

Do You Come From Gomorrah? **by Frank McGuinness**

Audio Description Introduction for performances in the Peacock at the Abbey Theatre up to the 16th May 2026

Welcome to this audio description introduction to **Do You Come From Gomorrah?** This play is directed by **Sarah Baxter**, with Set and Costume Design by **Alyson Cummins**. Lighting Design is by **Sinéad McKenna**. The Composer of the original score for this production is **Tom Lane**, and the recording artist playing violin is **Larissa O’Grady**. The Sound Designer is **Martha Knight**. The Voice Director is **Andrea Ainsworth**.

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

ABOUT THE PLAY

“I do not like the past. It is not kind to me. It does not belong to me.”

Do You Come From Gomorrah? is a memory play, one man’s elegy to a younger self who survived impossible circumstances.

In this world premiere, written by **Frank McGuinness** and performed by **Ryan Donaldson**, over the course of 75 minutes, we meet a man who has come through a terrible experience with enough humanity left that he can tell us about it. It is a testimony by those who have been abused by people in authority, and a protest against cruelty. Exploring the strangeness and contradictions of 1970s Ulster, it registers the damage done and celebrates the act of survival.

Commenting on the play, director **Sarah Baxter** says “I’m excited to be directing the world premiere production of *Do You Come From Gomorrah?* by Frank McGuinness. It’s always an honour to work on the premiere of a new play and a responsibility I take on joyfully.

Ryan Donaldson has a brilliant understanding of Frank's writing, and I can't wait for audiences to see him bring this complex, beautiful story to life."

Running until the 16th of May, and receiving four- and five-star reviews across the board, this is an opportunity to witness a world premiere by an acclaimed Irish playwright and poet, widely regarded as one of the most important voices in contemporary Irish theatre.

EXCERPTS from the PRINTED PROGRAMME

by Dr Graham Price, NUI Maynooth.

Frank McGuinness's **Do You Come From Gomorrah?** is the first monologue play that he has written since **Match Box** in 2012. His most famous theatrical work, **Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme**, begins and ends with monologues delivered by the main character, Pyper. What all McGuinness's monologists have in common is they feel compelled to deliver their identifying stories as a means of bearing witness to their trauma and sometimes that of other people who are no longer alive.... By not giving the monologist in **Do You Come From Gomorrah?** a name, the drama implies that his identity is fluid as opposed to static, and also that it is subordinated to a narrative that is broader than just his life story.

Do You Come From Gomorrah? relates the story of a young man who was resident in a fictitious, Protestant/Unionist-run, boys' home in Northern Ireland. Like many of the young inmates in this institution, he was sexually abused by members of the security forces. In an era in Irish history when the country is still rightly in shock because of the revelations of abuse of young people by the Catholic clergy, **Do You Come From Gomorrah?** reminds us of how equally appalling sexual crimes were committed by those of other professions and religious persuasions on the Island of Ireland. This is not to deny the appalling crimes done by servants of the Catholic church, but to allow for a broadening out of the narrative of abuse suffered by young Irish and/or British throughout all of the provinces of Ireland over a long number of years.

The word Gomorrah in the play's title can be said to symbolise the guilt that should be felt by the perpetrators of the abuse, but also of that silently forced upon the monologist and others like him who felt the stirring of same-sex desire in Ireland at the time the play is set.

All the themes and staging present in this production mark it out as another notable example of modern and contemporary Irish drama's theatre of remembrance and commemoration.

ABOUT THE SET

The stage of the Peacock Theatre is raised, so that when the audience is seated, the floor of the stage is at about head height. The set, while stark, and minimalist, is filled with different surfaces and textures. The back and side walls are rough and black and mottled grey, with a texture like soil. It is as though the space for the play has been dug out of a trench deep underground, or as though it were set among the high stone walls of some ancient mausoleum.

There is a raised platform at the back, that spans almost the full width of the stage. On the left-hand side, another walkway juts out at right angles from it, coming towards us, like a headland. On the right-hand side, the platform slopes down towards the front of the stage. The surface here is also black, but has a slight sheen from it, so that it creates a hazy reflection of the Man. He sometimes crouches low at the top of this slope, hunkering down, and managing not to tilt forward as the ground drops away.

At the bottom of the slope, and surrounding the headland platform is a low pool of water. It is recessed into the stage, so that even when we arrive into the auditorium, it is not evident, sitting still and dark against the dark floor. And then, after a pause in the monologue, the lighting shifts and suddenly bounces off the surface of the still water. The Man walks down the slope and wades in, casting ripples around his feet, but also overhead as the light casts these ripples all over the stage. We hear the splashes and gentle lapping each time he returns to the water.

Indeed, overhead there is another panel, slightly tilted towards us almost like a ceiling mirror. It has a black mid-sheen surface on it as well, which opaquely reflects the Man, the lighting, and the water, throughout.

ABOUT THE CAST AND COSTUMES

The lone performer onstage is **Man**, played by **Ryan Donaldson**. A trim man in his early thirties, the Man has thick, brown hair, a little long on top, but neatly trimmed on the back and sides. His hair parts naturally a little to the right of centre. It isn't styled, more like he ran his fingers through it to keep it back and out of his face. His eyes are also brown. He has clear, pale skin, and just a little scruff along the jawline, like the morning's shave wasn't enough to last the day. Man is very tall, well over six feet, and stands squarely, his shoulders back and arms hanging loosely by his sides, or comfortable in his pockets.

Man wears a casual beige linen shirt, unbuttoned at the neck, that has a faint check pattern in it, and grey-blue woollen trousers. He wears black socks and leather ankle boots. Man has no accessories: no belt, no wristwatch, no rings.

Man speaks for and about himself in a fairly neutral Lisburn accent. In the course of telling us his history, he takes on the voices of several other characters, including a British soldier, **Steve**, from Southern England; the person who runs the home, known to the inmates as **Beastie Billy**, who comes from Antrim, and who has a more nasal voice; and a fellow inmate, **Keith**, and Keith's **Father**, both of whom are from Belfast.

There are moments throughout the performance where Man pauses in his narration, to allow for some reflection, or the passing of time. At these points, the gentle underscoring of music swells a little, and the lights dim, and Man moves slowly, as if moving through water, his face serene, and arms gently billowing out from his body, or curling around his own torso.

That concludes the audio description introduction to **Do You Come From Gomorrah?**, prepared by **Bríd Ní Ghrúagáin**. Audio description and accessible performances nationwide are supported by The Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon, and by Arts & Disability Ireland.

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Thank you. Go raibh maith agaibh.



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