

The Boy – Play One by Marina Carr

Audio Description Introduction for the matinee performance in the Abbey Theatre Saturday 18th October 2025, at 2pm

Welcome to this introduction to **The Boy – Part One** by **Marina Carr**, the first instalment of this two-play theatrical event. The play is directed by **Caitríona McLaughlin**. Set Design is by **Cordelia Chisholm**, with Costume Design by **Catherine Fay**, and Lighting Design by **Jane Cox**. The Composition and Sound Design is by **Carl Kennedy**. Video Design is by Dick Straker. Hair and Make-up is by **Leonard Daly**. The Movement Director and Choreographer is **Stephen Moynihan**, and the Voice Director is **Andrea Ainsworth**.

The performance runs for approximately two hours and twenty-five minutes, including one fifteen-minute interval. This performance uses full blackouts. It is recommended for audiences aged sixteen and upwards, with content and themes in this production drawn from ancient Greek drama, including murder, sexual violence, child abuse, incest, child sacrifice, infanticide, and suicide.

ABOUT THE PLAY

The Boy: A Two-Play Theatrical Event explores the timeless themes of power, legacy, family, and love. Do any of us really control our fate?

It features two new plays that can be enjoyed separately or experienced back-to-back for the full, epic story on Ireland's national stage. **Play One, The Boy**, introduces a family at the height of its power before things begin to unravel under the pressure of untold truths.

Inspired by Sophocles' Theban plays, **Oedipus Rex**, **Oedipus at Colonus**, and **Antigone**, this exciting theatrical event continues Carr's vivid conversation with the foundations of modern drama.

ABOUT THE SET

The set is stark and minimalist, with dark walls to the left and right of the stage, each with three open doorways. These walls are a cold, slate grey, and appear to be polished stone, or perhaps even galvanised steel. The surface of these side walls is dappled and flecked with different shades of grey. The back wall of the theatre is covered by a pale canvas scrim. At times, a thick black felt curtain hangs just in front of this to make the stage feel more enclosed.

There is a rail that spans the entire width of the stage at the back, just in front of these two scrims, and at times a giant plastic sheeting, almost like a shower curtain, is drawn across the stage. This plastic is see-through, but slightly frosted and pearlized. When images are projected onto its rippling surface, they become like shadows, or ghost images. Another giant iridescent plastic curtain can be drawn across the front of the stage, also with images projected onto it. Indeed, when the audience first arrives, this plastic curtain is drawn, with a video of swirls of sand grains projected onto its surface, and various shades of blue lighting giving it the appearance of moving water.

Back on the stage, the floor is covered in a dull, grey-black material. Most of the stage is filled with a raised plinth, about 20 centimetres tall, and painted in creams and greys, like a limestone platform. In its centre, there is a rectangular hole, which has been covered by a metal grille – as though it were a dungeon. At the beginning of the performance, a long metal dining table sits in the centre of this platform, draped in a white cotton tablecloth, obscuring the metal grille from view. This table is surrounded by see-through plastic chairs. A large bowl of fruit, and a carafe of red wine and some glasses have been laid out.

Like a mirror image of this limestone platform, there is a second, large limestone rectangle hanging a little over 3 metres above the stage, like a suspended ceiling. A rectangle has been cut out of the centre of this ceiling. This forms a portal, through which the gods of ancient Greece can watch the actions of the people on Earth. Throughout the two plays, there is a camera hanging from above the stage filming everything the human characters do, and projecting it onto the underside of this ceiling, like a God's eye view of the action. This projection is there only when the gods are not onstage. When they appear, the ceiling is either a blank sheet of rock, or has memories of previous actions and transgressions projected onto it. These memories will be described throughout the performance, as they occur.

Lighting and video projection play an important part in this production, with some locations rendered by projecting images onto the plastic curtains or the flat scrims, keeping the stage bare and minimalist most of the time. Some scenes can be quite dark, with dim orange light coming in like shafts, through the doorways on either side of the stage. Other scenes, outdoors in the baking midday sun, are incredibly bright and stark, bleaching out the stage, like a dusty barren landscape.

ABOUT THE CAST AND COSTUMES

The characters in these two plays exist in two separate realms – the realm of the gods, and the humans on Earth. The humans wear contemporary clothes, mostly in natural fibres – linens and cottons, and in muted colours, like white, beige, and autumnal rust colours. They are always barefoot.

The ancient Greek gods wear fantastical costumes and move almost like animals, snarling and prowling.

The first two characters we encounter are Oedipus and the Shee. Oedipus is the person at the centre of this epic drama, and the Shee is a representation of the Oracle at Thebes – a human, but one who can communicate directly with the world of the gods.

Oedipus, played by **Frank Blake**, is a tall, trim young man, maybe around thirty, with thick, light brown hair and blue eyes. He is soft spoken, with a rural Irish accent. He first appears in a tuxedo, the bow tie hanging loose around his shirt collar, and his jacket held in his hand. He, like all of the human characters in this production, is barefoot. Later, he wears a loose, rumpled, white linen shirt and beige chinos, and carries a leather satchel. Later still, a t-shirt and chinos in pale grey, with a brown corduroy waistcoat. Mostly in casual clothes, a relaxed style.

The Shee, played by **Olwyn Fouéré**, wears the same costume throughout both plays. A petite, lithe woman, older, perhaps about seventy, the Shee has long, wavy, snow-white hair, and tanned skin. She wears a linen shirt dress buttoned from her collarbone to just above the knee, and swinging open from there to the floor.

The dress is black, faded to grey at the six inches above the hem. The sleeves are long and buttoned at the cuff, and a belt cinches the waist. The Shee wears Lycra black shorts underneath the dress, and wears lace-up black leather boots. She often carries a black leather folio case, in which important documents are kept. The Shee moves between the two realms and addresses gods and humans alike.

Jocasta, wife to the King of Thebes, and mother and wife to Oedipus, is played by **Eileen Walsh**, and the next character we meet. Jocasta first appears in a formal gown of stiff, beaten gold material, her long dark brown wavy hair falling around her shoulders. She is also petite and lithe, with piercing blue eyes. On the forearm of her left arm, there is a large mottled brown birthmark. As the story progresses, we move back in time to Jocasta's marriage, and she appears in a simple white lace and satin wedding dress and veil. Later still, a floaty white tea dress with blue flower print, and ruffles. Later still she wears a sleek, fitted black halter neck gown, then a rust red linen summer dress, all immaculately tailored to her slim frame.

Her husband, the King of Thebes, is **Laius**, played by **Frank McCusker**. A man in his fifties, he has thinning auburn hair, flecked with grey, and a neatly trimmed moustache and beard. He mostly appears in casual wear – linen shirts, unbuttoned at the neck, and chinos. For his wedding day, he has a formal jacket in deep purple, with gold brocade at the collar. This deep purple is the colour of the house of Laius and features throughout in shawls, and sashes, marking characters as being members of the royal household.

Laius has taken a child, a young boy named **Chrysippus**, to live with him in Thebes. Chrysippus is only about ten years old, thin, with long red hair that reaches down to his waist. He wears a simple sleeveless knitted top over a cotton shirt and trousers. Throughout the two plays, the boy sings a haunting lullaby, also known to Jocasta. The role of Chrysippus is shared by **Noah Behan** and **Harley Cullen Walsh**.

Jocasta's brother, **Creon**, is played by **Seán Mahon**. A tall man, of about fifty, he has neat, silver hair, and is tall and well-dressed. He tends to appear in navy trousers, and a matching tunic coat, with a grey shirt underneath.

A man named **Oreone** is played by **Ronan Leahy**. Coming from a neighbouring city state, Oreone befriends the young Oedipus, and is dressed in casual linen clothing, including a knitted cap and traditional knitted belt.

At times, members of the cast play roles like the soldiers in Thebes, dressed in navy heavy duty cotton shirts and trousers, with peaked caps. They stand at attention, and walk briskly and stiffly. These include **Eimhin Fitzgerald Doherty**, **Seán Fox** and some of the actors mentioned above.

Women play the mothers and wives of Thebes in simple cotton smock dresses of grey, black or white, some with headscarves, including **Zara Devlin**, **Éilish McLaughlin**, and those playing the gods.

The **Godwoman** is played by **Jolly Abraham**. She has long curling black hair, and sallow skin, with deep brown eyes, and wears a jumpsuit of gold and black threads thickly woven. The material is heavy and shimmers when she moves catlike across the space. Around her neck and shoulders is a heavy collar, almost like an armoured breastplate. She wears black leather soft-soled shoes.

The Sphinx is played by **Catherine Walsh**. A tall woman with auburn hair which has been styled into two victory rolls on either side of her head, almost like horns, she has a black leather headband around her forehead with a silver disc at the centre. The Sphinx wears a stiff cape of pleated black netting, like bats' wings, over a heavy jacket and trousers of black leather, which has been cut and plaited to resemble fish scales. On her torso, she wears a breastplate of wire thread, like chainmail, with actual silver chains draped across it, as well as a heavy leather collar around her neck. A long, scaly black leather tail protrudes from the seat of her pants hanging down to the ground. She wears slouched black leather boots on her feet.

The Moon is played by **Amy Conroy**. A tall woman with short blond hair, the Moon wears a shimmering gown covered in dark grey sequins, with a shawl with very long, pointed sleeves in bright silver sequins, and trimmed with a white lace ruff. She wears silver high-heeled shoes, which she sometimes lazily carries in her hand. The Moon has multiple diamond bracelets on her wrists, and a substantial diamond necklace around her neck, as well as an impressive silver and diamond glittering headdress with arrows pointing outwards like a sunburst!

Silver-blue light shines onstage whenever she appears, and immediately tiny star lights are cast around the theatre as her every movement is caught in the light and refracted like a walking Mirrorball.

That concludes the audio description introduction to **The Boy – Play One**. It was prepared by me, **Bríd Ní Ghrúagáin**, who will also provide audio description for this performance. A Touch Tour will also be held before the performance, meeting in the foyer at 12.00pm. Audio description at the Abbey Theatre is 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.

