

# **Static**

## **by Jimmy McAleavey**

### **Audio Description Introduction for performances in the Peacock at the Abbey Theatre up to the 18<sup>th</sup> July 2025**

Welcome to this audio description introduction to **Static**. This play is directed by **John King**, with Set and Costume Design by **Alyson Cummins**. Lighting Design is by **Suzie Cummins**, and the Composer and Sound Designer is **Rob Moloney**.

The performance runs for approximately one hour and thirty minutes without interval.

#### **ABOUT THE PLAY**

"The challenge is to live in this world, not a new one."

**Static** is a story to take you out of this world. Literally. A veteran astronaut in space and a lonely amateur radio operator in Donegal find each other by chance in the most unusual way, in this lyrical and searching play that explores our need for human connection against all the odds.

**Static** is a world premiere production. It was inspired by a real-life event when the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s disrupted communications between cosmonaut Sergei Krikalev aboard the Mir space station and his colleagues in Ground Control. Krikalev reached out to amateur radio operators on Earth, including Manus Joe McClafferty from Falcarragh, Co. Donegal, to help him find his way home.

This exploration of isolation, communication, and the double-edged role of technology feels more relevant today than ever.

## **ABOUT THE SET**

Upon entering the Peacock, the stage is only very dimly lit, and haze hangs in the air. The stage is divided in two levels, with a wall of machines spanning its entire width along the lower level. In the dim and hazy light, the dials and LED screens of various recording and playback tech glow faintly, some green, some a warm orange, and one or two a cool blueish white.

These machines are a collection of audio/visual equipment, from record players and EQ monitors, to AM/FM radios, ghetto blasters, some old-fashioned cathode televisions, and guitar amps. These objects date from each decade of the last fifty years. There are machines for receiving as well as transmitting signals. This could be a collection belonging to an enthusiast, or the remaining stock of a repair shop. It is vast.

Stuffed in between the machines are some old suitcases. Over on the far left of the stage, on the lower level, is an antique wooden desk, with papers poking out of the drawers, and microphones and headsets piled on top of the radios and old tv sets on the workspace. A wheelchair is placed in front of this desk, its back to us. Next to the desk is a small white fridge sitting on the floor with stickers from the Shannon Basin, Donegal and Lough Erne Amateur Radio Clubs, and fridge magnets from Las Vegas and New York. Next to the fridge is a coffee table, with a radio transmitter/receiver sitting on it, and an angle-poise lamp and tin of biscuits sitting on top of that. This corner of the stage is framed by wooden tongue and groove panelling, painted a blueish grey. The floor over here is covered in black and white chequerboard vinyl.

This workstation belongs to one of the characters, Moonman, in his house in Donegal. There are various documents peeping out of drawers here and there, like the sports supplement of a national newspaper, and an old Amateur Radio Station logbook. He has an old wooden footlocker shoved under an antique table. When he opens it later, it is filled with space paraphernalia: a poster for the Apollo 11 mission with the caption "One small step... One giant leap"; some model rockets and space shuttles; a silver astronaut statuette; and a parka with lots of badges sewn on. There are also a few biographies of astronauts tucked in the corner.

In the centre of the stage, sitting on a stack of radios, is a globe, lit from the inside by a bulb. It glows blue and green in the middle of the dark stage, as though floating in space. To the right of the globe, and on the upper level of the stage, which is about one and a half metres off the floor, is the Spaceman's capsule. This area is lit by cold, blue-white light, and has several grey consoles arranged into a sort of hexagonal shape. In the centre is a simple black stool which Spaceman uses to whizz from one piece of equipment to another. The largest panel in this space is his communications console, with dials and faders, and green LED displays. From the beginning, this comms panel causes problems for the Spaceman. Occasionally it fizzes and fritzes, with small puffs of smoke emanating from the panel.

Everything in Spaceman's capsule seems to be the same colour, and about the same age. A small laptop sits perched on one console, the screen and keyboard turned away from the audience.

Throughout the evening, the two performers remain in their respective sides of the stage, Moonman to our left, in the warm orange light of the various lamps in his office, and Spaceman floating in his capsule above and on our right, in the cold blue-white light. Communicating via radio, their eyes never meet, both completely ensconced in their own worlds. Occasionally, Moonman looks upwards, through a mentioned skylight in his workspace. Spaceman gives the odd glance to the laptop where he has called up real-time satellite imagery of the Earth – the closest the two can get to looking directly at one another.

## **ABOUT THE CAST AND COSTUMES**

**Spaceman**, whose real name is Commander Paul Slane, is played by **Seán Mahon**. A tall and trim man in his fifties, Spaceman has silver hair, neatly combed in a side parting. His forehead is lined, and his cheeks and chin carry a few days of beard growth. Spaceman speaks with an American accent. He is dressed simply in a blue flight suit, with a grey t-shirt underneath, and chunky black neoprene boots.

On the left shoulder of his flight suit, an American flag badge has been sewn on. On the front, on the right of his chest, the name of his company – Digistar - has been embroidered in yellow thread, with its logo - a star following an elliptical orbit. On the opposite side, his name badge – Slane – is sewn above one of his many pockets.

Spaceman moves slowly and smoothly around the space. He often sits on his stool, his legs suspended in mid-air, as though he were indeed in zero gravity. He wheels over from one console to another, and stands occasionally, though remaining very steady at all times. He wears a slim wire headset with microphone and earpiece throughout.

**Moonman**, his amateur radio handle, is played by **Dan Gordon**. A shorter man, perhaps in his late fifties, and with a slightly rounder physique, Moonman has a thick head of grey hair, a scruffy beard, and a soft Donegal accent. He wears glasses and is almost always wearing a chunky set of headphones, with one side left sitting above one ear. He wears a grey and white woolly jumper which he takes off later to reveal a pale grey t-shirt underneath – with the insignia of the Northwest Amateur Radio Club, and his own name – Moonman – printed on the sleeve. He has navy, well-worn tracksuit bottoms, and navy fluffy slippers into which he stuffs his chunky socked feet. He later pulls on an old khaki parka that he fetches from his footlocker, with worn badges from the Apollo, Mercury, and Space Shuttle missions, as well as the famous NASA worm logo – so-called because the smooth, rounded lettering of N.A.S.A. resemble a wriggling worm.

Moonman uses a wheelchair when we first encounter him, though later on he begins to stand and move around a little. He tends to have a mic in his hands – either the palm-sized version with a button on the side, or a mic on a stand – which he uses to communicate with Spaceman.

Additional voices are provided by **Ciarán McGlynn** and **Lesa Thurman**. These include the voice of one of Spaceman's colleagues in Ground Control, and the voice of the ship's computer, announcing alerts and warnings as they arise. We also hear the voice of a newscaster on a local radio station.

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That concludes the audio description introduction to **Static**, prepared by **Bríd Ní Ghrúagáin**. Audio description and accessible performances nationwide are supported by Arts & Disability Ireland and The Arts Council. For updates about audio described and captioned performances, text **ACCESSARTS** to **51444** or head to **www.adiarts.ie** for more information.

Thank you. Go raibh maith agaibh.

