**The Unmanageable Sisters**

**by Deirdre Kinahan**

**a new version of “Les Belles Soeurs” by Michel Tremblay**

**Programme notes for Audio Described Performance**

**The Abbey Theatre, 7th April 2018, 2pm**

Welcome to the introductory notes for thisproduction of **The Unmanageable Sisters** by Deirdre Kinahan, a new version of **Les Belles Soeurs** by Michel Tremblay. The play is directed by Graham McLaren. Set Design is by Colin Richmond with Costume Design by Joan O’Clery. Lighting is designed by Sinéad McKenna and the Sound Designer is Carl Kennedy. Hair and Makeup is by Val Sherlock and the Movement Coordinator is Eddie Kay.

**ABOUT THE PLAY**

Green Shield stamps - a million of them - and Ger Lawless has won them all! It’s Ballymun in 1974 and happiness is at her fingertips. But when fifteen friends and family gather to help her claim her winnings, all bets are off!

During one fateful night, these determined women bring you into their lives in the ferociously funny **The Unmanageable Sisters** *–*Deirdre Kinahan’s new version of Michel Tremblay’s fêted Quebecois comedy.

**ABOUT THE SET**

Laid out before us is a two-bedroom flat in dishevelled 1970s décor. On the far left of the stage is a large window divided into 6 oblong panes, and door with a frosted glass window that leads out to a balcony. A navy striped towel hangs on a rail on the door. A clothes line dotted with wooden pegs hangs outside the window, with a tablecloth hanging limply from it.

On the far right, towards the front of the stage is a hall door with a long, narrow glass pane, and a window overhead. Hanging on the wall by the doorframe, on the side nearest us, is a cream-coloured telephone. Directly underneath is a small upholstered stool and side table. A sewing box sits underneath, with brightly coloured ornaments sitting on the table.

The flat before us is divided into two parts, with the space on the left a little larger than on the right.

On our left is the sizeable kitchen. The wallpaper bares a hexagonal geometric pattern in yellow and green on a white background, though the edges of each sheet are discoloured and beginning to peel in places. Underneath the large window is a sink set into kitchen units that have pale green doors and white drawers, continuing along the back wall. The cream-coloured counter top is laden with cups and cardboard boxes, a bread bin and kettle. An electric oven sits at the end, on the back wall, next to a sliding door which opens into a small sitting room at the back. A hatch with white doors over the kitchen counter also opens into this dark room which is packed with furniture, and dimly lit by a standard lamp.

There is a stud partition wall running from front to back, just to the right of centre. The plasterboard has been removed, leaving the wooden planks on show, as though midway through a renovation. On the kitchen side of this partition are a few more kitchen units, more cardboard boxes and some folding tables. Set in the centre of the kitchen’s vast grey linoleum floor is a Formica-topped table with four mismatched chairs. More chairs sit by the wall on our left, next to the balcony door.

On the other side of the partition wall is a corridor. At the end, on the back wall, is a white door leading – probably – into one of the bedrooms of the flat. This right-hand side of the stage is divided into several areas. First is the narrow corridor running from front to back by the stripped partition wall. Next, along the right-hand side towards the rear, is a walled-off area. One door leads to a second bedroom, while another sliding door, on the wall facing us, opens up a bathroom painted a sickly pink with avocado bathroom fittings.

Lastly, towards the front, is the main hall with the front door and telephone on the wall. The hall and corridor have a carpet with a very busy pattern in brown, red and yellow. In the centre of the hall is a small, round, pastel pink rug. Sitting right in the middle of the broken down partition is a red and grey armchair with a small side table beside it.

In this flat, every architrave, window sill and counter top is festooned with little figurines or dolls – knick knacks of all sorts. Two clocks hang on two different kitchen walls. Reproductions of painted landscapes and decorative bronze plates hang elsewhere. The corridor is stuffed with stepping stools, laundry baskets, a vacuum cleaner and a carpet cleaner. An overburdened coat-rack adds to the crowded appearance.

Lights hang from the ceiling with a variety of lampshade covers. Occasionally, lamps are lit in the rooms beyond, and streetlight pours in the large window in the evening. Most of the time the lighting in this production is naturalistic - following the times of day. However, occasionally a character addresses the audience, or themselves. At such times, the rest of the cast are often left in half-darkness with the protagonist picked out by spotlights.

**ABOUT THE CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES**

There are fifteen women in this play ranging from twenty years old to a woman in her nineties. Set in seventies working class Dublin, the women wear 1970s style clothing - lots of mismatched patterning, shapes and flares.

The younger women who are in their early twenties – **Linda Lawless** played by **Clare Monnelly**, **Janet Mooney** played by **Sarah Madigan** and **Lisa Pearse** played by **Caoimhe O'Malley** are dressed fashionably. **Linda's** outfit accentuates her curves -tan, cream and brown checkered flares with a cream polo neck jumper and platform sandals. **Janet** wears denim flares and a brown sleeveless sweater over a blue blouse. On her feet dark brown, flat shoes. **Janet** wears thick rimmed glasses. **Lisa** also wears denim flares, hers are frayed at the bottom. She wears a flowery blouse with headband to match. All three women have long dark brown hair.

Linda's mother Ger Lawless played by **Marion O’Dwyer** is a woman in her mid-fifties perhaps. We first see her in a housecoat with rollers in her auburn hair. Later she puts on a blue dress with a yellow flowered pattern and wears her hair long and wavy.

**Ger** has three sisters in the play. Rose O'Brien played by **Karen Ardiff**, Gabby Joyce played by **Clare Barrett** and Patsy Guerin played by **Lisa Lambe**. **Rose** has wild, long dark curly hair which falls about her expressive, angry face. She wears a brown full skirt which falls to just below her knee and a brown and cream blouse. She wears platform sandals on her feet. **Gabby** wears a pale denim button-up short sleeved dress which with sandals, her blonde shoulder-length hair styled tightly. **Patsy** appears wearing large, dark glasses and a black and grey fitted dress with black tights and black platforms, her long blonde falling just above her waist.

Marie Boyle played by **Tina Kellegher** is the first guest to appear. A woman in her forties, wearing her brown hair pinned up in a bun, a green dress, tan cardigan and sensible shoes.

Lilly de Courcey played by **Charlotte Bradley** is a woman in her fifties, she walks with her nose slightly elevated, her dark hair loosely pinned up. She wears a garish pink and purple outfit.

Yvonne Long played by **Mary O’Driscoll**, one of the eldest of the women appears in a tan mac and brown printed headscarf. Underneath she wears a simple blue dress with shiny gold coloured buttons down the front.

Olive Doyle, played by **Noelle Brown** is the oldest of the bunch. In a wheelchair, slumped over appearing to be asleep most of the time. Her daughter-in-law Teresa Doyle played by **Catherine Walsh**, is a tall woman who towers over her mother-in-law.

Dolly Snow played by **Rynagh O’Grady** is a small, meek looking woman with a stoic face. Her greasy dark hair is shoulder length.

The final two characters are close friends, in their fifties. Angie Smith played by **Catherine Byrne** and Ruthie Barrett played by **Rachael Dowling**. Both dressed conservatively in dark clothing, **Angie** with a short haircut, **Rachel's** brown hair is pulled back tightly in a bun.

That concludes the introductory notes for this production of **The Unmanageable Sisters**. They were prepared by Máirín Harte and Bríd Ní Ghruagáin, your describers for this show. 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!

