

Straymaker and the Abbey Theatre in association with  
Miroirs Étendus and Once Off Productions



ABBey THEATRE  
AMHARCLANN NA MAINISTREACH

# ELSEWHERE

CONCEPT/COMPOSER

**MICHAEL GALLEN**

LIBRETTO BY

**MICHAEL GALLEN,  
DYLAN COBURN GRAY &  
ANNEMARIE NÍ CHURREÁIN**

DIRECTED BY

**TOM CREED**

CONDUCTED BY

**FIONA MONBET**

**15 — 20 NOVEMBER**

abbeytheatre.ie  
#Elsewhere

20  
21

Image: Shawn Fitzgerald/Ahern



Principal Partner:

**BANK OF AMERICA**



Clár Éire Míneach  
Creative Ireland  
Programme  
2017-2022



## COMPANY

### Singers

Daire Halpin  
Amy Ní Fhearraigh  
Adrian Dwyer  
Sarah Shine  
Sinéad O'Kelly  
Fearghal Curtis  
Aaron O'Hare

### Cover

#### Ensemble Miroirs Étendus

Brendan Collins  
Sarah Van der Vlist  
Constant Madon  
Joséphine Besançon  
Cyprien Noisette  
Romain Louveau  
Elsa Moatti  
Julia Macarez  
Michèle Pierre  
Aurélié Martin

### Concept/Composer

#### Libretto

Michael Gallen  
Michael Gallen  
Annemarie Ní Churraéin  
Dylan Coburn Gray  
Tom Creed

### Director

#### Conductor

#### Vocal Director

#### Set and Costume Designer

#### Lighting Designer

#### Video Designer

#### Choreographer

#### Associate Director

#### Sound Engineer

#### Line Producer

#### Producing Assistant

#### Production Manager

#### Assistant Production Manager

#### Company Stage Manager

#### Stage Management

#### Props Assistant

#### Repetiteur

#### Costume Supervisor

#### Women's Wear Costume Maker

#### Tailor

#### Seamstresses

#### Hair & Make Up

#### Set Graphics

#### Set Construction

#### Head Electrician

#### Flyman

Fiona Monbet  
Romain Louveau  
Katie Davenport  
Sinead McKenna  
Luca Truffarelli  
Shawn Fitzgerald-Ahern  
Aoife Spillane-Hinks  
Simon Cullen  
Grace Halton  
Cally Shine  
Rob Furey  
Veronica Foo  
Conleth Stanley  
Eavan Gribbin &  
Ilona McCormick  
Sue Crawford  
David Grealy  
Monica Ennis  
Denise Assas  
Seán Jackson  
Caroline Butler  
Veronika Romanova  
Sarah McCann  
Istvan Laszlo  
Ger Clancy  
Joe Glasgow  
Pawel Nieworaj

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#### Social Media Manager

#### Publicity photography

#### Production Photography

#### International Associate Producer

#### Producer

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David Grealy  
Sinead Moclair  
Mission PR  
Nathan Snow  
Shawn Fitzgerald-Ahern  
Ros Kavanagh  
Edie Demas  
Maura O'Keeffe

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#### Producing Assistant

#### Production Manager

#### Stage Manager

#### Dresser

#### Props Master

#### Props Assistant

#### Sound Technicians

#### Radio Mic Technician

#### Marketing and Press

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#### Administrator

#### Artistic Co-Ordinator

#### Production Manager

#### Production Assistant

Emmanuel Quinchez  
Anne Delmotte  
Sofia Surgutschowa  
Flora Laborde  
Romane Vanderstichele

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#### Directors

#### Company Manager

#### Marketing Consultant

#### Production Managers

#### Assistant Producers

#### Assistant Production Manager

#### International Associate Producer

Maura O'Keeffe  
Sara Cregan  
Fin Flynn  
Annette Nugent  
Rob Furey  
Peter Jordan  
Cally Shine  
Sadhbh Barrett Coakley  
Aoife Clarke  
Clara Bulman  
Veronica Foo  
Edie Demas

Acknowledgments to Emma Morwood, Aoife Miskelly, Othman Louati, Sylvain Devaux, Bertrand Laude, Juliette Adam.

*Elsewhere* is part of Graham McLaren and Neil Murray's final season of programming at the Abbey Theatre.



Michael Gallen  
Image: Shawn Fitzgerald-Ahern

# 'THE MAKING OF THIS OPERA HAS THRIVED UPON THE SAME SPIRIT OF COLLECTIVE ACTION AS THE EVENTS IT REIMAGINES'

In January 1919, the staff of the Monaghan Asylum barricaded the hospital gates, raised a red flag and established an independent Soviet commune. Exhausted by the hardships of the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic, these 'front-line' workers overcame sectarian divides to strike for more humane working conditions and gender pay equity. Under the guidance of visionary union leader Peadar O'Donnell, they conceived of a form of 'lock-in' strike that would allow them to gain leverage over the asylum authorities without compromising the welfare of the more than 700 hospital residents.

O'Donnell included both staff and patients in the planning and operation of the Soviet, all wearing identical uniforms. In the course of a dizzying fortnight, this unlikely collective of revolutionaries held off the advances of the Royal Constabulary; spurned the entreatments of Archbishops, politicians

and the press, and even found the time for football matches and dances, presenting a powerful vision of what a care-centred society could look like.

I first came across the story of the "Monaghan Asylum Soviet" in 2016, and was taken aback by the nuanced and compassionate thinking behind this radical event, and that it had taken place so close to my homeplace. There was something in this story that corresponded with what, at my core, I want to talk about and bring to life in my work.

The idea to create an opera around this story grew from a single preoccupation. How must it have felt to have been a resident at the Monaghan Asylum during those astonishing events of 1919 - to have been given a momentary sense of worth and inclusion - and to subsequently endure decades of anonymity and repression in institutional care?



There are stories that need music to be truly told, and I felt that in making *Elsewhere* I might be able to encapsulate all of the thrill, humour, hope and heartbreak that makes this history so unique. In the opera, the events of 1919 unfold through the visions of Celine, a patient who, decades later, remains 'locked in' to the moment of the Soviet, believing herself to be its leader.

My search for the voices of *Elsewhere* has been a person-centred one. In 2019 I spent two months working at the Hôpital Psychiatrique de Malévoz in Switzerland. I ran workshops with the residents there but primarily spent my time listening, and learning to appreciate the deep reserves of humour and compassion that make humans a resource for one another even in the most challenging circumstances. It was through the many conversations had in Malévoz that Celine's voice began to manifest for me; a person possessed with great intelligence and empathy who - like many others - falters in the attempt to communicate herself in a way that conforms to the majoritive idea of 'normality'.

In the two years since, my co-librettists (poet Annemarie Ní Churreáin and playwright Dylan Coburn Gray) and I have carefully woven two stories together; the fascinating history of the Soviet and the tale of a woman who must dig unimaginably deep within herself to find her freedom and autonomy.

The world in which Celine abides is drawn from the cadence of murmured litanies, the hum of ETC machines, the gentle loping of the border accent... At times she also succeeds in bringing a raucous and riotous vision to life, whirling the characters and musical forces around her into a frenzy of wildness and colour. I found a great creative freedom in conjuring the diverse personalities that populate Celine's "elsewhere", using aspects of traditional and contemporary music - even the cabaret-kitsch of her nemesis, the "Inspector of Lunatics" - to deliver the energy and mood needed for their work routines, medical procedures, games, negotiations, and revolts.

The making of this opera has thrived upon the same spirit of collective action as the events it reimagines. As I write, the whole Straymaker family is busy working in our hive in Monaghan: a sublime, indomitable cast of performers and a deeply imaginative production team all being imbued with ferocious energy by director Tom Creed, conductor Fiona Monbet and producer Maura O'Keeffe. We are making an opera that is deeply rooted in our own creative culture - at the margins, on a border, at the edge of a continent - and which I believe is all the more ambitious and contemporary for it. *Elsewhere* is at times thrilling, challenging, hilarious, devastating - all of these have their place in this almost-unbelievable story. It is an honour to be bringing it to life on the Abbey stage - the imagined future of a forgotten past.

**Michael Gallen**  
November 2021



Julia Macarez (viola)  
Image: Shawn Fitzgerald-Ahern





Fiona Monbet



Tom Creed  
Images: Shawn Fitzgerald-Ahern





# Special thanks to

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The Gaasthuismuseum, Geel  
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Dearbhla Collins  
David Adams  
Shane Mac an Bhaird  
Daire Hall  
Dublin City Arts Office  
Meath Arts Office

The Blayney Blades  
St. Maeldoid's Church, Castleblayney  
The National Concert Hall  
Don Black & all at Wesley House  
Niall McClean/Monaghan Music and Piano Centre  
Christine Monk  
Fergus Shiel  
Diego Fasciati  
Robert Read  
Mary Sheehan  
Florentina Burcea  
Barry Conway and The Lir Academy  
Damian and Catherine Gribbin  
Bailey Gibson and Sons  
Gavin O'Sullivan and Irish National Opera  
Eamon Fox  
Eoin Heaney  
Brian Daly  
Don Black  
Jason Coogans  
Ciaran Murphy  
Trevor Price  
Gavin Mooney  
Ian Thompson  
Art Furey  
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McWalter and all at the Beckett Locke Apartments  
Louise, Eleanor, Aiste, Elizabeth, Conor, Donnchadh,  
Fionn, Maria and Seàn at the Glencarn Hotel



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Maeubh Brennan  
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Behaviour and Attitudes

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Trocadero

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