**Room**

**by Emma Donoghue**

**Programme notes for Audio Described Performance**

**Abbey Theatre, 22nd July 2017, 2pm**

Welcome to the introductory notes for **Room** by Emma Donoghue. The play is directed by Cora Bissett. Design is by Lily Arnold, with Puppetry by David Cauchi and Sound Design by Alexandra Faye Braithwaite. Video Projection Design is by Andrzej Goulding. Music and Lyrics are by Cora Bissett and Kathryn Joseph, and the Musical Director is Gavin Whitworth.

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

**ABOUT THE PLAY**

Kidnapped as a teenage girl, Ma has been locked inside a purpose built room in her captor’s garden for seven years. Her five year old son, Jack, has no concept of the world outside and happily exists inside **Room** with the help of Ma’s games and his vivid imagination where objects like Rug, Lamp and TV are his only friends. But for Ma the time has come to escape and face their biggest challenge to date: the world outside **Room**.

Previously adapted for the screen by Donoghue from her novel, the film won Academy Awards, Golden Globes and BAFTAs.

This is an Abbey Theatre and Theatre Royal Stratford East co-production in association with National Theatre of Scotland and Covent Garden Productions.

**ABOUT THE SET**

As the audience arrives, a gauze screen hangs in front of the stage. A sketched line drawing in white on the black background is projected onto this screen. It is a floor-plan, a childlike drawing. Certain items are drawn and labelled in a child’s hand along the periphery. Starting from the bottom left hand corner and moving clockwise, they are: a plant, a keypad, a long string threaded through broken eggshell halves, called “Egg-snake”, an angle-poise lamp and a spotted dog called “Lucky”. A live camera feed is projected into the centre of this floor-plan, filmed from above. Two figures move about a room which has a single bed, a small kitchenette and a bath and toilet in it. This camera feed continues to be projected until the security announcement is made. At this point, the gauze screen is raised up and away.

The full expanse of the stage has been painted black – walls and floor - with black felt material hanging on either side. In the centre of this bare space is a cube, with a floor-space of about 5 metres by 5 metres. The top of the cube and side nearest us have been removed so that its contents are revealed.

Before us, in this cube, is the same room from the video projection. On the left hand side, nearest us, is a single bed with floral duvet and pillow. Set on the floor nearest us is a small potted palm plant and an old cathode television set. There are some wooden shelves on this left-hand wall with a few books and a green angle-poise lamp.

Behind the bed, towards the back left corner is a kitchenette consisting of a fridge, with a box of cereal, some bowls and cups on top. Next to this is a set of cupboards with a microwave on top, and a two-ring cooking hob on top of that. There is a single unit over this with canned goods, jars and flasks. Also in the kitchen is a strange construction made from egg-cups, tin cans and toilet-roll inserts. It is referred to as the “labyrinth”.

On the back wall of the cube, on the left is a metal door with an electronic keypad next to it. In the right hand corner stands a wardrobe with louvred double-doors.

On the right-hand wall is a sink and bathroom cabinet, a free-standing bath and a toilet. A washing line can be hung along this side of the room so that wet laundry can hang over the bath.

In the centre of the room is a small table with yellow Formica top, and two wooden chairs. This sits on a faded stripy rug. Almost every square inch of wall to the left and right, and all the kitchen cabinets, are festooned with children’s drawings.

Hanging high above the space is a rectangular window frame, referred to by the characters as “Skylight”. At times, the lighting is restricted to a beam of light coming through this lofty portal. When the characters begin to talk about things outside the room, sometimes music plays, the lights dim and animations are projected onto the walls of the cube, like stars and rockets and moving stickmen – all in the same hand-drawn childlike style.

There are some scene changes as the show progresses which are tied to the plot and as such will be described during the course of the show.

**ABOUT THE CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES**

**Ma**, played by Witney White, is a black woman in her early twenties. She wears sloppy grey jogging bottoms with an oversized khaki green t-shirt under a pink sweatshirt with a palm tree motif on the front. She walks around in pink socks. Later, she appears in light grey leggings with a white t-shirt and white plimsolls and chunky cardigan. Ma's long dark curly hair falls down her back in ringlets, framing a youthful face that appears pensive.

Her son **Little Jack**, played in the assisted performance by Taye Kassim Junaid-Evans, is a boy of about 5 years of age. He wears maroon jogging pants and a white sleeveless cotton vest over the top of which he wears a green sweatshirt with a small yellow rocket ship motif, and stockinged feet. He watches everything, a typical child of his age, with constant movement and curiosity. Later, he wears jeans and a grey jumper with a diamond pattern upon it. The role of **Little Jack** is shared by actors Darmani Eboji and Harrison Wilding throughout the run.

His shadow **Big Jack**, played by Fela Lufadeju, follows Jack wherever he goes. Sometimes next to him, other times on the other side of the room with a thoughtful expression on his face. He wears the same outfit of maroon jogging pants and white sleeveless cotton vest. Big Jack is a young black man of about 20 years of age who stands slightly apart from the goings-on, watching and reacting as if he were a small boy.

**Old Nick**, played by Liam McKenna, is a white man perhaps in his late forties, stocky with short red wavy hair over which he wears a nondescript brown woolly hat. He wears thick-rimmed glasses and dark blue mechanic’s overalls over which he wears a sleeveless jacket with workmen’s boots.

**Grandma**, played by Lucy Tregear, is a white woman in her fifties with blonde shoulder-length hair. She wears smart blue denim bootleg jeans with a grey shirt over which hangs a grey cotton scarf, and cream boots which have a small heel.

**Stephen Casey** plays Grandpa and a Doctor. When playing the doctor he wears the typical white coat over smart trousers together with a white face mask. A white man, his eyes give him away as a man in his late fifties or early sixties.

As Grandpa we see his long silver hair which hangs around his face. He sports a short beard and wears glasses. Grandpa wears jeans and brown Hush Puppy lace-up boots, white button-up t-shirt and grey cardigan. He has a light brown trench coat for outdoors.

**Janet Kumer** plays the Policewoman and also the Interviewer. Janet is a black actress in her late thirties or early forties. As the policewoman she wears a typical constable’s uniform in black and a white shirt. As the interviewer she wears a grey pencil skirt, sheer tights and tan slip-on court shoes, with a white blouse and white jacket that has a gold brooch pinned to it. Her hair is pulled back from her face and she wears bright pink lipstick. The interviewer holds herself tall and confidently.

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That concludes the introductory notes for this production of **Room**. 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