

RediscoveriesUK

A three month season of rediscovered plays by writers from
England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Worn Red Theatre in association with Neil McPherson for the Finborough Theatre presents

The Great Britain Premiere

Northern Star

by Stewart Parker

Directed by Caitlin McLeod. Designed by Clem Garritty. Lighting by Elliot Griggs. Costume Design by Dot Bowry.

Music by Ben Osborn and Tegid Cartwright.

Cast: Helen Belbin. Adam Best. Michael Byers. Anthony Delaney. Gemma-Leah Devereux. Jonathan Harden. Mark Edel-Hunt. Clare McMahon. Sean Pol-McGreevy.

"'Twas the night before Harry was stretched. And the boys they all paid him a visit".

Never before performed in Great Britain, renowned Ulster playwright Stewart Parker's *Northern Star* opens at the Finborough Theatre for a limited run of six Sunday and Monday performances from Sunday, 6 February 2011 (**Press Night: Monday, 7 February 2011**) as part of RediscoveriesUK, a three month season of rediscovered plays by writers from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

After the disaster of the 1798 rebellion, Henry Joy McCracken, one of Irish history's most charming political rebels, sits awake in a half burnt-out cottage in Ulster. His child and lover sleep nearby with plans of an escape to America. Outside a Phantom Bride guards the gate of the ramshackle safe house. Henry awaits his imminent execution, but he needs to perfect his final speech to the citizens of Belfast...

The night brings with it ghosts of friends and foes from Ireland's past – both North and South – to recall the seven ages of his life, from youthful idealism to disillusion and despair. Each age is presented in the style of a famous Irish writer, from Boucicault and Wilde, to Behan and Beckett, in a comic, terrifying and moving journey through the missed opportunities of Irish history.

Playwright **Stewart Parker** (1941–1988) remains one of Ulster's most acclaimed playwrights. His first internationally successful play for the stage was *Spokesong* (1975) which won the 1976 Evening Standard Most Promising Playwright Award. Parker then embarked on a decade of writing that saw his vision of Northern Ireland's past and present take flight. His other works include *Kingdom Come* and *Catchpenny Twist* (1977), *Pratt's Fall* (1981) *Northern Star* (1984), *Heavenly Bodies* (1986) and *Pentecost* (1987), winner of the Harvey's Irish Theatre Award.

Winner of the Buzz Goodbody Best Director Award, director **Caitlin McLeod** directed *And I And Silence*, a new play by Naomi Wallace, as part of the Finborough Theatre's *Vibrant – An Anniversary Festival of Finborough Playwrights* in 2010. Her previous productions include *One Short Sleepe* (South Bank Literary Festival) the UK premiere of *Elephant's Graveyard* (Warwick Arts Centre) which went on to win five awards at the National Student Drama Festival, *The Lady's Not For Burning* (Warwick Arts Centre) and Caryl Churchill's *Seven Jewish Children* (Capital Centre Studio). Assistant Direction includes *The Talented Mr Ripley* (Royal and Derngate Theatres, Northampton) and working with the National Student Drama Festival ensemble on *Touched* (North Wall Theatre, Oxford and Latitude Festival).

Helen Belbin's credits include recent development projects such as *Lady Chatterley's Boys* (Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith) and *Where's Your Mamma Gone?* (New End Theatre/ West Yorkshire Playhouse); **Adam Best's** credits include *By The Bog Of Cats*, directed by Dominic Cooke (Wyndham's Theatre), *Pieces of Vincent* (Arcola Theatre) and *FairyTale of New York* (Theatre 503). TV and Film credits include *The Bill*, *Holby City* and *Silent Witness*. **Michael Byers'** credits include *Grease* (Union Theatre). TV and short film credits include *Hollyoaks* and a number of BBC One and Three appearances. **Anthony Delaney's** credits include *Assassins* (Union Theatre), *The Seagull*, *The Year of The Pig* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Central School of Speech and Drama). **Gemma-Leah Devereux's** television credits include *The Tudors* and *MARU*. **Jonathan Harden** was the Artistic Director of the Lyric Theatre Studio in Belfast. His theatre credits include *Keem* (Arcola Theatre), *The Great Pretenders* (Lyric Theatre Belfast) and *Safety/That Dark Place* (Theatre503). Jonathan has just completed filming *Dreams of a Life* in Dublin, directed by BAFTA-nominee Carol Morley.

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Press Information

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Other film credits include *Fifty Dead Men Walking*, *Ghost Machine*, *Five Minutes of Heaven* (Sundance Film Festival); **Clare McMahon**'s credits include *King Lear* and *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (Central School of Speech and Drama); **Mark Edel-Hunt**'s credits include *See How They Run* (Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester), *Richard III* (Royal Shakespeare Company/RADA) and *Swimming with Sharks* (Vaudeville Theatre, West End) and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich). Film credits include *Brideshead Revisited*. **Sean Pol McGreevy**'s credits include *The Pajama Game* (Union Theatre), *The Picture of Dorian Grey* (Lyric Studio Theatre, Belfast), *The Unsinkable Molly Brown* (Landor Theatre, London) and *Rent* (Olympia Theatre, Dublin).

The Press on Stewart Parker

"A freewheeling, lunatic sense of invention is harnessed to a cultivated, literary imagination and stoked up by moral outrage." John Peter, *Sunday Times*

"Mr. Parker speaks to the present through the past, using comedy, satire, parody and a seriousness that is nonetheless deadly for its being lightly drawn...Seldom has Irish history been so provocatively or so entertainingly drawn on the stage." *Irish Times*

"Stewart Parker's death robbed Belfast of its most distinctive and entertaining dramatists." *Culture Northern Ireland*

The Press on *Northern Star*

"One of the most memorable nights I ever spent at the theatre" *The Guardian*

"A remarkable virtuoso achievement...It would help to regard Irish history as a 'comedy of terrors', an image which occurs in Stewart Parker's elegant, witty and moving *Northern Star*." *The Observer*

PRESS NIGHT: MONDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 2011 AT 7.30PM

Finborough Theatre, The Finborough, 118 Finborough Road, London SW10 9ED
Box Office 0844 847 1652. www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk

Sundays and Mondays, 6, 7, 13, 14, 20 and 21 February 2011

Evenings at 7.30pm. Tickets £13, £9 concessions.

For more information, interviews and images, please contact

Neil McPherson on e-mail admin@finboroughtheatre.co.uk or **07977 173135**

Press releases and images are available to download from

<http://www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk/pressresources.htm>

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