BOLAND: JOURNEY OF A POET

WORDS BY Eavan Boland
EDITED BY Colm Tóibín
DIRECTED BY Garry Hynes
PERFORMED BY Siobhán Cullen
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BOLAND: JOURNEY OF A POET

A Druid at Home production

LIVE STREAM PERFORMANCES
22–24 APRIL 2021
AVAILABLE ON DEMAND
27 APRIL–2 MAY 2021

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DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY
Colm Hogan

SET DESIGNER
Francis O’Connor

COSTUME DESIGNER
Clíodhna Hallissey

SOUND DESIGNER
Sinéad Diskin

COMPOSER
Conor Linehan

PORTRAIT ARTIST
Debbie Chapman

DURATION
60 minutes approximately with no interval

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#BolandJourneyOfAPoet
#DruidAtHome

Rehearsal Photograph: Emilija Jefremova
‘Finding a voice where they found a vision’

I am delighted that Druid is presenting *Boland: Journey of a Poet*. Eavan had a great gift for friendship and I was lucky enough to become a close friend when we were students together in Trinity in the 1960s. Both of us in our own ways were questioning society’s approach towards women, seeking a set of values by which to live and work, formulating ways to express our uneasiness with society and its attitudes. We would meet regularly, walk up Grafton Street and sit in a café, having these long conversations about poetry and law, the central role of the imagination.

Eavan had a wonderful sense of humour. One day she rang me and said she needed seven laws that discriminate against women for a meeting of the Women’s Liberation Movement. When I asked why only seven, she said, ‘It’s a good number and all I would be able to remember!’

Eavan talked openly about the struggle to write about what she felt deeply about, and to have it considered poetry. We each had our first child about the same time, and I loved hearing her read her poem ‘Night Feed’.

Eavan was the friend I turned to the night before my wedding to Nick in 1970. I stayed in her new home in Dundrum which she and Kevin had just moved in to after their marriage. It was very disorganised and still full of packing cases. Eavan laughed out loud when I asked her for a needle to fix my hem. We ended up finding a small pin that did the trick.

Much later, when I was preparing my Inaugural Address as President, I told Eavan I wanted to refer to women who had been outside history – a phrase we had both discussed together. She gave me the lovely last line, from ‘The Singers’, which she was still working on: ‘Finding a voice where they found a vision’.

I visited Eavan several times in Stanford and came to know how loved and respected she was there. Again, I recall her humour. When I asked if she thought of retiring from Director of the Stegner Fellowship, she replied ‘Oh no, I love administration!’ We both laughed, but what she meant was she loved the young poets she was helping, and she would do anything for them.

A few years ago, I attended a reception organised by Poetry Ireland to honour Eavan, and I realised the extraordinary inspiration she was for younger poets, particularly women. This she continues to be, so her journey really matters, now, and into the future.

PRESIDENT MARY ROBINSON
APRIL 2021
When Silence Is Broken

I knew Eavan Boland’s voice from the radio. Her tone was both questioning and authoritative. Poetry mattered to her. It did not survive solely in a private realm, but had, she believed, an element that was public. Its responsibility lay in the large, uncharted space between the lyrical and the political. As a reviewer and a broadcaster, she sought to tease out how this fraught and shifting space could be transformed. As a poet, she set about interrogating what was private, making clear that any image in a poem reflects not only the self but the wider world. And the question of who speaks in a poem, or who is the subject of a poem, remains a political one.

Eavan Boland moved from writing poems of formal grace and distant perspectives to dealing with her life as a woman and a mother in Ireland to considering what the past with all its erasures and ambiguous textures means. Her tone, as she wrote her early books, became more and more urgent. She sought a line in her poems that made a clear and chiselled statement. She avoided irony and easy comfort.

In her essays, she set about exploring and channeling the legacy that she had inherited from writers such as Elizabeth Bishop and Adrienne Rich. Once she began to teach in the United States, she found the debates about poetry there invigorating and rewarding. Soon, she herself became a central figure in the argument about poetry and privilege, poetry and gender, poetry and social change. At Stanford, where she ran the writing programme from 1996 until her death in 2020, she had an enormous influence on a generation of young American poets.

The impact she had arose not only from her eloquence but from her ethical sense. I remember meeting a student who reported that Eavan Boland had in a seminar asked her the most frightening question: ‘Why did you write this poem?’ The answer to such a question, for Eavan Boland, would always be complex. She understood the mysterious origins of a poem, but she also viewed composition and revision as deliberate and exacting. She sought a connection between vision and high intelligence and when there wasn’t one, she created it. In poetry, she saw no excuse for the unexamined line, or the statement or metaphor that was not fixed in something felt or seen or deeply understood. She saw no reason for the poem that was merely a technical exercise or was not rooted in experience or in some pressing need to write.

Her two prose books Object Lessons (1995) and Journey with Two Maps (2011) include her writing about other poets, but they also contain remarkable autobiographical essays which throw light on the poems. She writes about her mother, the painter Frances Kelly, and her diplomat father Freddie Boland, her upbringing in London and New York and then back in Dublin with a feeling that this was where she belonged and this was also from where she was estranged, a useful beginning for a poet.

These essays are attempts to create a mirror so that Eavan Boland can see herself in a time when representation and reflection raised questions about privilege and ownership. Since her life was as a young mother in the Dublin suburbs, where was the poem that described this? If such a poem were to appear, what would it look like? Thus began the poet’s journey from a writer in possession of eloquence and great technical skills to a woman registering her own small world – house, children, garden, views from windows – and giving it the power and resonance of what it sounds like when silence is broken.
Her writing about this journey offers context for the poems. Sometimes, we see the very moment that must have given rise to the poem. Her tone in her prose is never relaxed, it is always formal and reflective and deliberate. And yet the essays are revealing. It is unusual for a poet to offer us so much background to the best poems she has made. Often it happens by chance, such as Elizabeth Bishop in her letters, or in another form, such as Seamus Heaney in the interviews with Dennis O’Driscoll collected in *Stepping Stones*, but seldom in such a direct way.

It was as though Boland’s journey required a map not only for her but for the reader. She wanted to make clear how uneasy were some of the decisions she made, how much confusion and anxiety and rethinking went into what she did. What she trusts in her prose writing as much as in the poetry is the image itself. She works on image as though she were a painter with light. She knows that, as she says in one of her last poems ‘The Fire Gilder’, she is ‘burning light/ building heat’.

In putting *Boland: Journey of a Poet* together, I followed a line made by Eavan Boland’s own poems. I often tried to match a poem with a passage of prose, or at other times I allowed the prose to throw refracted light onto a poem. I followed the line of her journey, as her life changed, as her sense of her vocation changed, as her writing changed. Every word in the script is her word. I did not add anything; I did not need to. All the time, I concentrated on Eavan Boland’s voice, how formal it could be and also how willing to change register, how ready to speak plainly and also to search desperately for the perfect phrase, find the sudden illumination, the idiom of pure clarity, the moment of completion.

**COLM TÓIBÍN**
APRIL 2021
Eavan Boland (1944–2020)

A defining presence in Irish literature since the 1970s, Eavan Boland was born in Dublin in 1944, the youngest child of career diplomat Frederick Boland and Irish painter Frances Kelly. At six years of age she left for London, and later New York, finally returning as a boarder at Holy Child Convent, Killiney at fifteen. The peripatetic life of a diplomat’s family created in Boland a sense of displacement vital to her later explorations of self, family and nation.

After graduating from Trinity College Dublin in 1966, Boland began a doctoral thesis on W.B. Yeats, in whose work she found an early powerful affinity and example of laying claim to a place through language. In 1967 she published her first book of poems, New Territory, and was appointed a junior lecturer. Sensing the conservative environment was at odds with her ambition as a poet, Boland left her post at Trinity after a year.

When Boland began her second volume, The War Horse, she was in her early twenties, living in an Ireland that seemed secure and settled. By the time it was published in 1975, she was thirty, married to novelist Kevin Casey, expecting her first child, and looking out on a country fractured by civil violence. As Boland’s life stabilised around family, the crisis in Northern Ireland grew and darkened and how she thought about being a poet changed. By the end of her thirties, she had radically dismantled and rebuilt a poetic self in In Her Own Image (1980) and Night Feed (1982), routing her artistic exploration through women’s bodies, lives and histories.

In The Journey (1987) Boland extended that exploration into the way history confronts myth, and both engage nationhood.

In Outside History (1990) she described that artistic journey as stepping out of myth into history. In In a Time of Violence (1994) myth is revisited in the form of Anna Liffey, cast as an aging Dublin woman who has taken a lifetime to claim the ‘fractions of a life’.

In 1996 Boland returned to the United States to an appointment as Professor of English at Stanford University. The Lost Land, published two years later, marks the end of her years at home with her children, Sarah and Eavan Frances. It also explores the lives of colony’s unrecorded daughters, on city streets where a young poet struggled to find herself in a meteor shower of fragments of Irish history. Over subsequent volumes - Against Love Poetry (2001), Domestic Violence (2007), and A Woman Without a Country (2014) - Boland refined her sense of history’s exclusions using Virginia Woolf’s strategy of thinking ‘back through our mothers’. In her final posthumously published volume, The Historians (2020), history begins with mothers.

Until her sudden death in 2020, Boland continued to teach at Stanford University where she directed the Creative Writing Program. In addition to poetry, she wrote two influential prose books, Object Lessons (1995) and A Journey with Two Maps (2011), for which she received a PEN Award for creative nonfiction. A member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the Royal Irish Academy, she received a Lannan Foundation Award for Poetry, The Corrington Medal for Literary Excellence, and the Costa Award for Poetry.

JODY ALLEN RANDOLPH
APRIL 2021
Production Team

HAIR AND MAKE-UP  Gráinne Coughlan
COSTUME SUPERVISOR  Clíodhna Hallissey
DEPUTY STAGE MANAGER  Sophie Flynn
CHIEF ELECTRICIAN  Shannon Light
PRODUCTION SOUND  Frankie Pollard
VENUE TECHNICIAN  Frank Commins
CAMERA OPERATORS  Roman Bugovskiy
Martin Nee
CAMERA & LIVESTREAM FACILITIES  StationHouse Media
VISION MIXER  James Ryan
STREAMING TECHNICIAN  Johnathan Connolly
PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHY  Emilija Jefremova
GRAPHIC DESIGN  Gareth Jones
PUBLICITY  Bowe Communications
COVID TESTING  Event Medical Services

Thank You

Druid gratefully acknowledges the support of many people who assisted with this production.

The family of Eavan Boland
Michael Schmidt and John McAuliffe at Carcanet Press
Patricia Flaherty
Carolanne Joyce
Cue One Ireland
Blaise Drummond
Jody Allen Randolph
Deirdre Grandi

Boland: Journey of a Poet is presented in partnership An Grianán, Letterkenny; Backstage Theatre, Longford; Dunamaise Arts Centre, Portlaoise; glór, Ennis; Lime Tree Theatre, Limerick; Pavilion Theatre, Dun Laoghaire; Siamsa Tire, Tralee; Town Hall Theatre, Galway; The Everyman, Cork; Watergate Theatre, Kilkenny.

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Eavan Boland (1944–2020)

Born in Dublin in 1944, Eavan Boland studied in Ireland, London and New York. Her first book was published in 1967. She taught at Trinity College, University College and Bowdoin College Dublin, and at the University of Iowa. She was Mabury Knapp Professor in the Humanities at Stanford University, California. A pioneering figure in Irish poetry, Boland’s works include The Journey and other poems (1987), Night Feed (1994), The Lost Land (1998) and Code (2001). Her poems and essays appeared in magazines such as The New Yorker, The Atlantic, Kenyon Review and American Poetry Review. She was a regular reviewer for The Irish Times. She divided her time between California and Dublin where she lived with her husband, the novelist Kevin Casey. Eavan died in Dublin on 27 April 2020.
Colm Tóibín

Colm Tóibín is the author of nine novels, including *The Master* and *Brooklyn*, and two collections of stories. He has been shortlisted for the Booker Prize three times and his work has been translated into more than thirty languages. He is a contributing editor at the London Review of Books, Mellon Professor of Humanities at Columbia University and Chancellor of the University of Liverpool. A selection of his poems is published in *New Poetries VIII* (Carcanet, 2021).

Garry Hynes

Garry Hynes co-founded Druid in 1975 and has worked as its Artistic Director from 1975 to 1991 and from 1995 to date. From 1991 to 1994 she was Artistic Director of the Abbey Theatre, Dublin.

Garry has also worked with the Gate Theatre (Ireland); the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal Court (UK); Center Theatre Group, Second Stage, Signature Theater, Manhattan Theater Club, the Kennedy Center, the Mark Taper Forum and the Spoleto Festival (USA).

**Awards include:** The Joe A. Callaway Award (New York) for Outstanding Directing for *The Cripple of Inishmaan* (2009); a Tony Award for Direction for *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (1998); Irish Times/ESB Irish Theatre Awards for Best Director for DruidShakespeare: Richard II, Henry IV (Pts 1&2), Henry V, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane, Waiting for Godot* and a Special Tribute Award in 2005 for her contribution to Irish Theatre. Garry has received Honorary Doctorates from University College Dublin, University of Dublin, the National University of Ireland and the National Council for Education Awards. She is an Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians in Ireland, and a member of the Honorary Council of the Royal Hibernian Academy (HRHA). In 2011, Garry was appointed Adjunct Professor of Drama and Theatre Studies at NUI Galway.
Siobhán Cullen  PERFORMER

**Druid:** Once Upon a Bridge, The Cherry Orchard, DruidShakespeare: Richard III, Crestfall.

**Other theatre includes:** The Plough and The Stars (National Theatre); An Ideal Husband, An Enemy of the People, A Woman of No Importance, Jane Eyre (Gate Theatre); By the Bog of Cats, Ariel (Abbey Theatre); The Effect, Assassins (Rough Magic); Our Island (Mirari Productions); Othello (Mill Productions); The Life and Sort of Death of Eric Argyle (15th Oak); MONSTER/CLOCK (Collapsing Horse).

**Film & TV includes:** Dalgliesh, The Split, The Bright Side, Origin, Paula, The Clinic, Fair City, The Limehouse Golem, Jimi: All Is By My Side.

Colm Hogan  DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Colm Hogan is a director of photography who has been working in the film and TV industry for over 20 years. His work has taken him throughout Europe and the world.

**Film & TV includes:** Henry Glassie: Field Work, The Meeting, Foscadh, What We Leave in Our Wake, The Green Knight. Most recently, Colm has worked on the Apple TV series Foundation.
Francis O’Connor  SET DESIGNER

Francis is a regular collaborator with Garry Hynes and Druid. His designs for plays, musicals and opera have been seen in Ireland, the UK, throughout the US, Europe, and Asia and his work with the Gate Theatre (Ireland) has frequently been seen at Spoleto Festival.

**Druid:**
- DruidGregory, *The Cherry Orchard, The Beacon, Epiphany*

**Awards include:** Five Irish Times Irish Theatre Awards, three for Best Design, two for Best Costume Design (with Doreen McKenna); Boston Critics Circle; Dora Mavor Moore Award; and a nomination for the Faust Prize, Germany.

Clíodhna Hallissey  COSTUME DESIGNER

A recent graduate of the BA in Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies and English at NUI Galway, Clíodhna was the 2019/2020 recipient of Druid’s Marie Mullen Bursary for female theatre artists working in the fields of design, directing, and dramaturgy.

**Druid:**
- Clíodhna was Costume Designer for *Once Upon a Bridge*, Costume Supervisor for DruidGregory, Costume Designer for *On the Outside* as part of DruidGregory, Assistant Costume Designer and Dresser for *The Cherry Orchard*, and Costume Dresser for DruidShakespeare: *Richard III* at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin.

**Other theatre includes:** Costume Designer for *Ar Ais Arís* (Brú Theatre/Galway 2020); *An Dara Réalt, Yummy Mummy* (An Taibhdhearc); *Aisling?* (Ealain na Gaeltachta); *BAOITE* (An Taibhdhearc/Abbey Theatre); Costume Assistant and Dresser for *Grief is The Thing With Feathers* (Landmark Productions); *The Country Girls* (Abbey Theatre).

**Film & TV includes:** Costume Designer for *Living With a Fairy 2*; Costume Assistant for *Mr. Mender and The Chummyjiggers*; Costume Trainee for *Wild Mountain Thyme*. 
Sinéad Diskin  SOUND DESIGNER

Sinéad Diskin is a sound designer and composer based in Dublin, Ireland. She is a graduate of the SEEDS programme with Rough Magic Theatre Company, Dublin, a recipient of the Next Generation Artists Award 2019 from the Arts Council of Ireland.

Druid: Boland: Journey of a Poet marks Sinéad’s debut with the company.

Other theatre includes: Happy Days, Blood in the Dirt (Landmark Productions); Pale Sister, The Glass Menagerie, The Snapper (Gate Theatre, Dublin); Faultline, The Anvil, Torch (Anú Productions); The Phlebotomist (Hampstead Theatre, London); Incantata (Galway International Arts Festival); Eclipsed, Love and Information, Pornography (The Lir Academy); Mr. Burns: A Post Electric Play (Rough Magic SEEDS Showcase).

Film includes: Canaries, Torch (Anú Productions)

Conor Linehan  COMPOSER

Conor is a pianist, composer and teacher from Dublin. He is on the piano faculty of the Royal Irish Academy of Music where he also teaches courses in improvisation and is currently pursuing a Doctorate in Performance in association with Trinity College Dublin.


Other theatre includes: The Patient Woman (INO 20 Shots of Opera); The Great Hunger (Abbey Theatre); Woyzeck in Winter (Landmark Productions/Galway International Arts Festival); Dublin by Lamplight (Corn Exchange/Abbey Theatre); The Wolf and Peter (CoisCéim); productions with the Abbey and Peacock theatres; the Gate Theatre, Dublin; the Lyric, Belfast; the Royal Shakespeare Company; the Gate Theatre; the National Theatre, London; Liverpool Playhouse; Hampstead Theatre; Siren Productions, Dublin.

Awards: Irish Times Irish Theatre Award, Best Sound Design (with Ben Delaney); Irish Times Irish Theatre Judges’ Special Award nomination for ‘setting the standard of theatre composition’; PlayShakespeare website’s Falstaff Award, Best Score Worldwide.
Debbie Chapman  PORTRAIT ARTIST

Debbie Chapman is an Irish painter, based in Dublin. She has been painting professionally since 2003. Largely self-taught, Debbie sells privately both in Ireland and internationally and her work has been commissioned for notable Irish public spaces such as The Hermitage Medical Centre, Dublin, Waterford General Hospital and the Naas Courthouse in Kildare. Debbie’s painting asserts that while we sometimes make time to contemplate life’s bigger questions, it’s the gradual accumulation of micro-reflections that create our view of the world. These thoughtful pauses occur throughout any average (or extraordinary) day and yet often go unnoticed. They can be observations, realisations or just an appreciation of the moment itself.

Debbie works from a studio in Chapelizod, in the wooded valley of the River Liffey, near the Strawberry Beds and Phoenix Park. She uses oil, wax and acrylics in her mixed media paintings on canvas, panel and archival paper.
## Druid Staff

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- Garry Hynes
- Mick Lally (1945–2010)
- Marie Mullen

### Druid Staff
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  - Frank Commins
- **Office Manager**
  - Niamh Dolan
- **Financial Controller**
  - Brian Duffy
- **Producer**
  - Brian Fenton
- **Company Manager**
  - Jean Hally
- **Executive Director**
  - Feargal Hynes
- **Artistic Director**
  - Garry Hynes
- **Development & Marketing**
  - John McEvoy
- **Marketing & Communications Lead**
  - David Mullane
- **Venue Manager**
  - Siomha Nee
- **Financial Administrator**
  - Lisa Nolan
- **Production Manager**
  - Barry O’Brien

### Board
- Tom Joyce (chairman)
- Anne Anderson
- Helen Ryan
- Cilian Fennell
- Padraic Ferry
- Mary Apied
- Seán O’Rourke
- Bernadette Murtagh (company secretary)

### Druid Ensemble
- Derbhle Crotty
- Garrett Lombard
- Aaron Monaghan
- Marie Mullen
- Rory Nolan
- Aisling O’Sullivan
- Marty Rea

*part time position*

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Karl & Mary Verbruggen
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Patricia D’Arcy
Brian Darcy
Sean Denyer
Charles Dixon
Dennis Dougherty
Patricia Doyle
Jacinta Dwyer
Nicola Eustace
Sorcha Fahy
Dan Flinker
Jim Flynn
Kathryn Greenspan
Andrew Haggerty
Mary Harney
Mary Hawks-Greene
Bernadette Healy
Feargal Hynes
Jordan Katz
Una Kealy
Peter Kearns
Marie Keegan
Jack & Maureen Kissane
Damian Lane
Nolleke Lynden
Kieran Lyons
Bernadette Madden
Dr Paddy McKiernan
Pat Joe McLoughlin
Moya McMahon
Anne McQuillan
Nóirín Ni Nuadháin
Ciodagh O’Byrne
Gráinne O’Callaghan
Annette O’Connor
Julia O’Connor
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