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Adapted by Jocelyn Clarke

FLANN O'BRIEN'S
**THE THIRD
POLICEMAN**

Media Release

Blue Raincoat presents
Flann O' Brien's *The Third Policeman*
adapted by Jocelyn Clarke

Flann O' Brien aka Myles Myles na Gopaleen; novelist, satirist, linguist and newspaper columnist conveyed a marvelously surreal vision of Irish life in his many books and in particular in his much loved "Cruiskeen Lawn" column with *The Irish Times*.

His most celebrated book, *The Third Policeman*, first published over 40 years ago is a classic of modern literature. Set in an archetypal Irish village the book contains characters that range from a man who has no name but who has a soul named Joe, three rather curious village policemen who have a machine for storing light until it is needed, a murderous rake called Finnucanne and a one legged gallows maker. Add to this the theories of De Selby, an eccentric philosopher who believes that the world is not round but shaped like a sausage and you have a book that is all at once a surreal murder mystery, a highly comical satire and a chilling fable of eternal grief.

Blue Raincoat Theatre Company's critically acclaimed stage adaptation of the book was a sell out in venues throughout Ireland in 2008 and has since enjoyed a two week sold out run at The Project Arts Centre, Dublin in February 2009. No surprise really for a show that was voted one of the top 5 Theatre productions of 2007 by *The Irish Times*.

The Third Policeman engages, entertains, amazes and amuses. What else would one expect from the story that features literatures most infamous love affair - between a man and his bicycle.

“marvelous...and it looked gorgeous”

The Irish Times

“A heady delight”

The Sunday Independent

“Fantastic production”

The Sunday Independent.

Media Review

The Irish Times October 19th 2007 Sara Keating

The Third Policeman at The Factory Performance Space

“Ireland is a queer country”, indeed, especially in the imagination of Flann O’Brien, where bicycled humans, human bicycles, armies of one-legged men and Mermen philosophers make the most familiar landmarks of Irish literary tradition disquieting and strange.

In Jocelyn Clarke’s new adaptation of *The Third Policeman* for Blue Raincoat Theatre Company, O’Brien’s absurdist vision is given full gothic resonance as well as light relief. From the play’s opening monologue, *The Man with No Name* is teetering on the edge of sanity, his search for the mysterious black box that has gone missing being gradually revealed as an unfolding hallucination which darkens and gets stranger – and consequently more funny-as the play moves along with perfectly measured pace.

Jamies Vartan’s striking stage design gives director Niall Henry a large open book (literally) from which he can build his layered production. Multiple entrances, exits and journeys across the stage, are fluidly choreographed with a slow expressionistic physicality; while Michael Cummins’s unsettling mood setting lights and Joe Hunt’s portentous circus score lend an extra ominous edge to the actors’ marionette-like movements.

Blue Raincoat's resident ensemble provides individually nuanced performances as well as a cohesive vision throughout the 90-minute drama, particularly in the scenes where they are forced to embody various levels of velocipedity.

Ciaran Mc Cauley and John Carty are especially impressive as the passionately pedalling policemen, Pluck and McCruiskeen, while Sandra O Malley bravely stalks the shadow of the stage as the half-mad Man with No Name.

The Third Policeman's colourful characters and outrageous plot twists are rich with theatrical possibility, and Blue Raincoat's stylised approach fully exploits this potential. Clarke's adaptation, however, resonates beyond Blue Raincoat's entertaining production. It suggests a line from Synge-the original master of gothic comedy-to O'Brien, whose dark vision of the countryside is as funny, as tragic and as poetic as anything that Synge found in the shadow of the Wicklow glens.

Media Review

The Sunday Business Post February 22nd 2009, by Helen Boylan

The Third Policeman at The Project Arts Centre

O'Brien's masterpiece brought to life on the stage

Most people familiar with the 1940 book by Flann O'Brien (one of O'Nolan's many pseudonyms) will approach this theatrical adaptation with keen curiosity. How will the strange, intricate and dreamlike novel, with all its absurd theories and other-worldliness, make the leap from page to stage? Dramaturge and writer Jocelyn Clarke has risen to such a challenge, and created a lively, imaginative work for theatre which should entertain both fans of and newcomers to the late Irish novelists' writing.

When the play opens, a low fuzzy spotlight slowly lights up a figure standing on the pages of a huge open book. As it brightens and the figure comes into focus, an atmospheric sound increases at the same pace as the light brightens. The combined visual and aural impact of that simple effect sent a slight shiver through my skin. It was one of the many pleasurable moments to come during this Blue Raincoat Theatre Company production.

The figure is Man with no Name (played with unwavering appeal by Sandra O Malley). With clear, measured diction in a comforting Irish accent, this unnamed protagonist tells the audience how and why he came to be in a rural town peopled by a community who have a very unusual, often sensual, affinity for bicycles. In order to fund the definitive commentary on a philosopher called De Selby who he admires, Man with No Name becomes embroiled in a plot to murder a wealthy man for his money. With too many layers in this multi-faceted story to squeeze into the limited space of this page, let's just say that Man with no Name is on the hunt for a box of money which was hidden by his one-time partner in the murderous crime.

On his journey, he meets a variety of madcap characters, including his soul mate Joe (Kellie Hughes), Policeman Fox (Ciaran McCauley), John Diveney (John Carty), and Gilhaney (Fiona McGeown).

Niall Henry directs a sparkling, upbeat production which zips along and captures much of the flair and rich colour of the original book. The language and its delivery has a musicality and poetry to its rhythm with clear origins in the historic oral traditions of storytelling.

In this escapist piece of theatre, the audience can be transported into an unpredictable world of galloping old men, steak-eating bicycles, miniscule invisible boxes, an industrial eternity, and a house so full of strawberry jam that the doors won't close.



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