

An Abbey Theatre production



ABBAY THEATRE
AMHARC LANN NA MAINSTREACH

iGirl

WRITTEN BY
MARINA CARR

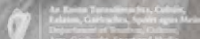
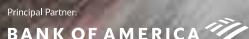
DIRECTED BY
CAITRÍONA MCLAUGHLIN

PERFORMED BY
OLWEN FOUÉRÉ

9 — 30 OCTOBER

abbeytheatre.ie
#iGirl

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COMPANY

Girl	Olwen Fouéré
Writer	Marina Carr
Director	Caitríona McLaughlin
Set and Video Design	Joanna Parker
Costume Design	Catherine Fay
Lighting Design	Sinéad Wallace
Sound Design and Composer	Carl Kennedy
Video Design	Daniel Denton
Movement Director	Sue Mythen
Voice Director	Andrea Ainsworth
Hair and Makeup	Caroline McCurdy
Casting Director	Sarah Jones
Costume Supervisor	Síofra Ní Chiardha
Producer	Jen Coppinger
Producing Assistant	Clara Purcell
Production Manager	Sally Withnell
Company Manager	Danny Erskine
Company Stage Manager	Roxzan Bowes
Deputy Stage Manager	Kevin Mullery
Assistant Stage Manager	Orla Burke
Costume Dresser	Maeve Brennan
Costume Team	Tara Mulvihill Sandra Gibney Vicky Miller Maeve Brennan
Chief Electrician	Simon Burke
Lighting Programmer and Operator	Eoin Byrne
Head of Sound	Morgan Dunne
Sound Technicians	Derek Conaghy Aidah Sama Eimer Murphy
Props Master	Adam O'Connell
Props Assistant	Noel Bell (CT Ireland)
Video Programming and Operation	TPS
Set Construction	Sandra Butler
Scenic Artist	Pat Russell
Flymen	Pawel Nieworaj Martin Reid
Stage Technicians	John Finnegan Larry Jones
Production Management	
Secondment	Zac Saric
Lighting Design Placement	Kevin Murphy

MUSICIANS

Violin/Viola	Cora Venus Lunny
Cellos	Jane Hughes Delia Lynch Jenny Dowdall Gerald Peregrine
Marketing and Press	Maura Campbell Fergus Hannigan Heather Maher Róisín McGann Jack O'Dea Sharon Sorohan ZOO. Barry McCall
Graphic Design	Leonard Daly
Production Imagery	Ros Kavanagh
Production Imagery Hair and Make up	Ali Stewart
Rehearsal Photography	Brid Ní Ghrúagáin
Irish Sign Language Interpreter	Michael Poynor
Audio Description	
Captioner	



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



Audio Description is a live verbal commentary fed through an ear piece that captures the visual elements of a production as it unfolds, that a blind or partially sighted person might otherwise miss.



Captioning is similar to television subtitling and gives deaf and hard of hearing audiences access to live performance.

Audio Described and Captioned performances are provided by Arts & Disability Ireland with funding from the Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon

Running Time: Approx. 1 Hour 40 minutes. There is no interval.

Sections of the text of Marina Carr's *iGirl* also formed the libretto for a new opera composed by Roger Doyle, which was first broadcast on RTÉ Lyric Fm's Opera Night on 28th September 2020, and has been released as a double album available at www.rogerdoyle.com

Photography: Ros Kavanagh



L-R Olwen Fouéré, Caitríona McLaughlin, Marina Carr and Jessica Traynor

'Like String Theory'

Jessica Traynor in conversation
with Marina Carr, Olwen Fouéré
and Caitríona McLaughlin

IN THE ABBEY REHEARSAL ROOM, SEPTEMBER 27TH, 2021

JT I'd love to kick off by asking you to talk about how *iGirl* came about.

MC I worked with Caitríona on *On Raftery's Hill* a few years ago at the Abbey. And we had a fantastic time. I was chatting to Caitríona and said, 'I have this thing, I'm adding bits to it every couple of weeks...would you have a look at it?' – thinking if there was a slot, five years down the line, maybe... In the meantime, Caitríona becomes the Artistic Director of the Abbey Theatre. Just real serendipity! However, a slot came up. Caitríona read *iGirl*, and said she loved it, and the idea of Olwen performing it too.

JT And Caitríona, did this feel very much like a Dublin Theatre Festival play as soon as you read it?

CML It did really. I just knew I wanted to direct it and I knew I wanted it to happen. I hadn't planned to direct anything here this year, because of the new job. But then we had to reschedule other programming, and we had to make a quick decision...and if you're sitting with a new Marina Carr play in your pocket, it's very hard to resist! So I texted Olwen first, because I didn't want to say to Marina that we could do it this year unless Olwen was definitely free. Then we had a few days of 'Can we tell her yet?', while we sorted it out. And now here we are.

JT *iGirl* is an incredibly urgent piece. Was that part of your decision, the play being so alive on the page and speaking so much of now?

CML Completely. It's very relevant, it's very personal. But the way that Marina has written it, it feels very personal to everyone who reads it. How she's managed to do it I don't know – it's some kind of Marina magic.

JT I'd like to talk to you about form, Marina – the play reads as poetry and yet has that performative spark to it. How did it take that shape on the page?

MC Well I suppose I got a little bit tired of the well-made play, having attempted to write so many of them. I like to experiment while holding onto the dramatic imperative, and looking at how I can pare back the language, take it out of realism, how I can play with logic and time. These are things that excite me about the theatre and have for some time. During my long apprenticeship – the many adaptations I have done, from Tolstoy, to Woolf, to Gilgamesh recently – you can't help but learn things. It gives you confidence in how much you can play with form. That's what excited me, and terrifies me, because if people are coming and expecting a well-made rational play, it's not that. It's something different.

JT Olwen, I'd love to talk to you about your first response to the play with its many voices, and the suggestion you might embody them all!

OF When I read this, my first response was that this would be an amazing piece for a solo performer. For me, it's like a journey into the underworld to retrieve something and offer it to the audience. I don't have anything against the well-made play, but I rarely work in terms of character. I tend to work much more in terms of an experiential journey. So it appealed to me for many reasons – the form opens itself up completely to entering into all these different dimensions, not being tied to place and character... and what is amazing about it, is how immediate the play suddenly becomes. It is completely about our existence now, and looking at the psychic DNA of our existence.

JT I'd like to talk about the many voices we hear in the play – we have the Neanderthals, we have Jeanne d'Arc, Antigone, Persephone, Jocasta, we even have Oedipus. Marina, can you talk to me about how these voices presented themselves to you?

'Like String Theory'

MC I suppose these voices have just always been there. I've been reading myths since I was a child. *iGirl* I wrote when I was supposed to be writing a commission, so it was like being bold, or a little holiday, and this is just for me and it doesn't matter if it never sees the light of day. So, this is how I feel tonight about Oedipus, or myself, or Jocasta, or Persephone. They are fragments, and it's tied into how fragmented we are ourselves. We were talking about this earlier in rehearsal; the idea that you call yourself 'I', that you are a coherent functioning adult in a rational world, and it's just nonsense. If the past year has taught us anything, it's about the swirl and swill of our own existence. So in part, the play is trying to articulate that. I've never felt very certain about the 'I'. And the other part is, we are such a product of our own family, our cultural history. In your DNA, you're carrying cataclysmic psychic traumas that have happened to the race. These are driving us, but we don't have the logic to articulate that.

OF Yes – when I talk about the idea of retrieval, it's about trying to bring up something that's part of the layer of consciousness that we've forgotten about, giving these voices space to speak, as they're speaking through us all the time.

CML It's funny, I think that when you're making something, everything you experience and watch and see, it all ends up in what you're making. So as well as being an abstract collage of who the speaker in the play is – we've been calling it 'the spirit' – it's also a real insight into all the multiple layers that go into creating something. Maybe that's my desire to turn everything into a well made play! Joking aside, I love the structure, the freedom it gives Olwen to have layers of character and thought and impulse and physicality, without having to impose an ordered logic on it.

OF There are constant transformations in it, which are amazing to experience.

JT Marina, can you talk to us a little about the Neanderthals and what they represent in the piece.

MC Well maybe I romanticize the Neanderthals. But I think they represent the best qualities of the human race – and let's not forget we have a few good qualities: our impulse towards kindness, mercy, our love of knowledge, our love of beauty. Our gentleness, at times. To me, these are Neanderthal qualities. It's a bit like the lost city of Troy, or any of those fabled cities – something incredible was lost, when Troy was lost. And we're left with the loss of that. But we're also haunted by the memory. And somewhere in us, we know we are capable of better. We are capable of retrieval, and yet this will to power, this will to destruction, seems to be rising in human nature.

CML I have a less romantic view of the Neanderthals, I'm not sure they were so benign. But the dark beside the light, the instinctive beside the learned – all these things sit side by side in Marina's work. The idea that the Oedipus myth tells the story of how we became human – there's something for me in the genetic journey of the species and the parallel myth, and how these stand against each other and tell a wider, deeper story of how we got here.

JT Caitríona, can you talk about how you all approached the the play in rehearsal?

CML The first thing we did was read it a lot, and had a lot of conversations to be sure we knew Marina's intentions – because there are many areas where you could apply a number of interpretations. And what's been brilliant about working with Olwen is that she never offers the most obvious interpretations in terms of performance! We started where we wanted to, not necessarily at the beginning, and Marina was bringing in new scenes...then she brought in a scene that felt very like 'the end', and it just felt very right. That's when the process really started to take off, and take a shape. Once we knew where we were going, it gave us freedom with the rest of the play.

JT I wanted to ask you to talk about the design process. I'm excited to see what this will look like on the stage.

CML Joanna Parker who designed On Raftery's Hill is designing this. Joanna has very strong ideas and yet still manages to be responsive and mercurial. We were all on slightly different versions of the same page when it came to our vision for the design. Olwen had a fairly stripped back idea in her mind – like an empty theatre. I had a blank page in my mind, that I couldn't get away from. And Jo had this kind of epic structure that really gave us an opportunity for entrances and exits. Then working with Sinéad Wallace, the amazing lighting designer, we came to the centrality of a contrast between light and dark. And it's such the right impulse for this piece of work that moves constantly between them. So it's part the empty stage, part the blank page, it's all of that.

JT I can see it would be important for all those aspects to be reflected in the design. Which brings us neatly back to the idea of connection we discussed earlier! One of my favourite quotes in the play is 'breasts are like string theory, connected to everything', and I think that's a good note on which to finish our chat – a reminder of that connectivity at the heart of *iGirl*.

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Maura Campbell
David Carpenter
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Derek Conaghy
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Laura Doyle
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Eimear Farrell
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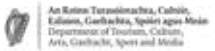
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