**What Good Is Looking Well**

**When You’re Rotten On The Inside?**

**by Emma O’Grady**

**Programme notes for National Tour, May 2019**

**at the Watergate, Kilkenny; Áras Inis Gluaire, Belmullet;**

**Dunamaise Arts Centre, Port Laoise**

**and the Roscommon Arts Centre.**

Welcome to the Programme Notes for **“What Good Is Looking Well When You’re Rotten On The Inside?”** written and performed by Emma O’Grady and presented by Bealtaine Festival. The play is directed by Jonathan Gunning, Catherine Ireton, Caroline Lynch and Andy Smith. Lighting Design is by Eoin Winning and Sound Design is by Rob Moloney. Costume Design is by Triona Lillis. The Stage Manager is Sadhbh Barrett Coakley.

The performance lasts for about one hour and twenty minutes without an interval.

**ABOUT THE PLAY**

One month before his death, retired civil servant and man of few words Paddy O’Grady had a sudden urge to talk. Using a portable cassette tape recorder, he recorded 15 hours of material: absurdist political satire; musings on life, love and death; stories, ballads and poetry; and memories of life as a civil servant.

Paddy’s granddaughter, Emma O’Grady, later discovered he had written plays, poems and short stories in the 1950s and until now his work has been without an audience. This one-woman show examines the fractured and fragile personas we present to the world, who we might be behind them and what we could be instead. **What Good Is Looking Well When You’re Rotten on the Inside?** is a piece about emotional inheritance and grief for wasted creativity that serves as both a tribute and a warning.

**ABOUT THE SET**

The side and back walls of the stage are draped in black. The floor too is painted black. Midway between front and back, five large round speakers are suspended above the performers’ heads in a ‘W’ formation. When a particular speaker is relaying sound, it is picked out by a focussed light, making it stand out from the dark.

The set is divided into three zones. In the centre is a large square of beige carpet with coloured flower pattern, about 2 by 2 metres squared, which looks as though it was cut out of a sitting room. In the centre of the carpet is a well-worn upholstered armchair, mint green with a faint floral pattern. A matching footstool is positioned by the left arm, with a tape recorder sitting on it, and a microphone that is attached by a wire. On the opposite side of the chair are three nesting tables in dark wood with leather-embossed tops. A plain white shoe box sits under the tables. Sitting on the top nesting table is a large 1970s style portable radio with a tape deck. There is a white china mug with a floral pattern on it, a saucer with a pipe and another pipe with a curved, ebony mouthpiece sitting in a little matching stand. There is a box of matches behind the mug.

In the zone on our left is a large black speaker on a stand, at about hip height. Next to it is another black stand with a small platform, carrying another silver tape recorder.

In the zone on our right is a work desk and matching chair in lightly varnished wood. An old ribbon typewriter is placed on the far right of the desk. A third black tape recorder sits on the desk in front of the chair.

Throughout the performance, the stage manager comes and goes, placing vases of cheery, brightly-coloured plastic flowers across the stage. She continues to do so until all the gaps between the furniture and all the flat surfaces are full of flowers.

There are two stage lights on wheeled stands on the far left and right that are moved about the stage during the performance. Each of the zones is, in turn, picked out in a warm yellow glow leaving the rest in darkness, when the action is focussed, but for much of the time the stage is brightly lit, certainly when the performers address the audience directly, or when the stage manager comes in to move things about.

At one point, when 1940s music is playing, the space around the armchair is bathed in vibrant pink light through a smoky haze, as the performer mimes to a recording of Vera Lynn.

**ABOUT THE CHARACTERS & COSTUMES**

There are two performers in this show. **Emma O’Grady** plays herself, her own grandfather **Paddy** and other characters throughout the show. She changes the energy in her voice when she becomes her grandfather, but does not change costumes moving from one to the other. Emma is of average height, with red hair parted at the side and tied back in a low ponytail. She has a round face and animated blue eyes. Emma wears a double-breasted trouser suit in grey with a faint pinstripe, a white shirt, a paisley tie and dark socks and lace-up brogues. Later in the performance she takes off her suit jacket and hangs it on the back of the chair. Later still she wears a chunky beige woollen cardigan.

At times, Emma sits back in the armchair and listens to her grandfather’s recordings for long periods of time. She smokes a pipe and slowly becomes surrounded by a halo of smoke, accented by the warm yellow light.

The other performer is the **Stage Manager**, **Sadhbh Barrett Coakley**. She first appears dressed in a long-sleeved black top, black trousers and shoes with her long brown hair tied back. She deftly pops in and out of the stage moving a prop or a lamp, or placing vases of flowers around the space. Her arrival is often commented on by Emma. Later, she plays **Mrs Helen Cassidy** in a scene from one of Paddy’s plays. Sadhbh changes into a floral knee-length tea dress of rich purplish-blue with pink and red blossoms all over, and a pair of heeled shoes.

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That concludes the Programme Notes for this production of **What Good Is Looking Well If You’re Rotten On The Inside?** They were prepared by Bríd Ní Ghruagáin. Accessible performances are provided by Arts & Disability Ireland with support from The Arts Council. For further details about other accessible performances, text **ACCESSARTS** to **51444** or head to [**www.adiarts.ie**](http://www.adiarts.ie/) for more information.

Thank you. Go raibh maith agaibh.

