



David Ireland's first play

WHAT THE ANIMALS SAY

by David Ireland.

Directed by Harry Burton.

Designed by Alex Marker.

Presented by Hallions Ltd in association with Neil McPherson for the Finborough Theatre.

Cast: Matthew Blaney. Robbie Martin.

Playwright **David Ireland** returns to the Finborough Theatre for the fourth time with a unique opportunity to see his first play – ***What The Animals Say*** plays for a strictly limited four week season from Tuesday, 29 September 2026 (**Press Nights: Thursday, 1 October 2026 and Friday, 2 October 2026 at 7.30pm**).

Two ex-classmates wait for the Stranraer ferry back to Belfast...

Jimmy is a struggling actor chasing the break that never comes.

Eddie is a celebrity footballer who, despite being Protestant, is the captain of Celtic.

At first, they reconnect over football, *Father Ted* and the staunch Unionist culture they grew up in, but what begins as banter spirals into confrontation as buried resentments, betrayal and violence rise to the surface...

Provocative and hilarious, David Ireland's explosive debut play is a portrait of two men trapped by the stories they tell themselves and each other.

First performed in 2009 at Òran Mór, Glasgow, as part of their legendary *A Play, A Pie and A Pint* season, and newly urgent in an era of renewed political tribalism and sectarianism, *What the Animals Say* is where it all began...

Harry Burton directs **Robbie Martin** and **Matthew Blaney** returning to the Finborough Theatre after his OffWestEnd Award nominated performance in David Ireland's *Not Now*.

Playwright **David Ireland** was born in Belfast and brought up in County Down. He was Playwright-in-Residence at the Lyric Theatre, Belfast, in 2011-2012. In 2010, *Everything Between Us*, first produced by Solas Nua and Tinderbox Theatre Company, was performed in Belfast, Scotland and Washington, D.C., winning the Stewart Parker Trust BBC Radio Drama Award and the Meyer-Whitworth Award for Best New Play. It received its English premiere at the Finborough Theatre in 2017. *Yes So I Said Yes* was first performed at the Crescent Arts Centre, Belfast, in 2011 as part of the Belfast Festival and then on a tour of Northern Ireland, where its performances in Omagh led to the theatre being picketed by a local church group. In 2021, *Yes So I Said Yes* had its Great Britain premiere at the Finborough Theatre, London, coinciding with the 100th anniversary of the partition of Ireland. *Cyprus Avenue* premiered at the Royal Court Theatre before transferring to the Public Theater, New York City, the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, and the Metropolitan Arts Centre, Belfast, winning *The Irish Times* Theatre Award for Best New Play, and the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for Drama. It returned to the Royal Court Theatre in 2019. It received over 100,000 views online. In 2018, Ireland's *Ulster American* was performed by the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh, as part of their Edinburgh Festival season, where it was awarded the Carol Tambor Best of Edinburgh Award, and won Best Female Performance, Best New Play and Best Production at the Critics' Awards for Theatre in Scotland. *Not Now* had its English premiere at the Finborough Theatre in 2022. *The Fifth Step* premiered at the Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh as part of their Edinburgh Festival season in 2024, before transferring to @sohoplace, London in 2025, and *Most Favoured* was seen at Soho Theatre in 2025.

118 Finborough Road, London SW10 9ED Telephone 020 7244 7439

e-mail admin@finboroughtheatre.co.uk www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk Artistic Director Neil McPherson

Registered in England and Wales as a company limited by guarantee, no. 03448268.

Registered Charity no. 1071304. Registered address: 118 Finborough Road, London SW10 9ED. A member of the Independent Theatre Council.

PRESS INFORMATION

Director **Harry Burton** has directed *The Lover* (Bridewell Theatre), *The Room* (Royal Court Theatre), *The Dumb Waiter* (West End), *The Dwarfs* (White Bear Theatre) all by Harold Pinter, *Quartermaine's Terms* (Theatre Royal Windsor), *I Found My Horn* (Chichester Festival Theatre, Hampstead Theatre and Trafalgar Studios), *Where I Come From* (Kentucky Rep), *The Leisure Society* (Trafalgar Studios), *Casualties* (Park Theatre), *Barking In Essex* (Wyndham's Theatre), *God Of Carnage* (Copenhagen), *Out There On Fried Meat Ridge Road* (Trafalgar Studios), *The Dogwalker* (Jermyn Street Theatre) and *C'Mon Angie!* (White Bear Theatre). He was Associate Director on *What The Butler Saw* (Vaudeville Theatre). On television, Harry directed the acclaimed Channel 4 documentary *Working With Pinter*, and co-produced the Emmy-winning documentary *Robert Bly – A Thousand Years Of Joy*. He has acted and directed in theatre, television, film and radio for four decades. Highlights as a performer include playing Henry Higgins in *My Fair Lady* (Theatre Royal Drury Lane), the title role in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* (Vienna Festival and BBC2), and the world premiere of Tony Haygarth's *Dark Meaning Mouse* at the Finborough Theatre.

The cast is:

Matthew Blaney | Jimmy

Productions at the Finborough Theatre include *Not Now* and its subsequent transfer to the MAC, Belfast.

Trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art.

Theatre includes *Derry Boys* (Theatre503) *Under The Black Rock* (Arcola Theatre), *Blackout* (Lyric Theatre, Belfast), *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* (Michael Grandage Company at Wyndham's Theatre), *The Secret Love Life of Ophelia* (Greenwich Theatre Online) and *Cymbeline* (Told by an Idiot at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art).

Film includes *Belfast*.

Television includes *Bloodaxe*.

Audio includes *Say Nothing*.

Robbie Martin | Eddie

Trained at The Poor School.

Theatre includes *Celtic Kiss* (Lion and Unicorn Theatre), *Hello Georgie*, *Goodbye Best* (Strand Arts Centre, Belfast, Edinburgh Festival and The Space), *Melons for Two* (Accidental Theatre), *Zig Zag* (The Space) and *C'Mon Angie!* (White Bear Theatre).

Television includes *Six Degrees*.

The press on *What the Animals Say*

'The audience howled with laughter throughout.' *British Theatre Guide*

'You can take the boy out of Belfast but, for sure, you'd be hard-pressed to take the conflicted issues of Belfast out of the boy.' ★★★★★ *The Herald*

'Fierce energy of its dialogue between these two boys from Belfast.' ★★★★★ *The Scotsman*

The press on David Ireland at the Finborough Theatre –

The press on *Everything Between Us* by David Ireland at the Finborough Theatre

★★★★ Four Stars, *The Guardian*, *The Stage*, *The Daily Star*, *Arts Desk*, *Broadway World*, *Theatre Full Stop* and *Paul in London*

'Emotionally rich, unapologetically hilarious, and compelling articulate...Scabrously funny.' Fergus Morgan, *The Stage*

The press on *Yes So I Said Yes* by David Ireland at the Finborough Theatre

★★★★ Four Stars, *The Guardian*, *The Observer*, *The Telegraph*, *The Stage*, *ReviewsGate*, *Broadway World UK* and *Close-Up Culture*

Winner Best Production at the *London Pub Theatres Awards 2022*

'Go prepared to be appalled and challenged.' Mark Lawson, *The Guardian*

'Hurrah for the first London staging of this play by David Ireland, most mordant of contemporary dramatists.' Susannah Clapp, *The Observer*

'A play not to be missed and not many theatres can say that these days.' William Russell, *Reviewsgate*

The press on *Not Now* by David Ireland at the Finborough Theatre

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★★★★★ Five Stars, *London Theatre 1 and Close Up Culture*. ★★★★★ Four Stars, *The Observer, The Stage, Daily Mail, Morning Star, London Pub Theatres Magazine, Broadway World, Everything Theatre, The Reviews Hub, Reviewsgate, Plays To See and Lou Reviews*.

Selected by *The Observer* as one of the Top Six Plays Of The Year 2022.

OffWestEnd Award Nomination for Lead Performance in A Play – Matthew Blaney.

'Not Now is the third new David Ireland play staged at the Finborough Theatre since 2017, in what is becoming a partnership of significance.' Tom Bolton, *Plays International*

'Wonderful to see two actors from Northern Ireland perform a play about Northern Ireland in London. As the character of Ray comments in the play, often the Northern Irish story is ignored or forgotten in the rest of the UK.'

Johnny Kemp, *London Pub Theatres*

'Blaney and Kennedy give excellent performances.' Tom Bolton, *Plays International*

'An excellent Matthew Blaney.' Jeff Prestridge, *Close Up Culture*

PRESS NIGHTS: THURSDAY, 1 OCTOBER 2026 AND FRIDAY, 2 OCTOBER 2026 AT 7.30PM

PHOTOCALL: TUESDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER 2026 AT 1.00PM–1.30PM

Finborough Theatre, 118 Finborough Road, London SW10 9ED

Book online at www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk

Box Office 020 7244 7439

No booking fees

Tuesday, 29 September – Saturday, 24 October 2026

Tuesday to Saturday evenings at 7.30pm. Saturday and Sunday matinees at 3.00pm.

Prices until 4 October 2026 – Tickets £20, £18 concessions.

Previews (29 and 30 September) £15 all seats.

£10 tickets for Under 30s for performances from Tuesday to Sunday of the first week when booked online only.

£15 tickets for residents of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham on Saturday, 3 October 2026 at 7.30pm when booked online only.

Prices from 6 October 2026 to 18 October 2026 – Tickets £25, £23 concessions, except Tuesday evenings £23 all seats.

Friends Evening on Wednesday, 7 October 2026 at 7.30pm

Prices from 20 October 2026 to 24 October 2026 – Tickets £29, £27 concessions, except Tuesday evenings £27 all seats. No concessions on Friday or Saturday evenings.

Group Bookings for all performances – 1 free ticket in every 10 purchased.

Performance Length: Approximately 70 minutes with no interval.

For more information, interviews and images, please contact

Finborough Theatre on e-mail press@finboroughtheatre.co.uk or **020 7244 7439**

Download press releases and images at <https://finboroughtheatre.co.uk/press-resources/>

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