**Jimmy’s Hall**

**adapted for the stage from the film script**

**by Paul Laverty**

**Programme notes for Audio Described Performance**

**Abbey Theatre, 19th August 2017, 2pm**

Welcome to the introductory notes for **Jimmy’s Hall**,adapted for the stage from the film script by Paul Laverty. The play is directed by Graham McLaren. The dramaturg is Pamela McQueen. Set and Costume Design is by Colin Richmond. The Musical Director is Michael John McCarthy and Sound Design is by Ben Delaney. Lighting Design is by Sarah Jane Shiels, and the Movement Director is Vicki Masterson.

The performance begins at 2pm, and lasts for one hour and fifty minutes, without interval. Please note that there will be haze, loud noises and pyrotechnics used in the show.

**ABOUT THE PLAY**

**Jimmy’s Hall** tells the true story of Leitrim farmer Jimmy Gralton, the only Irishman deported from his own country. His crime was to build a dance hall where he encouraged the local community to learn, to argue and to dream, but above all to dance and have fun. As the hall grew in popularity its free-spirited reputation brought it to the attention of the church and politicians who forced Jimmy to flee and the hall to close.

A decade later, at the height of the Depression, Jimmy returns from the US. The hall stands abandoned but as Jimmy sees the poverty and growing oppression in the village, the leader and activist within him is stirred. He decides to reopen the hall, and so takes on the established authorities of the church and the government. **Jimmy’s Hall** had its first performances in Carrick-on-Shannon Community School before coming to Dublin.

**ABOUT THE SET**

Almost the entire width and height of the stage is taken up with a single building – the hall that Jimmy Gralton built in a field in Leitrim. It is one single room, wider then it is long, with the wall nearest us taken away. The far wall has four sash windows set in it, and at the gable end to the right, a wall partition creates a small office space closed off by a door. A map of America is pinned to the partition wall. There is a second door to the outside in this gable wall, towards the front of the stage, with a large sink, some buckets, a kettle and a crate of teacups set beside it. Above the door hangs a framed photo of a bald, bespectacled man, with a lamp over it. At the gable end to our left is a heavy set of double doors, leading out to a porch made of corrugated iron. Hung over the double doors to the left are the portraits of Pádraig Pearse and James Connolly. Sat on the floor next to these double doors is a large tea chest.

The roof is also made of large sheets of corrugated iron, spanning the width between thick wooden beams that rise up from the floor. There are two small windows in the roof, and one panel of roofing has come a little loose. The floor is of unvarnished wooden planks, with dark wood panelling halfway up the walls. The top half of the walls are painted a pale grey-green.

The whole of the gable wall on our right is covered in sheets of drawings in pencil and charcoal, mainly seated figures and some still life. The partitioned office is draped in faded bunting, and next to it is a small raised platform upon which sits an upright piano and some microphone stands. Chairs and small tables are stacked nearby, and musical instruments hang on the walls: an acoustic guitar, an electric bass, flutes, tin whistles, fiddles and a small wooden chest for drumming. A leather football and set of boxing gloves are set nearby.

The lighting in this performance is naturalistic, mainly coming from the large light fixtures that hang from the ceiling in the hall, or smaller wall-mounted lamps by the doorways, inside and out. Occasionally, a shaft of cold white light will fall through the skylights like moonlight on a clear night.

On either side of the stage, in the corners towards the front, are microphones where characters come and address the public directly. In the space on the right hand side of the stage is a large gong. There is a narrow strip of stage directly in front of the hall, set about half a metre lower than the dance hall floor.

As the audience arrives, a céilí is in full swing with the cast onstage playing music and singing songs. The volume is quite loud, and the atmosphere is electric, though that might make hearing these Programme Notes a little tricky on the day!

**ABOUT THE CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES**

**Jimmy Gralton**, James to his mother, is played by **Richard Clements**. A man in his forties, he is tall, trim with a head of curly dark hair flecked with grey. He is clean-shaven and his brown eyes sparkle with enthusiasm. He carries himself in a measured way however, no grand gestures, just open and calm. He arrives wearing a suit jacket and waistcoat in pin-striped charcoal grey, with smart brown trousers and black boots. He wears a crisp white collared shirt and dark tie. Jimmy plays the piano in the corner of the hall.

His mother, **Alice Gralton**, played by **Bríd Ní Neachtain**, is in her sixties – a youthful sixties. Her brown curly hair is swept up into a high bun and her smilling face and sparkling eyes show the same liveliness as Jimmy’s. She is trim, not very tall, and wears a woollen dress of dark brown with cream piping at the neck and around the buttons on her chest. She wears smart black lace-up boots with a little heel. Later, she pops a floral house-coat on over her dress, and has a blue woollen overcoat for outdoors.

**Tommy Gilroy**, a friend of Jimmy’s, is played by **Diarmaid Murtagh**. A tall, broad-shouldered man in his late thirties, Tommy’s fair hair is neatly cropped, with a beard to match. His voice is deep, coloured with a strong midlands accent. Tommy wears a white shirt, dark woollen waistcoat and khaki trousers with black boots. He plays the electric bass guitar at times.

Another of Jimmy’s friends, **Oonagh**, is played by **Lisa Lambe**. A slim woman in her thirties, she has clear, porcelain skin and long, wild, curly red hair down the full length of her back. She wears a patterened lilac tea-dress with a thin brown belt around her dainty waist, and black lace-up boots with thick socks on her feet.

Her husband **Seán**, is played by **Muiris Crowley**. A tall man in his thirties with thick fair hair, he has an athletic build and is a stylish dancer. He wears a long sleeved white cotton shirt, with a fawn woollen waistcoat, grey corduroy trousers and brown boots. His voice is a little higher than the other men, yet strong and clear.

**Tess**, another friend and neighbour, is played by **Ruth McGill**. A trim woman in her thirties with boy-short red hair, styled into a quiff at the front, Tess wears navy dungarees over a pale lilac blouse, with black boots and thick grey socks. She plays acoustic and electric guitars during the evening.

Tess’s husband **Mossy**, played by **Alan Devally**, isa tall man, with his thick greying hair closely cropped, and a full bushy black beard. He speaks with a gruff, low voice. Mossy wears a blue and white striped shirt, brown trousers with braces, and black boots. He also plays the guitar during the evening.

The younger generation include **Brendan**, played by **Craig Connolly**, a slight man in his late teens at most. Thin and not too tall, Brendan has dark hair and a thin moustache. He wears a grey buttoned shirt with dark grey trousers with braces, and black boots. He is cheeky, and speaks defiantly to his elders.

**Marie O’Keefe**, played by **Sarah Madigan**, is about the same age as Brendan, a tall girl with brown straight hair, the top half pulled back into a high ponytail. She is fresh-faced and eager, and wears a blue and white print cotton summer dress with short sleeves, covered by a mustard cardigan, with brown lace-up boots.

Her father, **O’Keefe**, is played by **Dónal O’Kelly**. A man in his fifties, his grey hair is a little long and his eyes are wild, always darting about. He wears a navy suit with white shirt and tie.

Dónal O’Kelly also plays an member of the ensemble during the céilí, swopping the suit jacket and shirt for a white long-sleeved cotton shirt and grey V-neck jumper.

The parish priest, **Father Sheridan**, is played by **Bosco Hogan**. A slight man, bald, with a deep, booming voice, Father Sheridan has pointed features and intense eyes that command respect. He wears black trousers with the traditional black soutane and dog-collar over it. Bosco Hogan also appears as a member of the community with the ensemble at the beginning of the evening, leaving the soutane aside, for a wine long-sleeved t-shirt, waistcoat, and black trousers and shoes. He wears a tweed peaked cap on his head.

While many of the cast play musical instruments and sing, they are joined by other ensemble cast members who provide the backbone of the music throughout. **Aindrias de Staic** plays **Doherty**, and the violin. A man in his forties with long dark brown hair, greying at the temples, he wears charcoal grey trousers and waistcoat, with a pale grey shirt and wine-coloured scarf.

**Catherine Bell** plays Molly, a young friend of Brendan and Marie’s, who plays the tin whistle and flute. She wears a mint green cotton tea dress, moss green cardigan, brown lace-up boots and beige thick socks. Her long dark hair is swept up into a top-knot bun.

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

Thank you. Go raibh maith agaibh.

