

scarletnews

Welcome to an international year for Scarlet Theatre. Following our award from Culture 2000, Scarlet in collaboration with Pan Pan Ireland and Ludowy Poland, has been creating *The Chair Women*, written by Werner Schwab and translated from the German by David Hale.

Suitably for this newsletter, our contributors describe their experiences of other countries. Helen Rawlinson writes about her trip to Poland, Áinne Burke conjures up her Irish childhood and Dave Hale

explains how he discovered Werner Schwab and the delights of Austria.

We hope to see you as the show plays its way either in Poland or Ireland, or during our UK tour. Please see our tour list for details. In January, do join us again in North Finchley for *New Lives*, a specially commissioned performance to mark the opening of the new building for The Bull Theatre, which is moving down the A1000 from Barnet and will now be known as *artsdepot*.

Despite our good news, our three-year funding, which we were fortunate to be awarded by the Arts Council for the first time in 2002, has not been renewed. Without core funding, staying afloat is going to be a huge challenge – possibly the biggest one the Company has had to face in its long history. We hope that we can count on your support in the coming months by allowing us to welcome you to *The Chair Women* or *New Lives*.

Gráinne Byrne, Artistic Director

THE CHAIR WOMEN

(created in partnership with Pan Pan Ireland and Ludowy Poland)

We have used the work Die Präsidentinnen to create a multimedia performance in which the audience's reactions become part of the evening's entertainment. Werner Schwab was the German-speaking theatre's most exciting new discovery in the early 1990s. He died before the critical world could get used to him and his highly idiosyncratic use of language. Through his choice of explicit subject matter and vulgar language, he sets out to confront

notions of good taste. Set in suburban provincial Austria, Catholic to the core, the nonsensical babbling of Schwab's characters reflected his cynical attitude towards people and their ideas.

Originally a "theatre-in-theatre" piece, we are re-presenting The Chair Women in the form of "theatre-in-television" to reflect the effects of our "Big Brother" society.



Photo: Mark Hamilton

David Hale translator of The Chair Women

Die Welt ist ein Schweinestall: - The World is a Pigsty - and the Viennese Know It

I stumbled across Vienna in the middle of my Inter-Rail travels. It was raining heavily, the shops were filled with tat and my Morrissey hairdo had collapsed. It was the mid-1980's, I was twenty-four and Vienna was just a place on the way to Italy. I walked from one shop to the next trying to explain that I needed a two-pronged plug for my hairdryer. The people in the shops were extremely polite and unhelpful. I planned to go to Florence the next day.

That evening, I went out for a bedraggled drink to get away from my city-hopping roommates and I fell in love properly for the first time. I stayed in Vienna for the next 13 years.

The world is a pigsty, but you'd hardly know it as a tourist who doesn't speak the lingo in Vienna. There are palaces and music and cakes and waltzes and schnitzels with noodles. You will probably take too many photos, eat some overly sweet cakes, send some old-fashioned postcards, fly back to Britain – and never return. You will have found Vienna pleasant enough – but wasn't it just a bit too tidy? A bit too law-abiding? A bit too well-organised? A bit too polite? Actually, wasn't there something slightly sinister about it all? Didn't you think the locals were trying to hide something? Let's face it, there was that business with the Jews.

I started to learn the local lingo. It's German, not Austrian, by the way. And I found there is nothing

at all sinister about the Viennese. They are chatty, witty, kind and charming (my friends), and they are dour, miserable, obstructive and repulsive (the others). I know I'm being obvious here. Austrians are just people, after all. They do have something to hide, of course – but that's because we all do. What are your vilest fantasies, by the way? And what are you really afraid of deep down inside? Sorry. I suppose you don't really want to go there, do you? You typical Englander.

After a few years of hard German-learning, I was finally ready for my first trip to the theatre. I thought it was just going to be something one does occasionally if you're hanging around with the middle-classes (as I now was). I also thought it would probably make a nice change from the pictures or the pub or the telly. How wrong can you be?

My first theatre trip introduced me to a world where our vilest fantasies are flaunted shamelessly in front of a paying public, and where our deepest fears are celebrated as grotesque and hilarious comedy. I had found the world of the post-modern Austrian play – and the wonderful world of Werner Schwab.

I love Werner Schwab because he knows that the world is a pigsty and he was happy to say so. I love him because he showed me that theatre can be rich, challenging, surprising and entertaining. Werner Schwab made me want to start writing plays myself.

I went to the theatre once or twice a month while I lived in Vienna. I hardly ever bother now I'm back in England. British theatre needs Austrian theatre. Let's learn how to roll in the mud. Let's create something real instead of naturalistic or trendy or commercial. Then we can all start going to the theatre again.

THE CHAIR WOMEN TOUR DATES

14 - 18 Sept	Trinity Theatre, Tunbridge Wells 01892 678678
22 Sept - 1 Oct	Poland
6 - 9 Oct	Project Arts Centre, Dublin (+353) 1 8819613
12 - 31 Oct	Riverside Studios, London 020 8237 1111
5 - 6 Nov	Cambridge Drama Centre 01223 511511
9 - 11 Nov	Nuffield Theatre, Lancaster 0800 028 3042
16 - 18 Nov	Darlington Arts Centre 01325 486 555
19 - 20 Nov	Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh 0131 228 1404
24 - 26 Nov	Theatre Royal Winchester 01962 840 440



Photos: Jackie of Stefano

THE POLISH PRINCESS SHARON

By Helen Rawlinson

I'm on a train in Poland with Nigel and Jackie, and compared to Thailand where I've been for the last two weeks, this is all very strange.

Having been to Poland once before to see Scarlet's production of *Princess Sharon* in Krakow, I jumped at the chance to come again. Now it was the Polish version with Kasia again as director and Nigel's music. Our photographer friend Jackie was also keen to join us having never been to Poland.

Our plane landed in Warsaw and our first attempt at Polish was at the train station – a vast underground of silent people in big coats, lots of moustaches and hidey-hole cafes. We manage to get our tickets and we're on the train to Czestochowa. It's an old-fashioned wagon with snug compartments connected by windowed corridors. I feel like I'm on a Polish version of the Orient Express and Jackie's getting the eye from three big youths in the corridor - this is going to be an adventure.

Five hours later, we're on the main street of Czestochowa, which the guidebook describes as being like a Parisian boulevard, but it hasn't got many shops and we've walked and walked looking for a restaurant. It's certainly wide and long. Bravely we go downstairs into a cellar to find a group of people eating to electronic organ accompaniment. Everyone turns to look at us and we're not sure if we've walked in on a private party, but it's ok and they do food as the sign suggested. We have our first Polish meal - fish and chips with pickles. The owner slurrily tries his best English on us and we begin to feel warmed by the hospitality of our tipsy host. Nigel then goes off to meet Gráinne and Kasia, while Jackie and I head back to the Hotel Ibis for a quick drink before bed.

The next day, it's snowing. Gráinne has joined us and we're off to the theatre to meet the actors and Kasia, with a unique invitation to observe mass at a

Carmelite nunnery and meet a nun who was once an actor in the theatre. This is the first time in a year that the nuns will have a chance to see and speak to their friend Kasia and we are all very excited and honoured by the invite.

At the small stage door, a very tall man with sharp blue eyes and a big handshake greets us with the deepest voice ever, 'Hello, I am Marcus'. Jackie, Gráinne and I exchange wide-eyed glances of a girlie kind. We realise we are in the presence of a great man, The King (from *Princess Sharon*). Gráinne gives us her low-down on the rest of the cast and crew and after a few nods and smiles we board the 1970's theatre bus and set off for the nunnery.

Half an hour later, lots of sweet smiling nuns greet us from behind bars (of a nice decorative kind). We hear their beautiful, harmonised, fairytale singing, and a jovial priest conducts mass as we sit in silence on the other side. I don't understand a word of anything but get all tearful anyway and then we move next door for an audience with our nun. She has the happiest face in the room.

Jackie suddenly takes on professional photographer role to capture this emotional reunion, and after a long good bye to the nuns, a hearty meal that they had specially prepared for us follows - lovely sweet carrots, piles of mash potatoes and chocolate cake.

Back on the bus, word has got round that Nigel needs some socks as they were missed out in our packing frenzy. One of the theatre ladies on board seems to know where to get some. We arrive at the theatre and two minutes round the corner, on a plain grey street, she ushers us toward a solitary sock stall, wrapped in blue tarpaulin as if it just dropped out of the sky. In the excitement, I buy socks too. We attempt to thank our helpful guide and we all wave goodbye.

With a few hours to go before opening night, Nigel, Jackie, Gráinne and I spend our time walking the Boulevard and having tea.

In the curvy wide corridors of the theatre as we wait for the night's performance, amongst the velvet glitterati, I spot our helpful sock finder friend. Nigel rushes off to show her his newly purchased socks. After what seemed like ages of pointing and smiling at his lower legs, it looks like Nigel is getting across his appreciation and sharing in the enjoyment of a successful shopping spree. So I go over to join in and realise that this confused looking lady hasn't got a clue what he's on about and it's as if she's never met him before in her life. She shrugs at me helplessly and quickly moves away with an apologetic smile.

The rest - applause, flowers, speech, feast, after show party, drinking vodka with our King, pea soup and walking in Warsaw - well, we all had a fabulous time.

As research for a possible future Scarlet show, we explored the myth *The Children of Lir* with two sets of primary school children from St. John Vianney and St. Ignatius Schools in Tottenham. We particularly wanted to use the pure myth rather than those versions that have been oversimplified for children and reduced into mere fairy stories. We explored what is being communicated in terms of the emotions of people facing extraordinary events and in a time that is altogether different from ordinary experience.

We were very impressed with the creativity and the imagination of the children from both schools. It is hard to choose a favourite piece of work from all the art, drama and creative writing that the project

inspired, but I was drawn to this piece by the aptly named Aoife from St. Ignatius School.

"Fionnuala and Aedh, Fiakra and Conn doth still be alive. Not in body and spirit, but in the simple love of their hearts. I tell this to all of Ireland, that their people of old are not dead. But, in time, when these words are worn away, do not forget Aedh and Conn, Aoife and Lir. Do not forget their story so do not forget the swan Children of Lir."

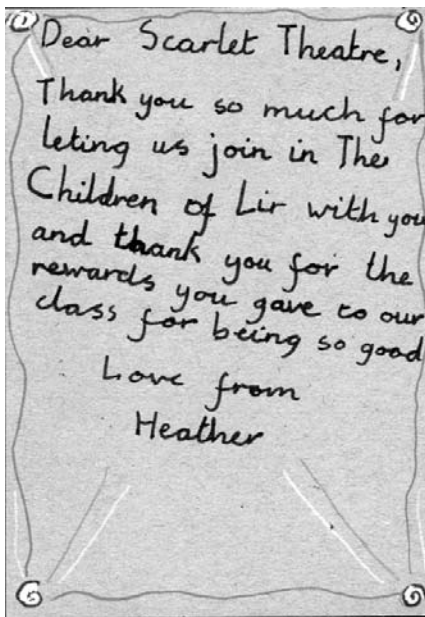
The project was based on previous work carried out by Educationalist Áinne Burke on the borders of the Republic and Northern Ireland.

Gráinne Byrne



THE JOURNEY TO

THE CHILDREN OF LIR by Áinne Burke



Beginnings

Growing up in the west of Ireland in the sixties and early seventies was a visually stimulating experience; watching the moon shine over the lake and seeing how the light changed season after season over the mountains. School taught you survival and camaraderie with your fellow students. No academic learning took place there because the fear of the rod and the mad teacher had you shivering in your welly boots. The art room was a haven but there was no art teacher so you taught yourself.

Art College was another personal journey. There was one great lecturer who had fire in his belly, a passion for life and a thirst for pints like no one else in the nation. A drawing class was a sanctuary for observation and guidance by this great man; a sculpture class was a workshop of survival as he lashed his tongue to challenge your modelling and casting work. It was an extreme matter of survival, he challenged you to look and see, to listen and hear and of course indulge him in a pint or two to loosen the tongue that would tell us the way to reshape our country and culture.

Art in Life

I have worked in the arts for 24 years and have loved it all my life; no day is the same, if it were it would be viewed with great suspicion. I had my last exhibition in 1986 and have since then produced and directed audio-visual productions and projects for education, broadcast and multimedia titles. At the end of the 24 years, I do many things and they all relate to creativity.

CREATE is my business trade name and represents what I know and share of my life with others. I am commissioned/contracted to develop projects for communities, schools, art centres, theatres, broadcasters and others, nationally and internationally, that has a meaning and purpose that respects the whole person. I implement and direct most of the projects embedding the creative process I have developed.

Cyber Connections

In the autumn of 2003, Gráinne Byrne commissioned me to work on a project with Scarlet Theatre in London. She had seen the Cultural Ireland website and liked the work. So we met in no other than the 'Queens of Tarts' bar in Parliament Street in Dublin to explore ways to implement the story of *The Children of Lir*. Many hours later we plotted and planned the project for Scarlet/Jackson's Lane with schools in inner city London. I liked the way Scarlet Theatre

worked. They were kindred spirits and any support I could give I gave.

Gráinne cast her shrewd eyes over the program and in January 2004 she met me in Stansted Airport and on our journey back to the Scarlet office in the company van the conversation continued as though we had never left the 'Queen of Tarts'. We met the two teachers involved in the project, introduced the programme and handed over the story and its music on CD. Scarlet and the schools worked on the understanding and the development of the story to the final day performance in February.

Flight

In February Gráinne met me again in Stansted and we continued our conversation from the last van journey high above the other cars on the motorway. The bed and breakfast in North London that Scarlet provided with its dancing furniture, creaking floorboards and night traffic, was a strange and wonderful experience. I spent a night illuminated by the streetlights to wake to the anticipation of all our plotting and planning. The wicked stepmother character cast her spells and the children characters became swans and were exiled to four lakes each for a hundred years we were all spell bound.

The students played their parts under the watchful eyes of Scarlet's actors and Gráinne's direction. They owned their characters and moved with great intention and purpose capturing their audience's attention and ending in great cheer. The story was reborn and the Fianna swans had found new friends in the two inner city schools in London.

Future

There will be more planning and plotting to come when Gráinne and I meet again in the 'Queen of Tarts'. The story of *The Children of Lir* is a universal mythical story with archetypes and events we can all relate to if given the time and place to hear and express our understanding of them. We come to know ourselves through sharing and understanding stories and it is in the telling of these stories that we form new relationships and hope for the future.



Following the success of the residencies in Tottenham, Scarlet is currently looking for schools to collaborate with us on similar projects in the future. Please contact 020 8441 9779 for more information.

NOTICE BOARD

We are grateful for the support of the European Commission Culture 2000 for *The Chair Women*. This £91,734 grant will fund our most ambitious project to date and a tour of the UK, Ireland and Poland.

We are thrilled to announce the arrival of Grace Peggy Eustace, daughter of Sophie and Richard, born on 19 January 2004, weighing 6 pounds 15 ounces. Many thanks to Marie Remy, Scarlet General Manager from 1994-8, who covered for Sophie during her maternity leave. Marie was assisted by regular Scarlet actress, Carmelle McAree and Danielle Capretti, a placement from City University who will become a Scarlet staff member until September.

Carmelle is delighted to announce her forthcoming marriage to "Titch". The wedding takes place on 18 December 2004 in Camden Town, with a reception in Highgate.

Sharp-eyed audience members will recognise *Love and Other Fairy Tales*' Squire and *The Wedding's* Luis, Colin Carmichael as last year's 118 118 star.

Comedian Nick Revell, who wrote *Love and Other Fairy Tales* for Scarlet, will be performing his new stand-up show, *Like It Matters* at the Edinburgh Festival all through August at The Stand Comedy Club.

Thanks to: Áinne Burke, David Hale and Helen Rawlinson for their contributions. Isobel Sallon for her extensive work as Education Officer for *The Children of Lir* project. Barnet College students Wayon Dayle, Renata Grehan and Loney Smallhorne for filming the building of the *artsdepot* in preparation for *New Lives*. Jo Dale for her proofreading.

Board of Directors: Kate Anderson, Carole Britten, Carrie Carruthers, Sue Emmas, Jane McMorrow, Anouk Perinpanayagam and Mhora Samuel.

Artistic Director: Gráinne Byrne

General Manager: Sophie Pridell

Project Co-ordinator: Carmelle McAree

Administrator: Danielle Capretti

For 2004, Scarlet Theatre is grateful for the financial support of: Arts Council England, Association of London Government, The European Commission Culture 2000 Programme, Haringey Community Chest and The Polish Cultural Institute.



Model: Ioney Smallhorne
Photo: Mark Hamilton

NEW LIVES

New Lives is a promenade performance that weaves together real voices from around the area of Tally Ho Corner, a group of actors from Scarlet Theatre and a specially commissioned short film by Barnet College students.

You enter a dark and silent forest of household domestic lamps that gradually light your pathway. These are talking lamps. Follow the light, listen to the voices, keep to the path and watch out for the roar of the Hoovers! Spy into the lives of people in their private rooms. Are they really living in there or are they merely waiting for time to pass?

New Lives celebrates the new building by taking a fresh look at the way we live and live with change.

January 2005 Arts Depot, Finchley 020 8449 0048

Advanced Acting Classes with Katarzyna Deszcz

Refreshing your skills

Three-day master-class for performers 13 - 15 October

Katarzyna Deszcz (Kasia) has developed a unique workshop designed to recharge the actor and to re-examine his/her performing skills in a supportive environment. Using a series of tailor-made exercises such as gesture, rhythm and voice, participants will discover new ways of exploring character and of opening up interaction between fellow performers.

Kasia is Artistic Director of Adam Mickiewicza Repertory Theatre in Czestochowa, Poland and has an established international reputation working extensively in Germany, England, Ireland and USA. She has directed five Scarlet shows.

Previous Participants' Comments:

"The workshop encouraged me through rediscovering the enjoyment of risk-taking and openness on stage".

"I can bring a whole new dimension to my acting. It will enrich and force me not to rely on just lines as a means to talk."

"The exercises made me trust my skills."

"I experienced a surprisingly relaxed and constant sense of trust and respect within the group which allowed me to take risks in the scene."

Dates: 13 October-15 October 2004 (11am- 4pm)

Price: £100 (excluding VAT)

Venue: Riverside Studios, London

Class size: 8 places maximum

To book: Applications in writing with a CV to Katarzyna Deszcz, Scarlet Theatre, Studio 4, The Bull, 68 High Street, Barnet, EN5 5SJ or email: admin@scarlettheatre.co.uk

We are registered under the terms of the 1998 Data Protection Act and are committed to protecting your privacy. Any personal information we collect about you will be used lawfully in accordance with the Act. From time to time, Scarlet would like to share your details with other organisations that may interest you. If you would like to join our mailing list please fill in the following form and send it to: Scarlet Theatre, FREEPOST, Studio 4, The Bull, 68 High Street, Barnet EN5 5BR (no stamp required). If you are already on our mailing list but you do not wish us to share your details with others, please also fill in the form and tick the appropriate box and return it to us.

Name _____

Address _____

I do not wish my data to be shared with any other parties.