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CONCORD
THEATRICALS

CELEBRATED VIRGINS

A STORY OF THE LADIES OF LLANGOLLEN

Written by Katie Elin-Salt

Created by Katie Elin-Salt and Eleri B. Jones

SAMUEL FRENCH

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Quote from Hannah Gadsby: Nanette reprinted with the permission by Hannah Gadsby.

CELEBRATED VIRGINS: A STORY OF THE LADIES OF LLANGOLLEN was first produced Theatr Clwyd on 20th May 2022. The cast was as follows:

SARAH . . . . . Heather Agyepong
ELEANOR . . . . . Victoria John
LADY BETTY / MARY . . . . . Emma Pallant
SIR WILLIAM / WILLIAM WORDSWORTH / EDMUND BURKE
. . . . . Seán Carlsen

COMMUNITY CAST . . . . . Lindsay Blessing, Pat Brewin, Liz Carter-Jones, Gwyneth Ann Dillon, Hannah Fargher, Gavin Hayes, Mair Hÿtch-Edwards, David Hÿtch, Maisie Langridge, Elliott Locke-De-Pinho, Ann Merrilees, Gerard McCann, Alison McLean, Jean Bridget Page, Lynwen Payne, Gordon Peterson, Karen Picton, Stephen Taylor

Writer – Katie Elin-Salt
Director – Eleri B. Jones
Designer – Holly Pigott
Lighting Designer – Kieron Johnson
Sound Designer – Matthew Williams
Movement Director – Jess Williams
Composer – Lynwen Haf Roberts
Casting Director – Polly Jerrold
Intimacy and Fight Director - Ruth Cooper-Brown of Rc-Annie Ltd
Dialect Coach – Natalie Grady
Assistant Director – Juliette Manon
Wellbeing Facilitator – Hester Evans
Company Stage Manager – Cassey Driver
Deputy Stage Manager – Edward Salt
Line Producer – Ric Watts
Production Manger – Jim Davis
Head of Production – Hannah Lobb
Technical Manager – Geoff Farmer
Senior Technician (Lighting) – Chris Skinner
Senior Technician (Stage) – Nic Samuel
Wardrobe Manager – Debbie Knight
Workshop Manager – Steve Eccleson
Scenic Artist – Katy Salt

CAST

HEATHER AGYEPONG | SARAH

Theatre credits include: *The Body Remembers* (The Place/Fuel Theatre); *Noughts & Crosses* (Mercury Theatre Colchester/Pilot Theatre); *GIRLS* (Talawa Theatre Company/HighTide/Soho Theatre); *So Many Reasons* (Fuel Theatre/Ovalhouse Theatre) and *TYPT 16: HATCH* (Talawa Theatre Company).

Television credits include: *The Power* (Amazon Studios), *This is Going to Hurt and Enterprice* (BBC). She was nominated for the South Bank Sky Arts Breakthrough Award 2018, awarded the Firecracker Photographic Grant 2020 and was selected as part of Foam Talent 2021.

She recently won the Jerwood/Photoworks Award 2022 and The Photographers Gallery New Talent Award 2021.

Heather is a visual artist, performer/actor and maker who lives and works in London. Heather's visual art practice is concerned with mental health and wellbeing, invisibility, the diaspora and the archive.

VICTORIA JOHN | ELEANOR

Victoria trained at Rose Bruford College.

Theatre credits include*: Pavilion, Wave Me Goodbye, Cyrano de Bergerac, All My Sons, The Light of Heart, Aristocrats, The Winslow Boy, Rape of the Fair Country, Boeing Boeing, Roots, The Suicide, A Chorus of Disapproval* (Theatr Clwyd); *Glitterball* (RifCo Theatre); *The Flock* (Chichester Festival Theatre); *HIR* (Bush Theatre); *Play/Silence* (The Other Room); *The Frozen Scream* (WMC/Birmingham Hippodrome); *Cancer Time* (the Caramel Club); *Never, Fear, Love?* (Velvet Ensemble/WMC); *The Gut Girls* (Velvet Ensemble/Sherman Cymru); *Treasure* (King's Head Theatre); *Reasons for Feeling* (Tristan Bates Theatre); *The Bitter Tears of Petra Von Kant* (Flaming Theatre Company) and *The Real Story of Puss in Boots* (Streetwise Fringe, Dubai).

Television credits include: *Gwaith/Cartref* (S4C/Fiction Factory); *Miranda* (BBC); *Cast Offs* (Channel 4); Rhiannon in *Little Britain* (BBC).

Radio credits include: *Telling the Bees* (BBC Wales).

EMMA PALLANT | LADY BETTY AND MARY

Theatre credits include: *Ravens: Spassky vs Fischer* (Hampstead Theatre); *A Christmas Carol*, *The Dog in the Manger*, *Tamar's Revenge*, *The House of Desires*, *Pedro*, *The Great Pretender*, *Henry IV Parts I and II*, *As You Like It*, *Laughter in the Dark* (Royal Shakespeare Company); *Enemy of the People*, *LAVA* (Nottingham Playhouse); *Intra Muros* (Park Theatre); *William Wordsworth* (ETT/Theatre by the Lake); *Wind in the Willows* (Rose Theatre, Kingston); *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You*

Like It, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Comedy of Errors*, *Macbeth* (Shakespeare's Globe); *It Just Stopped*, *Alison's House* (Orange Tree); *Bell, Book and Candle*, *Bleak House*, *Great Expectations*, *Romeo and Juliet* (New Vic); *The Cherry Orchard*, *His Dark Materials*, *Katherine Desouza* (Birmingham Rep); *On Golden Pond*, *The Herbal Bed* (Salisbury Playhouse); *The House of Bernarda Alba* (Belgrade Theatre); *Cymbeline* (Regent's Park); *Top Girls* (Watford Palace); *Precious Bane* (Pentabus).

Television credits include: *Father Brown*, *Holby City*, *Casualty*, *Doctors*.

Radio credits include: *Something Understood*, *Messages to a Submariner*, *The Daughter of the Air*.

Concert credits include: *WW1 Centenary: Fauré's Requiem* (Southwark Cathedral); *If This Is A Man* (Royal Festival Hall); *Shostakovich's Hamlet* (City of London Sinfonia); *Midsummer Night's Dream LPO* (Royal Festival Hall); *A Song of Good and Evil* (Stockholm Berwaldhallen); *Shakespeare Songs* (London Jazz Festival, Sam Wanamaker Playhouse).

Emma also records audiobooks and volunteers with the children's mentoring charity, *Scene and Heard*.

SEÁN CARLSEN | SIR WILLIAM

Born in South Wales, Seán trained at the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama and has worked extensively in theatre, television and film.

Theatre credits include: *Dust* –national tour (Quidem Productions); *Tales of the Country (*Pentabus Theatre – 2010/11 national tours); *Twelfth Night, Cymbeline* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Ludlow Festival Theatre); *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea (*Watermill Theatre)*; Blue Remembered Hills* (Cheltenham Everyman/Laughing Orange); *The Masque of the Red Death (*Fetch Theatre); *An Enemy of the People (*Theatr Clwyd), *Sons & Lovers (*national tour)*; Brief Encounter* – OTTC tour; *Rock n' Roll & Barbirolli (*Snap/Westcliff Palace Theatre); *The Picture of Dorian Gray (*national tour).

Seán has also worked with National Theatre Wales, Bristol Old Vic, Spectacle Theatre, Gwent Theatre, Theatr Powys and Theatre West Glamorgan.

Television credits include: *His Dark Materials* (BBC); *All Creatures Great and Small* (Channel 5); *A Mother's Love* (Channel 4); *Stella* (Sky1); *Skins* (E4); *Legends* (BBC4); *Doctor Who* (BBC); *Torchwood* (BBC); *Manhunt* (ITV); *Crimewatch* (BBC); *The Great Dome Robbery* (Channel 5); *The Bench* (BBC); *Casualty* (BBC); *Tastebuddies* (BBC3); *Back Up* (BBC); *Tiger Bay* (BBC); *Mud* (CBBC); *Y Palmant Our* (S4C) and *Halen yn y Gwaed* (S4C).

Film credits include: *Forgotten Journeys, The Cleansing, Boudica – Rise of the Warrior Queen, Frenzy, Shine* and *Darklands.*

Seán is perhaps best known to *Doctor Who* fans as the voice of Narvin in the *Doctor Who* audio series.

CREATIVE TEAM

WRITER | KATIE ELIN-SALT

Katie is an actor/writer from Bridgend, South Wales. She first discovered a love of theatre at Bridgend Youth Theatre aged nine, and then went on to train in acting at RWCMD and worked professionally as an actor for many years – taking many roles at Theatre Clwyd such as *Educating Rita*, *Under Milkwood*, *As You Like It*, *Season's Greetings* and played Fairy Daffodil in the 2019 panto *Jack and The Beanstalk*. Most recently Katie has been seen on BBC Wales in *The Tuckers*.

Katie has been writing for the last five years and was mentored under the Royal Court's Introductory writers' group. She went on to secure a writing residency at Clwyd, where the idea for *Celebrated Virgins* was born. Katie worked to develop her writing voice during the pandemic and her first play *Sprinkles* was produced by Dirty Protest in December 2021. Katie has also had commissions from Sherman Theatre, Chippy Lane and is a current member of the Soho Theatre Writers' Group. In her spare time Katie is training to be a Music Therapist and enjoys working with young people as a creative engagement facilitator.

Katie is thrilled to be having her debut commissioned play premier at Theatre Clwyd, a theatre that has supported her growth from young, inexperienced actor to established company member to fully-fledged playwright over the last decade.

DIRECTOR | ELERI B. JONES

Eleri is a Welsh theatre and film director, born and raised between Llangollen and Chester. She achieved a full scholarship to the University of Manchester where she studied Drama and Screen Studies, resulting in a 1st Class Degree, before being accepted as a Leverhulme Scholar onto the MA in Screen Acting at Drama Centre, London. After seven years working as a professional actor and workshop leader, Eleri moved into directing, mentored by BAFTA winning director Carol Wiseman and was selected as one of the first two recipients of the Traineeship for Directors in Wales at Theatr Clwyd, supported by the Carne Trust and Sir Ian McKellen. Eleri's previous directing credits include the *Women Rediscovered* Film Series (written by Emyr John for Theatr Clwyd/NE Wales Archives), *Sprinkles* (written by Katie Elin-Salt for Dirty Protest), *A Christmas Carol* (devised from the original text by Eleri & Laura Marie

Donnelly for the Charles Dickens Museum) and *Gwyl Gaeaf* (written by Rebecca Wilson for the *Once Upon a Christmas* Series, Theatr Clwyd).

Eleri also works as a 1st AD, and has recently finished shooting on the Theatr Clwyd/Rondo Media production of Tim Price's *Isla* for BBC 4, directed by Tamara Harvey. The Ladies of Llangollen have been a great source of inspiration and fascination to Eleri ever since she first learned about them as a child, and she is absolutely thrilled to finally have the opportunity to bring their wonderful love story to life!

DESIGNER | HOLLY PIGOTT

Holly graduated from the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in 2011. She was a finalist in the Linbury Prize for Stage Design and completed a year long residency as Trainee Designer with the Royal Shakespeare Company. Holly designs for both stage and screen, her recent credits including; Assistant Costume Designer on *The Confessions of Frannie Langton* (ITV/Drama Republic) and Set and Costume Designer for *The Picture of Dorian Gray, The Importance of Being Ernest* and *Going the Distance* – all digital productions for Lawrence Batley Theatre.

Other credits include: *Fleabag* (Wyndham's Theatre); *Ages Of The Moon* (Vaults Theatre); *The Talented Mr Ripley* (Stephen Joseph Theatre, Northern Stage + Lawrence Batley Theatre); *Sex With A Stranger* (Trafalgar Studios); *La Scala Di Seta* (Linbury Studio, Royal Opera House); *International Opera Awards* 2017, 2018 and 2019 (London Coliseum & Sadler's Wells); *The Island* (Young Vic); *The Prophet* (Gate Theatre); *Partenope* and *L'elisir d'amore* (Iford Opera); *The Magic Flute* (Copenhagen Opera Festival), *The Turn Of The Screw, Mad King Suibhne* and *Aurora* (Bury Court Opera); *Little Wolf* (Chapter Arts Centre); *Constellations* (Theatre Municipal De Fontainebleau); *Skin A Cat* (Bunker Theatre, Edinburgh Fringe and UK Tour); *Elegy For A Lady* and *The Yalta Game* (Salisbury Playhouse); *Klippies, Beast* and *East of Berlin* (Southwark Playhouse); *Caterpillar* (Theatre 503); *Lean* (Tristan Bates); *Eight Songs For A Mad King, Now This Is Not The End* and *Handel Furioso* (Arcola); *The Moor* (Old Red Lion); *Die Fledermaus* (OperaUpClose).

LIGHTING DESIGNER | KIERON JOHNSON

Kieron is a lighting designer for Theatre, Opera and Dance. Kieron has worked with many world renowned institutions such as Trinity Laban, London Contemporary Dance School and the Northern School of Contemporary Dance.

Recent credits include: *As You Like It* (Northern Broadsides); *West Side Story: Symphonic Dances* (Opera North); *Decades: Stories from the City* (Leeds Playhouse); *Black Waters* & *EBÓ* (Phoenix Dance Theatre); *Head Above Water* and *Tides* (Joss Arnott Dance).

SOUND DESIGNER | MATTHEW WILLIAMS

Matthew, known to everyone as Wills, trained at Theatr Clwyd and The School of Sound Recording, Manchester. Wills has designed sound for around ninety productions at Theatr Clwyd over his thirty years in the building.

Wills is an award-nominated sound designer and has had his sound designs as part of exhibitions all over the world, including the V&A Museum, London. As well as theatre sound design, Wills also works with a number of bands, in both video and audio and also designed soundscapes for three escape rooms. He has an audio services company called, WW Audio, and co owns the Elsberdance dance school with his choreographer partner, Rachel.

MOVEMENT DIRECTOR | JESS WILLIAMS

Jess works as a Movement Director, Director and Performer for Theatre and VR. She trained at the London Contemporary Dance School and the Laban Centre.

Jess is Creative Associate of ThickSkin, based in Manchester. Most recently she co-created and directed *Sorry, I Disappeared* a walking audio play and *Petrichor* a Theatre in VR experience for ThickSkin and has a number of projects in development with them.

Jess has been a practitioner for Frantic Assembly since 2012 and was Associate Director of *I Think We Are Alone* and *The Unreturning*. She toured the UK in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* for the National Theatre and Frantic Assembly and has been Associate Movement Director for the USA, World Tour, UK Tour and West End productions of the same show.

Other recent credits include: *The Boy with Two Hearts* (Wales Millennium centre); *Beginning* (National theatre, Queens theatre Hornchurch); *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* (The National Theatre); *Ignition* (Frantic Assembly); *A Walk is Not a Walk* (Lyric Belfast); *One flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* (English Theatre Frankfurt); *Constellations* (National Centre for Performing Arts, Mumbai); *Merched Caerdydd* (Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru); *Tuck* and *A Good Clean Heart* (Wales Millennium Centre); *Wonderland* (Nottingham Playhouse).

COMPOSER | LYNWEN HAF ROBERTS

Lynwen is an emerging Composer and Musical Director currently based in Mold. Her recent commissions include *Barry Harden – Facebook Troll!* (Academi Leeway/Leeway Productions) and *Golygfeydd o'r Pla Du* (Theatrau Sir Gâr & Chris Harris). She is also a participant of the inaugural MD Mentorship Scheme 2021-22, and has been assigned as a mentee to London MD Mark Collins, partaking in regular skill sharing

sessions as well as shadowing him in the orchestra pits of current West End shows.

Lynwen is also an experienced actor-musician, and has over ten years of experience working in Theatre, TV and Radio in Wales and across the UK. Recent credits include: *Summer Holiday*, *Blonde Bombshells of 1943*, *The Crucible* (Pitlochry Festival Theatre); *Clera* (Arad Goch); *Pobol y Cwm* (BBC) and *The News From Nowhere* (BBC Radio 4). She has also appeared in Theatr Clwyd's infamous Rock 'n' Roll pantos for the last five years; *Beauty and the Beast, The Panto that Nearly Never Was!, Jack and the Beanstalk, Dick Whittington* and *Sleeping Beauty.*

CASTING DIRECTOR | POLLY JERROLD

Polly previously worked as the Casting Associate at the Royal Exchange Theatre for five years.

Theatre credits include: *Antigone* (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre); *Chasing Hares, The Secretaries* (Young Vic Theatre); *First Touch* (Nottingham Playhouse); *Life of Pi* (Sheffield Theatres & West End); *Waldo's* (Extraordinary Bodies/Bristol Old Vic); *Pretty Shitty Love*, *Celebrated Virgins*, *Curtain Up* and *For the grace of you go I* (Theatr Clwyd); *Shandyland* (Northern Stage); *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *Tribes* (Sheffield Theatres); *Our Lady of Kibeho*, *Soul*, *Merlin*, *Peter And The Starcatcher* (Royal & Derngate); *Two Trains Running* (ETT and Royal & Derngate); *Approaching Empty* (Kiln, Tamasha & Live Theatre); *The Lovely Bones* (Royal & Derngate, Birmingham Rep and Northern Stage); *To Kill A Mockingbird*, *Running Wild* (Regent's Park tour); *Peter Pan*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Oliver Twist*, (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre); *All's Well that Ends Well* (Shakespeare's Globe); *The Caretaker* (Bristol Old Vic); *The Government Inspector*, *Tommy*, *Our Country's Good* (Ramps on the Moon); *The Island Nation* (Arcola); *Brideshead Revisited, A View from the Bridge*, *Sherlock* (York Theatre Royal); *Anita & Me*, *Peter Pan*, *Of Mice and Men*, *A Christmas Carol*, *101 Dalmatians*, *What Shadows*, *Folk*, *Winnie And Wilbur*, *Back Down*, *Feed the Beast*, *I Knew You* (Birmingham Rep); *The Kitchen Sink*, *Educating Rita* (Hull Truck Theatre); *Sweet Charity*, *Wit*, *The Ghost Train* and *Little Shop of Horrors* (Royal Exchange Theatre).

INTIMACY AND FLIGHT DIRECTOR | RUTH COOPER-BROWN OF RC-ANNIE LTD

RC-ANNIE Ltd, established in 2005 by Rachel Bown-Williams and Ruth Cooper-Brown, is the UK's leading Dramatic Violence and Intimacy Company.

Theatr Clwyd credits include: *Beauty and the Beast*, *Orpheus Descending*, *The Rise and Fall of Little Voice*, *Uncle Vanya*, *Jumpy*, *My People*, *All My Sons*, *Aristocrats*.

Other credits include: *Richard III*, *Henry VI: Rebellion*, *The Wars of the Roses Henry VI Part 1 Rehearsal Room Project*, *King John*, *Measure for Measure*, *As You Like It*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Tartuffe*, *The Duchess of Malfi*, *Salome & Snow in Midsummer* (Royal Shakespeare Company); *Henry VIII*, *Julius Caesar*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank – Macbeth*, *Macbeth*, *Emilia*, *Othello*, *The Secret Theatre*, *Boudica*, *Lions and Tigers*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Twelfth Night*, *Comus and Imogen* (Shakespeare's Globe); *As You Like It* (Globe on Tour); *The Scandal at Mayerling* (Scottish Ballet); *Theodora* (Royal Opera House); *The Father and the Assassin*, *The Welkin*, *Three Sisters*, *Anna*, *When We Have Sufficiently Tortured Each Other*, *Common*, *Ugly Lies the Bone*, *Peter Pan*, *The Threepenny Opera*, *The James Plays* (co-production with National Theatre of Scotland and Edinburgh International Festival) and *Cleansed* (National Theatre); *Persuasion* (Rose Theatre Kingston); *2:22 A Ghost Story* (West End); *The Play What I Wrote* (Birmingham Rep & Tour);*The Life of Pi* (Wyndham Theatre); *Blue/Orange* (Theatre Royal Bath); *Beauty and the Beast* (Theatr Clwyd); *Night Mother* (Hampstead Theatre); *East is East* (Birmingham Rep/National Theatre/Chichester Festival Theatre); *Once Upon A Time in Nazi Occupied Tunisia* (Almeida Theatre); *The Prince of Egypt* (Dreamworks at The Dominion Theatre); *A Monster Calls* (Old Vic Productions National Tour); *Alone in Berlin* (Royal and Derngate); *[BLANK]* (Donmar Warehouse); *Macbeth* (Chichester Festival Theatre); *Hedda Tesman* (Headlong/Chichester Festival Theatre/The Lowry); *The King of Hell's Palace* (Hampstead Theatre); *Peter Pan* (National Theatre); *Troubadour* (White City Theatre); *Noises Off* (Lyric Hammersmith & West End); *The Night of the Iguana* (Noel Coward Theatre); *Plenty* (Chichester Festival Theatre); *Hobson's Choice* (Manchester Royal Exchange); *King Hedley* (Theatre Royal Stratford East); *The Little Matchgirl*; (Bristol Old Vic/Shakespeare's Globe); *A Very, Very, Very Dark Matter* (The Bridge Theatre); *Wise Children* (Wise Children & The Old Vic); *Company* (Elliot Harper Productions at The Gielgud Theatre); *Europe* (Leeds Playhouse); *God of Carnage*, *The Price*, *Switzerland & Dusty* (Theatre Royal Bath); *A Monster Calls*, *Woyzeck* (Old Vic).

DIALECT COACH | NATALIE GRADY

Television and Film credits include: *Better* (BBC); *Happy Valley* (BBC); *The Reckoning* (BBC); *The Gallows Pole* (BBC); *The Birth Of Daniel F Harris* (C4); *Red Rose* (BBC/Netflix); *Rule Of The Game* (BBC); *Anne* (ITV); *Jingle Bell Christmas* (Hallmark); *Wolfe* (SKY), *Stephen* (ITV), *The Iprcress File* (ITV); Time (BBC); *Ackley Bridge* (Channel 4); *All Creatures Great and Small* (C5 and PBS for the US); *The Cure* (Chanelle 4); *Trip* (Channel 4); *Gwen* (Feature Film for Endor productions); *Your Christmas Or Mine* (Feature Film).

Theatre credits include: *Nora, Gee and Met*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Gypsy*, *Light Falls*, *West Side Story*, *Queens of the coal age* (Royal Exchange); *Hangmen* (Golden Theatre Broadway); *Hull and High Water*, *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian*, *The Last Testament of Lilian Bilocca* (Hull Truck); *The Nicol Project (MIF)*; *Scoring a Century* (British Youth Oppera); *Lancastrians* (Junction 8); *Jess and Joe Forever* (Stephen Joseph Theatr); *Chicken Soup* (Sheffield Crucible); *Bread and Roses*, *Jumpers for Goalposts*, *Brassed Off* (Oldham Coliseum); *Beggars Opera*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Blue Stockings*, *Wizard of Oz* (Storyhouse); *Hoard Festival*, *Seeing The Lights*, *Beryl* (New Vic Theatre); *La Vie Parisienne*, *Street Scen*e (RNCM); *The Last Yankee*, *A View From The Bridge*, *Two, Two 2* (Octagon Theatre); T*o Kill A Mockingbird* (UK tour and Barbican).

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR | JULIETTE MANON

Juliette is a Queer Welsh/French Director, Playwright and Theatre-Maker from Mold (North Wales). They're passionate about creating work that amplifies LGBTQ+ voices, women and nonbinary people's voices and any other voice that is currently under-represented (or rather, not represented) on the Welsh stage and screen. They're a member of the Sherman Theatre's 'Unheard Voices' Writer's Group and Theatr Genedlaethol's 'Young Playwright Programme' (2021-23). Their current projects include being co-Artistic Director of their new theatre company: Cwmni Cwiar and developing their play *Bébé Gay*. Their credits include: work with Theatr Clwyd, Wales Millennium Centre, National Youth Theatre of Wales, Solomonic Peacocks Theatre, Frân Wen Young Company, The Sherman Theatre, Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru, Channel 4, BBC and S4C.

Theatr Clwyd

The award-winning Theatr Clwyd is Wales' biggest producing theatre. Since 1976 Theatr Clwyd has created exceptional theatre from its home in Flintshire, North Wales. Driven by the vision and dynamism of award-winning Artistic Director Tamara Harvey and Executive Director Liam Evans-Ford, Theatr Clwyd pushes theatrical boundaries creating world-class productions.

In 2021 Theatr Clwyd was named as The Stage's *Regional Theatre Of The Year*. Major recent successes have included co-producing *Home, I'm Darling* with the National Theatre, which won Best New Comedy at the Olivier Awards and was nominated in five categories, the UK Theatre Award-winning musical *The Assassination of Katie Hopkins*, the site-specific, immersive *Great Gatsby,* Menier Chocolate Factory co-production of *Orpheus Descending* and the world premiere of new musical, *Milky Peaks*.

Theatr Clwyd is one of only four theatres in the UK to build sets and props, make costumes and paint scenery in-house. Their impressive team of workshop, wardrobe and scenic artists, props makers and technicians ensure the skills vital to a vibrant theatre industry are nurtured right in the heart of Wales, developing the theatre makers of the future. In addition to this, Theatr Clwyd hosts an artist development programme, trainee technicians' scheme and an eighteen-month traineeship for directors, to develop the Artistic Directors of the future.

Theatr Clwyd works in the community across all art forms and is recognised as a cultural leader for its cross generational theatre groups, work in youth justice and diverse programme of arts, health and wellbeing. Award-winning Community Engagement projects include *Arts from the Armchair*, in partnership with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, which uses theatrical making skills to help people with early onset memory loss and their carers, and *Justice In A Day*, working in schools and the law courts to help at risk children to realise the consequences of crime.

Theatr Clwyd has completed the public consultation period for a major Capital Redevelopment Project which will reimagine the theatre's public spaces and create a greener, more efficient and sustainable building where world-class art can thrive and social action is rooted for generations to come.

During the Covid-19 pandemic the theatre has been active in helping its community, from hosting blood donation sessions and distributing food to vulnerable families to creating digital dance workshops for those with Parkinsons and sharing creative packages and activities with those most isolated.

THANK YOU

Thank you to all the teams at Theatr Clwyd.

Thank you to all the funders and supporters of Theatr Clwyd.

The Carne Trust has been instrumental in creating the Theatr Clwyd Carne Traineeship for Directors in Wales. Eleri B. Jones, director of *Celebrated Virgins*, was one of the first two participants of the scheme.

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CHARACTERS

SARAH
ELEANOR
LADY BETTY / MARY CARYLL
SIR WILLIAM / WILLIAM WORDSWORTH / EDMUND BURKE

All other roles can be split amongst the cast or used as voices.

The community cast/witness roles should be played by members of the community in which this play is being performed.

LOCATION

The first half of this story takes place in Kilkenny, Ireland.
The second half takes place in Llangollen, Wales.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

Although this story is inspired by true events, it is a reimagining viewed through a modern-day lens and not a historically accurate re-enactment. With this in mind, I would encourage any future productions to make bold creative choices that not only reflect the period in which this play is set – but ones that also celebrate the diversity of the world around us today.

A note on time

This play primarily follows the life of Sarah Ponsonby from age nine to her death aged seventy eight. In our world, time is fluid and dreamlike as Sarah revists snapshots of her life and re-lives them as if for the first time. All other characters exist within Sarah's memory, but wholly and truthfully within their own circumstances and time.

Music

I was listening to a lot of Sinéad O'Connor whilst writing this play. All of it is relevant but specifically the songs *Mandinka*, *All Apologies* and *In This Heart*.

"You destroy the woman; you destroy the past she represents. I will not allow my story to be destroyed. What I would have done to have heard a story like mine, to feel less alone. I want my story heard because I believe we could paint a better world if we learnt how to see it from different perspectives – because diversity is a strength, difference is a teacher. Fear difference and you learn nothing. Hindsight is a gift; now can you stop wasting my time."

– Hannah Gadsby: Nanette

"There is indeed no other refuge from the horrors of history but in the mild majesty of private life"
– Mrs Elizabeth Carter (letter to Miss Catherine Talbot)

"A day of most sweetly enjoyed retirement. A day according to our hearts. Silent. Undisturbed"
– Lady Eleanor Butler's diary

For Sarah Ponsonby (1755–1831)
Eleanor Butler (1739–1829)

and
Keri Allen (1963–2012)

With Special Thanks to Issy Richards – Our Lady of Llangollen.

ACT ONE

Scene One

A Theatre

(The initial state should have the quality of the beginnings of a dream.)

(As the audience enters, members of a community cast weave in and out of the set. They should have the feel of ghosts being conjured from the past. They should be dressed in working-class clothes from the period of the 1700s. They either don't speak at all, or if voices are heard, they are faded and unclear. Eventually, most of the ghosts fade away – although one or two remain throughout to bear witness to the story. A representation of the eyes of the period and the constant gaze of the community – always present, always somehow a part of the story. They are faceless now and their names are forgotten, but they are never to be dismissed or forgotten entirely.)

*(***SARAH** *enters through the audience. A woman in her mid-late 30s. She is dressed in dishevelled upper-class men's clothes of the period in which she lived. She should look really cool and powerful, a visual*

representation of the image she would like to present to us today.)

(She stands centre stage, and smiles at the audience.)

(Waits for absolute silence.)

SARAH. Are you listening now?

Took you a while there, didn't it?

But maybe you didn't know if I was…

Who were you expecting?

Well I'm not… that.

I'm this.

Here.

Now.

You know me.

Don't you?!

(She looks round at the audience.)

No?

Interesting.

(Beat.)

You do know I'm dead, don't you?

Seriously dead.

In fact I could have lived and died nearly three times over in the time it's taken you to ask me anything.

And you don't seem to need my help at all.

Look.

My name is written on the pages in front of you.

My face is hanging up in the National Portrait Gallery.

Tourists come over to take photos with my bones.

My home… property of the local council, there's a guided tour round there twice a day now, a really rather reasonable rate out of season.

My life… poured out in ink over the desks of long dead men.

My sex… well I imagine you suspect a bit about that of course.

Why else would you have bought a ticket?

Unless…

(Beat.)

(She smiles.)

Ah, of course.

My love.

My love, my love, my love.

She is still quite my own.

Dead.

Buried.

Safe underneath me.

Delicious seclusion.

Do you understand

My story.

My love.

My words.

Every one of them remains lost, until you listen to me.

Know me.

See me.

As I am.

As all that I am.

Here.

(Beat.)

Now?!

*(***LADY BETTY** *enters, with maids.)*

LADY BETTY. Sarah, we don't have time for this.

(She circles around **SARAH**.*)*

Let's have a look at you.

I'm sorry I couldn't come sooner.

Speak up!

All will be well, Sarah.

Don't keep everyone waiting.

(The maids edge closer to **SARAH** *and as they do she screams at them.)*

SARAH. I'LL NOT GO!

(The maids restrain **SARAH**.*)*

(They dress her in a more young ladylike fashion.)

(She is taken down into her past.)

Scene Two

Sarah's First Home – Kilkenny, Ireland

*(**SARAH** is fighting with the maids.)*

*(The maid attempts to lift **SARAH**.)*

(She is a dead weight.)

*(**SIR WILLIAM** enters.)*

SIR WILLIAM. Not as we expected, is she?

LADY BETTY. My Lord, I can only apologise.

*(**SIR WILLIAM** approaches **SARAH**.)*

SIR WILLIAM. Hello there young Madam!

Hello?

*(**SARAH** hisses at him like a feral cat.)*

*(**SIR WILLIAM** makes to leave.)*

Well, that's that then.

LADY BETTY. We can't just leave her.

SIR WILLIAM. Why not?

LADY BETTY. We made an arrangement.

SIR WILLIAM. Send word, tell them she's faulty.

LADY BETTY. She has nowhere else to go!

*(**LADY BETTY** goes to her, puts her hand on her.)*

Sarah.

Sarah.

Sarah, please.

*(**SARAH** takes off her shoe and flings it at **LADY BETTY**.)*

(She tries to run away but the maids block her exit.)

(They stand guard, ready to take her out again if she steps out of line.)

Sarah.

Enough of this.

Your Father is dead.

Your stepmother does not want you here any longer.

You are to come with myself and Sir William today, and that is the way of it.

*(**SARAH** looks around for a friend but she can't find one.)*

There is nowhere else for you to go.

(Eventually she begrudgingly puts her shoes back on.)

Good girl.

Come now.

Don't keep everyone waiting.

*(**LADY BETTY** and **SIR WILLIAM** exit along with the maids.)*

*(**SARAH** tries to speak to the audience and finds she can't.)*

*(**SARAH** travels to Woodstock.)*

*(***SARAH** *is isolated and ignored in a big house, lots of people passing by working, nobody noticing her.)*

(In the end, **SARAH** *sits in the middle of the stage, alone.)*

Scene Three

Woodstock, Kilkenny

*(***LADY BETTY** *enters.)*

LADY BETTY. Ah, there you are.

*(***SARAH** *looks up, startled.)*

LADY BETTY. Not trying to run away from me there, are you?

SARAH. No, I was just/

LADY BETTY. It's alright.

Nicer outside anyway.

*(***LADY BETTY** *sits with* **SARAH**.*)*

Did you have a garden in your old house?

SARAH. Yes, my Father built it.

LADY BETTY. Is that so?

SARAH. I helped him sometimes.

LADY BETTY. Were you any good at it?

SARAH. Well, I can't dig very fast but I'm very good at planting seeds.

LADY BETTY. Are you now?

Perhaps we could have a word with Master Jacob, see if he'd like a small hand out here.

Would you like that ?

*(***SARAH** *nods.)*

SARAH. We'll have a look into that then.

LADY BETTY. Now, shall we give this another little try?

*(**LADY BETTY** produces a cross stitch.)*

*(She passes it to **SARAH**.)*

*(**SARAH** fumbles with it then throws it away.)*

SARAH. I can't do it!

LADY BETTY. Here, look, give it to me.

*(**LADY BETTY** threads the needle back and fixes the stitch, then gives it back to **SARAH. SARAH** slowly begins to stitch, quietly. **LADY BETTY** watches her.)*

That's better now, isn't it?

(Beat.)

There's no rush, you know.

You can take your time here.

We've plenty of it.

I'm just happy you're here at all.

*(**SIR WILLIAM** enters, and speaks loudly, startling **SARAH**.)*

SIR WILLIAM. Good day Miss Sarah, are you well

*(**SARAH** jumps up and runs to hide.)*

SIR WILLIAM. Never says a word to anyone.

Just sits around the garden like a sad little gnome.

LADY BETTY. She's still settling.

SIR WILLIAM. I feel like a beast stalking the walls of my own home.

LADY BETTY. Give her time.

SIR WILLIAM. Six months Lady Betty!

Enough of it.

I want her out by the end of the week.

LADY BETTY. That's impossible.

SIR WILLIAM. How can it be impossible when she has no business being here in the first place?

LADY BETTY. She is our ward of care.

SIR WILLIAM. What does that even mean?

Tell me Lady Betty, why exactly was it that we agreed to this?

(Beat.)

Go on.

LADY BETTY. I thought it might be nice for you to have a young companion.

SIR WILLIAM. Worked out well, hasn't it?

(Beat.)

How long must I be punished for your shortcomings as a wife.

LADY BETTY. What do you mean?

SIR WILLIAM. Stealing the first available orphan.

Pretty desperate measures, don't you think?

(Beat.)

(A blue flower grows through the stage.)

*(***SARAH** *spots it.)*

(She goes to it, plucks it out.)

(Studies it.)

SARAH. Bachelor's button.

LADY BETTY. What?

SARAH. Bachelor's button.

Centaurea cynus.

Cornflower.

LADY BETTY. Where did you learn that?

SARAH. My father taught me.

(They both watch her looking at the flower.)

LADY BETTY. You like it out here, don't you Sarah?

*(***SARAH** *nods.)*

Give Sir William the flower.

*(***SARAH** *hesitates.)*

He has been very kind to you,

Letting you share his garden.

Do you not think so?

(She gives the flower to **SIR WILLIAM** *and curtseys.)*

(He stares at it.)

SIR WILLIAM. Bachelor's Button.

Why is that?

(Beat.)

SARAH. Gentlemen wear them in their button holes when they are in love, and when the flower blooms they can be married.

SIR WILLIAM. Is that so?

LADY BETTY. She's a keen interest in gardening.

Perhaps Sarah might like to join you on your evening round Sir William.

She's never been any further than the lawn.

What do you think?

SIR WILLIAM. I'm not sure that would be/

LADY BETTY. Sarah… would you like to see the orangery?

*(***SARAH** *nods.)*

Well now, there we are. Sir William?

SIR WILLIAM. We could give it a try, I suppose.

LADY BETTY. Wonderful idea.

Sounds like a lovely evening for you both all together.

I shall tell the kitchen to expect you together.

Enjoy the grounds, Sarah.

*(***LADY BETTY** *exits.)*

(Silence.)

SIR WILLIAM. Now then.

Would you perhaps have any interest in seeing a real life lemon?

*(***SARAH** *looks up at* **SIR WILLIAM** *and nods.)*

Shall we?

(He offers his hand to **SARAH**, *which she takes.)*

(Together they walk the garden, **SARAH** *planting seeds and watching some of them grow.)*

(The flowers are not colourful yet.)

Scene Four

Woodstock, Kilkenny

*(**LADY BETTY** enters and the two of them plant flowers all around her.)*

*(They play together, **LADY BETTY** watching them, bemusedly laughing.)*

LADY BETTY. Sir William, would you kindly desist in this distraction!

SIR WILLIAM. Oh forgive us Lady Betty, we are in chronic good humour. We have spent the day accompanying Master Jacob on gardening duties.

Sarah was most enthralled.

SARAH. We planted sprouts!

LADY BETTY. Did you now?

SARAH. Alongside Master Jacob, watered all the seeds.

SIR WILLIAM. Tell Lady Betty the ground plans of the season, Sarah.

SARAH. Now...

(She surveys the stage as if it were a garden.)

Along the terrace there will be Hemerocallis fulva, Rhododendron macrophyllum and Viola wittrockiana – these shall bloom in the summer if we keep the soil moist and the cats distracted.

On the cross path we have placed the Taxus baccata and Prunus spinosa, though of course we won't see those till the Autumn.

And finally along the side banks we harvested Citrus sinensis.

Guess what those are?

Go on?

LADY BETTY. You'll have to enlighten me.

SARAH. MASSIVE ORANGES!

*(***SARAH** *pulls an orange out of her dress and hands one to* **SIR WILLIAM** *and one to* **LADY BETTY.***)*

LADY BETTY. Very good Sarah.

SIR WILLIAM. Most well versed in the latin vernacular of all your little plants and such.

SARAH. I have studied them.

SIR WILLIAM. Isn't she a clever girl?

LADY BETTY. Indeed.

(Beat.)

There has been talk of your gardening interests throughout the staff.

SARAH. Really?

LADY BETTY. Wandering about the walled gardens in your day dress, reading verse after verse amongst the yews. Quite the vision, it seems.

Master Jacob doesn't know at all where to put himself, I am told.

*(***SIR WILLIAM** *laughs.)*

SIR WILLIAM. Do you blush Sarah?

SARAH. No.

SIR WILLIAM. Your cheeks are flushed.

SARAH. I have been running, Sir.

SIR WILLIAM. There is no need to feel shy.

You are much loved here, by all of us.

Two years here, blooming like the narcissus each spring.

(Beat.)

Whatever shall become of you in summertime, I wonder?

LADY BETTY. My Lord, I thought it may be time to discuss the boarding house.

SIR WILLIAM. Bit soon, isn't it?

LADY BETTY. I don't think so.

I was thirteen when I first attended.

And she will be well looked after.

SIR WILLIAM. By whom?

LADY BETTY. Lady Butler writes to me, her own daughter has just been taken on as an aide there.

Lady Eleanor Butler.

SIR WILLIAM. Of Kilkenny castle?

LADY BETTY. The very same.

SIR WILLIAM. What is she doing working in the boarding house?

LADY BETTY. Her family seem quite at a loss as to what else to do with her, I am told.

SIR WILLIAM. Oh well, they should get on well then.

LADY BETTY. So we are in agreement then Sir?

SIR WILLIAM. Lady Betty, I'm not sure I quite understand the cause of this sudden action.

LADY BETTY. It's not sudden my Lord, it was your idea.

SIR WILLIAM. Was it?

LADY BETTY. Yes, you spoke at great lengths the other evening of the importance in broadening the minds of the young.

SIR WILLIAM. I have no recollection of saying such.

LADY BETTY. An enthralling conversation led by yourself, over dinner with Lord and Lady Tighe – most forward thinking.

They were terribly impressed.

*(***SIR WILLIAM** *is confused.)*

SIR WILLIAM. Ah, yes. Now I am remembered. I do forget the impression I make upon others with my simple musings.

LADY BETTY. She's a keen interest in learning.

Much better than sitting about the garden in the dirt reading musty old books, do you not think?

SIR WILLIAM. I suppose a small education can do a young woman no permanent damage.

LADY BETTY. Very good so.

I shall draft a letter to Miss Parkes and inform her of Sarah's desire to study.

SARAH. But I/

LADY BETTY. All will be well Sarah.

*(***LADY BETTY** *exits.)*

SIR WILLIAM. You shall of course be expected to come back and visit us in all holidays and breaks, yes?

*(***SARAH** *looks at him for a while, then just nods.)*

Good girl.

I fear we should all go quite mad without you.

*(***SIR WILLIAM** *exits.)*

*(***SARAH** *is alone again.)*

Scene Five

Miss Parkes School for Girls, Kilkenny

*(**SARAH**'s arrival at school. She is displaced, lots of faces, lots of bodies, all of them busy, none of them noticing her.)*

(The movement gets faster and faster until **ELEANOR** *clocks her.)*

(Everything freezes.)

ELEANOR. Hello Sarah. I'm/

SARAH. Eleanor.

ELEANOR. Lady Butler of Kilkenny castle.

Have you been waiting long?

*(**SARAH** shakes her head.)*

Speak up.

SARAH. NO I WAS JUST WANDERING THE GARDEN ACTUALLY!

(Beat.)

ELEANOR. I'm sorry I couldn't come sooner.

I'm here now.

Shall we?

*(**SARAH** just stares at* **ELEANOR**.*)*

*(**ELEANOR** takes a step towards* **SARAH**.*)*

*(**SARAH** steps away.)*

Are you alright?

*(**SARAH** nods.)*

Sarah, I am to teach you languages.

Your words are important.

SARAH. I'm fine, thank you.

ELEANOR. Very good.

The library is this way.

Will you come with me?

*(**SARAH** nods.)*

*(**ELEANOR** looks at her disapprovingly.)*

SARAH. Yes, I will.

(They walk into the library together.)

(Music plays as people swarm around them again.)*

(When they enter the library they are alone.)

ELEANOR. What's that you're reading?

SARAH. Clarissa.

ELEANOR. Excellent choice.

SARAH. I could only find it in French.

ELEANOR. Parlez-vous français?

*(**SARAH** stares at her blankly.)*

SARAH. Oh. Sorry. Oui, merci.

Je suis très malade.

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*(***ELEANOR** *laughs.)*

ELEANOR. Maintenant. On va commencer avec votre grammaire. Le pluriels, s'il vous plaît.

Je suis

(Beat.)

Tu es

Il est

Elle est

Nous sommes

(Beat.)

Tu ne peux pas parles le français?

SARAH. What?

*(***ELEANOR** *laughs.)*

(Beat.)

There's another library you know.

Is there?

ELEANOR. They keep all the good stuff hidden. This one's mostly full of antiques. I think the English text is in there.

SARAH. Where is it?

ELEANOR. That would be telling, wouldn't it.

SARAH. Will you take me there?

ELEANOR. We aren't supposed to let students in.

SARAH. I won't tell anyone.

ELEANOR. And they'd all say the same.

SARAH. I want to read it.

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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