

BIRR THEATRE & ARTS CENTRE *with* JASANGO THEATRE *present*

Scripts

Ireland's Playwriting Festival



10 – 13 July 2025

www.scriptsireland.com

11th EDITION



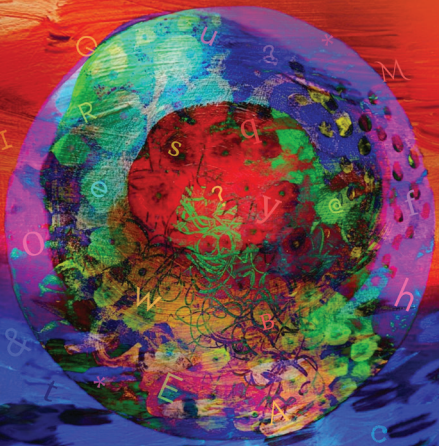
Ireland's Playwriting Festival

SPECIAL THANKS

Abbey Theatre, Fishamble,
The Arts Council, LOETB Birr,
Offaly County Council Arts Office,
Birr Castle Demesne, Brosna Press,
Birr Festivals Collective,
Kieran & Ethna Garahy,
Offaly Local Development Company



The Festival Founders



Cover Image: Emma Barone

Welcome to the eleventh outing of Scripts: Ireland's Playwriting Festival, a dynamic celebration of contemporary Irish theatre, dedicated to nurturing and showcasing the finest new plays from emerging and established playwrights. Held in the vibrant town of Birr, County Offaly, the festival transforms the historic Birr Theatre & Arts Centre into a buzzing hub of creativity and innovation. Over the course of several days, audiences are treated to a diverse lineup of full productions, staged readings and engaging workshops, all helmed by talented Irish artists. With its commitment to fostering fresh voices and bold storytelling, *Scripts* not only enriches Ireland's cultural landscape but also offers a unique platform for playwrights to develop their craft and connect with enthusiastic theatergoers.

Join us for an unforgettable journey through the power and passion of live theatre at *Scripts: Ireland's Playwriting Festival*.

This year's selected writers are **Róisín Daly**, **James Peaty**, and **Lisa Walsh**. 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 13 July, and a winner will be announced.

FESTIVAL TEAM

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



FESTIVAL PROGRAMME

THURSDAY 10 JULY

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8pm	No Romance: A Desperate Business Play by Nancy Harris	Performance	4
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FRIDAY 11 JULY

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11am	Theatre as a Platform for Change with Noelle Brown	Workshop	7
2pm	Writing Your Voice with Rian Smith, The Abbey Theatre	Workshop	7
8pm	Counting Swans by Conor Montague	Performance	5

SATURDAY 12 JULY

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11am	The Blank Page: How to Start... with Dee Roycroft	Workshop	7
1pm	The Play Express with Conor Montague	Workshop	8
3pm	In Plain Sight by Noelle Brown This play takes place in Roscrea. See www.scriptsireland.ie for details	Performance	8
8pm	The 3:30 at Cheltenham by Kenneth Hudson	Performance	6

SUNDAY 13 JULY

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11am	Breakfast Bites with Colm O'Callaghan	Talk	8
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: No Romance
Fri: Counting Swans
Sat: The 3.30 at Cheltenham
Sun: 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.

www.scriptsireland.com

NO ROMANCE: A DESPERATE BUSINESS

Written by Nancy Harris

Performed by John Cronin & Clara Fitzgerald • Directed by Ellen Buckley

"Why all of a sudden does everybody have to know everything about each other? When did we decide that unless we divulge every stupid thought we have, every minute of the day, that we're not living a proper life?"

A funeral home in Dublin. Carmel and Joe have arrived early to Joe's mother's wake. After twenty-four years together, they think they know each other inside out. But while they're here to bury their dead, they begin to uncover secrets, lies and fantasises that they've kept hidden from each other.

Are we entitled to our own private life, secret even from those closest to us? Or in this age of curated online lives and fake news, is honesty all we have?

No Romance by Nancy Harris (*The Dry*) was originally staged as a play in three acts at The Peacock Theatre in 2011. This, the second act, offers an uncanny meditation on how technology, spirituality and the economy was shaping and continues to shape modern love.

"Great comedy, keen sympathy and lingering poignancy... Harris's writing is bracingly witty, alert and incisive" - Irish Times

"It's safe to say that we are witnessing the emergence of a major talent... extraordinarily sure-footed writing and a depth of compassion and sly humour that bond into a dazzling debut."

- Sunday Independent

"Poignant, tragic and laugh out loud funny... Strong new writing like this breathes fresh life into Irish theatre" - Irish Post

Thursday 10 July, 8pm
BIRR THEATRE & ARTS CENTRE
€18 (+ Booking Fee)

Age Guidance 14+ • Duration 45 mins
Thank you to Boyd's Funeral Home for set furniture.
This play was originally commissioned by Abbey Theatre
Amharclann na Mainistreach

COUNTING SWANS

“Conor Montague’s tightly crafted drama sets a benchmark in creating stimulating, almost filmic drama for the stage.”

Paul Vale (The Stage, UK)

PERFORMANCE

Written by Conor Montague • Performed by Kieran Kelliher and Conor Montague

Would you kill for a friend? Would you kill your best friend? Do you have what it takes? A tragi-comic dialogue from award-winning playwright, Conor Montague, which interrogates societal attitudes towards care for the terminally ill though the personal trauma of two lifelong friends.

‘Life isn’t a game of hurling.’

Former All-Star hurler, Martin ‘The Butcher’ Molloy, is defined by courage, weakened by loss, haunted by failure. The untimely death of his wife forces confrontation with an old friend and inspires a journey through the dark recesses of grief in search of answers, forgiveness and a new beginning.

Counting Swans descends deep into the dark to retrieve slivers of light from within the despair of a broken hero. The nature of love, friendship, illness, courage and assisted suicide are just some of the topics meditated upon over the course of a dialogue that mixes tears with laughter, despondency with hope, and croquet with hurling.

Graduate of the MA in Writing from NUIG and Scripts alumni, Conor Montague is currently working in London where he is co-director of London Writer’s Eclective and Resident Playwright at the Irish Cultural Centre, Hammersmith.

Friday 11 July, 8pm

BIRR THEATRE & ARTS CENTRE

€18 (+ Booking Fee)

Age Suitability: Parental guidance advised – contains some strong language.

Show Duration 70 mins no interval.

Followed by Q&A.



Gúna Nua Theatre Company presents

The 3:30 at CHELTENHAM

Written by Kenneth Hudson • Performed by Darragh Conway & Kenneth Hudson

The 3:30 at Cheltenham is a fast-paced thrill ride into the life and gambling addiction of Andy Williams. Andy faces his past in an electric re-telling of when chasing the impossible win put much more at stake than just the horses. When the fun stops, can Andy stop?

Produced by award-winning Gúna Nua Theatre Company, *The 3:30 at Cheltenham* promises laughs, relentless truth and insights into the quiet dark side of the gambling industry.

Directed by: Paul Meade • Lighting Designer: Ciara Meehan • Costume and Set Design: Iris Liange
Producer: Liam Wilson Smyth • Sound Designer: Daniel Montague O'Brien

With a premiere and initial tour sponsored by Gambling Awareness Trust, The 3:30 at Cheltenham is a powerful story and theatre a powerful medium for storytelling, the perfect vehicle to open much needed conversations on the devastating impacts of problem gambling in Irish society.

Saturday 12 July, 8pm

BIRR THEATRE & ARTS CENTRE

€18 (+ Booking Fee)

Age Suitability: 16+ Contains Sexual References, Strong Language and Described Violence.
Show duration 70 mins no interval. Followed by Q&A.

"I'll let you in on a secret: Vegas isn't the only place you can lose it all, it can happen right here. Paddy Power, Ladbrokes, Pick your poison... All tied to that one vice: Gambling".

WORKSHOPS



THEATRE AS A PLATFORM FOR CHANGE

with Noelle Brown

Join playwright, social activist and performer Noelle Brown for a practice-sharing workshop. Noelle's creativity focuses on theatre as a platform to provoke political change by exploring urgent social issues and amplifying voices that are missing from contemporary theatre. Her work has explored the Irish State's treatment of marginalised people, including older people, the LGBTQ+ community, the Travelling community and survivors of 'Mother and Baby Homes'. <http://noellebrown.com>

Friday 11 July, 11am-1pm, LOETB €18 (+ Booking Fee)

Why not avail of workshop/performance bundle www.scriptsireland.com



ABBEY
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WRITING YOUR VOICE:

Figuring out your perspective and translating it into meaningful drama.

with Rian Smith, The Abbey Theatre

Rian Smith is a dramaturg and writer, currently working at The Abbey Theatre as Literary and New Work Associate. He has worked in various theatre and film departments, in Ireland, the UK and New York. He is a graduate of the National Film School at IADT, having majored in Screenwriting.

**Friday 11 July, 2-5pm, LOETB,
FREE WORKSHOP (Limited places, booking essential)**

THE BLANK PAGE: How to Start ... with Dee Roycroft

In this Introduction to Playwriting workshop with Dee Roycroft we will explore some useful ways to generate ideas for the stage, giving you the tools you need to start your play and finish it. We'll also dip a toe into the essentials of character, stage direction, dialogue and structure; the pitfalls and possibilities. No experience needed. All you have to bring is a blank page, something to write with and your imagination!



Dee Roycroft is last year's winner of *Scripts Ireland* and a *Next Wave* playwright at the Abbey Theatre. Her most recent play *Amelia* was a stand-out of the 2024 Dublin Theatre Festival and her play *Faun* was shortlisted for *Druid Debuts*. She has been nominated for an IMRO award for Best Radio Drama and shortlisted for the RTÉ Short Story competition and Redline Book Festival. Dee also regularly mentors and teaches for the NTAA, Creative Skillnet and Blinder Films Incubator Scheme.

Saturday 12 July, 11am-12.30pm, BIRR LIBRARY €15 (+ Booking Fee)

WORKSHOPS

THE PLAY EXPRESS

with Conor Montague



In this high-energy, practice-based workshop, you'll generate a brand new play from the ground up – no ideas required! Through rapid-fire writing exercises, feedback, and creative provocation, we'll explore ways to ignite character, setting, and story in real time. Ideal for both beginners and experienced writers, the focus is on momentum, playfulness, and trusting the process. You'll leave with the sparks of a fresh play – and the tools to shape it into something powerful.

Covering everything from; kickstarting ideas fast to fuelling story through character, using language as propulsion, and avoiding overthinking. Topics include structure, conflict,

mindset, and shaping a strong first draft – plus how to spot kindling moments, clear creative clutter, and even revive false starts. Expect pace, pressure, and plenty of fun, on a big red bus!

Saturday 12 July, 1-5pm, THE RED BUS, EMMET SQUARE, €20 (+ Booking Fee)



Breakfast Bites: IN CONVERSATION WITH COLM O'CALLAGHAN

Join us for a rare and fascinating insight into the evolving world of Irish theatre with Colm O'Callaghan, Executive Director and Co-CEO of Dublin's Gate Theatre. With over two decades of experience spanning Ireland and Australia, Colm brings a bold, global perspective to the opportunities and challenges and possibilities facing the performing arts today.

From his roots in rural Birr to leading one of Ireland's most iconic cultural institutions, Colm's journey reflects a passion for storytelling, representation, and innovation. In this dynamic conversation, he'll explore what it means to create "new work" in 2025, how theatre can become a true civic space, and why co-leadership and inclusive programming matter more than ever.

Whether you're a theatre-maker, a regular audience member, or simply curious about where Irish theatre is headed, this event offers a compelling look behind the curtain – and a chance to reflect on the enduring magic of the stage.

This event will be recorded for podcast for future broadcast.

Sunday 13 July, 11am, BIRR THEATRE & ARTS CENTRE
€15 (+ Booking Fee) Includes Tea/Coffee



IN PLAIN SIGHT

Written by Noelle Brown. Performed alongside singer, Camille O'Sullivan is a moving new work that explores the legacy of the construction of Mother and Baby Homes on the inhabitants, wider communities and the buildings themselves, in a delicate and compassionate exploration, through story and song.

Tues 8–Sat 12 July, (Note: This event takes place in Roscrea)
Noelle Brown workshop participants can avail of exclusive tickets to the matinee
(See Scripts website for info and times)

Why not avail
of workshop/
performance
bundle



Ireland's Playwriting Festival



PERFORMANCE

NURTURED NEW WORKS

Directed by Jim Culleton
Writing mentorship by Eugene O'Brien

FESTIVAL FINALE

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 Colm O'Callaghan (The Gate Theatre).

This year, our three selected playwrights – Róisín Daly, James Peaty and Lisa Walsh – have taken deeply personal and dramatically distinct approaches to the festival theme, *Perceptions*.

Each play invites us to look again: at the stories we tell ourselves, the truths we avoid, and the moments that reshape how we see the world. From the murky lines of memory and consent, to the claustrophobic tension of unresolved family trauma, to the surreal chaos of city-wide unrest – these nurtured works question what we think we know, revealing how perception can shift, crack and ultimately transform. Followed by discussion and announcement of awarded playwright.

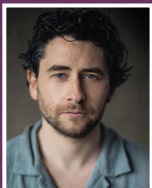
Sunday 13 July, 4pm

BIRR THEATRE & ARTS CENTRE €18 (+ Booking Fee)

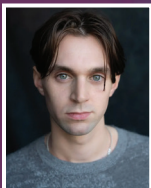
ACTORS



Hilda Fay



Darragh O'Toole



Cillian Lenaghan





Ireland's Playwriting Festival

NURTURED NEW WORKS FESTIVAL FINALE

The theme of this year's festival is **PERCEPTIONS**... How do perceptions shape the way stories are told? Whether it's the lens through which we view ourselves, others or society as a whole, individuals' perceptions impact each and every one of our daily interactions, leading to connections, misunderstandings, or revelations. Our perceptions can distort, illuminate, or inspire. From personal introspection to societal commentary, this year's theme invites us to explore different Perceptions with creativity and boldness.



RÓISÍN DALY

THE WAVES HAVE EARS TOO

Paddy, Jack and Conor are discussing the antics of their last night out, specifically the events that occurred between Conor and a girl in their year, Niamh O'Doherty.

Yet, questions around what really happened that night begin to arise, as the boys discover why Niamh hasn't returned to school.



JAMES PEATY

TURN

Turn is a taut and tight three hander that's focused around tension, interpersonal dynamics and continual turns and reversals. It follows two characters, Harry and Eliza, during one fateful evening when Jelly – Harry's

brother – comes knocking at their door. It's not a pleasant house call and soon long buried secrets, resentments and violence rear their head.



LISA WALSH

FANNY RIOT

Laura Kelly took a dreamy notion to go to a mad and beautiful book launch even though she doesn't speak Irish, a decision that has her trapped as the Dublin Riots erupt.

She has to find a way home. An embrace from an unexpected source lights a flame and plants a seed of strength as she rattles on through the madness in her city. Encountering violence, confusion, chaos, a bearded clam, grief, love and ultimately hope.

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

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. He also wrote 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.

DIRECTOR



JIM CULLETON is the Artistic Director of Fishamble: The New Play Company, for which he has directed productions on tour throughout Ireland, UK, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the US. His productions for Fishamble have won Olivier, The Stage, Scotsman Fringe First and Irish Times Best Director Awards. Jim has also directed for the Abbey, the Gaiety, the Belgrade and many more. He has directed audio plays for Audible, BBC, RTÉ Radio 1, and RTÉ lyric fm. Jim has directed across the world including Australia, LA, Washington on and off Broadway.

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.



COLM O'CALLAGHAN a Birr native, currently Executive Director and Co-CEO of the Gate Theatre, brings two decades' arts sector experience in various capacities, including Executive Director & Producer at Force Majeure in Australia and Company Manager with Sydney Theatre Company. He also worked for a number of years with Druid Theatre, Landmark Productions and Livin' Dred. In Australia, he sat on the New South Wales state government's Physical Theatre & Dance Board, and the Board of Ausdance National. He is currently a member of the Government's Advisory Committee on Women's Representation in Ireland.

THE AWARD

- Scholarship: Fishamble Playwriting Course
- Private Consultation and Script Analysis with The Abbey Theatre
- 2025 Birr Theatre & Arts Centre Theatre Residency

THANK YOU TO OUR AWARD SPONSORS!



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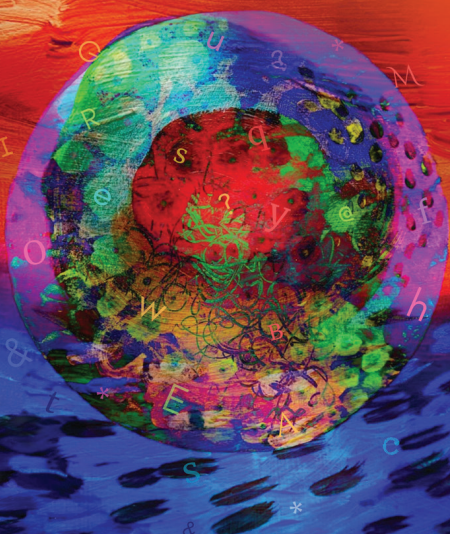
Scripts

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 likes of **The Abbey Theatre**, **Fishamble**, **Listowel Writers' Week**, the **Irish Writers Centre**, **RTÉ Drama on One**, **Culture Night**, **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

THURSDAY 10 JULY

8pm **No Romance: A Desperate Business**

FRIDAY 11 JULY

11am **Theatre as a Platform for Change**

2pm **Writing Your Voice**

8pm **Counting Swans**

SATURDAY 12 JULY

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1pm **The Play Express**

3pm **In Plain Sight** Venue: Roscrea

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4pm **Nurtured New Works**

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SCRIPTS SCHOLAR €120

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funding festivals



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Ár dTíochtai Tuilíthe
Our Rural Future



Bialais na hÉireann
Gaeilgeoirí
2040
Funded by the Department of Rural & Community Development



Birr Theatre Arts Centre



Anna chomhcheistilí ag an Aontas Eorpach
Co-fundáil by the European Union