

# **Walls and Windows**

## **by Rosaleen McDonagh**

**Programme notes for audio described  
on-demand performance  
The Abbey Theatre, 8<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

Welcome to the introductory notes for this production of **Walls and Windows**, written by Rosaleen McDonagh. The play is directed by Jason Byrne. The set designer is Joanna Parker who also designed the video together with Dick Straker. Lighting design is by Paul Keogan, costume design is by Catherine Fay. The sound designer is George Brennan and the voice director is Andrea Ainsworth. Hair and makeup is by Caroline McCurdy. The dramaturg for this production is Louise Stephens. Video production/livestream is by Areaman. Livestream producer for Areaman is Shane Hogan. Livestream director for Areaman is David Keeling. Director of photography is Tommy Fitzgerald. Post-production supervisor is Aisling Calt.

The performance lasts for one hour and forty minutes without an interval.

### **ABOUT THE PLAY**

All Julia and John want is to live their lives with their two sons, on their own terms. But despite their hopes, the outside world and its racism puts paid to their plans.

A world premiere of a new play from Rosaleen McDonagh, this tender, complex and beautiful love story examines how external circumstances pull us apart, when all we really want is to be together.

Please note that this production contains themes of suicide, sexual assault and alcohol abuse. Age recommendation: 14+

## **ABOUT THE SET**

The Abbey stage is all black – the back wall and the wings ever present. Large video images are projected onto the back wall, spotlights stand in the wings. A skeleton of a caravan is placed centrally width ways across the stage. It is dismantled and moved about like a jigsaw puzzle to make up different scenes for example, Julia and John's bedroom and Julia's hotel bedroom. Nine caravan doors lean against the back wall side by side facing us. As the show begins an image of net curtains with side profiles of Julia and John either side facing each other is projected onto the back wall. The same pattern of net curtain hangs to our left side wall of the caravan frame, they hang over a bench sofa that has grey and white zigzag print upholstery. It's a classic caravan fitted bench sofa. The caravan door sits just left of centre, two vertical strobe lights highlight the internal door. A long white lace wedding dress hangs from the ceiling in the centre of the caravan. A white holy Mary statue about 7 foot tall similar to one you might find in a grotto, stands on the tow bar of the caravan to our right. This too moves about the space, a piece of the puzzle.

Ensemble and stage hands move the set about in the semi-darkness.

Later in the play John and Julia are in a house kitchen with a washing machine. To the right in this scene is a child's wheelchair, John and Julia address this area as if there were children present.

The stage is dimly lit in this production but has contrasts of occasional white spotlights, flashing blue tinged strobe lights and sometimes an ominous green hue. It's quite dramatic with a lot of shadow, a little bit like old black and white film noir.

## **ABOUT THE CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES**

There are eight actors in the show **Sorcha Fox** plays **Julia** – a 37 year old woman. She wears grey and black loose fitted leopard print leggings and a white short sleeved fitted top, with lace along the V-neck and puff sleeves. This blouse is decorated with a rose motif print in reds and pinks with green leaves. Sometimes she wears a lilac cardigan.

She wears red pumps on her grey stockinged feet. Her name in gold on a chain hangs around her neck along with a gold heart locket on a chain. She wears gold hoop earrings, a gold thumb ring, wedding and engagement ring and a gold ring on her right index finger. Julia's thick wavy dark brown hair sits above her shoulders framing a face that holds concern. A furrowed brow, a far off stare from her brown eyes which are framed with black kohl, her eyebrows are also pencilled black. Julia's short nails are painted a deep red. She's a smoker and often has a can of lager in her hand. Julia is not quick to smile and often holds her arms around herself in protective mode.

**John Connors** plays Julia's husband **John** a 38 year old man. He has short brown hair with some stubble on his chin. He wears bootleg faded blue jeans with a bottle green polo t-shirt that hangs loose over the jeans. The t-shirt has a weave print on it. On his feet he wears white runners, a little scuffed with navy blue piping down the side. His jewellery, a gold wedding band and a sovereign ring. John is a serious looking man but when he smiles his face lights up like a child, he has dimples in his cheeks. He is also a smoker and often has a can of lager to hand.

**Charlene** played by **Hazel Clifford** is John's teenage sister. Charlene's hair – long, straight, mousey brown falls down her back, pulled back off her face in a slight quiff. She wears army print trousers in shades of pink and grey that rest just above the ankle. On her feet she wears black UGG style boots decorated with silver coloured studs. Her sleeveless top is black with an Aztec print theme of baby blue and pinks with a splash of white running through it. Over the top she wears a faded blue classic denim jacket embroidered with a circle of flowers of tiny blue forget-me-nots and rose buds, large orange, red, yellow and blue, flowers and green foliage. On the edge of the collar the tiny blue forget-me-nots and rose buds are repeated. She wears large gold hoop earrings and a couple of gold rings on her fingers. Her makeup, thick pencilled eyebrows and heavy grey eyeshadow with mascara. Her resting face appears to be melancholic.

**Nancy** played by **Hilda Fay** is the mother of John and Charlene – a strong matriarchal figure in spirit and physical stature. She takes up her

space standing strong. Nancy is about fifty years old. She wears a knee length black leather skirt, a white fitted wrap around top with black leopard print and a black sleeveless cardigan that hangs comfortably about her hips. On her stockinged feet black comfortable slip on shoes. Nancy similar to the other Travellers in this show wears gold jewellery – twisted gold hoop earrings, a gold crucifix and chain together with a gold necklace around her neck. The crucifix lays low about her breast. She wears a gold sovereign ring with a horse and warrior upon it. A gold wedding band, an engagement ring and a gold ring with a dark blue stone set in it. Nancy's dark long locks are rolled up and pinned loosely away from her face with a slide and grip – strands of hair escape and hang loosely about her face and neck. Nancy's make-up is similar to the other women. Dark around the eyes and eyebrows accentuating her pale pinched face. Her chin held high, her poise firm and resolute.

Next we have **Jimmy the Garda** played by **Mark Fitzgerald**. A red headed fellow wearing a Garda uniform of navy blue trousers and a navy blue Garda jacket, with a bullet proof vest underneath. He also wears a Garda baseball cap on his head and sturdy black shoes.

**Ruairí Heading** also plays a Garda as well as the **Hotel Manager**. As the Hotel Manager he wears a shiny grey two piece suit that looks like it hasn't been pressed for a while. Underneath the jacket he wears a vertically striped shirt black, pink, grey, white. The top two buttons are undone to reveal a thick gold chain. On his feet, well-worn black loafers. His hair, an outgrown short back and sides perhaps is greased back and he has a little stubble on his chin. His mouth expressive, he purses his lips at distaste and widens with lust. Hotel Manager walks around with hands on hips and sits with legs wide.

**Kayleigh** played by **Ericka Roe**, is a young woman with long straggly blonde hair partly held up with a hair band. She has a bruise at the corner of her mouth. Kayleigh wears grubby navy blue sports leggings that have a thick white diagonal stripe across each leg and the word Puma up the side of one leg.

She wears a pink vest top with a little grey stonewash motif down one side and a deep red butterfly emblazoned across the front. Over this a

white lace short sleeved unbuttoned top. On her feet blue, pink and white scuffed muddied runners.

**Nyree Yergainharsian** plays **Deirdre** and **Aga**. A woman in her early thirties with long dark brown hair. As Deirdre she wears navy smart trousers, a cream silk blouse with a blue flower print upon it, a grey/ blue fitted jacket and smart navy blue pump shoes. Deirdre moves confidently with her silky, wavy hair flowing. Sometimes she wears pink rimmed glasses. Deirdre smiles and laughs a lot.

**Aga** on the other hand has a pensive, worried look upon her face and her hair pulled back in a practical bun. She wears pretty leggings with pink flowers upon them and a green t-shirt. Over her top she wears a sleeveless work overall which is navy blue with little white flowers printed on it and a large pocket at the front. On her feet she wears brown UGG boots.

Everyone besides Julia, John and Nancy are part of the ensemble and as such play more than one role.

That concludes the introductory notes for this production of **Walls and Windows**. They were prepared and delivered by Mo Harte. Audio description at the Abbey Theatre is provided by Arts & Disability Ireland with support from The Arts Council.

**Thank you. Go raibh maith agaibh.**

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