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BY ERICA MURRAY

A NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE PRODUCTION



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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Each production is a unique journey. Reflecting on this one, I have a couple of thoughts to share.

It has always struck me that in a time when about two thirds of theatre-going audiences are women, we still see imbalances when it comes to percentages of female playwrights, directors and even leading roles in the plays we see. Lately, I've started to read a bit about the on-going gender imbalance. There's clearly a shifting awareness, both here in Buffalo and throughout the country, but the statistics show that there is still a way to go. Is calling something a "woman's play" problematic? We need to get to a place where that type of thinking goes away.

I've had the great fortune to direct more than a few all-female plays: *Agnes of God*, *The Vagina Monologues*, *Steel Magnolias*, *Stellaluna*, and, most recently, here at ICTC, *Belfast Girls*. What is it that draws me to these projects? The energy in the room is very different with an all-female cast. But it's more than that. Each one of these plays deal with the central conflict in a distinct way. One might call it 'feminine.' I choose to think of it as 'humane.'

Erica Murray has given us an incredible story that has been described as 'a play about love, loss, and birds.' It is that – and a whole lot more. At the core of the story are the choices each woman makes. For Nell, Gabby, Orla and Cheryl-Ann, the choices will change the trajectory of their lives. In the face of indescribable grief and crushing betrayal, the choices of compassion and forgiveness take far greater strength than choosing bitterness and resentment. If that's a female characteristic, I'm OK with it.

The second thought has to do with the way music informs and underscores our lives, and maybe more importantly, our memories. Throughout the years that my family was growing up, I introduced music into my kids' lives, and at a certain point, they began introducing me to the music they loved. Hearing any of those songs today will transport me immediately to a very specific time, place, and feeling.

For *The Loved Ones*, Sound Designer Stephen Schapero and I went on a little musical adventure to explore the artists and songs that Nell and Robin might have shared with one another. Stephen started hunting, I added some thoughts about music I particularly liked from the time Robin would have been growing up, and we were even assisted by our playwright, Erica Murray, with suggestions of things she remembers from her life growing up in Ireland. I like to think of it as the mix tape that a young Robin might have made for Nell; Maybe a birthday present, crafted with love by a son for his mother. If you get to the theatre for the half hour before the curtain, you can sit in the house and listen to the music this little family shared as they grew up together in West Clare.

Enjoy.

Kyle LoConti, Director

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Irish Classical Theatre Company
Presents the North American Premiere of

THE LOVED ONES

BY ERICA MURRAY

Cast

Nell.....Eileen Dugan
Gabby.....Ember Tate-Steele†
Cheryl-Ann.....Smirna Mercedes†
Orla.....Rebecca Elkin†

Setting: An open plan kitchen-living space in a renovated farmhouse in West Clare, Ireland.

Time: Present Day. *Important:* Robin died six months ago.

Run Time: Approximately 2 hours, with one 15-minute intermission.

Content Note: Contains strong language, themes of dying, miscarriage, adoption, and abortion.

Production Team

Director.....Kyle LoConti
Production Stage Manager.....Lauren Costello Yager
Assistant Stage Manager & Wardrobe Supervisor.....Alexia R. Guzmán
Scenic & Props Designer.....Kyler Sterner†
Costume & Hair Designer.....Kambrea Blu†
Sound Designer.....Stephen Schapero
Lighting Designer.....Jayson Clark
Dialect & Speech Coach.....Megan Callahan
Fight Director & Movement Coach.....Danielle Rosvally†
Make-up & Assistant Costume Designer.....Jordan Drakenhammar†
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The Loved Ones was commissioned by Rough Magic as part of its COMPASS programme and received its world premiere in a co-production between Rough Magic and the Gate Theatre at the Gate Theatre, Dublin, on 2 October 2023.

ICTC extends its gratitude to Rough Magic, Tom Lane and Frank Blake for contributing the voice recording featured in this production.

The Loved Ones is produced by special arrangement with Independent Talent, 40 Whitfield St, London W1T 2RH.

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Who's Who ... Cast



Eileen Dugan (Nell)

Eileen has performed with many of Buffalo's theater companies, including ICTC, Jewish Repertory Theatre, Buffalo United Artists, and more than 40 roles at the Kavinoky Theatre. She has also worked as an actor and director for Shakespeare in the Park over many years, and will direct *Twelfth Night* for next summer's 50th anniversary season. Eileen has won multiple Artie Awards for acting and directing. She is a long time instructor at Canisius University, and has directed some 50 shows there. Eileen is the co-artistic director of Red Thread Theatre.



Rebecca Elkin (Orla)

Rebecca is thrilled to be making her ICTC debut with this team of powerful women. After 15 years in NYC where she worked as a Licensed Creative Arts Therapist, she recently returned to Buffalo to raise her children, maintain her private practice, be close to family, and reengage with this city's vibrant theatre scene. Rebecca received her BFA in Acting from Syracuse University and her MA in Drama Therapy from New York University. Over the years she has returned to Buffalo to perform with Shakespeare in Delaware Park, Theatre of Youth, Buffalo United Artists, and the Jewish Repertory Theatre.

Favorite credits include: *Hamlet* (Ophelia), *Othello* (Desdemona), *King Lear* (Cordelia), and *Love's Labour's Lost* (The Princess of France) with SDP, *Kindertransport* (Faith) and *Beau Jest* (Sarah) with JRT, and *The Little Dog Laughed* (Ellen) with BUA. Rebecca sends out endless love and gratitude to her family whose support makes this work possible (emotionally and logistically) and above all to her incredible husband Bryan for his deeply generous and loving partnership. She dedicates her performance to the tiny loves of her life, Elliot and Esme.



Smirna Mercedes (Cheryl-Ann)

Smirna is extremely excited for her debut here at Irish Classical Theatre. She has been a registered nurse for more than 20 years, but her real passion has always been performing on stage. She is a proud disabled Army veteran. Among her favorite roles: Luisa (*Botanica*), Ho (*Hell Hole Honeys*), Estela (*Real Women Have Curves*), Norma (*La Gringa*), Luz (*La Luz de un Cigarrillo*), Abuela Claudia (*In The Heights*), Buffalo Quickies (2020, 2021, 2023). She has also written a play and performed in the ten minute plays of *Desde el Puente*. You may also have seen her in several local commercials. She has done costume designing for several shows, too!



Ember Tate-Steele (Gabby)

Ember Tate-Steele holds a BFA in theatre performance from Niagara University. She has worked on productions such as *Violet* (Music hall singer), *Disenchanted!* (Princess Who Kissed the Frog), *Cookin' at the Cookery* (Young Alberta), *Twelfth Night* (Ensemble), *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* (Little Eva/Shirelle) and *Crowns* (Wanda) at MusicalFare; she has also done *Stew* (Nelly) and *12 Mo' Angry Men* (Juror 6) at Ujima, and more. She is extremely grateful for the opportunity to work at Irish! She would like to thank her family and especially her Husband Sean for loving and supporting her.

Who's Who ... Production

Kambrea Blu (Costume & Hair Designer)

Kambrea is a Mexican-Filipino designer from Southern California based in Buffalo, NY. She earned her MFA in Costume Design from the University of Florida in 2022, where she explored historical, cultural, and technical aspects of costume. She is a third-year PhD student in Theatre Research and Performance at the University at Buffalo. Kambrea's designs blend her artistic vision with her cultural heritage to create unique and thoughtful work. Recent credits include *Three Sisters* by Sarah Ruhl, and *King Henry VI* at the University at Buffalo, with her work on the latter reviewed in *Shakespeare*, the British Shakespeare Association journal. She is grateful to ICTC for this opportunity and her talented design team, Jordan and Alexis. Kambrea would also like to thank her mentors, Dr. Danielle Rosvally and Jennifer Dasher, her friends who have been her rock, the Team, and Community at Rising Goddess, her Mom and family, and her son, Raiden, for his endless inspiration.

Megan Callahan (Dialect & Speech Coach)

Megan was last seen at ICTC as Connie in *The Mai*, and is a director, dialect and speech coach, theater teacher, actor, and musician. She has taught the Michael Chekhov technique for many years, including workshops in Ireland and throughout the United States. As a theater artist she has worked locally with ICTC, Shea's 710, MusicalFare, Jewish Repertory Theatre, The Kavinoky, Theater of Youth, Torn Space Theater, Raíces Theatre Company, Shakespeare in Delaware Park, Second Generation Theatre, Shea's, BUA, Subversive Theatre Collective, University at Buffalo and The ALT. She holds an MFA (Wayne State University/The Hilberry Repertory Theatre) and has a certificate of completion as a teacher in the Michael Chekhov Technique. Megan is currently a member of the founding faculty for Western New York's first ever Master of Fine Arts in Acting at D'Youville University. She is joyful to be working on this production at beloved ICTC, the company that brought her to Buffalo.

Jayson Clark (Lighting Designer)

A graduate of Niagara University, Jayson is thrilled to be returning for a 5th season with ICTC. Jayson has designed lighting for over 60 local productions. His most recent designs with ICTC have been *The Fitzgeralds of St. Paul*, *Betrayal*, *Faith Healer*, and *Belfast Girls*. Previously, he served as a lighting/sound technician for dozens of local and national musical acts, including Off-Broadway performances. He is also a multi-instrumentalist musician performing in several musical groups around Buffalo, including Almost Seamus, The Panfil Family Band, and the Rear View Ramblers (2016 Artvoice Best New Band in Buffalo), and serves as a lecturer and designer on staff at Niagara University. All of his love goes to his loving and supportive family; especially Katie, Natalie, and Ivy.

Lauren Costello Yager (Production Stage Manager)

Lauren (she/they) is thrilled to return to ICTC as Production Stage Manager (PSM). With ICTC, she has served as PSM for *Dracula: A Comedy of Terrors* (2024), *Private Lives* (2024), *Betrayal* (2024), *"Master Harold" ...and the Boys* (2023), *Thurgood* (2023), and *Doubt* (2022). Other Stage Management credits include *The Woman in Black* (2021), and *The Producers* (2017) at D'Youville Kavinoky Theatre. Lauren is a proud graduate of the SUNY Geneseo Department of Theatre & Dance. Lauren would like to thank her incredibly supportive partner, Nicholas, daughter, Henrietta, as well as her entire family for making this work possible.

Jordan Drakenhammar (Make-up & Assistant Costume Designer)

Jordan received her MFA in Costume Design from the University of Florida in 2022. Some of her favorite design credits include *Marisol* (University of Florida), *Dragons Love Tacos* (Snowy Range Summer Theatre), and assisting Dede Ayite on *Hair* (Asolo Repertory Theatre).

Alexia R. Guzmán (Assistant Stage Manager & Wardrobe Supervisor)

Alexia is excited to return to Irish Classical Theatre. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Digital Media & Communications from Hilbert College. Her stage management credits include *Desde el Puente*, *La Lupe: My Life, My Destiny*, and *Isleña* with Raíces Theatre Company. Alexia has also written, performed, and directed for Raíces' one-act play festival, *Desde el Puente: Christmas Edition* and *Musical Edition*. Additionally, she served as Wardrobe Supervisor for *Sweat* at Road Less Traveled Productions. Her Assistant Stage Manager credits include *Doubt: A Parable*,

Who's Who ... Production

"Master Harold"...and the Boys, *Betrayal*, and *Private Lives* at Irish Classical Theatre, as well as *Agatha Christie's Murder on the Orient Express* with All For One at Shea's 710 Theatre and *Merrily We Roll Along* and *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* at Second Generation Theatre. Alexia extends her heartfelt thanks and love to her fiancé Jake, her parents, brothers, and best friends for their constant love and support.

Kyle LoConti (Director)

Kyle is delighted to be returning to ICTC where she last directed the 2023 production of *Belfast Girls*. Directing favorites include *Stellaluna* (Artvoice Artie Award - Outstanding Direction of a Musical 2017-18) at Theatre of Youth, *Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird* (Artie Award - Outstanding Direction of a Play 2020) at The Kavinoky Theatre, the virtual production of *The Year of Magical Thinking* at Irish Classical Theatre Company, and *Agatha Christie's Murder on the Orient Express* for All For One Productions (Artie Award – Outstanding Production of a Play 2023.) LoConti is a retired Professor Emerita from Niagara County Community College where she served as Chair of the Division of Arts, Media & Technology. Big thanks to Keelie and the ICTC team for this opportunity.

Erica Murray (Playwright)

Erica is originally from County Limerick, Ireland. She holds a BA in Drama and Theatre Studies from Trinity College Dublin and an MFA in Playwriting from The Lir Academy. She is a previous member of the Soho Young Writers Group, Lyric New Playwright's Programme and the Six in the Attic programme at the Irish Theatre Institute. In 2018, her first play; *The Cat's Mother*, toured to London, Edinburgh and Dublin Fringe where it won the Fishamble Award for Best New Writing and was subsequently nominated for the Stewart Parker Award. In 2019, she was the Channel 4 Writer-in-Residence at The Lyric Theatre in Belfast where her second play *All Mod Cons* premiered. *The Loved Ones* premiered at the Dublin Theatre Festival 2023 in a co-production between Rough Magic and The Gate Theatre to critical acclaim and is going on an Irish tour in spring 2025. The Abbey Theatre has commissioned her to write a play for schools which will be touring primary schools in Ireland in 2024/25. In 2023 she received the Sonia Friedman Award for her play *The Magnificent* which is currently in development. She is also under commission for a new play by The Gate Theatre.

Alexis Qiao (Assistant Costumer)

Alexis (she/they) is a Sophomore Theatre Performance BFA from UB who is very interested in costume design. As an actor, when she was in high school in China, she co-directed two and performed four original Chinese historical plays, showing China at different times. She was in *King Henry VI Part 2* and *Three Sisters* at UB. Costume wise, Alexis started her journey from being the dresser for King Henry and assistant costume designer for *Three Sisters*. She is really excited to be part of the costume team for *The Loved Ones!*

Danielle Rosvally (Fight Director & Movement Coach)

Danielle is an assistant professor of theatre and resident violence consultant/fight director at the University at Buffalo. There, she teaches classes in stage combat, acting, theatre history, literature, and Shakespeare. She has been doing stage combat for over two decades, and teaching it for more than one. Recent favorite fight direction credits include *The Play That Goes Wrong*, *9 to 5: The Musical*, *Mr. Burns, a Post-Electric Play*, and *Henry VI part 2*. She has published articles and chapters on stage combat in such venues as *The Fight Master*, *HowlRound*, *Sports Plays* (Routledge, 2021), and *Theatre Topics*.

Stephen Schapero (Sound Designer)

Stephen (they/them) is a theatre artist & administrator currently based in Buffalo. Previously living in Brooklyn, NY, Stephen was founder and creative director of brooklyn theatre club, through which they produced immersive, often drunken, musical theatre. Some of their favorite projects include: *Sweeney Todd*, *A New Brain*, *Merrily We Roll Along*, *High School Musical*, and *Cabaret*. Stephen's voice can also be heard as part of The Civilians' *Michael Friedman Recording Project*. Some of Stephen's non-theatrical passions include astrology, tarot, and exploring the natural beauty of Western NY. Stephen is thrilled to offer their talents and skills to the Buffalo theatre community.

Who's Who ... Production

Keelie A. Sheridan (Artistic Director)

Keelie is an award-winning actor, director, choreographer, and filmmaker. She has performed in/ directed new plays and physical/dance theatre at The Public Theater, 3LD, JACK NY & Dixon Place. Keelie's award-winning feature film, planet b234, received international acclaim and is now available to stream on Amazon Prime. MFA Acting- Brooklyn College. MFA Directing- Trinity College Dublin/ RADA's The Lir Academy (US Ireland Alliance George J. Mitchell Scholar). AEA & SDC. KeelieSheridan.com

Kyler Sterner (Scenic & Props Designer)

Kyler is a Scene Designer from Lockport. He received his BFA in Theatre Design from SUNY Purchase this past May. He loves to work on props and building out the world through scene design and decorations. He has designed several shows locally, such as *The 39 Steps* at The Taylor Theatre, *A Doll's House, Part 1* at The Leary Theatre, and assisted with the design of *Newsies* at Shea's 710.



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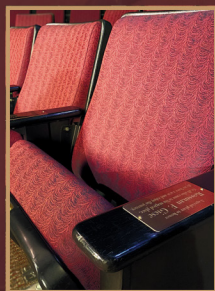
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 or by phone at 716-853-1380 ext. 103 to find out more.

PLEASE NOTE: Event seating is not guaranteed in seats bearing specific names.

NOW OFFERING OPEN CAPTIONED PERFORMANCES!

On Saturday, February 22, 2025 at 2:00pm,
The Loved Ones will be performed with Open Captioning (OC).
Captioning by c2 (caption coalition), inc.

Save-the-Date for these upcoming OC performances:

Dorian: Saturday, April 12, 2025 at 2:00pm
Crocodile Fever: Saturday, June 14, 2025 at 2:00pm

We are currently seeking a sponsor or individual champion to support the cost of providing open captioning for our remaining 2024-2025 productions, ensuring accessibility for all audiences. If you would like to contribute to the continuation of these initiatives, please contact ICTC's Producing Director, Cassie Cameron, at 716-853-1380 x103 (voice), or cassie@irishclassical.com.



Land Acknowledgement

Irish Classical Theatre Company, in residence at The Andrews Theatre, acknowledges that it operates on land that falls within the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy of Nations, also known as the Six Nations, including the Seneca, Tuscarora, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Mohawk Nations. This territory is covered by The Dish with One Spoon Treaty of Peace and Friendship, a pledge to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. It is also covered by the 1794 Treaty of Canandaigua, between the United States Government and the Six Nations Confederacy, which further affirmed Haudenosaunee land rights and sovereignty in the State of New York.

We honor the legacy of the Indigenous People who have made, currently make, and will continue to make this land their home for thousands of years. We also honor those who have suffered at the hands of colonialism, genocide, and land theft, including those who are no longer with us, having been lost to the history of violence against Indigenous People. We acknowledge their forced removal from this stolen land, and admire their perseverance through the horrific crimes committed against them and many attempts to wipe out their culture and quietly assimilate them into Western society over many generations.

ICTC is committed to becoming advocates for inclusion as we move into the future. We are grateful for the opportunity to live, work, and learn alongside the people who live within these lands. For more information, we encourage you to visit www.haudenosauneeconfederacy.com.



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Mina Westfeldt!

Paul Ziebarth

We apologize for any errors or omissions.

To request changes, please contact ICTC's Producing Director, Cassie Cameron, at (716) 853-1380 x103 or cassie@irishclassical.com.



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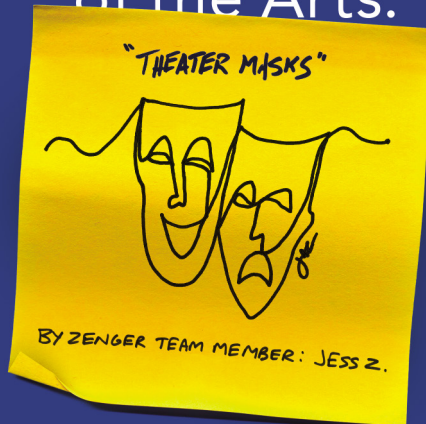
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