

A NOTE FROM CAITRÍONA MCLAUGHLIN, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF THE ABBEY THEATRE

Is Tom Moran a big fat filthy disgusting liar or does he just tell a great story?

Irish people are known the world over for their ‘great craic’, we’re “natural storytellers” who “never let the truth get in the way of a good story”. It is practically our birthright to exaggerate a bit for dramatic effect, it’s expected. We have spent hundreds of years perfecting the ability to uphold our own and each other’s lies, hide in half-truths, and ignore what we know is happening next door.

Tom Moran is a liar and his own admission of that fact is profound and refreshing. For me, *Tom Moran is a Big Fat Filthy Disgusting Liar* highlights a significant moment of change in Irish behavior and in our culture.

When John B Keane’s play *Sive* played for the first time in Limerick, there were riots outside the door and people clamoring to get in to see it, something important was being said. The audience recognised something in the play so fundamentally of themselves, so fresh, so unexpected, so truthful, raw, and exposing that they immediately identified its significance. This was not just a great story, this was an exposé, rural people talking about themselves to themselves and about enduring rural life in Catholic Ireland.

If that play marked a step change in Irish behavior, this one marks a leap. We have always had a fluid relationship to truth, one that is often grounded in shame. Historically we appreciate nothing is more dangerous, more unnerving, or more exposing than the truth, the bare ugly truth. Keane knew it and Tom Moran knows it.

Tom and a number of artists of his generation, in removing metaphor from their storytelling, have taken the concept of exposing the truth of our society’s and our family dynamics to a more direct place. Sharing uncomfortable truths and telling deeply personal stories with skill and alacrity, in the first person narrative, marks a significant moment in the Irish literary canon, we see it everywhere, in film, music, TV and literature.

Tom is one of a generation of theatre artists taking this compulsion for truth before a live audience and Tom does it superbly. He succeeds in creating great drama by employing humour and a keen dramatic intelligence to talking openly and honestly about his shame. This is a great story well told, but more notably, Tom’s play signifies a moment of change not only in the Irish dramatic canon, but in Irish culture.

Bringing this play under the banner of the Abbey Theatre, the Irish National Theatre, was important to me in order to acknowledge the significance of an Irish artist being able to talk so openly and honestly about shame and demonstrating categorically that our Catholic history and the grip of shame that previously prevented these conversations happening has now shifted. Tom brings truth, skill, and art together to examine Ireland now, specifically Irish people, our hidden selves and our capacity

for change and Tom himself is among the best of us, articulate, charming, intelligent, funny, uncommonly candid. *Tom Moran is a Big Fat Filthy Disgusting Liar* needs to be seen by Irish people everywhere.