**Donegal**

**by Frank McGuinness & Kevin Doherty**

**Programme notes for Audio Described Performance**

**Abbey Theatre, 12th November 2016, 2pm**

Welcome to the introductory notes for **Donegal** by Frank McGuinness with music by Kevin Doherty. The play is directed by Conall Morrison. Set Design is by Liam Doona and Costume Design is by Joan O’Clery. Lighting is designed by Ben Ormerod and the Sound Design is by Alexis Nealon. The Musical Director and Arranger is Conor Linehan. The Audio-Visual Designer is Arnim Friess and the Movement Director is Muirne Bloomer.

The performance begins at 2pm, and lasts for two hours and fifty minutes, with one twenty minute interval.

**ABOUT THE PLAY**

The Day family are Irish country-music royalty and Irene is their queen. Her relatives are completely dependent on her success. But as Irene’s star fades, the Days are facing financial destruction.

When the heir to her musical throne, Jackie Day, returns from the States with a new girlfriend, resentments simmer. Does Irene have the strength to hold the clan together? And will Jackie save them with the gift of a song?

A musical play about family, place and country music, Frank McGuinness’ **Donegal** premieres at the Abbey Theatre.

**ABOUT THE SET**

A bare black stage with entrances from the left and right. Placed centrally an upturned two person curragh. A single oar balanced on the upfacing seaweed covered underbelly of the boat. At the back of the space a screen sweeps across the stage a black and white film projection of the rough sea of Donegal, waves crashing against a rugged shore. Behind the screen is an orchestra pit where the musicians named later in the programme notes sit in a single row lengthways.

The stage morphs into a concert hall stage by the change of lighting - moving spotlights of white, pink, green and purple and the use of a smoke machine.

In the second half we find ourselves in the living room of the family home. The furniture is all made in mahogany wood apart from a dark leather three piece suite which is also finished off in mahogany. The sofa facing us is placed centrally, flanked by an armchair either side. A mahogony coffee table with a magazine rack underneath, sits in front of the sofa. An occasional table with a lamp upon it beside the right hand armchair and behind it to our right a mahogany oval shaped dining table with four chairs tucked around it. On the table sits a sidelight. Behind this an aging armchair with it's back to us. To the left of it a tall floor lamp with a cream lampshade. At the back of the space beside the lamp and behind the sofa is a tall mahogany cabinet with glass doors behind which we glimpse musical memorabilia and a framed photo of the family.

On the far left we have a large sideboard facing inwards, bottles of brandy, whiskey and crystal drink glasses upon it. In front of the sideboard another standing light.

**ABOUT THE CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES**

**Irene Day**, the so-called Voice of Ireland, is played by **Siobhan McCarthy**. A woman in her fifties with long blonde hair, teased into curls and sparkling blue eyes – Irene’s image gives a nod to Dolly Parton. She walks gracefully and purposefully, as though she were onstage at a concert, even when at home. Irene wears an array of heavy jewellery: sparkling rings, necklaces and bracelets. The sparkles don’t end there. Her singing outfits are all shoulder pads and sequins.

Irene first appears in a royal blue knee length dress embellished with sequins and beaded fringing, and matching bolero jacket. Her shoes are high heels in the same colour. Later, she is dressed more casually in a blush pink long cardigan, patterned sequinned t-shirt, tight white trousers and silver high-heeled ankle boots. Her next stage outfit keeps the white trousers, but teams it with a shimmering gold sequinned jacket and sparkly t-shirt.

For her next big gig, Irene wears a silver outfit: a snug fitted jacket with beaded shoulder pads and diamante buttons, and a sequinned silver skirt that comes to the knee at the front, but hangs to the calf at the back with a bit of a swing to it. She matches this with silver cowboy boots and big, bouncy blonde curls. Another stage outfit consists of tight black jeans teamed with a black and silver box jacket and matching camisole with black ankle boots. Again, back in the homestead, she returns to more muted cardigans and jeans.

Her husband, **Conor Day**, is played by **Frank Laverty**. Also in his fifties, Conor is trim and handsome, with grey black hair and a neatly trimmed beard. His voice is low and gruff, and he first appears wearing a shiny satin-like black suit, with cowboy-style embroidery across the shoulders and lapels. His shirt is purple and he wears a bootlace tie fastened with a silver brooch at the collar. He wears oxblood cowboy boots tucked under his suit trousers. Later he wears another cowboy suit: this one in a shiny pinstripe purple material with wine patterned shirt and brown brogues.

Irene’s mother, **Magdalene Carolan**, is played by **Deirdre Donnelly**. A woman in her seventies with fine, white blonde hair combed back into a neat bun and piercing blue eyes, Magdalene is imperious – every inch the matriarch. She dresses in hues of heather and mauve and moves about in a wheelchair, sometimes under her own propulsion, but mostly, pushed by a member of the family at her request.

She first arrives in a white blouse, puce cardigan, grey trousers and silver ballet pumps with a heather-coloured woollen shawl over her shoulders. Later on she returns in a purple tweed Chanel-style jacket and white blouse, with wine trousers, mauve chenille scarf and the same pumps.

Irene’s sister, **Joanne Carolan**, is played by **Eleanor Methven**. A little older than Irene, Joanne has shoulder-length auburn hair, sleekly parted at the side, and pale skin. Her voice is deep and round. She tends to wear looser clothes, tunics and large cardigans, very much in contrast with the other women in the play. She first appears in an over-sized white shirt with abstract splash pattern in green and yellow, with a mustard-coloured scarf around her neck, grey trousers and black ballet pumps. Later, she wears a large grey & white marled cardigan, with a loose, rust-coloured, cowl-neck jumper underneath with grey jeans and sandy ankle boots. After one of Irene’s gigs, she dresses up slightly in a leopard-print tunic with embellished jewels at the neck, over the same old jeans and ankle boots.

Conor’s father, **Hugo Day**, is played by **John Kavanagh.** A thin man, in his seventies, with wispy white hair, Hugo is often found pushing Magdalene about in her wheelchair. Gruff-voiced and a little shy, Hugo stands hunched. He first appears in a cream Panama hat, grey blazer, white shirt with a dickie bow and cream V-neck jumper, pale blue trousers and brown shoes. Later on he returns in a cream linen suit, blue shirt, and tweed waistcoat with the same dickie bow and brown brogues.

Irene and Conor’s daughter, **Triona Brogan**, is played by **Ruth McGill**: a woman in her thirties with curly red hair that tumbles to her shoulders, porcelain skin and high-cheekbones. She is tall and thin and first arrives in a long chiffon tunic in animal- and jungle-print, embellished with beading at the neck. This she teams with royal blue skinny jeans and leopard print high heels.

Later on she wears a white long shirt with black, red and pink flower and butterfly print, with white skinny jeans and very high gold sparkly sandals. Later still, she dresses more simply in a long pale blue cardigan, with shimmering white sequinned t-shirt and baby blue jeans, with ballet pumps.

Her husband, **Liam Brogan**, is played by **Keith McErlean**, also in his thirties. A man of average height with brown hair and clean-shaven face, Liam dresses much more simply than his family. He first appears in a Donegal GAA shirt and combat shorts in khaki green, with cream socks and brown leather sandals. He adds a grey hoodie top to this as the evening goes on.

Later, he changes into a Hawaiian shirt with short sleeves, jeans and white runners.

Irene and Conor’s son, **Jackie Day**, is played by **Killian Donnelly**. A man in his late twenties, Jackie is tall and well-built, with blonde hair swept back and side-parted with designer stubble on his square jaw. He first appears in gig-mode, wearing a black cowboy hat, white pin-tucked shirt, tight indigo jeans and black ankle boots, with an acoustic guitar slung across his chest. Throughout the evening, he wears a thick leather belt with a large, ornate silver buckle.

Over the course of the play, he wears an array of embellished cowboy shirts with either black or blue tight jeans. He wears a black shirt with embroidered red flowers, another with silver abstract patterns on the breast and sleeve, and yet another black shirt with the collar, shoulders and buttons edged with hot pink piping.

Jackie’s girlfriend, **Liza Field**, is played by **Megan Riordan**. A petite woman in her late twenties, she has long brown hair, an open face and big blue eyes. She speaks with a slight American drawl. Liza first appears wearing a bright red shirt dress that comes to the knee, teamed with plain black cowboy boots. She later adds a black suede waterfall jacket to this outfit.

Later still, she changes into a short lacy black dress with a fitted waist and frilly skirt, always with the same old cowboy boots. A third outfit change sees her wearing a form-fitting black leather short dress with painted oriental pattern of birds in flight and foliage in bright colours on the skirt. Her last costume change is into a more casual outfit: skinny jeans, a cream halter neck top and a red and cream check shirt with a waterfall wrap front, with her cowboy boots.

The band members that sit at the back of the stage are dressed in black cowboy shirts and jeans, with some of the men wearing black cowboy hats. They are seated in one long row and are, from left to right:

**Paul Brennan** on Pedal Steel, Banjo and Guitar; **Imogen Gunner** on Harp and Violin; **James Delaney**, the band leader, on Keyboards and Accordion; **Kenneth Edge** on Alto Saxophone and Clarinet; **Jason Duffy** on Drums and Percussion; **Jack Maher** on Bass Guitar and Guitar; and lastly, **Conor O’Farrell-Brady** on Guitar.

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That concludes the introductory notes for this production of **Donegal**. They were prepared by Máirín Harte and Bríd Ní Ghruagáin, who will be describing the performance. Audio description at the Abbey Theatre is provided by Arts and Disability Ireland with support from The Arts Council.

Thank you.

