

# Keegan Theatre and Town Hall combine for *The Crucible*

BY CHARLIE MCBRIDE

ARTHUR MILLER'S classic parable of mass hysteria, *The Crucible*, will be presented by the Keegan Theatre Company from Washington DC at the Town Hall Theatre this month.

The play draws a chilling parallel between the Salem witch hunt of 1692 – “one of the strangest and most awful chapters in human history” – and the McCarthyism which gripped America in the 1950s, when the play was written.

The small Massachusetts community of Salem is stirred into madness by superstition, paranoia and malice, culminating in a violent climax with the execution of 14 women and five men on the charges of being witches. The result is a play portraying the evils of mindless persecution and the terrifying power of false accusations.

*The Crucible* is widely regarded as one of the greatest American plays of all time: one man's struggle towards grace is set in the scorching context of the 17th-

century Salem witch trials. A community galvanised by fear and suspicion; a wife betrayed by lust; an orphan girl blind with passion and possessed with revenge; as well as ruthless prosecutors, deluded holy men, and covetous neighbours.

This year's production of *The Crucible* is a co-production between Keegan Theatre and the Town Hall, and will feature Galway actresses Nicole Brennan, Karen Kenny, Eva O'Callaghan, and Sarah Gardiner playing the younger roles. The young actresses will rehearse with the American cast after Keegan arrives in Ireland in early September.

The cast also features Keegan artistic director Mark A Rhea as John Proctor and five other veterans of the Ireland tour including Kevin Adams who will play Deputy Governor Danforth.

Keegan's associate artistic director, Susan Marie Rhea, directs *The Crucible* for the second time: Keegan first produced the show in the States in 2003 to widespread critical

acclaim.

Ahead of Keegan's visit to Galway, Mark Rhea shared his thoughts on this new production of *The Crucible*, beginning with an account of how the co-production with the Town Hall came about.

“It is quite an amazing undertaking and one I have dreamed about,” he declares. “I have wanted to bring this show to Ireland for the past 10 years, but the size of the cast and the resources to pull it off was just too overwhelming to attempt on our own and I just couldn't make the budget work to do so.

“Once Michael Diskin and I sat down and discussed the idea of this project last year, we were able to look at the numbers and we found ways that balanced it out, so we both felt it was worth the effort to bring this masterpiece to Ireland. We both had a passion to see this through, and now that it is a reality, I couldn't be more excited. It is a dream come true!”

Given *The Crucible* was originally written as a parable of 1950s McCarthyism, do different perspectives on

the play suggest themselves when it is staged before a modern-day audience?

“McCarthyism was about intolerance and fear, and these two elements still drive people to make choices in life that they wouldn't normally make,” Rhea replies. “It has always been a global issue and I think that is why *The Crucible* resonates even after almost 60 years. Hysteria, caused by intolerance and fear, tears apart the community in *The Crucible*. We still see that all too often in the news today.”

As this is Keegan's second time doing the play, does the company have any different ‘takes’ on it this time around and does Rhea have different thoughts on John Proctor compared to eight years ago?

“Outside of three cast members (including myself), the entire cast is different and every actor is unique,” Rhea responds. “As far as a different ‘take’, I wouldn't say so much except the unique qualities each individual actor brings to their role.



“In fact, the main reason for wanting to bring it to Ireland for so many years was that I felt it was one of the best shows we had ever produced. Susan's direction is spot on. She really understands the piece and she has so much passion for the play.

“As for playing John Proctor, I do feel like I have found more layers to the role this time around. It is great to have a second shot at this amazing role. Also

to play off the extremely talented Karen Novack as Elizabeth Proctor, along with the rest of the cast, it is a treat for me.”

The key role of Abigail Williams, ringleader of the accusers who trigger the witch trials is played by Sarah Lasko, a talented young singer who was recently a finalist in a high-profile Broadway talent show.

“We didn't know Sarah or her work when she first auditioned for the role of Abigail,” Rhea confesses. “We

only recently found out she was a singer, and she is a very fine singer indeed. This is a huge opportunity for her to showcase another area of her talents, and I think people will be very pleased with her Abigail.”

*The Crucible runs at the Town Hall Theatre from Monday September 12 to Saturday 17. Tickets are available from the Town Hall on 091 - 569777 and [www.tht.ie](http://www.tht.ie)*

# Emmet O'Malley to launch debut album @ Monroe's

BY KERNAN ANDREWS

EMMET O'MALLEY, the Galway based singer-songwriter, will launch his debut album *Playtime*, with a gig in Monroe's Backstage Bar on Friday September 9.

Musically and thematically, *Playtime* finds Emmet dealing with subjects such as the loss of innocence, conformity, the beauty of nature, suicide, and loss of ambition in small town Ireland.

All 11 songs were written and performed by Emmet O'Malley. Joining him for various tracks were accordion player Yvonne McGinley, drummer Stephen O'Mahony, and The Sumbrellas' Chris White and Federico Betti.

Emmet has spent the last few months preparing and recording the album with Galway based producer, Daniel J Gillen. The album was independently recorded at The Recording House, Galway, by David Lyons, and at Sunstreet Studios, Tuam, by Kenny Ralph. Mixing was by Shaun Cadogan at Apollo Studios in Dublin.

Emmet will be joined by his five piece band for the Monroe's gig. *Playtime* will be available on CD and from iTunes.

*Admission is €10 and includes a free CD copy of the album on the door. Tickets are available through Emmet's Facebook page; [antentertainment@gmail.com](mailto:antentertainment@gmail.com); and [monroeslivevenue@gmail.com](mailto:monroeslivevenue@gmail.com)*



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All news items must be in by 12 noon on Monday.

