

The Finborough Theatre is now fully heated and air conditioned

FINBOROUGH | THEATRE

Winter Season | October to December 2012



in association with Neil McPherson for the Finborough Theatre presents
The first London production in over 30 years

A Life

by Hugh Leonard.

Directed by Eleanor Rhode. Designed by James Turner. Lighting by Gary Bowman.

Sound and Original Composition by George Dennis. Costume Design by Holly Rose Henshaw.

Cast: Kate Binchy. Judith Coke. Jenny Fennessy. Robert Lonsdale. Mary Mallen. Neil McCaul. Hugh Ross. David Walshe.

"I need to know what I amount to. Debit or credit, that much I am owed."

A new production commissioned by the Finborough Theatre, the first UK production in over 30 years of the Tony-nominated *A Life* by one of Ireland's most acclaimed contemporary dramatists, Hugh Leonard, opens at the Finborough Theatre for a four week limited season on Tuesday, 2 October 2012 (**Press Night: Thursday, 4 October 2012 at 7.30pm**).

It's reckoning time for Desmond Drumm, a scathingly witty and high-principled civil servant, living in small-town Ireland.

With six months to live, Drumm looks back on the triumphs and tragedies of his life as he desperately tries to put his emotional accounts in order. The past and the present meet as Drumm, his simple and loving wife, and the one true love of his life, who rejected him for a lovable ne'er do well, trace the evolution of his life. Isolated from the world by his "high principles," Drumm comes to realise that perhaps he has never given his life, or the people in it, a chance...

A Life won the Harvey Award for Best Play in Ireland and was nominated for a Tony Award for Best Play. It premiered at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, in 1979, starring Cyril Cusack, and was seen on Broadway and for a limited season at The Old Vic. It has been extensively revived in Ireland and the USA including recently in Chicago with John Mahoney as Drumm.

The character of Desmond Drumm first appeared as a small part in Hugh Leonard's best known play *Da* which won the Tony Award for Best Play, the Drama Desk Award and the New York Critics' Circle Award and played for 697 performances on Broadway, and was later filmed, starring Martin Sheen and Barnard Hughes.

The Finborough Theatre regularly presents drama by Irish playwrights, and has won acclaim in recent years for its rediscovery of forgotten Irish playwrights including Lennox Robinson, T.C. Murray and St John Ervine ("Not for the first time, one looks to the Finborough to come up with the most compelling play in London." Michael Billington, *The Guardian*). Artistic Director Neil McPherson says "*A Life* is one of my own personal favourites, and I have long waited for the right director and company to present it at the Finborough Theatre – I'm very happy that we finally have the opportunity to bring this hauntingly beautiful play to London".

Playwright **Hugh Leonard**, the pseudonym of John Keyes Byrne (1926-2009), was one of Ireland's greatest contemporary dramatists. He wrote more than forty works for the stage including *Da*, *Love in the Title*, *The Mask of Moriarty*, *The Lilly Lally Show*, *Moving*, *Kill*, *Time Was*, *Summer*, *The Patrick Pearse Motel*, *The Barracks*, *The Au Pair Man* (nominated for Tony Award for Best Play), *The Quick and the Dead*, *The Saints Go Cycling In*, *The Poker Session*, *Stephen D*, and *A Walk on the Water*. He wrote a vast number of dramas, comedies, classic serials and thrillers for

118 Finborough Road, London SW10 9ED Telephone 020 7244 7439 e-mail admin@finboroughtheatre.co.uk
www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk Artistic Director Neil McPherson

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television in Britain and Ireland including *Parnell and the Englishwoman*, *Insurrection* and original work for Armchair Theatre. His adaptations included *Strumpet City*, *Good Behaviour* and *Silent Song* which won the Prix Italia and a Writers' Guild of Great Britain Award. His books included *Fillums*, *A Wild People*, *Rover* and *Other Cats* and the autobiographies *Out After Dark* and *Home Before Night*. He was variously a columnist, screen writer and reviewer of books and theatre.

Director **Eleanor Rhode** is a former Resident Assistant Director at the Finborough Theatre where she has directed the London premiere of *The Drawer Boy* by Michael Healey, both sell-out runs of *Generous* by Michael Healey, *The December Man* (*L'homme de décembre*) for 2009's *Vibrant – A Festival of Finborough Playwrights*, *Barrow Hill* for *Vibrant – An Anniversary Festival of Finborough Playwrights* in 2010 and *Sihanoukville* for *Vibrant – A Festival of Finborough Playwrights* in 2011. She was also Assistant Director on *Trying* and *S-27*. Eleanor graduated from Mountview in 2008. She went on to train at the National Theatre Studio in 2009 and is a former Staff Director at the National Theatre. Other directing includes *The Gypsy Thread* (National Theatre Studio), *The Error of Their Ways* (Cockpit Theatre), *A Number* (Camden People's Theatre), *This Lime Tree Bower* (Edinburgh Festival), and staged readings of *The Geese of Beverly Road* (Theatre 503) and *Photos of You Sleeping* (Hampstead Theatre). As Associate Director, she has worked on the London transfer of *Lie of The Land* (Arcola Theatre). Eleanor is the Artistic Director of Snapdragon Productions.

The cast includes:

Kate Binchy

Theatre includes *A Cavalier for Milady* (Jermyn Street Theatre), *The Factory Girls* (Arcola Theatre), *The Changeling*, *The Hebrides*, *Juno and the Paycock*, *The Deep Blue Sea* (Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh), *Allergy* (Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh), *The White Devil* (Oxford Playhouse), *The Plough and the Stars*, *Red Roses for Me* (Mermaid Theatre), *Shakespeare Recital for the British Council* (Japan and South East Asia Tour), *A Doll's House* (Liverpool Playhouse), *The Steward of Christendom* (Out of Joint at the Royal Court Theatre and World Tour), *Noises Off* (Olympia Theatre, Dublin), *Flesh and Blood* (National Tour for Triumph Apollo), *Sidewind* (BAC), *John Gabriel Borkman* (York Theatre), *Never in My Lifetime* (Soho Theatre), *The Playboy of the Western World* (St Martin's Theatre) and *Baal* (Phoenix Theatre). Previous Hugh Leonard plays include *Summer* (Watford Palace Theatre) and *Madigan's Lock* (Theatre Royal Stratford East).

Film includes *Mrs Dalloway*, *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*, *The Eagle Has Landed* and *The Sign of Four*.

Television includes *Holby City*, *Casualty*, *One Night*, *The Revenge of Alistair Fury*, *Doctors*, *Whose Baby?*, *Trial and Retribution*, *Fair City*, *Big Bad World*, *The Ruth Rendell Mysteries*, *Father Ted*, *The Chief*, *Events at Drimaghleen*, *A Sleeping Life*, *Crusades*, *Good Behaviour* (adapted by Hugh Leonard), *84 Charing Cross Road* and *Stigma*.

Kate is a frequent contributor to BBC Radio 4 Drama and has recorded many audio books, including those of her cousin Maeve Binchy.

Judith Coke

Trained at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

Theatre includes over forty productions at the National Theatre including *Danton's Death*, *The Enchantment*, *His Girl Friday*, *Tales From The Vienna Woods*, *Remembrance of Things Past*, *The Hare Trilogy*, *The Wind in The Willows*, *Trelawny of the Wells*, *Pygmalion* and *The Voyage Inheritance*.

Other theatre includes *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (Prince of Wales Theatre), *A Day in the Death of Joe Egg* (Comedy Theatre), *As You Like It* (Open Air Theatre, Regent's Park), *Dalliance*, *Love For Love*, *Racing Demon*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* (National Tours) and seasons at the Bristol Old Vic, York, the Watermill, Harrogate Theatre, Derby Playhouse, Perth Theatre, Mercury Theatre, Colchester, and Windsor Theatre Royal.

Television includes *Anna Lee*, *Emma*, *Wives and Daughters*, *Rosemary and Thyme* and *Absence of War*.

Radio includes many productions for the BBC World Service and Radio 4, most recently being *Nightingale Wood*.

Voice work includes *Democracy* (National Theatre, Broadway, Crucible Theatre Sheffield and The Old Vic).

Judith is a member of the board of the Orange Tree Theatre, Richmond.

Jenny Fennessy

Trained at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, where she appeared in *Medea*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Three Sisters*, *The Women*, *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby (Part One)* and *Breathing Corpses*.

Other theatre includes *The Girl Who Was Useful*, *He's Back* (Red Kettle Theatre Company), *The Bus* (Barnstorm Theatre Company) and *The Salvage Shop* (Garter Lane Arts Centre, Waterford).

She was a finalist in the 2012 Michael Bryant Verse Speaking Award (National Theatre) and runner up in the 2012 Alan Bates Award (The Actors Centre).

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Robert Lonsdale

Trained at ALRA.

Theatre includes *Anna Christie* (Donmar Warehouse), *La Bete* (Comedy Theatre and Broadway) and *The Indian Wants The Bronx* (The Young Vic).

Theatre workshops include *Made in Dagenham* with Rupert Goold, *From Here to Eternity* and *Finding Neverland*.

Staged readings include *Fuego* and *Brilliant Adventures* (Royal Court Theatre).

Film includes *The Glass House*.

Television includes *Silent Witness*, *Lost Christmas*, *Doctors*, *A Passionate Woman*, *Plus One*, *Heartbeat*, *Decisions* and *Coronation Street*.

Radio includes *Mole*, *The Steps*, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *Pilgrim* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.

Robert was the winner of the 2008 Carleton Hobbs Bursary Award.

Mary Mallen

Trained at RADA where she appeared in *The Man of Mode*, *Company*, *A Lie of The Mind*, *The Maid's Tragedy*, *Agamemnon*, *Macbeth*, *The Seagull*, *Miss Julie*, *Some Girls* and *Songs For A New World*.

Other theatre includes *Into the Woods*, *Three Sisters* (Middlesex Theatre, USA), *The Cement Garden* (National Theatre Studio) and *The Veil* (National Theatre).

Neil McCaul

At the Finborough Theatre, Neil appeared in *The Drawer Boy* (2012).

Other theatre includes *Soho Cinders* (Soho Theatre), *Twelfth Night* (Singapore Repertory Theatre), *A Round Heeled Woman* (Riverside Studios and Aldwych Theatre), *The Rise and Fall of Little Voice* (Hull Truck Theatre, Hull), *Fings Ain't What They Used to Be* (Union Theatre), *Oedipus* (National Theatre), *Calendar Girls* (Noël Coward Theatre), *Sylvia* (Apollo Theatre), *June Moon* (Vaudeville Theatre), *Privates on Parade* (Piccadilly Theatre), *The Merchant of Venice*, *Trelawny of the 'Wells'* (The Old Vic), *Once Upon A Time At The Adelphi* (Liverpool Playhouse), *Flying Under Bridges*, *Cor Blimey* (Watford Palace Theatre), *Brighton Rock* (Almeida Theatre), Chicago (Adelphi Theatre), *Romeo and Juliet* (English Touring Theatre), *Blackbird* (Southwark Playhouse), *Mr England* (Crucible Theatre, Sheffield), *Spend Spend Spend* (West Yorkshire Playhouse), *Sus* (Greenwich Theatre), *Spin* (White Bear Theatre and BAC) and *Habeus Corpus* (Oxford Playhouse).

Film includes *The Pirates of Penzance* and *Billy the Kid and the Green Baize Vampire*.

Television includes *Holby City*, *Foyle's War*, *Doctors*, *Blue Murder*, *Nostradamus*, *Most Mysterious Murders*, *Fifty Five Degrees North*, *Crossroads*, *Hearts and Bones*, *Lock, Stock, People Like Us*, *Where The Heart Is*, *A Wing and a Prayer*, *Father Ted Christmas Special*, *Get Real*, *Comedy Nation*, *Time After Time*, *Class Act*, *Up the Garden Path*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Take Me Home*, *The Upper Hand*, *The Peter Principle*, *Into the Fire*, *Casualty*, *Mary Rose* and *Minder*.

Hugh Ross

Trained at RADA.

Theatre includes *New World Order* (Brighton Festival, Barbican and Shoreditch Town Hall), *Hamlet* (Crucible Theatre, Sheffield), *Plague Over England* (Duchess Theatre), *Waste* (Almeida Theatre), *Bent* (Trafalgar Studios), *5/11* (Chichester Festival Theatre), *Pyrenees* (Paines Plough at the Tron Theatre, Glasgow and Menier Chocolate Factory), *Love Me Tonight* (Hampstead Theatre), *The Woman in Black* (Fortune Theatre), *Hare Trilogy* (Birmingham Rep), *A Prayer for Owen Meany*, *Lady In The Dark*, *Battle Royal* (National Theatre), *Fifty Revolutions* (Whitehall Theatre), *The Invention of Love* (Theatre Royal Haymarket), *Passion* for which he received an Olivier Award Nomination for Best Supporting Actor in a Musical (Queen's Theatre), *Tartuffe* (Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester), *Democracy* (Bush Theatre), *Dr Faustus*, *Mary Stuart* (Greenwich Theatre), *King Lear* (Royal Court Theatre), *Death And The Maiden* (Duke of York's Theatre), *Hedda Gabler* (Abbey Theatre, Dublin, and Playhouse Theatre), *As You Like It*, *All Well That Ends Well* (Royal Shakespeare Company), *Bussy D'Ambois* (The Old Vic) and *The Cid* and *Twelfth Night* for which he received the *Time Out* Performer Award in 1987 (Cheek by Jowl).

Film includes *Jabberwock*, *The Iron Lady*, *First Night*, *Dorian Gray*, *Bronson*, *Charlotte Gray*, *The Four Feathers*, *Trainspotting*, *Patriot Games* and Clive Barker's *Nightbreed*.

Television includes *Dark Matters*, *Midsomer Murders*, *Rab C. Nesbitt*, *Psychoville*, *Marple*, *Foyle's War*, *The Palace*, *Mine All Mine*, *Sea of Souls*, *Snoddy*, *The Cazalets*, *Men Only*, *Mists of Avalon*, *Invasion Earth*, *Family Money*, *Sharpe's Sword*, *Sharpe's Battle*, *Sharpe's Gold*, *Dr Finlay*, *Between The Lines*, *Lovejoy*, *Absolutely Fabulous*, *An Ungentlemanly Act*, *Poirot*, *The Advocates* and *Misterioso*.

Hugh has directed for the Royal Shakespeare Company and at the Mercury Theatre, Colchester. His production of Ronan Noone's *The Atheist* will be performed at the Lion and Unicorn Theatre in November 2012.

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David Walshe

At the Finborough Theatre, David appeared in *Drama At Inish* (2011).

Trained at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama.

Other theatre includes *Sex Chips and the Holy Ghost*, *Sleeping Beauty* *Insomnia*, *WestEnders*, *An Apple A Day*, *What the Animals Say* and *Clara* (Oran Mór, Glasgow), *The Other Side of Conflict*, *The Breathing House*, and *The Weir* (Tron Theatre, Glasgow), *Flashpoint* and *Entre-Deux-Mers* (Citizens Theatre, Glasgow), *Luvhart* and *Lost Property*, (Edinburgh Festival), *Betrayal* and *Shining City* (Rapture at the Byre Theatre, St Andrews), *Dirty Dusting* (National Tour), *The Psychic Detective* (National Tour), *Mother Courage* (BenchTours), *Big Baby* (Visible Fictions) and the award-winning *A Mobile Thriller* (Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh, at the Edinburgh Festival and international tour).

In Ireland he has worked in TV and Radio Drama for RTE Studios, Dublin.

Film includes *A Soldier's Song*, *The Morbegs*, *The Chop*, *A Map With Gaps*, *Irish Tourism Global Advertising Campaign*, *Korea*, *Love and Rage*, *Meal Deal* and the upcoming feature film *Evening of the Dead*.

David is currently developing *Sex, Chips and the Holy Ghost* with Channel 4.



Snapdragon Productions is led by Artistic Director Eleanor Rhode and Producer Sarah Loader, who formed the company in 2009. Their productions include the London premiere of *The Drawer Boy* by Michael Healey (Finborough Theatre), which was named Time Out's Critics' Choice; the European premiere of Michael Healey's

Generous (Finborough Theatre) which enjoyed two sell-out runs and was also named Time Out's Critics' Choice; the award-winning European premiere of Rodgers and Hammerstein's musical *Me and Juliet* (Finborough Theatre); *Anna Karenina* (Arcola Theatre); a co-production of the world premiere of Anders Lustgarten's *A Day at the Racists* (Finborough Theatre and the Broadway Theatre, Barking) which was nominated for the 2010 TMA Award for Outstanding Achievement in Regional Theatre and won the playwright the Inaugural Harold Pinter Award for Playwriting; and the world premiere of Jane Wainwright's *Barrow Hill* (also at the Finborough Theatre).

The press on *A Life* and Hugh Leonard

"Even better than its famous predecessor (*Da*): as human and funny, but richer in texture and even more cannily aware of the sad complexity of life" *The Daily Telegraph*

"Mr Leonard has created a life of memorable wit and feeling... and a great character. Drumm is not only worth an evening; he is a man who ultimately commands our laughter, affection and compassion." *New York Times*

"*A Life* is a gentle triumph of retrospection... a larger-than-life act of considerable understanding." *New York Post*

"Eloquent, literate, witty and touching." *Christian Science Monitor*

"A marvellous, remarkable play." *WCBS-TV*

"A wickedly funny writer... stings like the best of Wilde or Orton." Michael Coveney

The Press on Eleanor Rhode's productions at the Finborough Theatre

On *The Drawer Boy* –

Time Out Critics' Choice, ★★★★★ Five Stars, *WhatsOnStage* ★★★★★ Four Stars, *The Public Reviews*, *The Times*, *Time Out*, *Exeunt*

"Amusing, affecting and evocative... Satirical yet tender, this is a small delight." Dominic Maxwell, *The Times*

"Rhode's production delves into all the play's many layers, drawing out the qualities that have made it a near-classic in its native Canada." Zakia Uddin, *Exeunt*

"*The Drawer Boy*...makes a powerful case for the necessity of art. It's one that's perfectly rendered here in Eleanor Rhode's lean and vital production." Stewart Pringle, *Time Out*

"Skillfully directed by Eleanor Rhode, the actors truly shine in their roles." *Londonist*

"This three-hander is delicately and sympathetically approached by director Eleanor Rhode, who skillfully draws out the humour within each relationship, and creates an immersive world which the audience can simply sink into." Amy Stow, *WhatsOnStage*

On *Generous* –

Time Out Critics' Choice

★★★★ Four Stars *Time Out*, *WhatsOnStage*

"As good as anything you'll find in the West End." Robert Shore, *Time Out*

"Eleanor Rhode's production is bright, sharp, swift and well-acted." Michael Billington, *The Guardian*

"Slick direction by Eleanor Rhode" Paul Vale, *The Stage*

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"Adeptly directed by Eleanor Rhode, *Generous* is engaging and genuinely thought-provoking throughout." Kelly Ann Warden, *WhatsOnStage*

"Eleanor Rhode matches its seriocomic mood admirably, coaxing fine performances out of her cast." Dominic Maxwell, *The Times*

"A high-quality production that zings along from first to last." Timothy Ramsden, *Reviewsgate*

"Director Eleanor Rhode grasps these high-octane minds in a fast, explosive production...the acting's undoubtedly fine throughout." Timothy Ramsden, *Reviewsgate*

PRESS NIGHT: THURSDAY, 4 OCTOBER 2012 AT 7.30PM

PHOTOCALL: TUESDAY, 2 OCTOBER 2012 AT 1.00PM-1.30PM

Finborough Theatre, The Finborough, 118 Finborough Road, London SW10 9ED

Box Office 0844 847 1652 Book online at www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk

Tuesday, 2 October – Saturday, 27 October 2012

Tuesday to Saturday Evenings at 7.30pm. Sunday Matinees at 3.00pm. Saturday matinees at 3.00pm (from 13 October 2012).

Prices for Weeks One and Two (2–14 October 2012) – Tickets £14, £10 concessions, except Tuesday Evenings £10 all seats, and Saturday evenings £14 all seats. Previews (2 and 3 October) £9 all seats.

£6 tickets for Under 30's for performances from Tuesday to Sunday of the first week when booked online only.

£10 tickets for residents of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea on Saturday, 6 October 2012 when booked online.

Prices for Weeks Three and Four (16–27 October 2012) – Tickets £16, £12 concessions, except Tuesday Evenings £12 all seats, and Saturday evenings £16 all seats.

Performance Length: Approximately two hours with one interval of fifteen minutes.

For more information, interviews and images, please contact

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

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

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