BIRR THEATRE & ARTS CENTRE with JASANGO THEATRE present

Scripts

Ireland's Playwriting Festival



02–05 July 2026

www.scriptsireland.com

12th EDITION

Scripts
Ireland's Playwriting Festival

SPECIAL THANKS
Abbey Theatre, Fishamble,
The Arts Council, Offaly County Council
Arts Office, LOETB Birr, Ultan Pringle,
Dooly's Hotel, County Arms Hotel,
Brosna Press, Birr Festivals Collective.

FESTIVAL TEAM
Emma Nee Haslam, Eugene O'Brien,
Angela Ryan Whyte, Lisa Daly,
Gildas Le Pallec, Emma Hanley,
Anne Coughlan, Connor Keaveny,
James Kelly.



The Festival Founders



Welcome to this, the twelfth edition of Scripts – Ireland's Playwriting Festival, where the freshest voices in Irish theatre take centre stage. For several days, Birr, County Offaly, will become a creative crossroads, alive with new writing, innovative performances and the artists who make them possible. At its heart, Birr Theatre & Arts Centre is transformed once again into a space buzzing with ideas, collaboration and discovery. From fully staged productions to intimate readings and interactive workshops, Scripts offers audiences a chance to experience new work at its most exciting moment: the moment of creation.

This year's selected writers are **Elaine Maguire O'Connor**, **Liza Costello** and **Liam McCarthy**. The writers will work with their mentor, Eugene O'Brien, for a week to further develop the final plays, which will be performed as rehearsed readings with professional actors at Nurtured New Works on Sunday 5 July, and awards will be announced.

The theme of this year's festival is **Desire**. What pulls us forward, and what holds us fast? Desire can be a spark or a storm, an intimate whisper or a force that reshapes entire worlds. It drives choices, fuels conflict and reveals the deepest truths we try to hide. Whether it's longing for connection, power, escape, justice or transformation, desire shapes the stories we tell and the lives we lead. This year, we invite you to explore the many faces of desire with courage, imagination and emotional honesty.

With our continued commitment to supporting playwrights at every stage of their journey, we're proud to foster a festival that celebrates risk-taking, imagination and the evolving landscape of Irish theatre. We're delighted to have you with us for another unforgettable celebration of storytelling.







FESTIVAL PROGRAMME

THURSDAY 02 JULY

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6pm	**Bridge the Gap (Part 1)** with Ultan Pringle (online)	Workshop	4
8pm	**Love in the Wild** by Lisa Walsh	Performance	7

FRIDAY 03 JULY

			PAGE
2pm	**Writing Desire: Intimacy, Power & Embodiment** with Emily Reilly, The Abbey Theatre	Workshop	7
8pm	**The Quiet Men** by Morgan C Jones	Performance	7

SATURDAY 04 JULY

			PAGE
10am	**Let's Write a Play** with Lena Byrne	Children's Workshop	7
11am	**The Next Draft** with Róisín Daly	Workshop	8
12.30pm	**From Script to Access** with Christian O'Reilly & Peter Kearns	Workshop	8
3pm	**Footnote** by Irene Kelleher	Performance	8
8pm	**Elysium Nevada** by Barry McKinley	Performance	8

SUNDAY 05 JULY

			PAGE
10am	**Breakfast Bites** with Mark O'Rowe	Talk	8
12pm	**Bridge the Gap (Part 2)** with Ultan Pringle	Workshop	10
4pm	**Nurtured New Works** Festival Finale	Performance	10







TICKET BUNDLES

All events are individually priced but why not pick a bundle and immerse yourself in Scripts!

ONE-A-DAY €65
Thur: Love in the Wild
Fri: The Quiet Men
Sat: Elysium Nevada
Sun: Nurtured New Works

SCRIPTS SCHOLAR €120
Access to all performances and workshops and observing a Scripts mentoring session

SUPER SCRIPTS SUNDAY €50
2 x workshops & Nurtured New Works

To avail of the above discounts, the **FULL** package must be purchased at the one time.

www.scriptsireland.com

PERFORMANCE

LOVE IN THE WILD



Written by Lisa Walsh
Directed by Peter Sheridan
Performed by Anto Seery

Ger Duffy is a dreamer. He mostly dreams about Grainne McManus. There is a hole in his heart from the day she disappeared out of his life. That was five years ago, when they were lovers and addicts together. One day, Grainne's Da turns up at Ger's hall door in Ballymun. Ger assumes that she's dead; that she has become another statistic to heroin. But the news is different and lights the flame of hope in Ger's heart.

Lisa Walsh is an award-winning playwright with an MA in Creative Writing. Her critically acclaimed debut play, *Love in the Wild* (2018), toured Ireland, and her play *Fanny Riot* was selected for the Scene & Heard Festival. She was also a finalist in Scripts Festival 2025. Followed by Q&A.

"Lisa Walsh has put human faces, emotions, hopes, fears and dreams into one of the many stories that lay buried behind the headlines." Joe Duffy, RTÉ Broadcaster & Author.

"Under Peter Sheridan's subtle direction...Seery slowly reveals layers of personality... we are fully invested in what's at stake." Alan O'Riordan, The Sunday Times.

"Excellent...You should go see it." Rosita Boland, The Irish Times.

Thursday 2 July, 8pm
BIRR THEATRE & ARTS CENTRE
€18 (+ Booking Fee)





PERFORMANCE

THE QUIET MEN

Written & performed by Morgan C Jones
Directed by Conall Morrison

What is the Irish link between James Connolly, John Wayne, James Bond and the Oscars? *The Quiet Men* takes audiences on a whistle-stop tour though the life stories of two remarkable Dublin brothers, Barry FitzGerald and Arthur Shields who between them fought in the GPO in Easter Week and won an Oscar. Known and beloved by movie audiences for their roles in John Ford's *The Quiet Man* - Arthur portraying Reverend Playfair and Barry the quintessential matchmaker and rogue Michealeen Óg, these two stalwarts of the Abbey Theatre Company went on to carve out lives in Hollywood. However, little is known about their private lives. *The Quiet Men* delves into this hidden history and revelations about their connections to Alfred Hitchcock, James Bond 007 and James Connolly!

Written and performed by their great grandnephew Morgan C Jones and directed by Conall Morrison, this show sheds new light on two of Ireland's most talented and prolific stage and screen actors.
Followed by Q&A.

Set & Lighting Design: Sound Entertaining
Stage Manager: Zoë Powell
Sound & AV Design: Morgan C Jones
Original Poster Design: Bold Bunny
Graphic Design: Gavin Doyle

Friday 3 July, 8pm
BIRR THEATRE & ARTS CENTRE
€18 (+ Booking Fee)



PERFORMANCE

FOOTNOTE



Written & Performed by Irene Kelleher
Directed by Laura O'Mahony

Noreen Gilhooly spends her days untangling customer disasters, alphabetising the children's section and trying not to cry beside a collapsing World Book Day display. Meanwhile, her mother, (legendary poet, feminist icon and professional intimidator Genevieve de Lacy), looms over Irish literature like a very judgemental ghost. But when Noreen is finally offered the chance to be published herself, she must decide: step into the spotlight... or stay forever trapped as her mother's footnote.

"Kelleher is an exceptionally talented writer."
★★★★★Broadway Baby

Saturday 4 July, 3pm
POP UP THEATRE AT MAIN STREET
(RJ Barber old shop premises, Eircode will be emailed to ticket holders)
€13 (+ Booking Fee) Capacity limited - book early

PERFORMANCE

ELYSIUM NEVADA

by Barry McKinley

"'a study in wizened, impotent rage, measured out in wicked one liners"
The Irish Times

"it has a memorable conclusion, linking these fading characters to the heavy pulse of human history, at one of its defining moments"
The Scotsman

In a sun-blasted retirement home on the edge of the Mojave Desert, two residents pass their days trading barbs, jokes and grievances as they wait for time to do what it always does. Their brittle comedy masks deeper fears about decline, memory and the approach of death. When a mysterious outsider joins them, the familiar rhythms of their banter begin to fracture, and what starts as a darkly comic portrait of old age shifts into something stranger, more unsettling – and unexpectedly moving.
First presented to great acclaim in 2010, Barry McKinley's *Elysium Nevada* was nominated for the Irish Times Best New Play Award. Scripts is delighted to present this new production.



Saturday 4 July, 8pm
BIRR THEATRE & ARTS CENTRE
€18 (+ Booking Fee)
Duration: 50 minutes | Age Guidance: 14+



BRIDGE THE GAP
with Ultan Pringle

Bridge the Gap is a bold, high-energy two part workshop for playwrights who don't want to wait around for permission. If you're serious about getting your work out of the notebook and onto the stage, these sessions are for you. Led by Ultan Pringle, Artist in Residence at An Grianán Theatre and One To Watch from The Irish Times, this is a practical, no-nonsense deep dive into how plays actually get made and how to cultivate your craft while doing so. See online listing for more information. This workshop is presented in association with An Grianán Theatre.

Thursday 2 July (6-7.30pm online) / **Sunday 5 July** (12 - 1.30pm in person),
DOOLY'S HOTEL €25 for both workshops (plus booking fee).



WRITING DESIRE: INTIMACY, POWER & EMBODIMENT with Emily Reilly from The Abbey Theatre

In response to this year's theme *Desire*, this workshop invites playwrights to explore how longing, attraction and power are expressed on stage. Moving beyond dialogue, it considers the role of subtext, embodiment and silence in writing intimacy for performance. Participants will reflect on how desire shapes character, action and tension. Abbey Theatre Dramaturg, Emily Reilly will bring her experience in theatre, devising, dance, and sexual assault advocacy to craft an artist centred workshop that digs into these rich and complex arenas with boldness and care.

Friday 3 July, 2-5pm
BIRR LOETB FREE Workshop - booking essential as places limited

ABBEY THEATRE AMHARCLANN NA MAINISTREACH



CHILDREN'S WORKSHOP

LET'S WRITE A PLAY with Lena Byrne

Children are invited to join Lena for an energetic playwriting workshop where they will mix together the main ingredients for a play – set the scene, identify the characters and start writing! Watch your ideas burst into life as you create exciting stories and unforgettable adventures. Whether you dream of being a hero, a villain or something in between, this is your chance to bring your imagination to the stage. Come along, get creative and make something truly spectacular – because in this workshop, your story takes centre stage! Suitable for age 8 – 12 years old.

Saturday 4 July, 10am - 11.30am
BIRR THEATRE & ARTS CENTRE, €10 (+ Booking Fee)

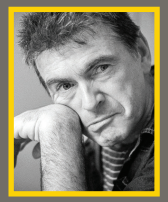




FROM SCRIPT TO ACCESS

A Case Study in Disability-Led Theatre Practice

with Christian O'Reilly & Peter Kearns



How can theatre-makers create disability-themed work that is authentic, collaborative and theatrically compelling? In this case study-based session, playwright Christian O'Reilly and disability activist and facilitator Peter Kearns reflect on the development of *No Magic Pill* and their experience of working within disability-led theatre practice. Together, they will explore the creative and practical considerations involved in bringing disability narratives to the stage, including representation, access, allyship, collaboration and inclusive production processes. Blending discussion and reflection, this session offers an opportunity for playwrights, theatre-makers and artists to engage with the evolving landscape of disability arts practice in Ireland.

Christian O'Reilly *is a Galway-based playwright and screenwriter whose work has been produced nationally and internationally by companies including Druid and Rough Magic. He is the writer of the acclaimed disability rights drama No Magic Pill.*

Peter Kearns *is a disabled activist, facilitator and educator working across disability equality, inclusive arts practice and cultural advocacy. He collaborated on No Magic Pill as Disability Equality Dramaturg, actor and outreach producer.*

Saturday 4 July, 12.30-2.30pm | BIRR THEATRE & ARTS CENTRE €25 (PLUS BOOKING FEE)



THE NEXT DRAFT with Róisín Daly

Where new plays begin – an early reading from one of Ireland's emerging playwrights Róisín Daly, Writer-in-Residence at Birr Theatre, has been developing her Scripts 2025 play, *The Waves Have No Ears* in collaboration with mentor Eugene O'Brien over recent months. You are warmly invited to attend a table reading of the play. This is an opportunity to experience the work in progress, ask questions and share your feedback as part of its ongoing development.

Saturday 4 July, 11am-12.30pm | TIN JUG STUDIO, No charge - Spaces limited / booking advised



BREAKFAST BITES with Mark O'Rowe

One of Ireland's most distinctive writing voices, Mark O'Rowe joins us for an intimate morning of conversation and reflection on the craft of writing for stage and screen. Known for his razor-sharp dialogue and compelling storytelling, his acclaimed work spans theatre, film and television, including celebrated scripts such as *Howie the Rookie*, *Intermission* and *Terminus*. In this relaxed and informal session, Mark will speak openly about his creative journey, the realities of sustaining a writing practice, and the lessons learned across his career. Moving between storytelling, insight and discussion, the morning offers a rare opportunity to hear directly from one of Ireland's leading playwrights as he reflects on process, inspiration and the evolving landscape of writing today.

Sunday 5 July, 10am | DOOLY'S HOTEL, €25 (+ Booking Fee) – including tea, coffee & scone

Scripts
Ireland's Playwriting Festival



PERFORMANCE

NURTURED NEW WORKS

FESTIVAL FINALE

Directed by Jim Nolan
Music by Morgan Cooke
Writing mentorship by Eugene O'Brien

Nurtured New Works is the heart of Scripts – Ireland's Playwriting Festival, where emerging voices are given space to grow, challenge and connect. After a week of mentoring, editing and directing, our selected Scripts Playwrights' plays will be brought from page to stage in a rehearsed reading by some of Ireland's leading actors. The awarded playwright will be chosen by our esteemed judging panel, Selina O'Reilly (The Abbey Theatre) and Mark O'Rowe.

This year, our three selected playwrights, **Liza Costello**, **Elaine Maguire O'Connor** and **Liam McCarthy**, respond to the festival theme, *Desire*, through works that are atmospheric, urgent and deeply human. Across these nurtured plays, desire emerges in many forms: as longing, ambition, grief, hunger for connection, the search for healing, and the need to be seen or understood. Set against worlds shaped by shifting power dynamics, fractured relationships, economic precarity and an undercurrent of unease, the plays move between the intimate and the surreal, the personal and the political. Together, they explore the tensions between what we yearn for and what society, circumstance or fear places out of reach; revealing desire as a force that can unsettle, transform and ultimately reshape how we understand ourselves and each other.

Followed by discussion and announcement of awarded playwright.

Sunday 5 July, 4pm
BIRR THEATRE & ARTS CENTRE €18 (+ Booking Fee)









Scripts
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NURTURED NEW WORKS
FESTIVAL FINALE

The theme of this year's festival is **Desire**. What pulls us forward, and what holds us fast? Desire can be a spark or a storm, an intimate whisper or a force that reshapes entire worlds. It drives choices, fuels conflict and reveals the deepest truths we try to hide. Whether it's longing for connection, power, escape, justice or transformation, desire shapes the stories we tell and the lives we lead. This year, we invite you to explore the many faces of desire with courage, imagination and emotional honesty.



MENTOR



EUGENE O'BRIEN mentors our selected playwrights throughout the festival. Eugene won the Irish Times Theatre Award, the Stewart Parker Award and the Rooney Prize for Literature for his play *Eden* and his play *Heaven* was awarded an Edinburgh Fringe First and Irish Times Theatre Award in 2023. He also wrote the plays *Savoy* and *Falling to Earth – my summer with Bowie*. Other work includes the TV series *Pure Mule*, winner of five IFTAs and films *The Flag*, *Tarrac* and the screen version of *Eden*. He published his first novel *Going Back* in 2022. A new film *One Sweet Hour*, directed by Declan Recks will be released later this year.

THE WRITERS



LIZA COSTELLO
IN THE GARDEN
When Lukas finishes transplanting a laurel tree for one of his wealthy gardening clients, all he wants is to get home in time to take his son to football training. But Marion has questions about the tree – and other reasons for keeping him there. What begins as a minor inconvenience slowly turns into a tense negotiation of class, loneliness and power that asks where 'mere' pushiness might end and violence begin.



ELAINE MAGUIRE O'CONNOR
LAY YOUR HANDS ON ME
In a dingy bedsit, restless Alannah pushes her broke, aimless boyfriend Bagsy to exploit his alleged healing powers for money. Caught between scepticism and desire – for Alannah, money, and meaning – Bagsy wrestles with a decision that could transform their lives. But when tragedy strikes, they realise something much darker was already in motion.



LIAM McCARTHY
MAM AND LOVE AND WOO
Mam is concerned that her son spends too much time at the riverfront of Limerick City. Preoccupied as she is with her love and concern, she hasn't left her house in six weeks. Her quiet life is upended when a well-meaning community volunteer barrels into her world.

DIRECTOR



JIM NOLAN is a playwright and theatre director, a founder member and Artistic Director of Red Kettle Theatre Company, a former Writer in Association at the Abbey Theatre and Theatre Artist-in-Residence at Garter Lane Theatre. His plays have been presented throughout Ireland, in the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada and he has worked as a writer and director with some of Ireland's leading theatre companies. Jim has won several awards for his work, including Sunday Independent Play of the Year for *The Salvage Shop* and Irish Times Theatre Awards Best New Play nominations for *The Salvage Shop* and *Dreamland*. Jim's latest play, *Castel Gandolfo*, opened at Garter Lane Theatre, Waterford, in October, 2024. He is a member of Aosdána and his plays are published by Gallery Press.

JUDGING PANEL



SELINA O'REILLY is a theatre producer and arts administrator currently working as the Literary and New Work Assistant with the Abbey Theatre. Selina has been with the theatre since 2020 and manages all events, workshops and writer development programmes run by the department. Prior to this, Selina worked as a producer namely with Rough Magic Theatre Company, Barabbas... the Company and Calypso Productions and has produced over 25 professional productions. She holds a BA in Theatre and English from St. Mary's University, in Twickenham.



MARK O'ROWE is an Irish writer and director. His plays include *From Both Hips* (Fishamble Theatre Company), *Howie the Rookie* (Bush Theatre), *Made in China* (Peacock Theatre), *Crestfall* (Gate Theatre), *Terminus* (Peacock Theatre), *Our Few and Evil Days* (Abbey Theatre), *The Approach* (Landmark Productions), and *Reunion* (Landmark Productions / Galway Arts Festival). He has also adapted several works, including Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* (Abbey Theatre), *DruidShakespeare*, an amalgamation of four of Shakespeare's history plays (Druid Theatre Company), and Ibsen's *Ghosts*, (a Landmark / Abbey Theatre coproduction). Screenplays include *Intermission*, *Boy A*, Perrier's *Bounty, Broken* and *The Delinquent Season*, which he also directed. TV includes the series *Temple* and *Normal People*.

Read more about our writers and production team on **ScriptsIreland.com**

THE AWARD

One writer will be awarded:

- Private Consultation & Dramaturgical Support with The Abbey Theatre
- Scholarship: Fishamble Playwriting Course
- 2027 Birr Theatre & Arts Centre Theatre Residency

Both Runner Up writers will be offered a further development opportunity about their work, practice and script with An Grianán Theatre, Artist-in-Residence, Ultan Pringle.

THANK YOU TO OUR AWARD SPONSORS

fishamble THE NEW PLAY COMPANY

ABBEY THEATRE AMHARCLANN NA MAINISTREACH

Birr Theatre & Arts Centre

AN GRIANÁN THEATRE

Scripts

Ireland's Playwriting Festival

Since bursting onto the scene in 2013, *Scripts* has become a powerhouse for new writing in Ireland, building bold collaborations with the theatre leaders such as The Abbey Theatre, Fishamble, Listowel Writers' Week, the Irish Writers Centre, RTÉ Drama on One, Waking The Feminists, Minding Creative Minds and more.

From winning a PPI Radio Award with Midlands 103 to championing excellence in playwriting, *Scripts* continues to be a launchpad for fresh talent and fearless storytelling. Over the years, many of our alumni have carved exciting paths into professional theatre, and we're proud to keep their voices alive by spotlighting past participants and the remarkable work they've created.

Passionate about originality.
Driven by community.
Powered by story.
Scripts is where great ideas take the stage and where tomorrow's voices are heard today.



SCRIPTS - AT A GLANCE

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6pm	**Bridge the Gap (Part 1)** (online)
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Sat: Elysium Nevada
Sun: Nurtured New Works

SUPER SCRIPTS SUNDAY €50
2 x workshops &
Nurtured New Works

SCRIPTS SCHOLAR €120
Access to all performances and workshops and observing a Scripts mentoring session

To avail of the above discounts, the **FULL** package must be purchased at the one time.

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