**Asking For It**

**by Louise O’Neill**

**adapted by Meadhbh McHugh in collaboration with Annabelle Comyn**

**Programme notes for Audio Described Performance**

**Abbey Theatre, 24th November 2018, 2pm**

Welcome to the introductory notes for **Asking For It**, by Louise O’Neill, adapted for the stage by Meadhbh McHugh in collaboration with Annabelle Comyn. It is a Landmark Productions and The Everyman co-production in association with the Abbey Theatre and Cork Midsummer Festival. This production is directed by Annabelle Comyn, with Set Design by Paul O’Mahony and Costume Design by Niamh Lunny. Lighting Design is by Sinéad McKenna, Sound Design is by Philip Stewart and Video Design is by Jack Phelan. The Movement Director is Sue Mythen.

The audio-described performance at the Abbey Theatre on November 24th 2018 at 2pm lasts for two hours and fifty-five minutes, including one twenty minute interval.

**ABOUT THE PLAY**

One night in a small town in County Cork, where everyone knows everyone, things spiral terrifyingly out of control.  What will happen now... to Emma... to her family... to the others?

Adapted for the stage by Meadhbh McHugh, the play had its world premiere as part of Cork Midsummer Festival in June 2018. **Asking For It** was funded through an Arts Council Open Call Award.

Age Guidance is 16 years of age and over. Please note this performance contains scenes which patrons may find distressing. This performance also contains strobe lighting.

**ABOUT THE SET**

The stage floor is covered with a black glossy surface, polished to a high shine so that the actors and sets are reflected in it, like a giant, dark mirror. About midway from front to back is a massive steel frame wall with girders and metal stairways behind it. It takes up the full width and height of the stage and is covered in opaque, metal gauze. This surface means that images and video can be projected onto it, but the audience can also follow the actors moving around behind it. Behind, there is a central stairway leading to the upper floor, where there is a landing spanning the width of the stage. On the lower floor – at stage level - to the left and right, are two pods – trapezoidal boxes that can be separated and moved outwards to create corridors between metal spaces. These boxes have doors into them.

Items of furniture are brought in to create a variety of spaces. We begin in a teenager’s bedroom with a large green beanbag on the floor to our left and a white study desk and chair to our right. There are schoolbooks piled high on the table, with an Irish dictionary on top. A small white lamp sits on the corner of the desk.

For the schoolyard scenes, the two pods are pulled away from the metal screen creating two corridors on either side of the central T-shaped metal building. A metal-framed bench with glass top is brought in for the teenagers to lounge around.

Nightclubs are invoked by bringing the metal screen back together and projecting psychedelic shapes and colours onto its surface as people dance wildly to the fore.

Another bedroom is created simply by bringing on a double bed with red rose pattern duvet cover and placing it centre stage.

A family kitchen is created by drawing forward the two metal pods and then lowering the upper half of the metal screen over them as a ceiling. This creates a room with walls on all sides except ours. A long island of kitchen cabinets is wheeled in and placed centrally at the back wall of this room. These black marble units have plenty of cupboards, a sink with burnished steel fittings and an electric oven and hob. On the counter top, towards the right, sit an electric kettle and microwave. Under the counter on the far right is a small fridge.

Towards the front is a round, wooden dining table with four chairs with cream-upholstered seats.

Often, during the performance, the stage is stripped bare of all props and set, and the characters address us directly, or give us an insight into their thinking. At these times, the light focusses on them, leaving everything else in darkness.

Lighting in this production switches from the naturalistic to heightened use of colour, or dark shadows with actors picked out by spotlights. Often, characters’ thoughts are presented to us by through pre-recorded dialogue played through the sound system. The audio describers will flag, where possible, when inner monologue is used in this manner. When actors move behind the main screen, their voices are boosted by microphone. Only the action directly in front of us takes place without amplification.

Images and videos are projected throughout the performance, often under action and dialogue.

**ABOUT THE CAST & COSTUMES**

The characters below are listed more or less in the order in which they appear.

**Emma,** played by **Lauren Coe**, is a petite young woman in her late teens. Full-lipped and doe-eyed, Emma has long, chocolate-brown hair which falls a little below her shoulders, clear complexion and dark brown eyes. She first appears in a lilac t-shirt which falls to her thighs, then quickly changes to a white vest top and boxer shorts when she sits at her desk studying. Her costume changes are mostly onstage before us, and she often appears momentarily in her cotton underwear.

Emma and her fellow Leaving Cert student friends wear a school uniform of white shirt, black V-neck jumpers with the school emblem in gold thread over their left breast, grey socks and black, sensible shoes. The girls wear grey pleated skirts and the boys wear trousers and striped ties under their jumpers. Each character styles their uniform distinctively - tying jumpers around their waist, pulling grey socks down to their ankles and so forth... Later in the first half of the play, Emma changes into a simple figure-hugging little black mini dress and black runners, with a loose yellow top over it, tied in a knot under the bust. She later swaps her runners for black stilettos.

After the interval, Emma wears grey trackie bottoms, baggy lilac t-shirt and an oversized hoodie, with her greasy hair tied in a topknot.

Emma's mother, **Mam**, played by **Ali White**, is a stylish woman perhaps in her early fifties. She has auburn shoulder-length hair, styled in waves and first appears in a short-sleeved, peach-coloured bodycon dress which comes just to the knees, and nude stilettos. Later in the first half she wears pink trousers, pink pumps and a white sweater sometimes with a white blazer over the top. In the second half Mam wears dark grey slacks with light grey sweater and navy blue pumps. When baking, she wears a mustard-coloured apron tied around her waist.

Next we are introduced to one of Emma's school friends, **Zoe**, played by **Venetia Bowe**. Zoe first arrives in her school uniform and her hair tied up in a pineapple-style bun on the top of her head. Later she wears a multi-coloured, striped t-shirt and short denim skirt with runners, her long hair hanging loose. She sometimes covers this outfit with an oversized pink hoodie.

**Ali** is played by **Síle Maguire**. Another late teen, she has her dark hair in a shoulder-length bob and hazel eyes. Her face is often serious, her posture correct. When out of her school uniform, she wears a bodycon short, red dress with tiny pattern all over, a denim jacket and white runners.

**Maggie,** played by **Amy McElhatton,** is another of Emma’s school friends. She is taller than the other girls, and has a curvier figure. Her brown, curly hair is pulled back into a high ponytail and cascades down her back. When out of uniform she wears black jeggings with roses embroidered on the leg, a white tasselled t-shirt and a light blue shirt over this, left unbuttoned. The tassels on her shirt fall to the top of her thighs, and sway as she dances.

There are four male students in this group of friends. Firstly **Conor**, played by **Frank Blake**. A tall, willowy redhead with a gentle freckled face, Conor is soft-spoken. When out of uniform he wears drainpipe jeans with a blue t-shirt, over which he wears a blue checked shirt unbuttoned, like a jacket. He wears white runners.

**Seán** is played by **Seán Doyle.** Seán’s brown hair is well-quaffed in a short, brushed-forward style. A well-built young man, he appears later when the others are out in the blue shorts of his football club, bare-chested. He later puts on a black shirt with tigers on it.

**Eli,** played by **Kwaku Fortune,** istall, but trimmer than Seán. He wears his dark curly hair quite short, and carries himself confidently, wearing dark grey drainpipe jeans, a blue polo shirt and red runners. Eli is less boisterous than some of his classmates.

**Dylan** is played by **Darragh Shannon**. He has a round, freckled face and short ashy hair. Animated in his gestures, he swaps his school uniform for grey trackie bottoms and a lime green and yellow striped t-shirt and white runners.

**Paul**, played by **Charlie Maher**, is older than the schoolmates. In his mid-twenties, he is the captain of Seán’s football team. A handsome, chiselled, sporty type with a large smile and a twinkle in his eyes, he wears dark jeans and a burgundy vest t-shirt.

**Bryan**, played by **Paul Mescal**, is Emma's older brother. As a college student, he would be about twenty years old. He appears after the interval wearing casual clothes – trackie bottoms or shorts, teamed with t-shirts and hoodies. His dark hair is cut short and frames his sullen, serious face.

Lastly, **Dad** is played by **Frank McCusker.** He is a trim man in his fifties. Always appearing smartly dressed, in suits mostly, his casual look is to adopt chinos, an open-necked shirt and woollen jumper. His greying auburn hair in clipped to a short back and sides, and his goatee beard is neatly trimmed. **Dad** does not easily make eye contact with others.

That concludes the introductory notes for this production of **Asking For It**. They are prepared by Máirín Harte and Bríd Ní Ghruagáin. Audio description at the Abbey Theatre is provided by Arts and Disability Ireland with support from The Arts Council.

Thank you. Go raibh maith agaibh.