

ABBNEY THEATRE AMHARCLANN NA MAINISTREACH

Abbey Theatre celebrates a successful 2011

~ Highlights included national and international tours and sell-out productions ~

Monday, 19th December 2011 – The Abbey Theatre, Ireland's national theatre celebrated another thriving year in 2011 with five world premieres, national and international touring, new work from new and established Irish writers and sell-out productions.

In total, there were 436 performances of 18 productions at the Abbey in 2011 on the Abbey and Peacock stages. Over 120,000 people attended these productions. The biggest draws of the year for audiences included **JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK** by **Sean O'Casey**, **TRANSLATIONS** by **Brian Friel** and **PYGMALION** by **George Bernard Shaw** with over 20,000 people attending each production.

'An epic production' – **The Sunday Business Post** on **JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK**

Fiach Mac Conghail, Director of the Abbey Theatre said, *'I'm delighted with the productions our audiences have experienced this year. Following sell out successes with **RAOUL**, **PYGMALION** and **JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK**, I'm in no doubt our audiences enjoyed the work staged at Ireland's national theatre. Reflecting on the year, I'm proud of our first ever co-production with the National Theatre of Great Britain with **JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK**. To date almost 30,000 people have now seen the play in London.*

*This year, the Abbey also fulfilled its mission to tour, picking back up a tradition we started in 1911 when we toured to America. At home, audiences all around Ireland witnessed the great new play **B FOR BABY** from Carmel Winters while internationally we*

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*staged 99 performances of Mark O'Rowe's **TERMINUS**. We look forward to more touring in 2012 and another great year with our loyal audiences.'*

The Casting Department at the Abbey Theatre conducted over 500 auditions in 2011 and 298 roles were cast across productions, readings and workshops. 33 actors made their debut at the Abbey in 2011 and 110 actors were employed across the Abbey and Peacock stages in the year.

Other highlights of the year included the exhilarating production of **RAOUL** by **James Thiérée**, one of Europe's most extraordinarily versatile artists and the Abbey's production of **CURSE OF THE STARVING CLASS** by **Sam Shepard** with whom the Abbey has built a solid relationship over the last number of years.

'Spellbinding' – The Irish Times on RAOUL

Work presented at the Abbey Theatre included five world premieres which included **THE PASSING** and **THE EAST PIER**, two new plays by **Paul Mercier**. Both plays were Abbey commissions and were performed in repertory on the Abbey stage.

'Mercier's characterisation is superb' – The Sunday Times on THE PASSING

The Abbey Theatre is proud to support and showcase the best of the independent theatre sector. Six visiting theatre companies presented work at the Abbey in 2011. These included **The Ark** in association with **Theatre Lovett** presenting **THE GIRL WHO FORGOT TO SING BADLY** and **The Company** presenting **AS YOU ARE NOW SO ONCE WERE WE**.

'The cast of four are a dream to watch' – The Sunday Independent on AS YOU ARE NOW SO ONCE WERE WE

In the last year, the Abbey Theatre made history by presenting new plays by four female playwrights in a row. **NO ROMANCE** by

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Nancy Harris, **PERVE** by Stacey Gregg, **16 POSSIBLE GLIMPSES** by Marina Carr and **B FOR BABY** by Carmel Winters were produced, promoting work of Irish female playwrights and new writing at the Abbey.

‘Strong new writing like this breathes fresh air into Irish theatre’ – **The Sunday Business Post** on **NO ROMANCE**

The Abbey’s Literary Department, Ireland’s only full-time literary department receives over 300 unsolicited scripts every year and attended over 100 productions all over Ireland in 2011 including shows at the *ABSOLUT Fringe Festival* and *Dublin Theatre Festival*. In **Something Borrowed** it presented four new short plays commissioned by the Abbey Theatre which were, **MONSTERS, DINOSAURS** by Jimmy McAleavey, **GROWTH** by Robert Massey, **MARVEL** by Elizabeth Moynihan and **HALF A GLASS OF WATER** by David Ireland.

Another Literary Department initiative, and now in its third year, the New Playwrights Programme for 2011 is working to nurture and develop the talents of six emerging writers, **Neil Bristow, Amy Conroy, Clare Dwyer Hogg, Damian Kearney, Tara McKevitt** and **Lydia Prior**. The programme provides the participants with intensive artistic development in all aspects of writing for stage, including workshops, talks and master-classes with international theatre practitioners such as **Marina Carr** and **Patrick Mason** over 18 months.

The Abbey Theatre toured extensively nationally and internationally in 2011. Tours visited three continents this year with **JOHN GABRIEL BORKMAN** touring to New York, **TERMINUS** touring to the U.S., U.K. and Australia and **B FOR BABY** visiting the Tampere Festival in Finland and completing a 15 venue nationwide Irish tour. **B FOR BABY** by **Carmel Winters** also won *The Irish Times Best New Play* award in 2010. The Abbey Theatre’s first ever co-production of **JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK** with the National Theatre of Great Britain is currently enjoying a

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successful run in London, following its sell-out run on the Abbey stage. This was made possible with the support of Culture Ireland. Watch a video of audience reactions in London [here](#).

The intimate series of Abbey Talks were also well received, with over 2,000 people attending. Highlights included acclaimed Broadway, West End and Tony award-winning designer Bob Crowley in conversation with his brother John Crowley about his set design for **JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK**. In March **Paul Mercier** also chatted to fellow writer **Roddy Doyle** about his work including **THE PASSING** and **THE EAST PIER**. Recently during **JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK**, **Shivaun O'Casey** the playwrights daughter, was joined by playwright **Peter Sheridan** and Abbey Theatre archivist **Mairead Delaney** in conversation about her father **Sean O'Casey's** life and work.

The Abbey Theatre is one of the only theatres in Ireland with a full-time Costume Department. It established a public costume hire service as a direct result of restructuring in the organisation in 2009. Due to the growing success of the costume hire facility in 2011 the department had to increase the number of days it opens from one to two. The department maintains over 20,000 costume pieces collected over 100 years.

In 2011 the Abbey Theatre launched an online shop with ideas for a cultural Christmas and New Year including gift vouchers from the [Abbey Theatre Gift Shop](#). The Abbey's online merchandise site went live in May 2011 and on the first day had orders from as far away as Puerto Rico, Germany, France and Russia.

Currently entertaining audiences on the Abbey stage, **Roddy Doyle** has returned with his version of **Nikolai Gogol's** satirical comedy, **THE GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR**. In 2012 the Abbey Theatre's forthcoming productions include **BOOKWORMS** by **Bernard Farrell**, **ALICE IN FUNDERLAND** by **THISISPOPBABY**, **TRISHA BROWN DANCE COMPANY**, **THE HOUSE** by **Tom Murphy**, **THE PLOUGH AND THE**

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STARS by Sean O'Casey, **I (HEART) ALICE (HEART) I** by **HOTFORTHEATRE** and **SILENT** written and performed **PAT KINEVANE**.

Watch a video celebrating the highlights of 2011 at the Abbey [here](#).

The Abbey Theatre acknowledges the financial support of the Arts Council.

Booking and further information on www.abbeytheatre.ie and (01) 87 87 222.

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Notes to Editors

ABBAY THEATRE PRODUCTIONS FOR 2011

Abbey stage:

ARRAH-NA-POGUE

RAOUL

THE PASSING

THE EAST PIER

PYGMALION

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TRANSLATIONS

CURSE OF THE STARVING CLASS

JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK

THE GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR

Peacock stage:

AS YOU ARE NOW SO ONCE WERE WE

NO ROMANCE

THE GIRL WHO FORGOT TO SING BADLY

PERVE

ANGELS IN AMERICA

IT ONLY EVER HAPPENS IN THE MOVIES...

16 POSSIBLE GLIMPSES

B FOR BABY

SÉTANTA