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by Brian Friel





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Dancing at Lughnasa

by *Brian Friel*

September 30 - October 24, 1993

Previews September 28 & 29, 1993

The Cast

Rose **Ellen Cohen**
Kate **Kathleen Fee**
Jack **Harry Hill**
Michael **Marcel Jeannin**
Maggie **Kathleen McAuliffe**
Agnes **Siobhan McCormick**
Gerry **Tim Post**
Chris **Jane Wheeler**

Director **Elsa Bolam**
Set & Costume Designer **Andrew Lue Shue**
Lighting Designer **Norberts J. Muncs**
Sound Designer **Howard Mendelsohn**
Stage Manager **Krista Hansen**
Assistant Stage Manager **Elaine Normandeau**

Time:

Act 1 - a warm day in early August, 1936

Act 2 - three weeks later

Place:

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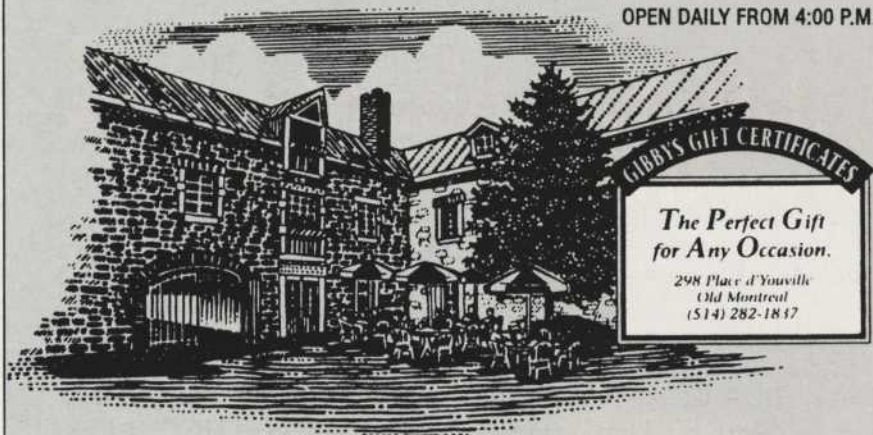
Originally produced on the New York Stage by Noel Pearson in association with Bill Kenwright and Joseph Harris.

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BRIAN FRIEL

(Playwright)



- 1929 Born in Omagh, Co Tyrone
- 1939 Family moves to Derry City
- 1950 Begins writing short stories. Contract with the *New Yorker* magazine.
- 1954 Marriage to Anne Morrison. Five children – four daughters, one son.
- 1958 First radio plays produced by BBC, Belfast.
- 1962 *THE ENEMY WITHIN* produced at the Abbey Theatre (then at the Queen's), Dublin. First collection of short stories, *THE SAUCER OF LARKS* (Gollancz).
- 1963 Spends six months with Tyrone Guthrie at the new Guthrie Theater, Minneapolis, USA.
- 1964 *PHILADELPHIA, HERE I COME!* produced at the Gaiety Theatre, Dublin. (Helen Hayes Theater, New York, 1965; Lyric Theatre, London 1967).
- 1966 Second collection of short stories, *THE GOLD IN THE SEA* (Gollancz), *THE LOVES OF CASS McGUIRE*, opens at the Helen Hayes Theater, New York (Abbey Theatre, Dublin 1967).
- 1967 *LOVERS* produced at the Gate Theatre, Dublin (Lincoln Center, New York, 1968; Fortune Theatre, London, 1968).
- 1968 *CRYSTAL AND FOX* produced at the Gaiety Theatre, Dublin. (Mark Taper Forum, Los Angeles, 1968).
- 1969 *THE MUNDY SCHEME* produced at the Olympia Theatre, Dublin. (Royale Theatre, New York, 1969).
- 1971 *THE GENTLE ISLAND* produced at the Olympia Theatre, Dublin. (Peacock Theatre, 1989).
- 1973 *THE FREEDOM OF THE CITY* produced at the Royal Court Theatre, London. (Abbey Theatre, Dublin, 1973; Alvin Theater, New York, 1974).



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- 1975 VOLUNTEERS produced at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin.
- 1977 LIVING QUARTERS produced at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin.
- 1979 ARISTOCRATS produced at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin (Hampstead Theatre, London, 1988; Manhattan Theatre Club, New York, 1989; Gate Theatre, Dublin, 1990).
- 1979* FAITH HEALER opens at the Longacre Theater, New York (Abbey Theatre, Dublin 1980; Royal Court, London in 1981).
- 1980* Co-founder with Stephen Rea of Field Day Theatre Company. TRANSLATIONS, its first production, opens in Derry (Hampstead Theatre, London, 1981; National Theatre's Lyttleton Theatre, 1981; Manhattan Theater Club, New York 1981; Abbey Theatre 1983).
- 1981 Translation of THREE SISTERS opens in Derry.
- 1982 THE COMMUNICATION CORD opens in Derry (Hampstead Theatre, London, 1983).
- 1986 Editor of THE LAST OF THE NAME, (Blackstaff Press), reminiscences of a Donegal weaver.
- 1987 Friel is appointed to the Irish Senate.
Adaptation of Turgenev's novel FATHERS AND SONS opens at the National's Lyttleton Theatre (Long Wharf Theater, USA, 1988; Gate Theatre, Dublin, 1988).
- 1988 MAKING HISTORY, opens in Derry (National Theatre's Cottesloe Theatre, 1988).
- 1989 NBC Radio devotes a six-play season to Friel, the first living playwright to be so distinguished.
- 1990 DANCING AT LUGHNASA opens at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin; Royal National Theatre (Lyttleton), London.
FAITH HEALER, Abbey Theatre.

DANCING AT LUGHNASA is published by Faber and Faber

*Translations was seen at Centaur in 1983 and Faith Healer in 1987.

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THE LUGHNASA FESTIVAL



Throughout the whole of Ireland and in parts of Great Britain and France, a festival celebrating the beginning of harvest was held every year in early August. In Ireland that festival was called Lughnasa after Lugh, the pagan god, who had once more provided the rich crops. (Lugh's counterpart was the Roman god Mercury, the Greek Hermes). Even as late as 1962, when Máire MacNeill first published her definitive study of Lughnasa, she claimed, "We have found the survival of Lughnasa at a hundred and ninety-five sites in Ireland... Lughnasa was celebrated until recently in ninety-five heights and by ten lakes and five river banks." Mountain tops were favorite sites for the festival, sometimes involving a journey that took hours. Wells, river banks and lakes were also chosen as sacred areas for the primal rites.

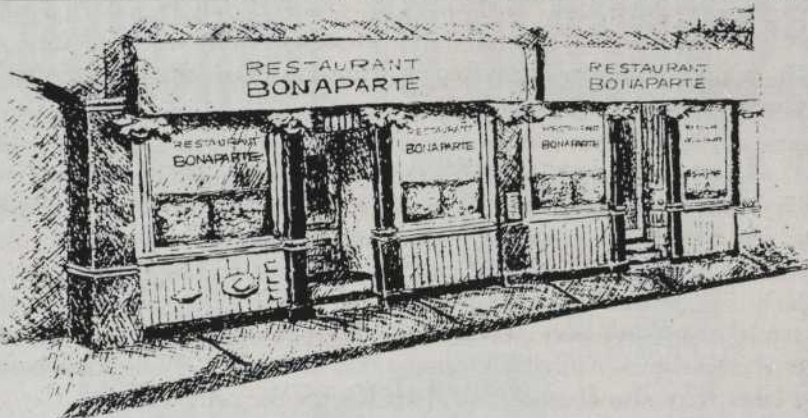
The festival varied from place to place and from generation to generation. The sacrifice of animals seems to have disappeared early in its evolution in Ireland, but many elements remained constant throughout the centuries. There was always a solemn first cutting of the corn or wheat which the head of the family or the chief man of the community would offer to Lugh. "From the Hebrides," MacNeill tells us, "there is the impressive and detailed description of the father's ceremonial reaping of the first sheaf, his waving it thrice above his head, the chant said while doing so in which a blessing is invoked and protection sought from the ills which threaten the crops." Also in Scotland, cakes for each member of the family were made from the hastily winnowed and ground grain; and in Ireland, where potatoes had taken the place of bread as the main food, a special meal from the first digging was eaten on Lá Lughnasa, the first day of the festival.

In return for these hilltop offerings, Lugh gave his people another kind of first-fruit, the small dark blue bilberries growing wild on the hillside. No Lughnasa custom has been more lasting than the picking of bilberries—they were looked on as an earnest of the earth's fruitfulness and the bounty of the deity. It was important that everyone should eat them and that some should be brought home to the old and the weak who were unable to climb the hill.

But in all the records and recollections of the Lughnasa festivities in Ireland, dancing is the most prominent and persistent element.

In Kerry, for example, the best dancing couple was chosen on the hilltops of Drung Hill and Cnoc na dTobar. Lughnasa dancing competitions were held, too, on the Playback mountain in County Leitrim, on the Blackstairs in Wexford and on Slieve Bloom between Leix and Offaly. And at Ganiamore in County Donegal the prize for the best male dancer was his choice of bride from among all the female contestants.

The Lughnasa festival was so important in the lives of the people and so involved with their notions of welfare that Christianity had to adopt it or permit it to survive. "It could not crush it as it may have crushed observances at the other quarterly feasts," MacNeill says. "It succeeded in turning the most important assemblies into Christian devotions... but in taking them over it



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took over inevitably some of the old stories, altered only in making a saint, not a god, the people's champion. If – as seems certain from our survey – it left a great number uncovered to Christian devotion, it succeeded in suppressing specifically pagan customs."

Most of the above is taken from *The Festival of Lughnasa* by Máire MacNeill, published by Comhairle Bhealoideas Eireann, University College Dublin, 1982 and Irish production programs.

Notes on DANCING AT LUGHNASA

In *Dancing at Lughnasa*, Brian Friel returns to several concerns which have been the focus of his earlier plays: the nature of love, the pieties associated with home and place, the processes of memory, and the various factors – economic, social, religious – restricting personal freedom and underpinning self-sacrifice. With varying degrees of emphasis, these issues were considered in *Philadelphia*, *Here I Come*, *Faith Healer*, and *Translations*. But in this new play Friel goes further in scrutinizing the metaphors that simultaneously cloak and permit a view of the cauldron at the heart of identity, where all these concerns bubble and swirl around the core of the self.

The structural device that permits examination of these psychic pressures in the lives of his characters is a series of dichotomies that weave themselves through the narrative. Of these, the most obvious are the tensions between past and present, pagan and Christian, home and abroad, reality and illusion, silence and expression. Beyond such unifying pressures, the central structural framework of the play is the interplay in the narrator's mind between the world as it was experienced and how it later comes to be understood. The story of the five spirited yet ultimately broken Mundy sisters and their confused uncle is rendered above all else as a product of the encompassing memory of the now-adult Michael. In teasing out the ways in which memory holds the key to his own childhood and his present self, Michael learns how all attempts at autobiographical discovery and definition are as much creative as re-creative acts.

Friel has made significant advances in this play in the ease with which he makes accessible to his audience the unique 'language' of the stage. He is extraordinarily successful in establishing the richness of dancing as a metaphor, as a medium of self-expression in a society where traditional means of communication such as speech and social interaction have so obviously and tragically failed. The dance, then, becomes paramount in both suggesting and releasing into being what Friel calls 'otherness', whether it be the undiscovered self at the heart of identity or the persona necessary for successful social relationships. As the narrator Michael comes to understand it, dancing provides a code of accessibility to his own past and that of his family.

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It is the orchestration of the dance that allows Friel's audiences to connect with the reality of his characters' lives, no matter how far removed the world of Donegal in the 1930s may appear to be. Through the powerful sense of immediacy and nostalgia it creates, dancing becomes the most vital and accurate conduit into 'the very heart of life and all its hopes.' Above all, *DANCING AT LUGHNASA* reveals Friel's ability to exploit a range of theatrical devices - words, music, movement, and shifting perspectives - in such a way that the play transcends the specifics of its physical and temporal worlds and appeals powerfully to audiences everywhere.

Michael Kenneally



THE CAST

ELLEN COHEN (*Rose*)

Ellen is thrilled to be back at Centaur once again where she appeared as the ever fertile Mae in Centaur's production of *CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF*, in *Extremities* (Elite Productions), *Three Postcards* (Street People Theatre) and *The Death of Bessie Smith* (Black Theatre Workshop). This past summer, she played Mary Baltimore in *On The Verge* at Theatre Lac Brome, and the artist Prudence Heward in the upcoming NFB docu-drama *By Woman's Hand*. Ellen was Rachel Kane for two seasons on the CBS/CBC series *Urban Angel* and will soon be seen as Ellen Harris in *Are You Afraid of the Dark: Full Moon* for Nickelodeon/YTV. Other television and film appearances include: Elsie Dick in *Mrs. Parker and the Round Table*, Lani in *Deadbolt*, Freda in *The Quarrel*, Marie in *The Final Heist*, Hélène in *Aux Voleurs*, *Love and Human Remains* and *Street Legal*. Recent stage credits include *The Heidi Chronicles* (Saidye Bronfman Centre), *The Perils of Persephone* (The Piggery); as well as *Marat/Sade*, *Danton's Death*, and the role of Stella in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, all in Toronto. Following *LUGHNASA*, she will be playing Johanna Stentley in *Accidents de Parcours* at Théâtre Denise Pelletier. Ellen is a graduate of Concordia (B.F.A.), York (M.F.A.), and The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London, England.

KATHLEEN FEE (*Kate*)

During her career as a bilingual stage, television, radio, and film performer, Kathleen has appeared on stages large and small across Canada. Credits include *Hobson's Choice* at the Manitoba Theatre Centre and the Vancouver Playhouse; *Play It Again, Sam* at Stage West, Edmonton; and locally, *Pleasure and Repentance* for Arts Westmount. She was the English voice of Jeanne Mance in *The Night Fantastic*, the sound and light spectacular in Old Montreal. Recent film and television work includes *Les Grands procès* for TVA and *The Boys of St. Vincent* for the National Film Board. She is also in demand as a narrator, character voice and voice director for documentaries and industrials, feature film dubbing, and animated cartoons.

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HARRY HILL (*Father Jack*)

Harry Hill, seen here in his first Centaur production, is a native of Aberdeen, Scotland, where he was trained as a chorister, actor and revue artist. Some of his extensive stage work in Canada has been with the Bastion Theatre Victoria (*The Odd Couple*, *The Roar of the Greasepaint*, *Nina*, and *Beauty and the Beast*), the Citadel and the Studio in Edmonton (the title role in *Hamp*, Claudius in *Hamlet*, and the MC in *O What A Lovely War*), and in Montreal at the Poudriere (Ayckbourn's *Absent Friends* and *Time and Time Again*) and in Foolhouse's production of *A Life* at Centaur two summers ago. Radio, television and film have featured him in many character parts. Most recently, he appeared as MacTavish in *Shadow of the Wolf* and Uncle Charlie in CBS's *Scene of the Crime*. He is the author of a speech book for actors, *A Voice for the Theatre* (Holt Rinehart and Winston, New York), and dubs, narrates, advertises and announces in addition to teaching English at Concordia University.

MARCEL JEANNIN (*Michael*)

Marcel most recently appeared at Centaur as Donald in Collodian Theatre's *Raft of the Medusa*, and at the Montreal Fringe Festival as Martin in GGB's production of *Sara's Cave*. A native Montrealer, he returned home after spending two seasons with the Stratford Festival, where he appeared as Hortensius in Michael Langham's acclaimed production of *Timon of Athens* and Thurio in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Other credits include Rick in Centaur Theatre Company's *WOMAN IN MIND* and Antipholus of Syracuse in Repercussion Theatre's *Comedy of Errors*, as well as work for Theatre Lac Brome, Theatre 1774, the National Film Board, and Playwrights' Workshop Montreal.

KATHLEEN McAULIFFE (*Maggie*)

Kathleen was born in Dublin, Ireland where she began her theatrical career at the Gaiety Theatre in a wide variety of roles (*Mikado*, *Brigadoon*, *Yeoman of the Guard*, *My Fair Lady*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *South Pacific*). While in Ireland, Kathleen was also a musical guest on a number of television and radio variety shows, as well as a soloist at the famed medieval entertainment at *Bunratty Castle* in County Clare. In 1974, Kathleen moved to Montreal where she has been adding a touch of Gaelic to *Le Festin du Gouverneur's* baroque banquet ever since. Now a Canadian citizen, Kathleen's Canadian stage and film credits include roles in Hugh Leonard's *Time Was* (Lakeshore Players), *Frère André* (Productions de la Montagne), and *The First Winter* (National Film Board - 1982 Academy Award nominee). Her last appearance at Centaur was in *THE GIGLI CONCERT* (1988). Kathleen is delighted to be back at Centaur.

SIOBHAN McCORMICK (*Agnes*)

This production marks Siobhan's first appearance at Centaur. Originally from Montreal, she has returned after many years absence. Most recently, Siobhan

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has been Toronto-based, and has performed at many of Toronto's major theatres. In addition to appearances at the Tarragon Theatre, Theatre Passe Muraille, and The Theatre Centre, Siobhan's roles include Isobel Warwick in *The Queens* (Canadian Stage), Cathos in *Two Precious Maidens* (Young People's Theatre) and Mary/Jason in *No More Medea* (Factory Studio Cafe/Toronto Fringe). Her recent credits also include *Wars of the Roses* (Canadian Stage) and *The Anger in Ernest and Ernestine* (Magnus Theatre).

TIM POST (Gerry)

Although Tim has appeared at Centaur as Alan in Collodian Theatre's *Raft of the Medusa* and as Charlie in Montreal Theatre Ensemble's *A View From The Bridge*, this is his first Centaur production. Other Montreal stage appearances include Antonio Salieri in Spontaneous Combustion's *Amadeus*, Tim Fitzpatrick in Village Theatre's *Sacred Hearts* and Murk in Make Haste's *Savage in Limbo*. Tim is particularly grateful to John Lucas, Nancy Helms, Penny Mancuso, and Michael Thomas for their assistance on this production.

JANE WHEELER (Chris)

This marks Jane's first appearance at Centaur and, as a native Montrealer, she is delighted to be here. Most recently, she was seen at Theatre Lac Brome in *On the Verge*; and prior to that in *7 Stories*, *Talley's Folly*, and *Cabaret* also for Theatre Lac Brome. She will be reprising her role as Sally Bowles for Centaur's production of *CABARET* next May. Other theatre credits include *Macbeth* and *The Comedy of Errors* for Repercussion Theatre, and *Berkeley Square*, *Trelawny of the Wells*, *You Never Can Tell*, and *The Voyagey Inheritance* for the Shaw Festival. Film and television credits include *Are You Afraid of the Dark?*, *The Boys of St. Vincent*, *E.N.G.*, and NFB's *By Woman's Hand* to be aired next spring.

BEHIND THE SCENES



ELSA BOLAM (Director)

Elsa Bolam is originally from England, where she worked for the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford and London, directed free-lance with many English theatre companies, and was a television director at the BBC in London. Since coming to Canada, she has taught at the national Theatre School, helped found Centaur Theatre, and continued to direct at theatres across the country, including Theatre Calgary, Theatre Plus in Toronto, Sudbury Theatre Centre, Magnus Theatre, the Globe Theatre in Regina, and others. In 1982, she founded Geordie Productions, a touring company based in Montreal, which serves both young and adult audiences, and which recently received an award for its record in touring to Off-Island English-speaking audiences. Previously, she directed the Centaur production of Brian Friel's *TRANSLATIONS*.

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KRISTA HANSEN (*Stage Manager*)

Since graduating from the Technical Production Section of the National Theatre School, Krista has worked as Assistant Technical Director for the Saidye Bronfman Centre; Assistant Stage Manager for *Don Giovanni* and *Così Fan Tutti* at the National Arts Centre (NAC); Production Assistant at the Stratford Festival; and Stage Manager for the Piggery Theatre productions of *Bedside Manners*, *Perfect Crime*, and *Dead Serious*. For Centaur Theatre Company, Krista has worked as Assistant Stage Manager on *THE WOMAN IN BLACK*, *CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF*, *BROADWAY BOUND*, *A SHAYNA MAIDEL*, and *ROUGH CROSSING*, and as Stage Manager on the Centaur/NAC Co-production of *AURÉLIE, MA SOEUR*.

ANDREW LUE SHUE (*Set & Costume Designer*)

A graduate of the National Theatre School and recipient of a BFA in Art Education from Concordia University, Andrew has designed some thirteen productions at Centaur over the past eight seasons beginning with *SOMEBODY'S SOMEBODY RETURNING*, and including *OBSERVE THE SONS OF ULSTER MARCHING TOWARDS THE SOMME*, *GOODNIGHT DESDEMONA (GOOD MORNING JULIET)*, *PLAYBOY OF THE WEST INDIES*, and last season's production of *UNCLE VANYA*, for which he was Associate Set Designer. Andrew's other design credits include several Piggery Theatre, Youtheatre, Geordie Productions, and Black Theatre Workshop shows; the Banff Centre's *The Plough and the Stars* directed by Joe Dowling; and costumes for Toronto's Caribana 1992. Andrew is currently a member of both the Associated Designers of Canada and the Association des Professionels de la scène du Québec.

HOWARD MENDELSON (*Sound Designer*)

This is Howard's fourth season with Centaur, where he is currently the company's Technical Supervisor. His most recent credits include sound designs for last season's *UNCLE VANYA* and the Centaur/National Arts Centre co-production of *AURÉLIE, MA SOEUR*, as well as the lighting design for the *TWELVE ANGRY JURORS* gala. Upcoming projects are lighting designs for *Tartuffe* at McGill and *SOMEONE WHO'LL WATCH OVER ME* for Centaur later this season. Howard likes to fish - his 13 1/4" yellow perch was one of the biggest caught (and released) in Quebec this year - and his latest hobby is playing silly folk songs on his guitar.

NORBERTS J. MUNCS (*Lighting Designer*)

Presently Director of the Technical Production section at the National Theatre School of Canada, Norberts Muncs has worked as Production Manager, Technical Director, Tour Manager and Carpenter for various theatres. His lighting design credits include: *The Agunah*, *The Rothschilds*, and *The Jazz Singer* for the Saidye Bronfman Centre; *Eleemosynary* for Bulldog Productions; *The Nutcracker*, *Coppelia*, and *Sleeping Beauty* for Ballets-Quest;

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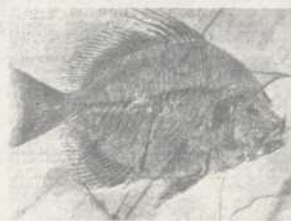
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ELAINE NORMANDEAU (*Assistant Stage Manager*)

After two seasons as Apprentice Stage Manager at Centaur, Elaine graduated to stage manage *LOOK BACK IN ANGER* in Centaur 1 last season and will be back in that same capacity for *SOMEONE WHO'LL WATCH OVER ME* early next year. This past summer she was at the Banff Centre for the Arts in Stagecraft II to learn more about the technical aspects of theatre, specifically lights and sound. This is her first time in Centaur 2.

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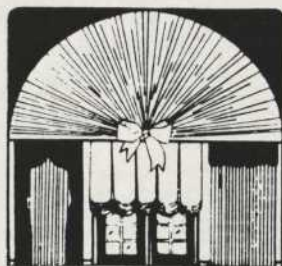


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DECEMBER 4, 1993 Geordie Productions presents

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Directed by Elsa Bolam. Designed by Jill Thomson.

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Laura Calver Head Technician C1
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