**Mainstream**

**by Rosaleen McDonagh**

**Programme notes for Audio Described Performances**

**Project Arts Centre, 25th & 26th November 2016, 7.45pm**

Welcome to the introductory notes for **Mainstream** by Rosaleen McDonagh. The play is directed by Jim Culleton. Set and Costume Design is by Niamh Lunny. Lighting is designed by Sarah Jane Shiels and the Composer and Sound Designer is Denis Clohessy. Video Design is by Neil O’Driscoll.

The performances begin at 7.45pm, and last for one hour and twenty minutes without interval.

**ABOUT THE PLAY**

“We share a history, we share a memory and they both share my heart.”

It’s that time of the year. A time that Eoin, Mary Anne and Jack all remember. They have all agreed to take part in a documentary. They have all lied to each other about what they are going to say on camera.

Project Arts Centre and the Olivier Award-winning Fishamble: The New Play Company present a new play by Rosaleen McDonagh about truth, lies and the mainstreaming of people with disabilities.

**ABOUT THE SET**

This play takes place in The Cube, a large black-walled room downstairs in the Project Arts Centre. Upon entering the space, there are two long banks of seating on either side of the venue, with three rows in each and wheelchair spaces at floor level. Mounted on the wall, behind each of these banks, are two large screens – one facing the other, each showing the same video material throughout the show.

The seating therefore forms a long, rectangular channel in the centre as the performance space, with a larger space at either end.

When we arrive, there are three wooden boxes arranged in a row, about the same height as a dining chair. As audience members can sit on either side of the performance space, we will refer to the stage as top, centre and bottom rather than to the left and right.

At the top of the space stands a circular set of white shelves on castors. It is divided into three sections, each with three sets of shelves. As we move between scenes, the shelves are revolved to display a different location and a different set of props. These scenes correspond to animated images projected onto the screens.

We begin with Rosa’s Café. On the screens behind is an image of a shop window with Rosa’s Café written in reverse. Next to this is a blackboard with the daily specials written in chalk. Through the window a row of Georgian red bricks are shown on the other side of the street. On the shelf onstage are cups, saucers, takeaway cups, wooden stirrers and sugar sachets, glasses, a jug of water, a waste basket and brush and dustpan.

Next we are in a flat several floors above street level. The image on the screens is a yellow-walled room with flat screen TV and a games console. On the wall is hung a poster of the Judy Garland film “A Star Is Born”. On the shelving unit onstage are placed a ship in a bottle, some photos, wine glasses, mugs, books, and a ceramic statue of a collie dog. A black hoodie is folded neatly on the middle shelf.

We move to another flat as the moveable shelf unit swings to the third position. The image on the wall is of a lilac-walled bedroom with pale floral curtains. A painting of tango dancers hangs over the bed. The shelves onstage bear a bottle of brandy and some glasses, a decanter, sugar bowl and some framed photos. There is a vase of silk flowers and some pottery in the shape of thatched Irish cottages.

We return later to the first flat, to a blue-walled bedroom with a check throw as a bedspread. There are two posters on the wall – an iconic red and black image of David Bowie in his Ziggy Stardust days and a poster for the film “Singing in the Rain”.

We return to the second flat for the last two locations. The screens show us a peach-walled living room with a sideboard and a glass lampshade. A print of Warhol’s “Marilyn” hangs next to a portrait of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo.

The last room is a yellow-walled kitchen with a Child of Prague painting hanging by the window. A laptop is shown sitting on the counter.

Throughout the performance the actors move the three white boxes on wheels around the space to furnish these locations – sometimes opening up the boxes to get cushions or blankets. As we move from one scene to another, music is played while a brightly coloured sequence of static and digital interference plays on the screens behind us.

During these scene changes the light is low, sometimes just picking out a square around the white boxes. During the scenes the lighting is warm and naturalistic. One of the characters carries a handheld camera. Occasionally she films the other characters and these images are projected live onto the screens behind us.

**ABOUT THE CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES**

**Grainne Hallahan** plays **Eleanor**, a woman in her twenties, who is making a documentary. Eleanor is short, perhaps 4 ft. tall, and slender with long brown hair that she keeps pulled back in a bun most of the time. Her face is open and kind with high cheekbones and eyebrows that arch with incredulity. Her voice is soft, her accent hailing from South Dublin. Eleanor first arrives wearing a black top with long, sheer sleeves and a fitted mid-brown skirt with a kick flare at the end. She teams this with opaque tights and knee-high boots and a large black and pink handbag. She carries a clipboard and Filofax and wears an access card on a lanyard round her neck.

Later she returns in a grey fitted dress and black waterfall jacket. Later still she wears black jeggings and a cream buttoned cardigan under her black jacket.

The first of her interviewees we meet is **Jack**, played by **John Connors**. A man of average height, Jack is broad and strong-armed, carrying a bit of extra weight in front. In his thirties, he has a round, youthful face, short brown hair and a stubbly beard and speaks with a low, husky voice in a midlands accent. He first appears wearing a flat cap, brown t-shirt and jeans with brown leather runners. Later on he wears a red and black check shirt over this.

**Donal Toolan** plays **Eoin**, a friend of Jack’s and another potential star of Eleanor’s documentary. Eoin is a short man, and very thin, with very fine features and long fingers. A man in his forties, Eoin’s hair is grey and thinning on top and his face long and narrow. He uses a motorised wheelchair to move about.

Eoin wears a white t-shirt with abstract red figure on it, under a blue shirt and mustard cargo pants. He wears thick navy woollen socks on his feet with the toes knitted in red wool. Over his chest is slung a small grey satchel. Eoin’s voice is richer and brighter than Jack’s, prone to sarcasm, and has taken on more of the Dublin brogue over his country accent.

Lastly we meet **Mary-Anne**, also called Rooney, played **Neilí Conroy**. A woman in her thirties, Mary-Anne is of average height with long wavy auburn hair and a round open face, dusted with freckles. She keeps her arms crossed on her lap, or in front of her stomach, and has some difficulty walking. She sometimes uses a manual wheelchair to help her move around.

Mary-Anne appears first wearing wine jeggings and a purple check shirt with black t-shirt underneath, and black suede ankle boots. She has bright red rollers in her hair. Later on, with her wavy hair flowing down her back, she returns wearing the same jeggings, but with a wine shirt and black- and white-striped open jacket. Lastly, she swaps this jacket for a long, chunky black cardigan with coloured Aztec pattern knitted into the lower half.

--

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

Thank you.



