop till you Drop!* is confirmed to play The Cork Midsummer's Festival, Naas, Carrick on Shannon, Longford, Navan, Drogheda, Dundalk and Boyle Arts' Festival, with more dates to follow.

# Wonderland Reviews

## **The Miser 2007**



### **The Irish Times**

Quite simply superb! Witty, wonderful, Wonderland. I had not seen a performance by Wonderland Productions before, though they have been in existence since 2003, nor have I come across a more promising company since the debut years of Rough Magic. Venue, performance, pace, writing and costumes wed into a intoxicating mix of what is probably Molière's best farce. Translated, written and directed by the clearly multi-talented Alice Coghlan, it has been updated to Georgian Dublin (of the 1770s) with strong resonances for today. There was not a weak link in the excellent cast.



### **The Irish Mail on Sunday**

Verdict: *Fresh Molière shows us the filthy lucre...*

This late play by Molière is pure seventeenth century situation comedy, satirising a soulless obsession with money. It's full of misunderstandings, revelations, double-dealing servants and thwarted lovers.

This is a sparkling fast-paced production in the eighteenth century surroundings of the Joyce Centre in North Great St Georges' St...Martin Philips gives a scintillating, exhausting performance as the skinflint Harpagon, in this adaptation by Alice Coghlan, who has moved the setting from Paris to eighteenth century Dublin. Coghlan also directs with pace and an excellent eye for detail.

### **The Sunday Independent**

Molière's great satire is inventively staged by Coghlan's company, Wonderland, in the drawing room of 35 North Great St Georges' St and there's some fairly spiffing acting on display.



# **Life Shop till you Drop!**

**January 2007 followed by two national tours.**

## **Sunday Tribune**

January is an apt time to see a play about the evils of self-help books and new year's resolutions. So *Life Shop till you Drop*, a one-woman show that casts a satirical eye over one year in the life of single thirty-something Ailish McGovern (played by Clodagh Reid), is a salutary lesson in what not to read.

McGovern has vowed 2007 will be the year she finds love, a promotion and ultimately happiness. Armed with nine of the best-selling self help books she aims high – to be branch manager of her recruitment agency, get married and win the Irish Tatler Woman of the Year award...

Writer and director Alice Coghlan's clever script and pitch perfect self-help jargon are a delight, colourfully illustrating how we unconsciously use these phrases in our everyday life.

## **Metro**

Are you a self-help junkie? If so perhaps you could do with a little detox. This cautionary tale offers the perfect solution. Ailish McGovern (Clodagh Reid) is a girl who seems to practise more self-hindrance than self-help, and her story might ensure that you turn your back on pop psychology once and for all...

Ailish is like a little girl lost. Behind the biting comedy, Reid portrays with great understanding a lonely woman who is struggling to come to terms with her grief. As a result no matter how ridiculous Ailish's predicaments become, one always feels sympathy for her plight. And yet the only tears shed are ones of hilarious laughter. While there are undoubtedly touching elements to the play, the overriding tone is light and fun, thanks to Alice Coghlan's wonderfully feel-good script and Reid's ability to inhabit a number of comic characters, from Ailish's irritating boss to her chain smoking matchmaker.

## **The Irish Times**

It seems that the self-help industry is now a commercial reality, generating huge profits from the inchoate desires of people to be happy and successful. This gives the play a satirical edge, although its exaggerations are rooted in farce. Clodagh Reid plays Ailish with comic versatility, generating continuous laughter.

Wonderlandtheatre presents  
Summer '08  
Tour of . . .

Life Shop till  
you Drop!

The smart girls'  
selfhelp solution

**DATES:**

- Carrick on Shannon April 4th & 5th
- Dundalk 31st May
- June 4th & 5th Moat
- June 7th Naas
- July 29th & 30th Boyle Arts Festival

"Clodagh Reid plays Ailish with comic versatility generating continuous laughter"  
Gerry Colgan  
IrishTime

"The overriding tone is light and fun, thanks to Alice Coghlan's wonderfully feel-good script and Reid's ability to inhabit a number of comic characters," Roz Britton, Metro \*\*\*\*,

Starring Clodagh Reid. Directed by Alice Coghlan. Written by Alice Coghlan after collaboration with Clodagh Reid