



# Between the Lines

Liam Murphy casts an eye on the local Theatre Scene  
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**Liam Murphy**  
reports

**Review:**

## The Key of D

Scott Johnston's direction of Adam Wallace's *In The Key of D* for Waterford Youth Arts at Garter Lane bookended the work beautifully and brought shape, layers of meaning and a glorious dollop of magic where early on it rained silver keys on one of the four Dees in this production. It deserved the standing ovation.

Songs and memorable music from Kenny MacLeod added much to a rites of passage piece from childhood wonder to the liberating excesses of the Debs Ball.

Trish Murphy choreographs some stylised movement with umbrellas to create mystery and possibility. Dee in red, played by Nikki Moran set out to remember and in remembering tells the story, her story and the story of her friends along the way. Another child possibly another Dee was kidnapped and posh parents lamented to an obtuse Garda. Ciara Murphy was the snobbish mother and Ciaran Guinan was the snooty father, while Niall Cawley was the guard.

Then Dee, as played by Aibhlinn Ryan gave a Juliet performance full of love and gentleness with Jamie Flynn as a caring Romeo before Gavin Walsh as Eugene Power Jr burst upon the scene with a memorable comic routine.

Sophie Bray was another Dee with Shannon O'Reilly as Sharon as they caught the Blue mood of Joni Mitchell. Michael Cooney and Gavin Walsh did a great duet of sports commentators as Dean Croke O'Sullivan and Shane O'Sullivan created two know all taxi drivers.

Orlaith Daly was another Dee who together with Joanne Whelan as Anna created fart jokes, a bag of sick and toast and tea not tea and toast. Orlaith Daly returned to upstage her Dee by having a Greek chorus in the toilet, before another Dee, Meg Stokes, in fine form, broke it off with a gem of dialogue with geeky but nice Andrew played by Cillian Jacob with a rare ability to underplay comedy to excellent effect.

Beth Quinlan played an ornithologist who commented on the ritual of the Debs and the production returned to a triumph of staging to round off the

magic, create happy memories and sent the audience home happy.

## Guerrilla Days in Ireland

A rousing standing ovation acknowledged the world premiere of Neil Pearson's adaptation of *Guerrilla Days in Ireland* by Tom Barry at the Everyman Palace. Since the success of Bryan Flynn's *Michael Collins The Musical*, there has been a renewed interest in this drama and in the history of Ireland's struggle for freedom and independence. Tom Barry's story tells with some passion and belief his early involvement with the British Army in Mesopotamia where he learned about the 1916 Rising.

Returning to Cork, this Killorglin County Kerry man got involved in the War of Independence and the West Cork Flying Column.

After some initial suspiciousness he was accepted and he trained a rag and taggle guerrilla band to strike and run at the feared Black and Tans auxiliaries. He met brutality with brutality, executions and burnings with similar ferocity and formed a one hundred strong force of committed volunteers who ambushed and thwarted the British forces in West Cork.

The use of Donizetti's romance aria from *L'elisir D'amore* set a strange tone on a stage where scarecrow like spectral figures were used as silent and helpless witnesses to death and brutality and were used as clotheshorses for costume changes. Downstage right at a table and chair sat the older Tom Barry superbly played by Brendan Conroy as he narrated his story and typed his book. Aidan O'Hare played the young Barry and two other actors played a host of characters.

Despite excellent acting, four performers are too few to populate the stage and give credence to ambushes and it was a dangerous place to be in the audience, being shot at so often. At times the presentation had the static sense of a pageant but the urgency of the story was lost a bit in the history lesson.

Towards the end, I felt the transition to Civil War was glossed over a bit and you might have felt that Michael Collins was still on the Republican side. That said there was a wonderful sequence where Michael Grennell played a bravado Michael Collins who walked off stage and a minute later was back as an aloof De Valera to again exit and quickly return as a jovial Collins.

Jack Walsh was impressive as a list of characters and temperaments. I liked the way Pearson used the dialogue between older and younger Tom Barry to show doubts about the killings and slaughter.

## Blood Brothers

It was a joy and a pleasure to revisit Rebecca Storm in Willy Russell's *Blood Brothers* back at Cork Opera House where over twenty years ago I saw Rebecca Storm with an Irish cast perform. I later saw Helen Reddy and Con O'Neill in West End productions and this show has a strong appeal for me. It must be that universal sense of innocence and unknowing with memorable music and lyrics.

I was still caught up in the magic and the visceral impact of these two brothers, separated at birth by circumstances and poverty. The Summer Sequence still seems magical and it seems summers never end - you are innocent, immortal, you're just fifteen. The tragedy still unfolds - and only if we could predict no changes in the weather...and only if we could stop and be forever just eighteen.

The descent into depression and prison and the death of hope and dreams is still a shock in *Just Another Sign of the Times* - you get used to being idle... unemployment is such a pleasure these days, we call it leisure.

Despite a few nervous giggles from the audience the shocking finale is still a stab in the heart and there were tears at the edge of my eyes. Tell me it's not true...say it's just a story. Rebecca Storm was magnificent. Craig Price was a strong narrator and Sean Jones was a tear-jerking Mickey and Chris Carswell and excellent Eddie. Anna Sambrooks was a luminous Linda.

## Bryan Flynn

Bryan Flynn's co-written *All Star Wars* that was reviewed in this newspaper in May will be in the Theatre Royal from 3rd-8th October as part of a national tour. It is a smash hit GAA comedy and Richie Hayes' portrayal of Davy Fitz is a must see sequence in a great night's entertainment.

## Ilse de Ziah

Christ Church Cathedral gave their Coffee Concert audience a special treat with cellist Ilse de Ziah, a Connecticut born but Australian educated performer who now lives in

Cork and plays with the Cork Symphony Orchestra. Her programme *Irish Airs to Australian Fairs* was crowd-pleasing and her unusual arrangements of familiar Irish tunes created an expressive journey of styles and influences.

Her opening Carrickfergus was cold and lonely and caught the "black as ink" mood as the drone sound caught the heart - "I would swim over the deepest ocean" and de Ziah has crisscrossed oceans to share and expand her talents. Bua-chaille ón Eirne was beautiful and she sang her own love song *Driftwood* with contemporary folk touches.

Her arrangements were ambitious and interesting and O'Carolan's *Fanny Power* was a gem glistening with grace and sparkle. Her own contemporary composition *The River* seemed too complicated

for a noon concert and she followed this with an Indian table-influenced piece that caught the humidity, thunder and downpour.

Amhrán na Leabhar was very mournful, but she finished off an excellent with a jazzy song *Chicken and Fox*.



"Banjo Bren"(Brendan Bracken) tuning up at last weekend's Bluegrass Festival in Dunmore East. | Photo: John Power.

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