CITYSONG

ABBNEY THEATRE 25 MAY – 8 JUNE

WRITTEN BY DYLAN COBURN GRAY
DIRECTED BY CAITRÍONA MCLAUGHLIN
COMPANY

Cast
Amy Conroy
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Bláthín Mac Gabhann
Daryl McCormack
Clare McKenna
Dan Monaghan
Dylan Coburn Gray
Caitriona McLaughlin
Sarah Bacon
Paul Keogan
Adrienne Quirky
Jennifer O’Malley
Sue Mythen
Andrea Ainsworth
Eoin Byrne
Bronagh Doherty
Tara Furlong
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Ger Clancy and Artfx Ltd
Shane Connaughton
Ros Kavanagh
Ali Stewart
Jen Sinnamomn
Bríd Ní Ghruagáin and
Máirín Harte
ZOO Digital
Marchje Jansen (The Lir)

Audio Described and Captioned performances are provided by Arts & Disability Ireland with funding from the Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon

ISL interpreted performances feature a professional interpreter that translates the production into Irish Sign Language.

Audio Description is a live verbal commentary fed through an ear piece that captures the visual elements of a production as it unfolds, that a blind or partially sighted person might otherwise miss.

Captioning is similar to television subtitling and gives deaf and hard of hearing audiences access to live performance.

Running Time:
100 minutes approx. without an interval

OUT OF THE ABBEY
12 JUNE – 6 JULY SOHO THEATRE, LONDON*
23 – 28 JULY GALWAY INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL

*Supported by Culture Ireland

Culture Ireland
Cultúr Éireann
DEDICATION

It takes a village to write a play. I think it's important to acknowledge that. The first reading of Citysong was as part of the Lingo Spoken Word Festival 2015, so when the Abbey programme went live I went looking for the names of the Lingo team to make sure I spelled them right in my thanks. What was the first thing I saw on their website? A gorgeous photo of the one and only Paul Curran, a wonderful poet who is now dead. It was a bit of a gut punch. Me and Paul started performing around the same time and I always loved his stuff. The reason I'm so proud of Citysong is that I think it has something of the spirit Paul had in buckets: a compassion, a tenderness, an anger born of fierce love. I worked out how I wanted to write in a scene where he loomed large but never scary. I feel like I owe him. I wish I had known him better and that he were still here. So this is for you Paul, the whole first section in particular owes you bigtime.

https://soundcloud.com/paulcurranspokenword

DYLAN COBURN GRAY
ECHOES

I've been reading a lot of diaspora fiction. I love exactly what is easiest to dismiss about it. The broad strokes recur: leaving home, living somewhere alien, raising children who belong as much to it as to you and whose children in turn will be as different from them as they are from you. If your sense of good writing centres on relentless newness, unprecedented sentences describing unprecedented people thinking unprecedented thoughts and doing unprecedented things so that no one is left in any doubt that the writer has done some work, then these echoes of other stories in every story are failures. I love an aud unprecedented sentence — as you will shortly find out — but I love an Aud echo too.

And I've always felt that loving newness above everything else is a paralysing way to be. Worse than that, I think that newness is at root a lie. Because we're all preceived. All mosaics of other people who are mosaics, linked even if we're opposites. (A compass is as useful for going south as going north.) Worse again, a fetish for newness seems to go with a belief in A Universal and Enduring Human Condition. Square that circle for me. How do you write something new about something that never changes? If there even were such a thing as a UEHC, what could it be other than the jazz chord chart of our lives: the skeleton sitting under the surface of what we actually improvise, incredibly boring in and of itself, written to be rewritten, most interesting when least tangible.

Citysong is a multigenerational story about a family who never leave Dublin. But it's informed by my love of fiction about displacement, loneliness, longing, being fugitive. About thresholds, twilights, moments of netherness and bothness. The truth at the heart of it is the beautiful paradox of immigrant fiction: that the only constant is change, that the only universal is specificity, that we are always like and unlike our parents. We might have had these brains for one hundred thousand years, but we've only had farms for eleven thousand, writing for five thousand, printing for six hundred, electricity one hundred, the internet twenty, smartphones ten, these exact teeth five; this hairstyle one, this address six months, this boyfriend six weeks, this pimple six days, this hangover six hours, this programme six minutes. We have never been one way for very long at all. We're all immigrants in time and the present is a strange country.

"THE TRUTH AT THE HEART OF IT IS THE BEAUTIFUL PARADOX OF IMMIGRANT FICTION: THAT THE ONLY CONSTANT IS CHANGE, THAT THE ONLY UNIVERSAL IS SPECIFICITY, THAT WE ARE ALWAYS LIKE AND UNLIKE OUR PARENTS"

I don't want this to be misunderstood. I would be heartbroken if anyone thought there were a dismissive or racist subtext to this. So you left home. So it was hard. So what? We all suffer, get over it, the Irish were slaves too and you don't see us whining. There's enough of that around. (And Liam Hogan, a very cool historian, has lots to say on his twitter about how totally false it all is. Check him out.)

I mean the opposite, that immigrant stories more openly and more rawly touch on something fundamental to life: the journey of time, that the past is an origin we can never return to, that in the present they eat strange things, talk funny, have an inexplicable sense of humour about things we were taught never to mention much less laugh at. That a swathe of stories too often dismissed as parochial or niche for or those people actually tell us the truth about our lives we are most uncomfortable facing. Nothing comes back once it's gone. (But something else is always on its way.)

The same paradox again: what is most universal is most often dismissed as specific. And what is most specific is, secretly, most universal. What's oldest newest, newest oldest.

Citysong is about a Dublin family. In one sense, nothing new happens to any generation because they do exactly what their parents did. In another sense, it's exactly the opposite.

DYLAN COBURN GRAY
# ABBEY THEATRE STAFF

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THE RIDLEYs
THE 24 HOUR PLAYS: DUBLIN
GLASGOW GIRLS
THE COUNTRY GIRLS
OPERA BRIEFS
DUBLIN WILL SHOW YOU HOW
ULSTER AMERICAN
IN OUR VEINS
IT WAS EASY (IN THE END)
TRAD
SESSION
LA NATURA DELLE COSE
ROSAS DANST ROSAS
CITYSONG
RTÉ ALL IRELAND DRAMA FESTIVAL
5 X 5—WEEK 1
5 X 5—WEEK 2
5 X 5—WEEK 3
5 X 5—WEEK 4
5 X 5—WEEK 5
THE UNMANAGEABLE SISTERS
TWO PINTS
YOUNG CURATORS FESTIVAL
ASK TOO MUCH OF ME
THIS BEAUTIFUL VILLAGE
DUBLIN FRINGE FESTIVAL
LAST ORDERS AT THE DOCKSIDE

OUT OF THE ABBEY

TWO PINTS, US Tour
CYPRUS AVENUE at Royal Court, London
THE COUNTRY GIRLS, National Tour
CLASS at Bush Theatre, London
CITYSONG at Soho Theatre, London
CITYSONG at Galway International Arts Festival
REDEMPTION FALLS
at Galway International Arts Festival
THE PATIENT GLORIA at Edinburgh Fringe

UNTIL 19 JAN
15—26 JAN
3 FEB
13—16 FEB
23 FEB—6 APR
26—30 MAR
4—13 APR
9—20 APR
10—20 APR
26 APR—4 MAY
30 APR—11 MAY
10—11 MAY
14—15 MAY
18—19 MAY
25 MAY—8 JUN
6—8 JUN
10—14 JUN
17—21 JUN
24—28 JUN
1—5 JUL
8—12 JUL
14 JUN—3 AUG
24 JUN—10 AUG
29 JUL—10 AUG
19—24 AUGUST
31 AUG—14 SEPT
7—22 SEPT
23 SEPT—26 OCT

5 FEB — 18 MAY
14 FEB — 23 MAR
16 APR — 4 MAY
7 MAY — 1 JUN
12 JUNE — 6 JULY
23—28 JULY
24—28 JULY
1 — 25 AUGUST

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