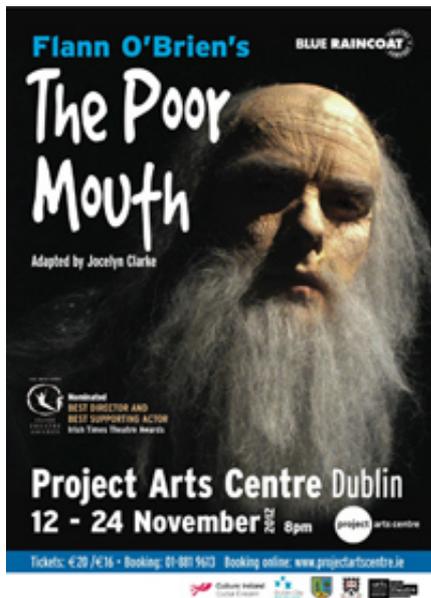


Tag Archives: *Blue Raincoat*

NOVEMBER 13, 2012 · 11:11 PM

Review: The Poor Mouth at The Project Arts Centre

It's been years since I read an uttering from Flann O'Brien and more's the pity. With a uniquely Irish, twisted and convoluted but so irresistibly lyrical turn of phrase, O'Brien is, despite opinions to the contrary, a unique Irish writer.



Yes, he did follow on from Joyce which was an enormous struggle in itself for any writer not least one who shared the same alma mater and stomping ground with the writer of the world-famous blue books of Eccles, and while I'm not entirely convinced O'Brien did enough to stay away from Joyce, he did carve through a style and niche of his own.

His imaginative meanderings through dark and unknown worlds led by the careful hands of colourful and insightful characters marks a new dawn in postmodern writing for Irish literature. *At Swim Two Birds* being his most famous novel, other works such as *The Third Policeman* and *An Béal Bocht* can boast an enormous amount of literary achievement.

While these quirky pieces of literature have found themselves enjoying somewhat of a resurgence in popularity in recent years; they have also taken to the stage thanks to the impressive and careful work of dramaturge Jocelyn Clarke. Blue Raincoat are currently staging Clarke's stage adaptation of O'Brien's novel *An Béal Bocht* in one of the Sligo company's newest productions – *The Poor Mouth*.

Having seen Blue Raincoat's productions of *At Swim Two Birds* and *The Third Policeman*, I thought I knew what I was in for – imaginative staging, energetic performances and complete dedication to appreciating the writing style of Flann O'Brien. I didn't expect however, for a completely new imagining of a book I thought I had already made my mind up about.

To me, *An Béal Bocht* is a cleverly constructed parody of the island literature that was prominent during the

Celtic Revival era – it's packed full of lots of fun pastiches of over-enthusiastic gaelgóirs, ignorant peasants and the general misery and hardship we've come to expect in plenty of Irish literature. Blue Raincoat keep all this wonderful humour and very astute observations on the ridiculous over-simplified attitudes of the Celtic Revivalists, but also manage to extract the beautiful humanity of the novel's story. The sadness as well as the uplifting and joyous moments throughout the story are treated with enormous reverence and create extremely poignant moments throughout the production.

The company have never failed to impress me and with a great cast led by the extremely talented Ruth Lehane; *The Poor Mouth* is both a respectable tribute to Ireland's greatest postmodern writer as well as a celebration of his wry wit and cruel and unmistakably Irish sense of humour.

Newcomers to O'Brien's work may find it hard to get used to the long rambling sentences full of clauses and roundabout ways of getting to the point and the production keeps perhaps a little bit too close to the text resulting in quite a lengthy performance, but these minor issues aside *The Poor Mouth* is well worth the visit to The Project Arts Centre for what, I personally promise will be a clever, creative, moving and most of all, fun production.

Plays until November 24 – [more details here >>](#)

Share this:

Facebook 34

Twitter 1

More

Like this:

★ Like



One blogger likes this.

FEBRUARY 17, 2010 · 2:34 PM

Blue Raincoat's The Third Policeman Review

After my trip to see [Eamon Morrissey's The Brother](#), I meant to write up a review of Blue Raincoat's [The Third Policeman](#), but stuff happened and I never got around to it.

It's been ages since I went to see the Sligo based company's stage version of O'Brien's somewhat rogue novel. Written straight after the genius that is [At Swim Two Birds](#), O'Brien experienced difficulty securing a publisher after the mediocre reception of *At Swim*, and O'Brien eventually concocted a ridiculous lie which had the manuscript flying out of the window of his car on a drive one evening, only for the novel to be published posthumously.

While *At Swim Two Birds* is postmodern and quirky in format and structure, the characters and concepts are the quirky and insane facets of *The Third Policeman*, so O'Brien's second novel is probably better suited to a stage adaptation seeing as there is little structural difficulty in the physical staging – it would be interesting to see how the metalepsis is conveyed in a stage adaptation of *At Swim*.



Copyright Blue Raincoat 2009

Anyways – enough of the literary jargon. The Third Policeman on stage is beautiful. It really struck me how well Blue Raincoat managed to take all the visual elements of the novel, such as the stark setting in Ireland’s midlands, as well as the darkness and bleakness. However, there is a very magical element to the production and of course the cyclical theme is well used to keep the momentum up within the play as well as staying true to the character of the bicycle within the novel. In particular, scenes with the characters repeating movements and moving around the large book in a circle really work well.

I was also really struck by the terrific acting, as well as the music which really set the tone of the play. A friend who saw the play hated it and thought it was a bit farcical but I have a suspicion that she may have not read the novel. I think that, although the production is terrific as a stand alone project, having read the novel beforehand and understanding the theories created by the characters along with the general mayhem of the fantastical world created by O’Brien is a plus and you really have to be “into” that sort of thing to really enjoy the play.

Probably not a must for Chekov fans! I’m not so sure that I would even recommend it to The Brother fans, as the characters and humour is very different. The Brother has real “pub” humour, while The Third Policeman is very quirky, however it’s still an excellent adaptation of a wonderful novel!

Share this:

Facebook

Twitter

More

Like this:

★ Like

Be the first to like this.

NOVEMBER 15, 2009 · 10:48 PM

Eamon Morrissey’s The Brother Review

A pint of plain is your only man....and Eamon Morrissey is the only man to represent the humour of Flann O’Brien/Myles na Gopaleen/Brian O’Nolan.* I got a nice little surprise yesterday when I was presented with a ticket for [Ten 42](#) and Eamon Morrissey’s one man show *The Brother*. Inspired by, shall we call him for clarity sake, O’Nolan’s variety of fictional and satirical works, *The Brother* is a well gelled trip through the writer’s work and a must for any O’Nolan fan. The piece contains, from what I could identify, sketches from the *Cruiskeen Lawn* column (Irish Times), *At Swim Two Birds*, *The Third Policeman* and I have a vague idea that the taxidermist story is from *The Hard Life* – but I’m open to correction on that one!!!!

Playing in Draocht last night, Morrissey can only but astound you with his sheer resilience. I don't know what age the man is, but seriously, if any actor of any age could stay on stage on his own for over an hour and a half without taking any break, talking non-stop, and perform such an entertaining show, culminating in the downing of a pint of Guinness in one go.... he/she deserves all the awards and accolades on offer.

O'Nolan's work is easily suited to stage performance with wonderful, wry and witty one-liners and real theatrical colour, but Morrissey really puts the cherry on top! It was particularly touching when the audience chimed in with O'Nolan's Jem Casey character's recital of *A Pint of Plain is Your Only Man*, as below:

35 years ago Morrissey first performed this show on the Peacock stage, and he can still perform the show with as much freshness, relevance and humour as I can only imagine he began. I should put my hand up and admit that I'm one of the biggest Brian O'Nolan/Flann O'Brien/Myles na Gopaleen fans, and I was, up until yesterday, extremely excited about Brendan Gleeson's upcoming cinematic adaptation of [At Swim Two Birds](#), however after last night's performance, I do wonder how Gleeson is going to better *The Brother* as a suitable celebration of O'Nolan's work. You can line up a stellar cast of Ireland's biggest Hollywood hotshots, but really Morrissey is the ephihane of O'Nolan's work – he sits proudly in the set of the old Dublin pub, his accent is perfectly pitched with not a hint of “Howya” or “OMG” – just true blue traditional Dublin of the 1950s and 1960s – he is magnificent!



Image courtesy of Ten42 Productions' website

On another related thread, I recently saw [Blue Raincoat's](#) *The Third Policeman* when it played in the Project and was really impressed by their creativity and originality when adapting the text to stage. I really felt they did something different with the storyline and presented it in a fresh and creative manner – very fitting to the juicy postmodern storyline of O'Brien's "lost" text. I recently spotted that the same production company are currently staging their adaptation of *At Swim Two Birds* in Sligo...fingers crossed they'll bring it to Dublin sooner rather than later!!! In the meantime, we'll have to satisfy ourselves with this:

A pint of Flann is your only Man!

*To clarify for those "not in the Flann-loving loop", Brian O'Nolan was the "real person" behind the two pseudonyms of Myles na Gopaleen (of *Cruiskeen Lawn* and *An Beal Bocht* fame) and Flann O'Brien (of *At Swim Two Birds*, *The Third Policeman*, *The Hard Life* and *The Dalkey Archive* fame). Born in 1911, he went to college in UCD, and in between working as a civil servant and regular columnist for the *Irish Times*, he also published a number of novels which, while they did not enjoy huge success in his lifetime have seen a resurgence in popularity in recent years. After a lifetime of alcohol abuse, O'Nolan died (sadly and fittingly) on April 1st, 1966.

Share this:

Facebook

Twitter

More

Like this:

★ Like

Be the first to like this.