

Balally Players

The Mai

by
Marina Carr

The Mill Theatre, Dundrum
27 to 31 March 2012

balallyplayers.com



milltheatre.ie

A comic and moving story of love and loss

The Mai is an intelligent, talented and attractive woman whose unfulfilled wish for the perfect life and partner breaks her heart. It is a moving story of love and loss that is told with the comedy and warmth of real people.

There are many layers to this story, each woven by a different character into a dark, but sympathetic portrayal of an Irish family in the Midlands of Ireland during the 1970s.

The house she built by Owl Lake is, in some respects, the castle in The Mai's fairy tale. Standing by the window that overlooks the water, she waits for her husband, her handsome prince, to return after the four years he spent far away from her, pursuing his career as a professional cellist. Their attempt to rebuild what they had and hoped would endure is not easy. The challenges and demands presented in the relationship take their toll on the marriage and set her questioning whether she can go on without him.

*"... and I was good
on the cello -
I know I was ..."*

- *The Mai*

All this is framed within a family of interesting and colourful women. Queen among them is the 'Spanish Beauty' old Grandma Fraochlán, complete with opium pipe. The light she shines and the shadow she casts over the family

are complemented and enlarged by her daughters, Agnes and Julie, as they interfere in the lives of Connie and Beck, their nieces and by Millie, daughter of The Mai and the play's narrator.

The Mai is a tragic character in search of elusive perfection, a woman trapped in a relationship that fails to live up to her expectations and needs. Unless you come to it with closed mind, it has enough of the grey inconsistencies and contradictions of real life to leave open the question of cause and effect.

In that colourfully Irish way of commenting on two people, who are not on the same page in a relationship, "there's a pair of them in it". But it is The Mai's position and predicament at the centre of the emotional storm that draws us in. Hers is the eye through which we focus our attention on the tragedy.

The play is never far from the water in a literal and metaphorical sense. It also uses repetition in its observations on how this family's history repeats itself, chronicled in memories recalled by members of its four generations of women.

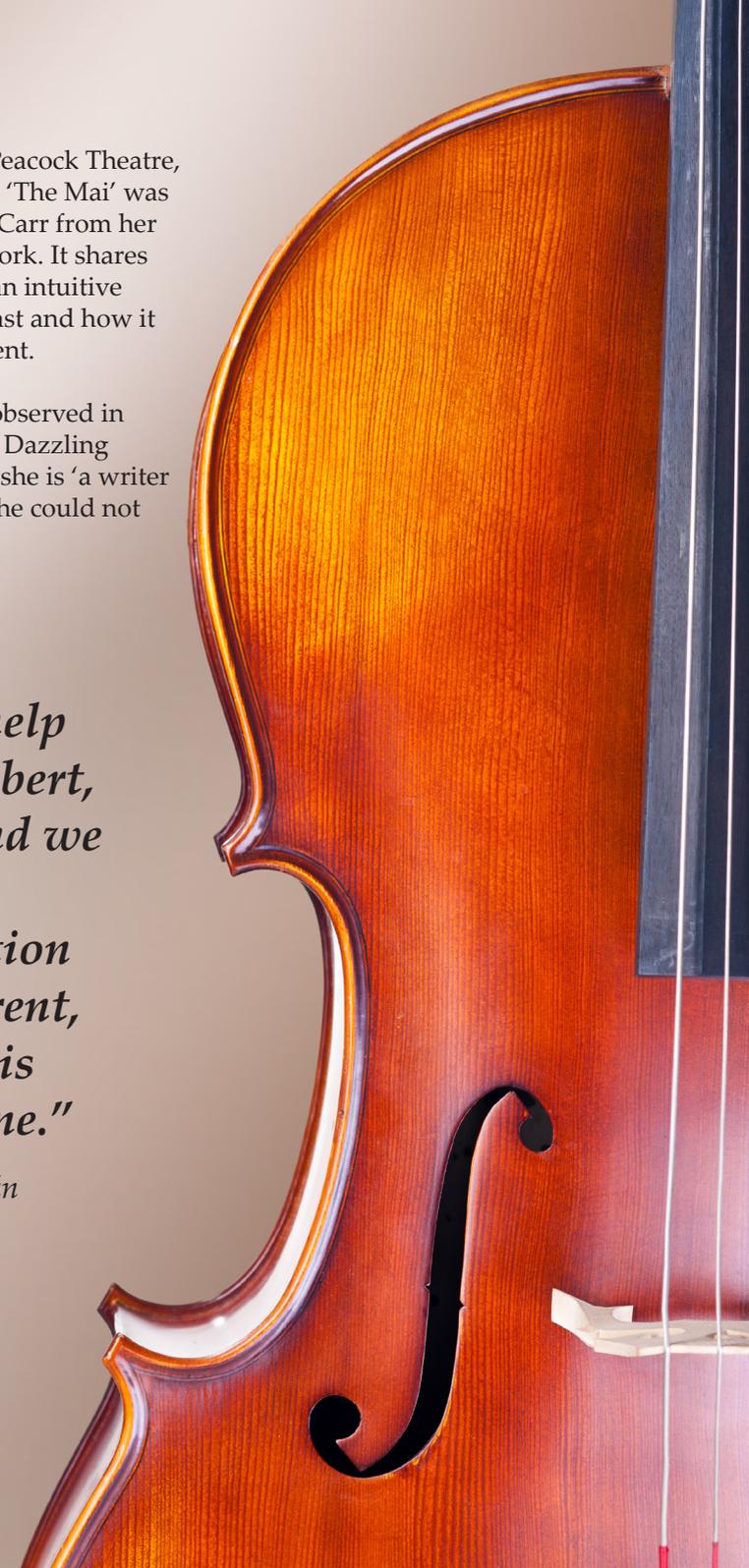
Apart from the humour and also the drama, one haunting image that is sure to linger is that of The Mai standing by the window in the house she built by the lake. This was to be her dream home and a magnet to draw Robert back to share love and life with her, just like the swans who mate for a lifetime on the lake.

First performed in the Peacock Theatre, Dublin in October 1994, 'The Mai' was a departure for Marina Carr from her earlier, more abstract work. It shares with her other writing an intuitive understanding of the past and how it shapes lives in the present.

As Frank McGuinness observed in his introduction to 'The Dazzling Dark: New Irish Plays', she is 'a writer haunted by memories she could not possibly possess'.

*"...we can't help
repeatin', Robert,
we repeah and we
repeah,
th'orchestration
may be different,
but tha tune is
allas tha same."*

- *Grandma Fraochlán*



"... a carriage drawn by two black swans takes you away from me over a dark expanse of water ..." - Robert

Caroline Williams - *The Mai*

Caroline has been involved with Balally Players since 2007. She has played roles in several of the group's productions, including 'Riders to the Sea', 'At The Black Pig's Dyke', 'Medea' and also 'Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead'. She is delighted to be taking the title role in 'The Mai'.



Judy McKeever - *Beck*

Judy joined Balally Players in 2000 and since then has played many roles with the company and reached the All Ireland Finals five times. Her roles have included Slippy Helen in 'The Cripple of Inishmaan', Celeste in 'La Corbiere', Sandy in 'Happy Birthday Dear Alice' and Eileen in 'The Country Boy', which went on tour to the USA. She won Best Actress for her role as Angela in 'Bedtime Story' and won a scholarship at the All Ireland Drama Festival Finals for her role as Agnes in 'The Great Hunger'. Judy has trained with Classic Stage Ireland and the Irish Film Academy.



Hilary Madigan - *Connie*

Hilary is a long-time member of Balally Players. She has been involved in a number of productions, both on and behind the stage, some of which were in competitive drama. As Kathleen in the All Ireland winning production of 'Melody' she was awarded the Adjudicators Award at the All Ireland Final, 2006 and went on to represent Ireland at the Mondial du Theatre, Monaco. Hilary represented Balally Players at the AIITF in the USA as Julia in 'The Country Boy'. Other recent roles include Barbara in 'Happy Birthday Dear Alice', The Nurse in 'Romeo and Juliet' and Aggie Flynn in 'Tarry Flynn'.

Hilary's most recent appearance was as Judith in 'Aristocrats'.



Caitlín Higgins Ní Chinnéide - *Millie*

Caitlín attended Ann Kavanagh's Young Peoples' Theatre between 1995 and 2002 and was a gold and silver medallist for solo-drama performances at Feis Maitiú. In 2000, she played the roles of Fanny Scrooge and Belinda Cratchet in the Gate Theatre's production of 'A Christmas Carol' and, in 2005, played the role of Joe in a student production of 'Philadelphia, Here I Come!' at Oxford University. Caitlín is delighted to be performing with Balally Players for the first time.



Seán Ahern - *Robert*

Seán's introduction to drama was in the Conor McPherson play 'Port Authority' at the All-Ireland Drama Festival in Athlone in 2002. Before joining Balally Players he was with the Dundalk Theatre Workshop for three years and has won several awards and nominations on the amateur drama circuit. More recently he won Best Supporting Actor in the Balally Players production of 'Old Saybrook' at the Bray One-Act Festival in 2010 and played Chris in the 2011 production of 'All My Sons'.



Muriel Caslin-O'Hagan - *Julie*

Muriel's recent roles with Balally Players at the Mill Theatre included the mother, Kate Keller, in 'All My Sons' and Anna's voice in 'Aristocrats'. Previously she appeared in 'By the Bog of Cats', 'As You Like It', 'Riders to the Sea', 'Many Young Men of Twenty' and 'Romeo and Juliet'. In 2006, for Mill Productions, Muriel appeared in the theatre's inaugural play 'Our Town'. She later co-devised and provided musical accompaniment for its 5th Anniversary production 'Tarry Flynn' and most recently played several roles in the Mill Productions version of 'A Christmas Carol'.



Mary Ryan - *Agnes*

Mary has acted in many of Balally's award winning productions. Her most recent appearances for the group have been as Hamlet's mother Gertrude in 'Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead', as Lady Montague in 'Romeo & Juliet' and Maynan in 'Many Young Men of Twenty'. She played the lead role, Mistress Page, in 'The Merry Wives of Windsor' and Kate in 'The Cripple of Inishmaan'. She has won best actress awards for Popova in Anton Chekhov's 'The Bear' and Baroness Sophie in Peter Shaffer's 'White Liars'.



Doris Cullen - *Grandma Fraochlán*

A mainstay of Balally Players, Doris has played a wide variety of roles in plays such as 'Factory Girls', 'Vinegar Tom', 'I Do Not Like Thee Dr Fell', 'A Tomb With A View', 'The Plough and the Stars', 'Juno and the Paycock', 'By the Bog of Cats', 'Tarry Flynn', 'Our Town', and many more over the years. She has been in every one of our Christmas Shows at Airfield.



“... looking for that magic thread that would stitch us together again.” - Millie

Cast

The Mai	Caroline Williams
Millie	Caitlín Higgins Ní Chinnéide
Grandma Fraochlán	Doris Cullen
Robert	Sean Ahern
Beck	Judy McKeever
Connie	Hilary Madigan
Julie	Muriel Caslin-O'Hagan
Agnes	Mary Ryan

Creative Team

Directors	Jean Monahan and Óran O'Rua
Stage Manager	Aoife Braidén
Assistant Stage Managers	Susie Nix Orla Cooney
Lighting Design and Operation	Paul Macken
Sound Design and Operation	Óran O'Rua
Set and Costume Design	Dympna Murray
Set Construction	Bobby White/SceneMaker
Make-up	Teresa Dempsey Joanne Keane
Publicity	Claire O'Donovan
Graphic Design and Programme	Declan Brennan

Writer - Marina Carr

Born in 1964, Marina Carr was brought up in Co. Offaly. She graduated from University College, Dublin in 1987. Plays for the Abbey Theatre, Dublin include 16 Possible Glimpses, Marble, Ullaloo, The Mai, Portia Coughlan, By the Bog of Cats, Ariel and Meat and Salt. Other plays include Phaedra Backwards (Mc-Carter), On Raftery's Hill (Druid/Royal Court), Low in the Dark (Project Arts Centre), Woman and Scarecrow (Royal Court), The Cordelia Dream (RSC) and The Giant Blue Hand (The Ark). Marina was awarded The Puterbaugh Fellowship for 2012 by The University of Oklahoma as part of the Puterbaugh

Festival of International Literature and Culture, this year devoted to her work. Other awards include The Macaulay Fellowship, the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize and the E.M. Forster Prize from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She has also held the Heimbold Chair of Irish Studies at Villanova.

She was a Class of 1932 Fellow in Theatre and Dance at Princeton for 2008, an honorary professor at Trinity College Dublin and has just been awarded an honorary doctorate from her alma mater. A member of Aosdána, Marina lives in Kerry with her husband and four children.

Directors

Jean Monahan



One of the founding members of the group, Jean has played many roles and has previously directed a number of productions for the company, including 'By the Bog of Cats' by Marina Carr, and 'Happy Birthday, Dear Alice' by Bernard Farrell. Most recently, Jean directed a one act play entitled, 'Like A Virgin' by Gordon Steele, which was a finalist in the All-Ireland One Act Festival in 2010.

Óran O'Rua

Óran began acting and directing with Dramsoc at UCD, where he was awarded the Irish Student Drama Association's Best Actor award in 1998. While in UCD Dramsoc he adapted for the stage the Robbie Hyland poem, 'What Has To Be Done' and directed the ensuing production entitled, 'Betrayal'. Since joining Balally Players in 2003, he has played diverse roles both on and off-stage, including Casimir in 'Aristocrats', Cripple Billy in 'The Cripple of Inishmaan', Barry in 'Happy Birthday Dear Alice', The Covey in 'The Plough and the Stars' and Feste in 'Twelfth Night'. In 2008, Óran directed a new piece of Irish writing for the company entitled, 'The Moon Cut Like A Sickle' by Ken Armstrong, and has since gone on to direct and produce a number of plays. Most recently, he directed 'Small Box Psychosis' by Barry McKinley, and is currently participating in the Fishamble Theatre Director Programme based in the Mill Theatre.





The Balally Players Theatre Company

The Balally Players Theatre Company has been part of the amateur theatre movement in Ireland since its first performance in 1983.

Each year, the group stages a diverse range of productions in a great variety of genres. From some of the great plays of the past to modern works that have been or are becoming classics in their own right, the group has consistently delighted audiences with the quality of the productions and performances presented over the years. Since 2006, the Mill Theatre has been home to the group and most of the major plays it has produced.

For more information on the group's current activities and past productions, visit the pages of our website at balallyplayers.com

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