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SF PERUSALS

CUCKOO

by Lisa Carroll

SAMUEL FRENCH

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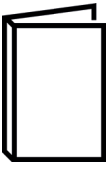
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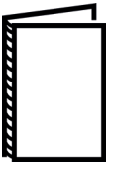
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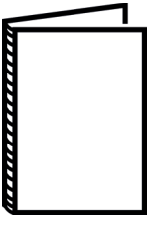
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Lisa is an Irish playwright based in London. Lisa trained on the Foundation Course at RADA and graduated from University College Dublin in 2012 with a BA in English. She has undertaken writing programmes at the Lyric Hammersmith, the Royal Court and Headlong. *Cuckoo* is Lisa's debut full-length play, and was shortlisted for the Papatango Prize and Verity Bargate award. Previous work includes: *Three Cities* (Edinburgh Fringe), *Poultry* (Miniaturists), *Catcall* (RADA), *Róisín* (Old Red Lion), and *Snapdragon* (Abbey Theatre).

Photo © Ste Murray

AUTHOR'S NOTE

SETTING

The play is set in Crumlin, Dublin 12, today. The action is chronological.

CASTING

The cast should reflect the diversity of its audience and the world around us.

PINGU

It is crucial that the actor playing Pingu identifies as non-binary and/or genderqueer. Pingu expresses themselves non-verbally, though this is never caricatured, signed or mimed. They are not mute, they have chosen not to speak.

PUNCTUATION AND STAGE DIRECTIONS

A slash (/) indicates where one character begins speaking over another

A dash (–) indicates that the character speaking is cut off by an interruption from another character, or a thought cutting across

Ellipses (...) suggest space for thought in the line, or in **PINGU**'s case, a thought or response.

A space within a character's lines suggests a pause, hesitation, thought, and/or change in tactics. These need to be acknowledged in performance.

A (beat.) is shorter than a (pause.) which is shorter than a (silence.)

Codas indicate moments of visual storytelling which advance plot and/or reveal character.

WITH THANKS TO

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Caitríona, Elise, Sade, Colin, Peter, Jess, Basia (oh my God I know), Dom, Mel, Sofi and Andre – thank you.

My brilliant and supportive colleagues, especially Laura.

Erin Cressida Wilson – you started this.

The Squids. Dobby. My Mum and Dad.

Thank you.

For my family and friends.

Cuckoo was first presented by Metal Rabbit Productions at Soho Theatre, on 13 November 2018 with the following cast and creatives:

IONA	Caitríona Ennis
PINGU	Elise Heaven
POCKETS	Colin Campbell
TOLLER	Sade Malone
TRIX	Peter Newington
Directed by	Debbie Hannah
Produced by	Sofi Berenger & George Warren
Designed by	Basia Bińkowska
Lighting Design by	Jessica Hung Han Yun
Sound Design by	Dominic Brennan

CHARACTERS

IONA – female, 16 years old, Irish
PINGU – non-binary, 16 years old, Irish
TRIX – male, 17 years old, Irish
POCKETS – male, 17 years old, Irish
TOLLER – female, 16 years old, Irish

ACT ONE

Overture

*Conor McGregor's sister's voicemail to the dog groomers, mixed with **"DIAMONDS"** by Rihanna.*

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* A licence to produce *CUCKOO does not include a performance licence for "DIAMONDS". For further information, please see Music Use Note on page v.*

Scene One
Thank Fuck For Ryanair

Crumlin. The Old County Glen Estate. Friday Night.

Down the back of **IONA***'s high-walled back garden. The house is dark and empty.*

We can hear the distant sound of thudding bass from a party we're not invited to. It reverberates around the garden and, each time it peaks, only intensifies **IONA***'s misery.*

IONA *(16) was born with all the intensity of a speeding freight-train, and to this day she's never been able to slow down. Entirely un-self-conscious and yet utterly self-conscious, people don't know what to do with her as much as she doesn't know what to do with herself. N.B* **IONA** *is pronounced "eye-own-ah".*

Her dress style is an attempt at cool, but she just doesn't have the eye to hit the mark, her own eclectic tastes breaking out despite her best efforts. Her footwear right now is the exception – there's no world in which these are cool and even **IONA** *knows it – she's in a huge, ungainly pair of white Crocs and they are awful. Plus, today she has egg dried into her hair and jumper. She's in a stinking mood.*

PINGU *(16) has gone by this name since the age of 12, and is known for their signature tailcoat – a penguin in name and appearance.* **PINGU** *identifies as non-binary, uses they/them pronouns, and presents as androgynous – which is to say it's tricky to decipher whether* **PINGU** *is 'male' or 'female' by their outward appearance, and this is very much deliberate.* **PINGU** *does not present as either gender, but something else entirely.*

__PINGU__ does not speak – but is absolutely not mute. __PINGU__ knows exactly how and when to use silence (and speech, should they choose) and, despite quite some level of inner turmoil, outwardly comes off as calm and confident thanks to an unflinching and piercing thousand-yard stare.

__PINGU__ communicates subtly and non-verbally, using silence, eye contact, or choosing not to communicate. It is never pantomimic or charades, __IONA__ and __PINGU__ have been friends for such a long time – they are close to the point of being symbiotic – that often, not always, but often, __IONA__ knows full well what __PINGU__ means: words aren't necessary. However, often around people they are not comfortable with, __PINGU__ wears a poker face which is indecipherable.

Today, __PINGU__'s tailcoat is splattered in a congealing murky liquid.

IONA – ya have ta give the fellas doin' it on the regs some credit like cos it's not fuckin' easy – at least two days in preparation – like mental preparation as well as logistical like: gettin' there, actin' cool calm and collected, escape routes and tha' – as well as a good half day the day itself, between gettin' down to Blackrock –

PINGU ...

IONA Well the way I thought was tha' if you go somewhere everyone's rollin' in ih, they're not gonna expect people ta be swipin' stuff since everyone can afford it annyway

PINGU ...

IONA Wha'? Eh, NO that is a flawless logic

PINGU ...

IONA Am I tellin' this story?

PINGU ...

IONA Yeh so I sit my little ass on the seventeen down to Blackrock shopping centre – happy out. Gonna get meself a handy pair'a them Rihanna Pumas – it's the Creepers I've me eye on, but I'm not gonna say no to them furry sliders either –

A burst of distant music and a roar of laughter. This catches **IONA.** *She listens longingly, her heart sinking.*

Cos I'm thinkin' – there is no way – no WAY Toller can deny the power of Rihanna – there's no WAY I won't get in ta Pocket's 17th birthday wearin' them Creepers

So I get there, righ' – my gut's goin' mad, I'm absolutely shittin' it, but I'm just about managin' to control me shakes. So to start, I'm doing some casual light browsing, set the groundwork righ', you know, for the cameras and security and tha': that I'm just here lightly touching the goods on display, ya know, I'm a regular Joe who totally belongs here

PINGU ...

IONA What!!?? Yeh, lightly touching! You know, pick it up, inspect it, put it back down! Wouldn't be doing that if I was there to swipe it would I, I'd not be puttin' it back, would I? GENIUS.

PINGU ...

IONA So finally righ', I've done me recce, I've curated an image of *indescribable* wealth – and now it's time ta pally up to the attendant, try them on – cos God Forbid I'd go to all that trouble ta nick a pair that didn't bleedin' fit, d'ya know?

PINGU ...

IONA So I've got them, they're fittin' nice and snug an' I'm lookin' *real* well, and the attendant's hovering – all eyes and teeth: "Can I get anything else for ya there pet?" – "No thanks," says I – "just need ta have a think about these, I'm not *totally* convinced," and after a bit of tramping up and down and humming and hawing she finally fucks off into

the back to get me another size – THAT I DON'T NEED WHAAAAAAAAAA'!?

Now it's time to stall ih, I've left her me aul piece'a shit runners in the box – don't need them anymore thank you – and I'm swannin' outa there like I fuckin' own the place in me new kicks – CHEERS Robin Fenty more commonly known as multi-platinum selling artist, Rihanna.

Then, there I am, a good five if not six paces out the door when I feel – you guessed ih – the dreaded hand on the aul shoulder. Huge fucker, looks like he eats children for breakfast,

"Here, let's see what's in that bag of yours missy"

Well.

"Be my fuckin' guest sugartits," I tell him and I open that baby up wide: "have a good rummage."

And this is the bit that *really* fuckin' pissed me off – he looks at me when I says that and kinda snorts at me an' says, "You're a bit of a handful aren't ya?"

You know what Pingu?

I swear. Someone comes to me all "You're too much Iona" ... "You're a handful Iona" ... "Tone it down Iona" ...EVER again – I'll take their fucking eyes out with me fingernails. I'll slice them from crown to fucking chin. I'll go cata-fuckin'-tonic is what I'll do. It'll be like a nuclear explosion down in Crumlin. People'll think the IRA're back. People'll think someone's finally taken out The Monk and it's out an' out warfare. I'll fucking...

PINGU ...

IONA Sorry –

Yeh – ehhhhhhh – yeh, now I've just seen your one the shop assistant reappear from the back so I've not got time to rip him a new arsehole – so I simply tell him that between being bald, ugly and overweigh', he looks like a giant thumb, and then I'm away on the bus, victorious, fuckin' buzzin' I am.

PINGU …

IONA Yeh well relax the kaks cos it was a sharp downhill from there babes – amen't I on the 17 home all thrilled wit' meself – *well* on time to meet you – an' I can *tell* today's finally our fuckin' day!

Don't I get off on Bangor Road – the *moment* me two feet hit the kerb, who clocks me?

Kelly Phelan an' her mangy crew of harpies.

It's like one'a them slow-mo moments in the movies…she looks at me… I look at her…an' I do me best ta' silently communicate: 'No bitch…not taday, not ta-fuckin'-day' – but sure she's not half as telepathic as you Pingu cos next thing aren't they peggin' it towards me full speed? I'm only little now I'm no Mo Farah but I manage ta pelt it down towards the football club an' eventually they give up. Next thing don't I realise me phone's fallen outta me pocket an' all so I can't even text ya?

So I'm guessin' this is when –

PINGU …

IONA *picks at some of the smoothie on* **PINGU***'s coat.*

IONA Fuckin' cunts

Get ta Pocket's house fit ta collapse, but still…still holdin' out a hope in the power of this footwear gold – plus at this point I'm thinkin' you must've got in cos there's no sign of ya – so I'm feelin pretty *bold*

…

I swear to God there's a special place reserved in hell for Toller.

PINGU *nods. Cunt.*

Toller opens the door face on her like a bag a' spiders

"I was wonderin' when you'd try your luck," she says. "Your little mate was just here."

Honestly it felt like I'd swallowed a rock hearin' tha'

"You'd wanna tell that weirdo they'd have a much better chance a' gettin' in if they'd ditch that FUCKIN' AWFUL SUIT"

Then she looks at my feet

I'm thinkin'

Maybe this is the moment's gonna change everything

She'll take it back

Apologise

Tell me she didn't realise I was such a fashionable legend

"Girls!" she roars – next thing, Kelly has me in a headlock, Sharon's me left arm and Fiona my right, cos I'm scratching like a motherfucker, and there's Tara and Clare ripping them off me feet, and there's me squirming like a fuckin' centipede while Toller just stands there watchin'

I was the proud owner of them Creepers for an hour, Pingu.

An HOUR.

"When're you gonna get it inta your head that it is *never* gonna happen Iona?"

That's when I notice she's holdin' a box of eggs an' all

For an actual second I was thinkin' to meself well eggs aren't really a very good party snack so that's weird

Then I realise...

Eggs actually hurt quite a lot when they smash in your face like these were like quite sturdy eggs

Phelan flings my phone at me, they're laughing at me like a pack a'hyenas while I stand there drippin', everyone recordin' me.

Then Toller comes righ' up in my face, bout four inches of makeup on her:

"You an' your little pal come here again, we'll have your eyes out of their sockets alrigh'? Now *fuck* off."

They sit in their shared misery for a moment.

A back door opens and with it, a burst of music floods the estate once more, **IONA** *wilts.*

Fuckin' sick'a this place.

A pause for as long as it takes.

I just *wish* they'd –

But **PINGU** *jumps up, giving the finger towards the party. They are done. Maybe they chuck something towards the revellers.*

IONA *sits in misery. Suddenly they pull their phone out, open the Ryanair app and show* **IONA** *the screen.*

Ah Pingu...

PINGU ...

IONA I've *told* ya –

PINGU ...

IONA You've never even been ta London you've no *idea* what it's like

PINGU ...

IONA ...you're talking about moving *country* here I mean...

Where'd we stay?

PINGU ...

IONA Mam won't tell me where he lives

I mean he's probably in one of the real swanky bits, Kensington or... Croydon or somethin', but...

She gets real weird when I ask her

...I'm dyin' ta see him

PINGU ...

IONA *gets up, paces.*

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