

Abbey Theatre in
partnership with IMMA



ABBey THEATRE
AMHARCLANN NA MAINISTREACH

THE GREAT HUNGER

BY PATRICK KAVANAGH



**DIRECTED BY CAITRÍONA MCCLAUGHLIN
AND CONALL MORRISON**

1—10 OCTOBER

**AT THE ROYAL HOSPITAL
KILMAINHAM**



IMMA

Abbey Theatre
International
Maritime
Museum

BANK OF AMERICA



abbeytheatre.ie

#Abbey2020 #TheGreatHunger



WELCOME

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



COMPANY

Cast

Emmet Byrne
Liam Carney
Peter Coonan
Derbhle Crotty
Naoise Dunbar
Felispeaks
Maeve Fitzgerald
Andrea Irvine
Mark Lambert
Patrick Martins
Eleanor Methven
Michael Glenn Murphy
Brid Ní Neachtain
Barry Simpson
Eloise Stevenson
Catherine Walsh

Musicians

Éamonn Cagney
Susan Doyle
Dermot Dunne
Ken Edge
Caimin Gilmore
Vyvienne Long
Cora Venus Lunny
Lisa O'Neill
Niwel Tsumbu
Olesya Zdorovetska

Writer

Patrick Kavanagh

Directors

Caitríona McLaughlin
Conall Morrison

Lighting Designer and Set Consultant

Paul Keogan

Composer and Musical Director

Conor Linehan

Costume Designer

Saileóg O'Halloran

Composer (Stanza 1)

Lisa O'Neill

Voice Director

Andrea Ainsworth

Movement Director (Stanza 8)

Liz Roche

Casting

Sarah Jones

Dramaturg

Louise Stephens

Producer

Jen Coppinger

Producing Assistant

David Doyle

Production Manager

Sally Withnell

Company Manager

Danny Erskine

Company Stage Manager

Bronagh Doherty

Deputy Stage Managers

Tara Furlong

Anne Kyle

Assistant Stage Managers

Orla Burke

Zoë Reynolds

Props Master

Eimer Murphy

Props Assistant

Adam O'Connell

Head Electricians

Simon Burke

Dave Carpenter

LX

Kevin McFadden

SFX

Morgan Dunne

Costume Supervisor

Emily Ní Bhróin

Hair and Make-Up Consultant

Lisa Smythe

Sign Language Interpreter

Amanda Coogan

Sculptural Elements

Ger Clancy, ArtFx LTD.

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Maura Campbell

Publicity

Róisín McGann

Graphic Design

ZOO.

Photography

Ros Kavanagh

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.



ISL interpreted performances feature a professional interpreter who translates the production into Irish Sign Language.

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.



An Roinn Turasóireachta, Cultúir,
Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán
Department of Tourism, Culture,
Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media

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.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Caitríona McLaughlin

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 Kabrokov, 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.

Caitríona McLaughlin

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Conall Morrison

Like many theatre artists, I had to take the Covid Tippet 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 Caitríona 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 Caitríona, 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, BRUISINGLY 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



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

Stanza

6

Stanza

7

Stanza

8

**Abbey Theatre
Box Office**

**Main
Entrance and Exit**

Stanza

13

Stanza

14

Stanza

11

Stanza

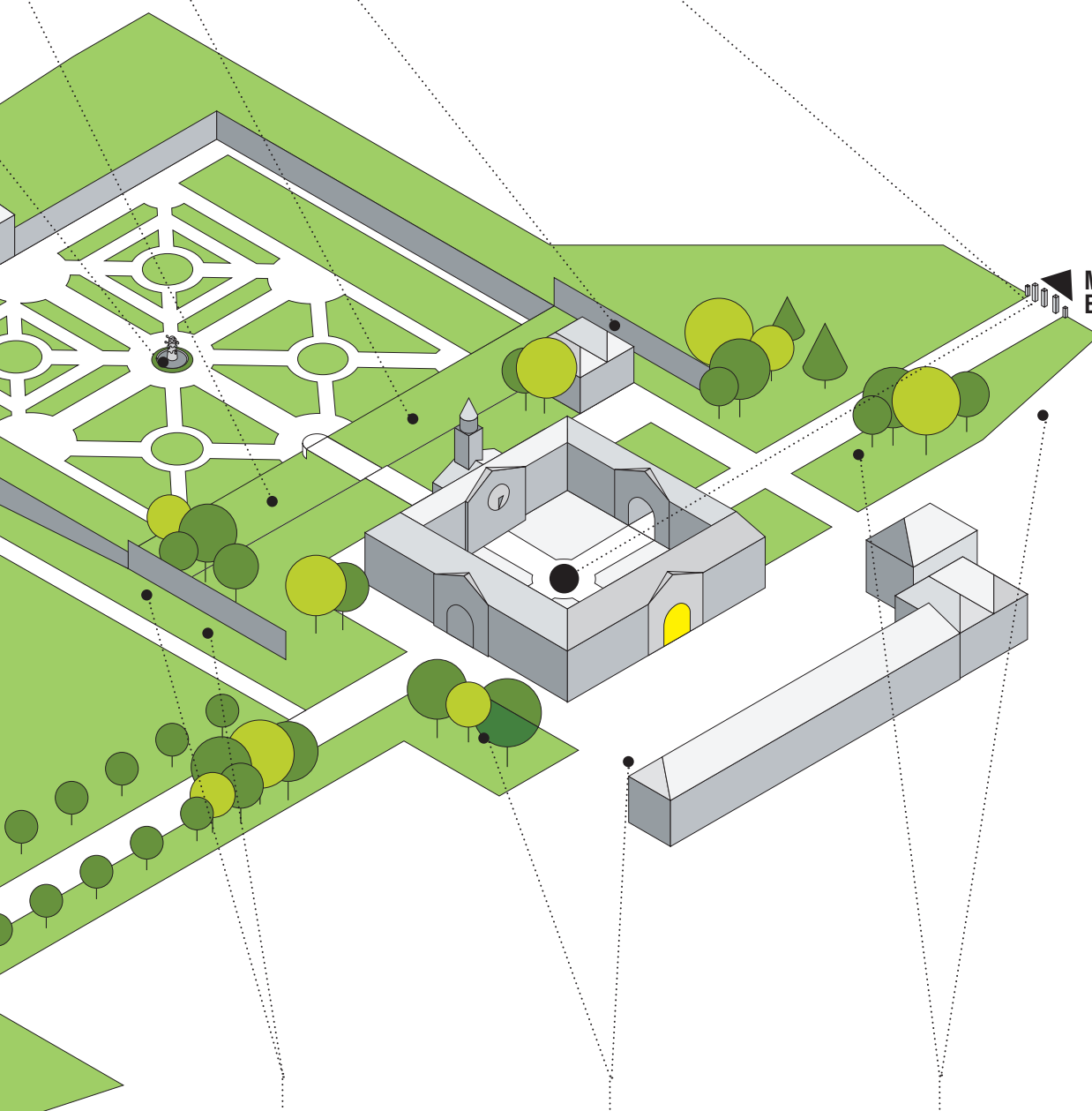
12

Stanza

9

Stanza

10



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Colin Doran
Con Doyle
David Doyle
Laura Doyle
Ken Dunne
Morgan Dunne
Lisa Ellen Schon
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Breege Fahy
Eimear Farrell
Lisa Farrelly

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Craig Flaherty
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Michael West

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OÉ Gaillimh



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