**Ulysses**

**by James Joyce**

**adapted by Dermot Bolger**

**Programme notes for Audio Described Performance**

**Abbey Theatre, 21st July 2018, 2pm**

Welcome to the introductory notes for this production of **Ulysses** by James Joyce, adapted for the stage by Dermot Bolger.

The play is directed and designed by Graham McLaren. Costumes are designed by Niamh Lunny and Lighting Design is by Kevin McFadden. The Musical Director is Jon Beales and Sound Design is by Ben Delaney. The Puppetry Designer and Maker is Gavin Glover and the Movement Director is Eddie Kay.

The performance begins at 2pm, and lasts for two hours and thirty minutes, with one 20 minute interval.

**ABOUT THE PLAY**

After a sell-out run, the Abbey Theatre’s bawdy, vibrant and tumultuous production of James Joyce's classic is back by popular demand.

Bloom’s Odyssey is a pandemonium of live music, puppets, dancing, clowning, bowler hats and kazoos. It’s **Ulysses** as you’ve never imagined it before, a superbly theatrical homage to Joyce’s chronicle of Dublin life and the greatest novel of all time. Created by Abbey Theatre Director Graham McLaren, this production is absurd, brilliant and oodles of fun.

**ABOUT THE SET**

The Abbey is transformed for this production. There are seats at what would normally be the back wall of the theatre stage as well as the usual seats for the audience, although the first 5 rows have been removed. The stage is at floor level between these two banks of seating that face one another. It is covered in black and white chequered tiles.

Nine round wooden tables and chairs are placed around this stage with more audience members seated here, thus becoming part of the performance. Each table leaves a single seat empty. One table is left entirely empty, and has a large box-shaped object placed upon it, hidden from us by a black cloth cover.

In the centre of the stage is a single bed with cast-iron frame. It is draped in white sheets and a plush, peachy quilt, with pillows at either end. A grey lacy shawl and pair of lacy knickers are draped over the brass knob at one end.

At one edge of the stage is an upright piano with two dining chairs placed in front of it and a microphone stand. This is next to the set of steps by which the audience enter the auditorium. These steps are also used by the actors during the performance. At the opposite edge of the stage is a bar in dark mahogany, about 3 metres long and slightly curved. Behind this bar, a set of wooden shelves stands, with a mirror emblazoned with the logo and name of Jameson Whiskey.

Bottles of whiskey, stout and clear bottles of soda water sit on these shelves. On the top shelf are cream and brown unlabelled stoneware bottles. Four bar stools are tucked snugly underneath the bar.

Dotted around the stage are coat-stands with a variety of black overcoats, check blazers and women’s fitted jackets that are picked up nimbly by the ensemble as they flit from one character to another. Still more costumes are hung from coat hooks nailed into the walls behind the piano and beside the bar. One coat-stand carries a dusty white veil with a wooden, carved face-mask in dark grey attached.

The overall style of the set is a kind of Edwardian vaudeville setting. Hanging directly over the central bed are tasselled lampshades, while globed chandeliers and massive streetlamps hang over the rest of the stage. The lighting in the play stays true to the vaudeville style, using dramatic reds, blues and purples, as well as more neutral daytime colours as the scenes dictate.

**ABOUT THE CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES**

**Leopold Bloom**, played by David Pearse, is a short, balding man in his forties with a neat moustache and furrowed brow. His thinning brown hair is flecked with grey – his voice a little timid, and his movements controlled and a little clipped. Leopold wears a black three-piece suit for most of the performance, sometimes with black bowler hat and overcoat. When he first appears, however, he wears only a white shirt and long cotton underpants.

His wife, **Molly Bloom**, played by Janet Moran, is a buxom woman in her late thirties with blonde curly hair, messily pinned up. She walks on-stage as the audience are arriving and clambers into the bed and snuggles in under the covers. Molly wears a white cotton slip with full skirt edged with broderie anglaise, and a tight corset. She wears thick black stockings rolled up to her thighs. Her voice is rich and a little husky. Her movements as she sprawls over the narrow bed, or hops up on her knees on the mattress, are almost catlike.

Their daughter **Milly** is played Caitríona Ennis, who also takes on several ensemble roles. She is petite, with brown curly hair, porcelain skin and ruby-red lips. As Milly, she wears a long teal skirt with black lace-up boots, a mustard yellow printed blouse and bright red hat.

When playing **Martha**, a paramour, she drapes a lace scarf over her face. As **Josie Breen**, she pulls a moth-eaten shawl around her shoulders. And as **Martin Cunningham**, she wears a long black overcoat and hat. With each new character she adopts a new walk and voice.

Bryan Burroughs plays **Buck Mulligan** and **Lenehan**. A trim man with a shaved head,we first meet him as Buck Mulligan, in a gold damask dressing-gown and black trousers. As Lenehan he wears a check jacket, neatly fitted, with waistcoat and dark trousers. Later still, he appears as a madam of a brothel in a bustier and bustling silk skirt, short at the front, with a slight train at the back, flourishing a fan wildly.

**Stephen Dedalus** is played by Donal Gallery. A young man, with brown hair and neat moustache and beard, Dedalus wears the gold-rimmed round spectacles often associated with Joyce. He is pale and speaks in an almost affected manner, stiff and serious, his movements mirroring this. He wears a thick grey overcoat, black jacket and waistcoat and pinstripe trousers.

Later on he also plays a **Policeman** in navy serge uniform and helmet, as well as a **Narrator** at the bar, when he dons a shell tracksuit and thick inner-city Dublin accent.

Raymond Keane plays several parts, including **McCoy**, an acquaintance of Bloom’s. He wears a check 5-buttoned jacket, brown bowler hat and glasses, and clasps his hands tightly across his chest, his movements and speech sudden and precise – almost birdlike. As **Simon Dedalus**, he wears a black three-piece suit and overcoat. He adopts several other roles over the evening including **Lynch**, **Corny Kelleher** and the down-on-his-luck **Lord John Corley**, imbuing each with his own distinct physicality.

Stephen Jones plays an array of ensemble characters, first appearing as **Bantam Lyons** in a brown corduroy jacket and dark trousers with peaked cap. A man in his thirties with fair hair neatly slicked back and clear blue eyes, he has a fine tenor voice, perfect for playing **Blazes Boylan**. Boylan wears a flamboyant navy velvet blazer, red silk shirt and blue cravat. His tight check trousers with sky blue socks and shiny brown brogues complete the look as he swishes and minces around the stage, flirting outrageously with every woman that comes near him. He struts about with his walking cane, pouting and winking at the ladies onstage and in the audience alike. He later appears as **Private Carr** in khaki army uniform.

Faoileann Cunningham - a young woman in her twenties with dark brown curly hair and rosy cheeks - is bright-eyed with a peaches and cream complexion. She too pops up in a myriad of characters, as a shopgirl, as **Miss Kennedy**, a waitress in the Ormond Hotel, and later as **Gerty McDowell**, as well as a working girl in Nighttown. She first arrives wearing a white cotton blouse and long, dark green check skirt, teaming it with various jackets, and later, as Gerty, changing to a full, peach coloured skirt with cotton underskirts.

Puppetry is a central feature in this production. From the beginning there are characters represented in this way that are manipulated by different members of the ensemble. Molly and Leopold’s dead infant son, Rudy is a gaunt, grey papier maché face with dark eyes, and a long, white shirt. Stephen Dedalus sees his dead mother in the carved, grey death mask with dried floral wreath and long white veil that is worn at times by Faoileann Cunningham.

The bar scene in the Ormond Hotel is populated with drunken, tufty-haired puppets in suits and overcoats worn in front by the actors, with their own hands reaching out as the puppets’ hands. These include **The Citizen**, **Bob Doran** and **Alf Bergan,** and **Garryowen** the dog.

A bawdy courtroom scene is enacted on the counter of the bar with short puppets strapped from neck to waist of the actors, their own faces as the heads of the puppets. These include a **Magistrate** with lacy French knickers under his robes, **Buck Mulligan**, who is stark naked under his dressing-gown and a **Haughty Woman** in a purple negligee with nothing underneath.

The Musical Director **Jon Beales** sits at the piano throughout in black suit and grey waistcoat. He occasionally conducts the cast in group singing and at one point dons a surplice and leads them in prayer.

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The Abbey Theatre invites audience members availing of audio description to join them for a touch tour of the stage, costumes and puppets at 12.15 before the matinee performance on July 21st.

That concludes the introductory notes for this production of **Ulysses**, prepared by Bríd Ní Ghruagáin who will deliver the audio description and touch tour on the day. 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.