

Mary-Lou McCarthy in association with **Ready, Steady SHOW!**,
The Civic and The Everyman presents

The Dead Letter Office


by MARY-LOU MCCARTHY

GRAFFITI THEATRE, CORK

19 - 22 October

THE CIVIC THEATRE, DUBLIN

26 - 28 October



“Letters are the most intimate form of long-distance correspondence we have available. It is a tangible connection between the sender and receiver. One cannot hold an email and marvel at how they are touching the same object that someone else held thousands of miles away. Writing a letter gives one the opportunity to choose their words with care, rather than having to spit them out willy-nilly into the ethereal land of zeroes and ones. A letter is proof of history, an artifact of one’s life and community.”

Letter Writer's Society



A Programme Note

In 2020, I was commissioned by *Ready, Steady, Show!* at The Civic Theatre, Tallaght to write the play *The Dead Letter Office*. After two years of research and writing, working with schools, children, and a fantastic creative team, it's exciting to finally be bringing *The Dead Letter Office* to audiences in Cork and Dublin.

I strongly believe in the importance of creativity in the lives of children and the value of creating theatre for young people. As a young child, I was lucky enough to be brought to see many plays by my mother in my local theatre, The Everyman, Cork. These powerful experiences at a young age influenced how I saw the world; they made me want to become a writer and performer, and ultimately to make work for young people. It feels fitting to premiere *The Dead Letter Office* in Cork where my journey in theatre began.

For some *The Dead Letter Office* will be their first time experiencing a live performance. For others it could be their 100th time seeing a play! Maybe you remember your first live show... the anticipation as the lights go down, the whispers and excitement, and - the big one in our house growing up - the discussions and questions afterwards about who said what and why! I hope that this play will leave its audience with much to think and talk about - questions around belonging, connection and most importantly, empathy. How can we teach children and adults to have empathy? How, when we meet a stranger in need, do we show empathy? When we are struggling ourselves and need help, can we rely on others to recognise our struggle? With the ongoing conflict in Syria and Ukraine, and in many other countries around the world, this feels like an important moment to stop to think and to make space in our day to discuss these important questions with the young people in our lives.

Every time I facilitate a workshop I'm inspired by young people's endless curiosity and sense of play. I hope I have brought this sense of play to *The Dead Letter Office*, and that the show will empower young audiences to discuss the often complex issues and questions that the world will throw at them in their own language and their own unique way

Mary-Lou McCarthy





Cast

Elizabeth
Hassan
Rosemary
Seamus

Mary-Lou McCarthy
Curtis-Lee Ashqar
Gina Moxley
Shane Daniel Corcoran

Creative Team

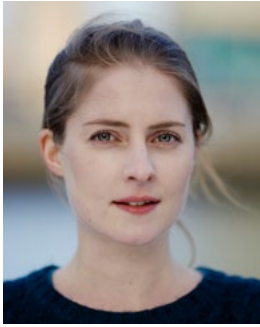
Writer
Director
Play Development
Set Designer
Costume Designer
Music Composer and Sound Designer
Lighting Designer
Olfactory Engineers

Producer
Production Manager
Deputy Production Manager
Stage Manager
Assistant Stage Manager
Irish Sign Language Interpreter
Crew

Graphic Design
Educational Resource Pack Design
Photography

Mary-Lou McCarthy
Emily Foran
Veronica Coburn
Ger Clancy
Deirdre Dwyer
Jack Cawley
Sarah Jane Shiels
Dr. Anderson Augusto Simiscuka
& Dr. Mohammed Amine Togou
Mags Keohane
Anthony Hanley
Ronan O'Shea
Sadhbh Barrett Coakley
Georgia Maguire
Ray Greene
Rab Urquhart
Joe Mc Nicholas
Ian Brown
Arran MacGabhann
Seamus Hegarty
A Worthy Cause
Sarah FitzGibbon
Ros Kavanagh





Writer / Performer

Mary-Lou McCarthy

Mary-Lou McCarthy is a writer and actor working across multiple disciplines including theatre, film, TV and radio and in 2022 was awarded a Next Generation Award by the Arts Council. She is passionate about creating innovative work with and for young audiences and is a committee member of Theatre for Young Audiences Ireland. Her new play *The Dead Letter Office* will premiere in October 2022 and explores themes of migration and belonging for ages 9+. The play was commissioned by *Ready, Steady, Show!* and is co-produced by The Everyman and The Civic, supported by Branar Meitheal and funded by the Arts Council. In 2020, Mary-Lou received a "Arts for Young Audiences" residency at the Linenhall Arts Centre and created a new audio project for the classroom entitled *Squawker*. In 2021, Mary-Lou was a National Youth Council of Ireland artist in residence with Graffiti's Activate Junior Youth Theatre and has been an artist in residence at Le Centre Culturel Irlandais and as part of PUSH, a Creative Europe-funded lab supported by 5 European partners with the aim of advancing ideas within theatre and dance for young audiences. Mary-Lou is a fluent Irish speaker, and her work across theatre, film and television spans both Irish and English languages. Mary-Lou is from Cork and a graduate of Drama and Theatre Studies and English from UCC and is currently based in Co. Mayo. Past work with the Everyman includes research and development on productions and performances in *Lovers*, *Factory Girls* and the *Fighting Words Young Playwrights* programme.





Performer

Curtis-Lee Ashqar

Curtis-Lee is a graduate of the Three Year Bachelor in Acting (Hons) from The Lir Academy. He recently appeared on stage in Carys Coburns' *Absent The Wrong* at the Peacock Theatre (Winner of 'Best Production' at Dublin Fringe Festival 2022).

He has just finished filming on *Blue Lights* for BBC NI. Other recent tv credits include the role of Xavi in the TV Series *Hope Street* for BBC NI and on stage at Theatre Royal Stratford East playing the role of Laurence in Conor McPherson's *Shining City* directed by Nadia Fall.

He recently worked on a new play by Marina Carr, *Gilgamesh*, with theatre company Macnas playing the title role. Curtis-Lee appeared in the role of Jo in *Peat* by Kate Heffernan and directed by Tim Crouch at The Ark, Dublin.

He has just finished filming on *Blue Lights* for BBC NI. Other recent tv credits include roles in *Game Of Thrones* (Season 5) directed by Michael Slovis, *Into The Badlands* for AMC, *Torvill & Dean* for ITV and the lead role of Ahmet in Murat Asker's short film *The Gift* and Liam in *Ourselves Alone* (currently circulating festivals).



Director

Emily Foran

Emily is a freelance director for theatre and film based in Belfast and trained at The Lir Academy Dublin. Her work spans across the island of Ireland, working with Druid Theatre after receiving the Marie Mullen Bursary, as well as The Lyric Theatre Belfast, The MAC, An Grianán Theatre and Greenshoot Productions. Her recent work includes Northern Ireland Screen-funded short film *BAD VIBES*, which she wrote and directed and is due to begin its festival run later this year. Recent credits also includes returning as guest director for *Dancing at Lughnasa* at The Lir Academy; *The Half Moon* by Alice Malseed with Greenshoot Productions; *REVVED* by Patrick Quinn at An Grianán Theatre; *Except a Man* by Jan Carson, a series of audio monologues produced by the MAC; a rehearsed reading of *In My Mind's Eye* by Shirley-Anne Godfrey at An Grianán Theatre, *Here and Now* at The Brian Friel Theatre as part of Northern Ireland Office's 21 Artists for the 21st Century programme, on which she was a mentor for Drama; *And Other Hellish Things* by Shane Burke for Druid Debuts; *Bloodlines* by Vittoria Caffola for the Listen at the Lyric series at Lyric Theatre Belfast; short film *Partition* by Nandi Jola with Brassneck Theatre which premiered at Belfast Film Festival 2021; No Touching Theatre Festival as Associate Director and Programmer; *The Mouth of the Birch* by Shane Mac an Bhaird for Druid Debuts; *Anniversary Lockdown* by Lata Sharma as part of the *Splendid Isolation* series produced by The Lyric Theatre and BBC Northern Ireland. Emily was also a resident Hatch and Scratch Artist at the MAC with The Movement Collective and was one of Big Telly Theatre Company's Early Career Artists. She currently has a new project in development with the support of The Lyric Theatre.



Set Designer

Ger Clancy

Ger Clancy is the creative director of ArtFX, an art studio based in Wicklow, Ireland.

With over 20 years' experience in the arts, he works as a designer, artist and educator.

Ger is actively involved in Theatre, Film, Spectacle and Visual Arts. He is programme chair of the Design for Film course in IADT, Dun Laoghaire. He has lectured there since 2003.

Ger is a determined, creative individual who enjoys the challenge of creating new work. Always striving to achieve superior innovative solutions, he is keen to ensure that his designs and artwork leave a lasting impression on audiences.



Costume Designer

Deirdre Dwyer

Deirdre Dwyer designs sets and costumes for theatre, opera, dance and film. She also adapts and directs her own work for young audiences. She is a member of BrokenCrow Theatre Company. She trained in UCC (BA in English and Drama and Theatre Studies), at RWCMD (MA in Theatre Design, Cardiff and participated, as the Designer, in Rough Magic SEEDS3. She was awarded the first Pat Murray Bursary in 2009. She is a founder member of the Irish Society of Stage and Screen Designers and is Theatre Artist in Residence at Garter Lane Arts Centre, Waterford.

Previous work includes designs for the Everyman, BrokenCrow, Rough Magic, Theatre Royal, Junk Ensemble, Graffiti, Tinderbox, RSC Glasgow, Dublin Youth Theatre, Ulysses Opera Theatre, Linbury Studio LAMDA, Cork Opera House, Spraoi and Waterford Youth Arts.

www.deirdredwyer.com





Music Composer and Sound Designer

Jack Cawley

Jack Cawley is a composer, performer, producer and sound artist currently based in Sligo. Jack has an M.Phil in Music Technology from Trinity College Dublin and is currently working on a research Masters in Artificial Intelligence.

He has composed theatre soundtracks for *The Shaughraun*, *The Snow Queen* (Smock Alley), *Follow, Farm, Jockey, BEES!* (Willfredd), *SCORE* (Breach & Quinn/ Dublin Fringe Festival 2015, Georgetown Festival (Malaysia) 2018), *The Bockety World of Henry and Bucket*, *The Ice Child*, *Song from the Sea* (Barnstorm Theatre Co), *Ferry Tales*, *Pigeon* (Carpet Theatre), *Pumpgirl* (Lyric Belfast), *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* (Second Age), *The Lonesome West*, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* (Town Hall Theatre Productions), *Translations*, *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me* (Decadent Theatre).

Sound Designs include *Here Comes Trouble* (Hawk's Well Theatre/ Loco & Reckless Productions), *The Blue Boy*, *Silver Stars*, *This Beach*, *The Circus Animals Desertion* (Brokentalkers), *What Did I Miss?* (The Ark/DTF), *Ten Dates with Mad Mary*, *GLITCH* (Calipo), *Chicane* (Gúna Nua), *The Nose* (Performance Corporation), *You Are Here* (Living Space/ Bedrock)

Film work includes *The Far Side* (Upstate Theatre Co) *HAXAN* (With Dublin Film Ensemble- live performance of original score as part of Horrorthon in IFI) .



Lighting Designer

Sarah Jane Shiels

SJ began designing lighting in Dublin Youth Theatre, completing M.Sc in Interactive Digital Media 2021, a BA in Drama and Theatre Studies 2006 (Trinity) and the Rough Magic Seeds3 programme 2006 - 2008. From 2010 – 2017, she was co-artistic director of WillFredd Theatre.

Previous lighting designs include *Hive City Legacy* (Hot Brown Honeys), *Party Scene*, *SHIT*, *Conversations After Sex* (This Is Pop Baby), *The Tin Soldier* (Theatre Lovett , The Gate), *All the Angels* (Rough Magic Theatre Company), *Book of Names* (ANU Productions), *The Veiled Ones* (Junk Ensemble), *Afterlove* (Stephanie Dufresne, Galway Dance Project), *Luck Just Kissed You Hello*, *One Good Turn* (Abbey Theatre), *Hansel and Gretel* (Irish National Opera, Theatre Lovett, Abbey Theatre).



Producer

Mags Keohane

Mags Keohane is a freelance director and producer. Mags is company producer for Dead Centre Theatre and works with a number of independent artists. Producing credits with independent artists include *Opening Night* by Jane Deasy at Dublin Fringe 2022 (Winner of Best Design), *Also for Roaring* by Roisin Stack 2021, *In It For The Long Run* with Cork Dance Initiative (Cork Midsummer Festival 2021), *Spliced* by writer-performer Timmy Creed (Cork Midsummer 2018 & Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2019). With Dead Centre Mags has worked on their recent premiere of *Good Sex* at Dublin Theatre Festival 2022, and touring productions of Beckett's *Room* & Chekhov's *First Play*. Mags also runs MINNOW productions, directing credits with MINNOW include the Irish premiere of *Stacy* by Jack Thorne in 2022 and a contemporary adaptation of *Three Men in a Boat* by Jerome K. Jerome in 2018. Mags graduated with distinction from an MLitt Theatre Practice at the University of Glasgow. To get in touch visit and for further credits visit: magskeohane.com





Stage Manager

Sadhbh Barrett Coakley

Sadhbh is a free-lance producer, stage manager and actor from Kerry, based in Cork. She holds a BA in Theatre and Drama Studies from CIT Cork School of Music. She completed the Smock Alley Creative Producers GENERATOR training programme 2016/2017 and an MA in Arts Management and Creative Producing in UCC.

Sadhbh is co-artistic director of ALSA Productions, a Cork-based theatre company who make work for all ages. ALSA Productions were artists in residence in CIT Cork School of Music (2017-2019) and Artists in Residence in Corcadorca's Theatre Development Centre (2018 - 2020).

In 2021, Sadhbh joined Once Off Productions as an Associate Producer. With Once Off she has produced multiple projects including Peter Power's *The City Is Never Finished* and the Irish and North American tour of Manchán Magan's *Arán & Im* which toured to 16 cities across 12 states and 2 provinces.

Recent stage managing credits include; *How It Is Parts 1 - 3* (Gare St Lazare), *Contact* (Corcadora), *The O'Casey Project* (Shinawil Productions), *The Big Chapel X* (Asylum Theatre & Kilkenny Arts Festival), *Seahorse* (Dublin Fringe & Everyman Cork), *What Good Is Looking Well...* (Dublin Fringe & Irish Tour), *How It Is* (Gare St Lazare, Everyman Cork & Coronet Notting Hill), *Here All Night* (Gare St Lazare, Irish Tour), *My Real Life* (Ed Fringe 17, Irish Tour), *Eggsistentiaism* (Ed Fringe 17) and *Noël* (National Opera House).



Acknowledgements



The making of *The Dead Letter Office* would not be possible without the endless support of my partner Michael Gallen and my family, especially my mother Marian, who believed in me from the outset. Veronica Coburn worked with me on the dramaturgy of the play for 2 years and I will be forever grateful for her passion and persistence during tougher days. I spent 4 weeks at Centre Culturel Irlandais, Paris in 2019 with the support of Draíocht and John McIllduff which helped me uncover the play I needed to write. Thank you to the actors I worked with in development over a number of years including Karl Quinn, Louis Lovett, Julie Sharkey, Clare Barrett and Peter Hanly. Thank you to the wonderful creative team and my producer Mags Keohane, without whom the play would never have made it this far. Finally, I would like to thank Razan Ibraheem for sharing her love of Syria with us.



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For all booking enquiries, please contact Mags Keohane, Producer:
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