THE GREAT HUNGER
BY PATRICK KAVANAGH

1—10 OCTOBER
AT THE ROYAL HOSPITAL KILMAINHAM

DIRECTED BY CAITRÍONA MCLAUGHLIN AND CONALL MORRISON

Abbey Theatre in partnership with IMMA

abbeytheatre.ie #Abbey2020 #TheGreatHunger
Welcome to ‘The Great Hunger’ by Patrick Kavanagh. You are the first physical audiences to attend an Abbey Theatre production in almost 7 months. We are so glad to have you here with us.

Back in March, we were forced to radically rethink our 2020 programme in response to the global pandemic. COVID-19 strikes at the very heart of theatre’s foundations – a collective experience which, typically, has no social distancing, no distance between performers, no distance between the audience members and, in some cases, no distance between audience and performers. Whilst the impact of social distancing has a profound effect on the physical making of theatre, the guidelines also present a creative challenge and, within this challenge, is a space to innovate and experiment with form. The world may be changing but the Abbey’s function must not change. The job is to tell Ireland’s story to Ireland. The way in which we do it may be different, but the end must be the same.

The idea of ‘The Great Hunger’, at IMMA, was one of the occasions when two minds are better than one. Graham thought of Kavanagh’s majestic poem as an ideal project for these troubling times and Neil remembered the generous offer of Annie Fletcher, Director of IMMA, to think of the wonderful grounds of the Royal Hospital Kilmainham for any suitable partnerships. The poem and the setting immediately seemed meant for each other. The struggle and redoubtable spirit of the poem’s hero, Patrick Maguire, seemed, also, to match the approach the Abbey Theatre has tried to take through this most difficult of years.

One of the guiding principles of the Abbey’s reimagined 2020 programme is to employ as many freelance theatre-makers as possible. As Ireland’s national theatre, we must continually seek to create opportunities for Irish artists to create work and connect with audiences.

We would like to thank the directors Caitríona McLaughlin and Conall Morrison for taking up the challenge we gave them, the incredible cast of 16, the 10 brilliant musicians of ‘Kilmainham Philharmonic’, the design and music teams, and all the Abbey staff for bringing this production to life in extremely challenging conditions.

We would also like to thank our partners at IMMA and Dublin Theatre Festival for their unwavering support. Finally, a special thank you to the team at The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media for working with us, up until the 11th hour, to find a way to allow the show to be seen by a live audience.

We hope you enjoy the show and thank you, so much, for coming.

Graham McLaren and Neil Murray
Directors of the Abbey Theatre
ISL interpreted performances feature a professional interpreter who translates the production into Irish Sign Language.

This production of The Great Hunger by Patrick Kavanagh has been made possible by kind permission of the Trustees of the Estate of the late Katherine B. Kavanagh, through the Jonathan Williams Literary Agency.

Running Time
Total performance time is approximately 90 minutes, inclusive of 30 minutes walking. There is no interval.

Special Thanks to
Gary Leeper, John Smith, John Byrne and Anthony Rafter.
GAA material courtesy of the IFI Irish Film Archive.

Please Note
As this is an outdoor promenade production it will involve walking, so appropriate clothing and footwear is advised. Total walking distance is 1.7km.

Social Distancing
Face masks are mandatory. Please respect social distancing and remain 2 metres apart from those around you at all times. We ask that you adhere to and follow the guidance of staff at all times.
AUDIENCE FAQs

HERE'S EVERYTHING YOU'LL NEED TO KNOW BEFORE ATTENDING A PERFORMANCE OF THE GREAT HUNGER AT IMMA

Is the performance safe to attend?
We have adhered to all COVID-19 prevention protocols and have a bespoke risk assessed plan in place for The Great Hunger to ensure the safety of all ticket holders, artists and staff.

Do I have to wear a face mask?
Face masks are mandatory. Staff will be wearing face masks also.

Where are the entry and exit points?
Please use the main entrance at Military Road to enter and exit the grounds of IMMA. Abbey staff will be there to admit patrons.

Where will the audience gather?
Audience members should walk up to the IMMA courtyard, where we’ll have a pop-up box office. Our Front of House team will meet you and supply you with a wristband for your performance time and direct you to your designated waiting area. We ask that you remain there until you’re brought to the first performance location.

How will I navigate the route?
Each audience group will be accompanied by an Abbey staff member, who will direct you towards the next location.

Will there be social distancing markers?
There are guidelines in place at IMMA to enable you to enjoy your visit safely. Please adhere to these and follow the guidance of staff at all times.

Is there any shelter?
This is an outdoor production, so we advise you to dress appropriately, wear comfortable shoes and prepare for inclement weather.

Are there toilets?
Toilets are located in the Courtyard.

Should you have any further questions our staff on site will be happy to help.

IMMA is Ireland’s National Cultural Institution for Modern and Contemporary Art. Nestled in 48 acres of land in the heart of Dublin 8, IMMA’s home is the extraordinary historical site of the 17th century Royal Hospital Kilmainham. Our programme extends beyond the gallery space, activating the beautiful grounds and buildings of the entire campus. A visit to IMMA can include time to discover, connect and reflect in our galleries, grounds, formal gardens, meadows, café and shop. IMMA is home to the National Collection of Modern and Contemporary Art, started in 1990 and now numbering over 3,500 artworks by Irish and international artists. Visit imma.ie

IMMA would like to thank its invaluable Members, Patrons and Corporate Partners for their support.
To be asked to direct ‘The Great Hunger’ is one thing; to be asked to co-direct it with Conall Morrison, whose legendary production of Kavanagh’s _Tarry Flynn_ I’ve been hearing about for 20 years, is quite another. Co-directing is never easy, but if you are going to do it you certainly don’t do it with someone who knows the work and the writer infinitely better than you do. Before my first meeting with Conall I was apprehensive, to say the least. Of course, I needn’t have been. Conall was warm and funny and shared his knowledge of Kavanagh willingly, generously, and lightly. In fact, working with Conall has been a wholly collaborative and creative experience; more than that - it’s been great fun.

These days it sounds weird to say that something is fun, in the context of a global pandemic. It sounds frivolous and irrelevant. And yet it’s not. That sense of fun, of play, is at the core of what we do as theatre artists, and it’s a gift: it’s necessary to the creation of work in preparation, rehearsal, and performance. More than that, that sense of play and discovery is an essential part of who we are, not just as theatre animals, but as a species. COVID-19 is brutally decimating our arts, and the livelihoods of all of our artists, placing the entire theatre community under serious threat. The ends to which we work have a serious purpose, but if we lose that fun, which prompts exploration and discovery, we lose that part of our humanity that connects us to each other. That sense of fun, in addition to being the engine of creation, also fosters an environment where we can recognise in each other both our shared frailties and our shared potential.

Stepping back to 1942 and ‘the stoney grey soil of Monaghan’ and spending time with Kavanagh, a man who was trying to carve out a space for himself and his art in a world that was at war, and in a community that didn’t always welcome his interventions, has been balm for the soul.

The complexity and richness of Kavanagh’s image making, the aching desire that underpins every stanza, and his ability to build a world for our imagination to inhabit and revel in, is a timely reminder that he was a truly modern artist.

He sits very comfortably within IMMA’s grounds. A particular joy of this project has been to scroll through IMMA’s archives, looking at the artists that both represent and speak to Kavanagh’s world, and to find inspiration and challenge in locating the nexus where Kavanagh meets them. For me in particular the work of people like Alice Maher, Willie Doherty, Jaki Irvine Ilya, Paula Rego, John Gerrard, Emilia Kabakova, Fergus Martin and Gillian Waring.

Watching how those artists in turn sit next to each of our individual performers, the actors and musicians who bring Kavanagh’s text into 3D, breathing life and love into it, has been like seeing a painting of an old master being restored to its full glory. Conall and I have been very lucky with our collaborators on this production. We have a dream team in Saileóg our costume designer, Paul our set and lighting designer and Conor our composer. Each of them has deepened and enriched our connection to Kavanagh’s poem with every conversation and piece of work they produce. It is the Abbey Technical team who are the real poets in this journey. When Neil and Graham had the idea to produce this poem/play none of us realised what a Herculean effort would be asked of the technical team, and they have created magic in a field. Like Patrick Maguire, the subject of ‘The Great Hunger’, the only thing we need to complete our journey now is to meet our other half, to be seen, to watch, and to be watched, properly, in a way that helps all of us understand a little bit more about what it is to be human.

Caitriona McLaughlin
Like many theatre artists, I had to take the Covid Tippex to my diary this year as show after show was cancelled. So to get a call from the Abbey asking would I be interested in co-directing a promenade version of ‘The Great Hunger’ – one of my favourite poems – was immensely exciting.

And co-directing? Directors are normally a solo act, working with a team, of course, but used to ultimately having control of the steering wheel. But the ambition for this show is large: the epic poem performed over the wonderful span of the site at IMMA, so the wisdom of having two directors quickly became clear.

Working with Caítriona McLaughlin has been a treat: as well as it being great fun, two minds have definitely been greater than one in analysing the text and dreaming up ideas of how this remarkable piece of writing could be fused with the theatricality of the IMMA grounds. And with a lot of theatre on pause, the opportunities to enjoy the pleasures of collaboration have been thin on the ground, so to share this process with Caítriona, designer Paul Keogan, costume designer Saileóg O’Halloran, and composer Conor Linehan, and explore with them how best to animate Kavanagh’s epic work, has been a sustaining pleasure. And our ideas have all been realised by a dedicated Abbey staff who are determined to keep making theatre in these challenging days.

We have been able to attract a top-flight cast and a superb roster of musicians - 26 in all - a wonderful number of performers to bring together to bring Kavanagh’s vision to full-blooded life.

‘THE GREAT HUNGER’ IS ONE OF THE GREATEST POEMS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. KAVANAGH’S TALE OF SUBSISTENCE FARMER PATRICK MAGUIRE AND HIS LIFE AND TIMES IS STARK, STRIKINGLY VIVID, BRUIISINGLY HONEST - UNSPARING IN ITS DEPICTION OF MAGUIRE’S LONELINESS AND REPRESSION.

But yet it is also shot through with beauty - the beauty of the language itself, and moments within the piece where the transcendent materialises, where the light shines in. If it is one of the great Irish works of the twentieth century, it also speaks to us here in the twenty-first - difficult days, where some have experienced loneliness and anxiety like Maguire, and where we can recognise Maguire’s experience of nature being pitiless to the fragile human. So, in the performance of ‘The Great Hunger’ we watch Maguire’s travails, and they speak to us, but the redemptive energies too are on offer: enchantingly rich language, the moments of sunshine and transformation, and the communal desire to gather, tell a tale and share the experience.

Conall Morrison
No Entrance or Exit

This graphic is based on an IMMA Engagement & Learning/New Graphic project.
ABBREY THEATRE STAFF

Andrea Ainsworth
Donal Ayton
Cliff Barragry
Roxzan Bowes
Aoife Brady
Susan Bryan
Niamh Buckley
Nicola Burke
Orla Burke
Simon Burke
Christina Byrne
Eoin Byrne
Maura Campbell
David Carpenter
Luke Casserly
Daire Cavanagh
Jack Cawley
Priyanka Chidgumpi
Connall Coleman
Derek Conaghy
Laura Condon
Evan Connolly
Niamh Cooke-Escapli
Jen Coppinger
Richard Curwood
Mairéad Delaney
Sean Dennehy
Pat Dillon
Debbie Doak
Bronagh Doherty
Colin Doran
Con Doyle
David Doyle
Laura Doyle
Ken Dunne
Morgan Dunne
Lisa Ellen Schon
Danny Erskine
Aoife Eustace Doyle
Breege Fahy
Eimear Farrell
Lisa Farrelly
John Finnegan
Craig Flaherty
David Fleming
Ellen Fleming
Robert Flynn
Veronica Foo
Tara Furlong
Sophie Furlong Tighe
Derek Garland
Donna Geraghty
Sandra Gibney
Shane Gill
Catherine Griffin
John Gunning
Jamie Hallahan
Clodhna Hallissey
Thomas Hand
Fergus Hannigan
Grace Healy
Marie Hegarty
Daniel Hickey
William Hickey
Dermot Hicks
James Hickson
Dara Hogan
Laura Honan
Narges Jahani
Larry Jones
Sarah Jones
Maeve Keane
Fergus Kelly
Yvonne Kelly
Albhe Kelly-Miller
Tom Kennedy
Shane Kenny
Andy Keogh
Phil Kingston
Anne Kyle
Michael Kyle
Luke Lamont
Marie Lawlor
Adrian Leake
Jonne Lindfors
Ciara Lynch
Bridget Lynskey Faust
Darren Magnier
Heather Maher
Elaine Mannion
Shannon Matthews
Katie McCann
Éadaoin McCarrick
Davy McChrystal
Dan McDermott
Kevin McFadden
Róisín McGann
Ciara McGlynn
Terence McGregor
Graham McLaren
Caítriona McLaughlin
Shauna McNally
Gus McNamara
Victoria Miller
Nadine-Mary Moore
Conor Mullan
Tara Mulvihill
Donna Murphy
Eimer Murphy
Orlaith Murphy
Neil Murray
Agnieszka Myszka
Emily Ni Bhroin
Siofra Ni Chiardha
Pawel Nieworaj
Holly O’Brien
Adam O’Connell
Esther O’Connor
Colin O’Connor
Jack O’Dea
Aoife O’Neill
Tara O’Reilly
Emma-Kate O’Reilly
Simon O’Reilly
Feidhlim O’Shea
Laura Pulling
Sinead Purcell
Valentina Quiroga
Martin Reid
Dean Reidy
Fiona Reynolds
Audrey Rooney
David Roper Nolan
Ed Rourke
Josh Roxby
Pat Russell
Barbara Ryan
Joe Sanders
Sarah Smith
Jacob Sobczak
Louise Stephens
Rachel Stout
Fergal Styles
Cydney Thompson
Sean Treacy
Renée Van De Schoor
Sean Walsh
Jesse Weaver
Sarah-Jane Williams
Sally Withnell
Monika Włodarczyk
Bill Woodland
Díarmuid Woods

BOARD
Jane Daly
Loretta Dignam
Bosco Hogan
Peter Lowry
Kevin McFadden
Máire O’Higgins
Breda O’Keeffe
Dr. Frances Ruane (Chair)
Michael Owens
Michael Wall
Michael West
GOLD AMBASSADORS
Behaviour and Attitudes

SILVER AMBASSADORS
Trocadero
101 Talbot Restaurant
Clarion Consulting Limited
The Church Bar & Restaurant
Le Bon Crubeen
The Merrion Hotel
Thompson & Knight LLP
US Visa Solutions

DIRECTORS’ CIRCLE
Tony Ahearne
Richard and Sherril Burrows
Pat Butler
The Cielinski Family
Fiona and Niall Coffey
John P. Drew
Deirdre Finan
Honorable Elizabeth Frawley Bagley
The Bernard and Muriel Lauren Foundation
James McNally
Donal Moore
William O’Connor
Sheelagh O’Neill
Joseph and Mary Lou Quinlan
Sarah and Sean Reynolds
Dr. Frances Ruane
Susan and Denis Tinsley
Lloyd Weinreb

SILVER PATRONS
James Adrian
William H. Bohnett
Frances Britton
Catherine Byrne
Tommy Gibbons
Dr. John Keane
Andrew Mackey
Eugenie Magee
Eugene Magee
Ryan Manus
Gerard and Liv McNaughton
Alan O’Sullivan
Prof. Joseph Walshe

PRINCIPAL PARTNER
BANK OF AMERICA

PROGRAMME PARTNERS

CORPORATE GUARDIANS