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CONCORD
THEATRICALS

GIRLPLAY

by Sarah Richardson

SAMUEL FRENCH

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GIRLPLAY was first performed at theSpace on North bridge for the Edinburgh Festival on 5th August 2022. Produced by Sarah Richardson with SJ Woods. The cast was as follows:

A . . . . . .Sarah Richardson
B . . . . . Laura Brady
C . . . . . .Martha Dunlea

CAST

SARAH RICHARDSON | "A" (Playwright/Co-Producer)
Sarah Richardson is an actor, playwright and spoken word poet. She trained at the Gaiety School of Acting in Ireland and appeared in a number of the Gaiety's Shakespeare productions including *Macbeth* and *King Lear*. Alongside *GirlPlay*, Sarah has appeared in other self-penned work such as *A Ton Of Feathers* that was presented at the NSDF festival 2022 as part of the NSDF Lab programme and was the recipient of the Axis Assemble Associate Artist programme (2020) and FringeLab Artist programme (2020) for her work on her one woman show *Sun Bear*.

LAURA BRADY | "B"
Theatre includes: *The Roaring Banshees* (Smock Alley Theatre); *TINS* (The Boys School); *How Far*, *Antigone?* (Teatrelabor, Bielefeld); *Flaming Inspirations* (Samuel Beckett Theatre); *Essex Birds* (Smock Alley Theatre); *Triangles* (The International Comedy Club) and *Romeo and Juliet* (The Samuel Beckett Theatre). Film includes: *Soft Places* (Independent); *Crone Wood* (Blacklodge Films); *Proclaim!* (Three Hot Whiskies Production).

MARTHA DUNLEA | "C"
Martha is an Irish actor living in London. She graduated from the MA Acting for Screen course at The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in 2021. She most recently worked on the world premiere of *Baile Beag Mór*, written and directed by IFTA nominated filmmaker Philip Doherty with Fibín sa Taibhdhearc. Other recent credits include: *GirlPlay* at Camden People's Theatre and Dublin Fringe Festival; *Eclipsed* at The Mill Dundrum; *Macbeth* with Fibín, *Dancing at Lughnasa* at The Everyman Cork and *The Shaughraun* at Smock Alley Theatre Dublin.
Martha recently worked with BAFTA winning director David Blaire on *The Reckoning* for ITV, which aired in 2022.

CREATIVE TEAM

CIARA ELIZABETH SMYTH | Director
Ciara Elizabeth Smyth is an Irish writer and director for stage and screen. Her plays have been presented by the Abbey Theatre, Fishamble, Dublin Fringe Festival, the MAC Theatre, Project Arts Centre and Bewley's Café Theatre. She currently has several new projects in development for TV, including adaptations of her debut play, *All honey*, (Fishamble New Writing Award 2017) and her 2019 play *SAUCE*. Ciara is a recipient of the Next Generation Award 2020, the Lyric Theatre's Live to Digital Commission 2021, the Abbey Theatre's Commemoration Bursary 2021 and was accepted to Sharp Shorts 2022, a development fund to create her first short film. Ciara is represented by Nick Marston and Katie Battcock in Curtis Brown.

SJ WOODS | Creative Producer/Assistant Director
SJ Woods is a London-based Creative Producer from the West of Ireland. She makes immersive and multi-sensory theatre experiences inspired by place, identity, class and the visceral subject matter that this provides. Her work has an international focus and cross pollinates between theatre, live art and film, often pushing conventional theatrical boundaries to off-site locations.

SJ came on board as Creative Producer of *GirlPlay* in Spring 2021 bringing it to Camden People's Theatre later that year and to Edinburgh Fringe in 2022.

JENNIFER O'MALLEY | Sound Designer
Jennifer is a composer and sound designer based in Dublin who is a classically trained multi-instrumentalist and vocalist. She primarily composes electronic and orchestral music, often blending the two using her cello (among other acoustic instruments) and synthesisers while her sound design explores moving from organic to non-diegetic sound worlds.
Some of her theatre credits as a composer & sound designer include: *Summertime* (Dublin Fringe, 2018, Drogheda Arts Festival, 2019, Abbey Young Curators Festival, 2019); *Iphigenia In Splott* (Smock Alley Theatre, 2018); *We Can't Have Monkeys In The House* (Peacock Theatre, 2019); *SAUCE* (Bewley's Cafe Theatre, 2019); *Restoration* (Project Arts Centre, 2020); *Venus In Fur* (Project Arts Centre, 2020); *SHIT* (Project Arts Centre, 2020); *Will I See You There* (Dublin Fringe, 2020); *Before You Say Anything* (Dublin Fringe, 2020); *Ar Ais Arís* (Brightening Air, 2021); *Goodnight Egg* (Civic Theatre, 2021); *Where Sat the Lovers* (Dublin Fringe, 2021); *Masterclass* (Dublin Fringe, 2021); *You're Still Here* (Dublin Fringe, 2021); *Absent The Wrong* (Dublin Fringe Festival, 2022); *Good Sex* (Dublin Theatre Festival, 2022). www.jenny.ie

AMY DANIELS | Lighting Designer
Amy (she/her) is a London-based freelance lighting designer, production manager and technician. A lover of theatre since she can remember, she studied English Literature at the University of Sussex and fell in love with production during a year abroad at SUNY Stony Brook. She is the Technical Manager at Camden People's Theatre and designs for a wide variety of performances. Find her full credits and portfolio on her website - www.amydanielslighting.com.

ÁINE O'HARA | Set, Costume and Graphic Designer
Áine O'Hara is a Dublin based multidisciplinary artist, theatre maker and designer. They are interested in creating work that blurs the lines between community building and art. Áine has presented work nationally and internationally and their work has been supported by Dublin Fringe Festival, A4 sounds studios, Arts and Disability Ireland and the Arts Council of Ireland. You can see more about their work at aineohara.com

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"Where gems emerge." – *The Scotsman*

When the 2020 pandemic hit, theSpaceUK launched Online@ theSpaceUK to allow companies and artists from all over the world to take part in the largest virtual festival in the world. *GirlPlay* was the star of Online@theSpaceUK Season 2, picking up awards, rave reviews and global audience acclaim. A courageous cast and production team meant that GirlPlay was a powerful and emotive show that richly deserved these plaudits.

"theSpaceUK has the kind of lovely, unheralded work that will surprise audiences once more onEdinburgh stages." – *The Stage*

theSpaceUK champions new work and new artists. As part of this support theSpaceUK offers a Supported Artists Programme to new and innovative work, providing financial, marketing and production support. We are delighted to announce that *GirlPlay*, written by Sarah Richardson, is one of the Supported Artists for 2022.

CHARACTERS

A

B

C

AUTHOR'S NOTES

I started writing *GirlPlay* in 2018/19. I had been writing and performing poetry for a few years at this point and a lot of my work already focused on sex and relationships, however I wanted to write something bigger. When it came to sex, there was so much more I wanted to explore that I could never fully fit a three-minute poem. There were so many situations, moments and dynamics that I wanted the space and the scope to examine more deeply. So, with the original poems creating a basis for the play, *GirlPlay* was born.

GirlPlay has had a journey to get to this point, as most shows created right before the pandemic have. From a work in progress showing at Scene and Heard and debuting at Dublin Fringe 2019 to being turned into an audio play and touring internationally online, winning Best Digital Experience at Stockholm Fringe 2020. It was restaged at the end of 2021 for a three-night run at Camden People's Theatre in preparation for Edinburgh Fringe 2022. All of this is to say that sometimes it has been a bit of a mission and there have been obstacles along the way, but I am really pleased that as a team we have been able to keep *GirlPlay* alive over the last few years and get it to where we are today.

When writing *GirlPlay* I wanted it to be a piece that could discuss sex and women's sexual experience honestly. I wanted it to be awkward and funny and pleasurable and sexy and heart-breaking and painful all at once. Sex is never one thing. What it is to me, will be different from what it is to you. But my hope is that there will be at least one moment in the play that will make you feel seen and understood or that it will help you to see and understand others.

I don't really know why so much of my work focuses around sex, I think it has led to people believing that I am obsessed with the subject (and I'm not saying I'm not obsessed, I think a good portion of people are) I just find it interesting that something that is so heavily present in our society, amongst our peers and in our culture can still be laced with so much taboo and stigma. Sex is everywhere, constantly, yet for a lot of people and a lot of communities sexual expression and sexual pleasure is still not a conversation that can be had freely. I'm almost annoyed that a play like this is even still relevant, but here we are. As a woman, I wanted to create a piece that depicted the many complexities, good and bad, that

we encounter in relationships when it comes to sex. And I wanted to go beyond just the sex itself. There is so much shame when it comes to women having sex and enjoying sex and wanting sex. There is so much shame around women and their bodies. There is so much shame around motherhood and pregnancies and miscarriages. And shame leads to silence. Silence in pleasure. Silence in pain. Silence in our experiences. I hope that, even in a small way, this play can break down some of those silences.

Finally I want to thank everyone who has supported or been involved with *GirlPlay* so far. It is fair to say this play wouldn't have happened without all the generosity and support it has been offered personally and professionally. Thanks to my amazing creative team, Scene and Heard, Dublin Fringe, Fishamble, theSpaceUK, Concord. And, last but not least, a massive thank you to my family, whose unwavering support, advice and encouragement is a constant that I can always rely on.

NOTES ON STAGING

A, B and C are all the same character.

"..." - indicates when a character is trailing off or avoiding saying a word

"/" - indicates lines being cut off/short or when characters are finishing sentences/talking over each other in conversation

"-" - indicates lines being interrupted or when characters lines are in their own moments rather than conversation

For Mum, Dad and James,
Thank you for everything.

A. I sit here

B. Look at me

A. Sitting here

C. Cramped in

A. Sitting here

B. Wet

C. Cramped in

A. Sitting here

C. Looking at me

A. I sit here

B. Too late

C. Is it too late?

A. To sit here

B. And start

A. I want them

B. Their millions of nerves

C. Their heartbeat

B. Something with a heartbeat

A. I want

C. A beat

A. I want

B. Them

C. To sit here

B. With me

A. And

B. It hurts

C. It's suffocating

B. It's isolating

C. But it's funny

A. I could

C. Laugh

A. Because it's funny

B. Me

A. Sitting here

B. You

C. Looking at me

A. Sitting here

C. Look

B. At

A. Me

B. I want

C. You

B. Let me help

C. You heal

A. My body can heal

C. Heal my body

B. We can heal

A. Trace

B. Trace my skin

C. Connecting

B. Everything

A. Connecting every inch

C. Inch closer

B. And now you

C. Look

B. At

A. Me

C. As I

A. Sit here

B. Sparkling

C. It's sparkling

B. I'm looking like

C. I want

A. My

B. I want

A. Me

C. I want

A. No?

B. Maybe

C. Yes

A. I want to

B. Try

C. To pump life

B. To consume

C. To play

A. To sit here

B. And look at me

C. I want

A. To sit here

C. And start

A. To try

B. A touch

A. To try

C. Touching

A. Me

B. I want to

A. Sit here

C. Cramped in

B. Wet

A. I want to sit here

C. And

B. Understand

A. I want you

B. I want them

C. I want me

A. So I

B. Touch

A. And I start

(Beat.)

Seven

C. I don't know when I first became aware of it.

B. I thought it was something that just held my wee,

A. And then suddenly, it's sparkling

C. Sort of tingling

B. Like it's giggling.

A. It's funny

B. A funny feeling.

C. Something's happening.

B. Beyond my understanding.

A. And then I'm standing,

C. Looking in a mirror

B. Looking at me.

A. And looking back at me

C. I'm wondering?

A. What's that funny thing?

(Beat.)

B. And then later, I'm in the bath,

A. Sitting in Mum's used water,

C. And I don't know why but I'm bashing barbies together.

A. Smashing their bodies, on top of each other

C. Legs split open, aggressively hitting them against one another.

B. Rubbing their smooth areas up and down and around the others,

C. And it's funny,

A. Because there's that feeling,

B. That sparkling,

A. But nothing's happening,

B. The barbies are just sort of slipping.

C. And I'm wondering?

A. Where are their funny things?

(Beat.)

C. Eighteen

B. And I don't know when it transitioned from being that funny thing that I peed out of to being something else.

C. Something exciting, something bad, something…

A. I remember the first time I touched it, like properly investigated it.

C. It was like when you are doing a word search and you've got one word left to find and you've been staring at the page for so long that you actually start to think there is a mistake, like maybe they forgot to put that word in there or something. And so you start compiling a letter of complaint in your head, when you see it. And it's now as if that word is in bold letters and every time you look at the page it's all you can see. It was like that.

A. I was in the shower.

C. And for girls it's really hard to masturbate standing up, but it's not like anyone told me that or gave me a wanking masterclass, so I just had to sort of work it out for myself. I tried opening my legs as wide as possible and got a sort of squat on.

B. But my thighs gave way so I tried rubbing away, one leg up against the wall, bent over, water running down my face, hair sticking to my cheeks, blurred vision.

A. Luckily we had one of those shower/bath combos.

B. So there I was, back in our family bath only this time I'm cramped in, legs open as wide as the sides would go,

elbows hitting the support handles, shower pounding down on me, the water cold by the time it had left the shower head and hit my body and then/

ALL. Boom.

(Pause.)

B. I thought I had peed myself.

I found that button and my whole body spasmed, feet kicking taps, head smacking into shampoo bottles, Mum calling to ask if I was alright.

ALL. Yeah, fine thanks, just stubbed my toe.

A. What the… just happened?

B. Is that normal?

C. Should I have done that?

B. After the first time I couldn't stop.

C. I couldn't believe anyone stopped. Ever.

A. I heard of a woman who can have an orgasm just from thinking, in like two minutes. How the hell does she get anything done? I wouldn't. I wouldn't be able to focus.

C. It would be like the best superpower ever…

B. And the worst,

C. Because how would I fight crime? I would be too busy getting myself off.

B. I couldn't understand why no-one talked about this. Why no-one mentioned it before? Why other girls didn't do it.

A. I mean, women wouldn't have been given clits if they weren't meant to be enjoyed.

ALL. Right?

(Beat.)

C. Twenty one

B. Sure, I was a late bloomer

C. And everyone else came sooner

B. And I was one of the fewer

A. But we few had each other. And this was a big night, my night.

My 21st

So we went out.

Like out out

Out of our family homes

Down the road

Turn right onto the high street

And there it was.

ALL. The Club

C. Of course we knew it, but we hadn't actually been to it,

Everyone in the town knew it,

We were just new to it.

To this

To being out

To being out out

It wasn't really our thing

But tonight it was happening.

We walked in,

The smell of sweat was shocking

It had eroded the walls till they were dripping, the paper curling at its edges

We edged in further

Uncomfortably squirming in our overdressed dresses

Tripping over abandoned heels, abandoned bags, abandoned lads.

What am I doing here?

B. We make a beeline for the bar,

And people slip and drinks tip as we fight to get served.

And in the exchange of money for drinks I struggle to hear what the barman's saying over the thud of a beat bashing in my head

What am I doing here?

A. I lean in,

I put my hands on the bar to push myself up to hear and they stick,

Becoming attached so I have to physically unpeel them from stickiness that clings to them.

From what I hope is just alcohol and not a mix of the saliva dripping from the open mouth, of the tongue licking olympic team, going for gold next to me.

What am I doing here?

I don't belong here

I go to move

Maybe to leave/

C. And then *You* walk in, talking, girls trip and fall in at your feet.

You never miss a beat as you meet and greet your fans. You stand, tall but cool, happy to take a back seat as people taxi along with you, I'm with you.

And for a second I catch your eye and I think,

Fuck

What if he was mine?

B. But see I'm not a massively sexually experienced person.

From Barbies to bathtubs, I haven't quite graduated to full on sex stuff.

Sure I have kissed and maybe once or twice a hand might have slipped but the opportunity for anything else was just sort of missed.

Shocked? I know right but look at me; –

Lacking class, tight ass, big ask to take me: a geeky Dr Who fan, who can't stick it to the man and doesn't really have any plan at all.

And least of all, this exposed, protruding nose, sticky out chin and a brace for a grin.

And I know that my mum teaches me that it's these quirky features in me that make me stand out… right out of that line of another kind of fucking fit ass girls.

I mean, Jesus Christ, that's some good DNA.

But it's okay because Mum says that's what makes me unconventionally beautiful.

C. But right now I don't want unconventional I want Your attention so I fall into every stereotypical intention;

As I clench in, wrenched in, end up drenched in anything to fit into perfection.

Beauty's pain as I get slain by the blisters forming as I conform into wearing these lace up, waist up, trying to keep my face up boots.

B. Because really, I wish I could be in that line of fit ass girls.

In the club with their arses hypnotising, all eyes in on them. So much sass pouring out that too tight dress. And curves… those curves! With legs like pegs, never

ending, sending come to bed eyes and opening their thighs as they basically fuck on the dance floor.

C. I mean, I am a feminist you know, but it goes out the window as I try to attract and interact with you.

Principles I live by, give by, disappear as I try to get your attention by falling into social conventions because apparently I'm not supposed to be intelligent or excellent, everything about me is irrelevant except these tricks we used to get picked up.

But I might as well give up, because you're dancing on the dance floor with a better trickster.

And this is how I know I'm going to be single forever, unable to mingle, sitting in my bed, stuffing my face full of Pringles, because I can't do those tricks.

B. And then some gangly, mangly boy sidles up to me and flattered?

Maybe.

But I look at the dance floor, at those fine specimens of human reproduction coming together moving, feeling, touching, as she wettens and you harden.

And I feel the buzz of that fly buzzing around me and sure he's a nice guy,

But for once I want to be her because I know she's getting laid tonight as I know that she knows that you know stuff!

C. But then Your eyes breakaway from the dance floor, floored by your gaze everyone stands amazed and this is my chance so I try giving *You* a look but something is wrong, I'm holding it for too long, staring, wearing you down, not blinking, freaking you out.

Try again but now I'm just too quick, back and forth as if I've got a twitch, an itch in my eye.

B. And I feel like I am losing my chance because as you dance I know that she knows that you know that this is a wild, crazy adult game of twister, bodies mixing into one another, feeling, exploring, playing with each other.

Her bending like a Barbie and you extending like a sonic screwdriver – driving into her, coming in her.

C. But your eyes continue to wander so one last attempt, I use the toilet as an excuse to sashay past you, slyly catching your eye or seeing them watching my thighs.

I go more frequently just to get You to look at me, the girls start asking questions, coming up with suggestions, one asks if I've got a UTI as I've gone to the toilet five times in the last half hour, offering me tablets to power on through.

ALL. Fuck.

B. So I just stand there and to the gangly guy next to me, I tut aloud but inside I'm aroused.

Beause the thing is I'm not even going to have clumsy, fumbly, bumbly sex with this fly.

Him stuck in his shirt and me unable to undo my skirt with awkward touching and him apologising for his early arrival.

No I'm just going to go home, alone and feel... fucking frustrated.

People think girls like me don't want the "D".

That our hormones aren't developed – But we're thirsty!

C. Then suddenly You move towards the bar, not far from me, this could be my chance;

I think about going up to You and explaining I don't have an infection,

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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