

PECK SCHOOL OF
THE ARTS

Department of Theatre 2005-2006 Season

Dreams Deferred

April 20-May 7, 2006



FROM THESE GREEN HEIGHTS

By Dermot Bolger

Directed by Rebecca Holderness

and

A RAISIN IN THE SUN

By Lorraine Hansberry

Directed by Bill Watson

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
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DIRECTOR'S NOTES

From These Green Heights was to the poet-playwright the chronicle of a very particular place and time, a ravaged, high-rise housing project in the fields outside of Dublin. It was the story of extraordinary people in extraordinary situations. For me, an ocean and half a continent distant from Ballymun, I found my inspiration in Bolger's image of ghosts haunting the destroyed shell of a skyscraper:

Whose voice can you here?
Who calling down the stair?
What ghost trapped in a lift shaft?
What child played and laughed?

Growing up in New York, I knew not open spaces but a squared sky of high buildings. So the perspective of the play is a familiar one to me: vertical space filled with the moving, curvilinear bodies of people. People in that city have re-learned in recent years what they had always known, but might have forgotten--that the glass and steel walls of tall buildings wrap around multiple lives and multiple stories. It is those stories, finished and unfinished that haunt us when the walls are ripped off.

While reading this play, I also began to think about the architecture of our human bodies, and the ghosts they can contain. In the complex construction of our bodies and consciousness, we hold the physical memory of each age, each love, each loss, the phases of our many selves. We keep inside us the young lips with which we kissed for the first time. Our ghosts are embodied and physical ghosts. In this production the ghosts are present in many ways, in image, in movement, and in stillness. We have also taken the two central male characters and presented them at four ages- 7, 17, 27 and 40 years. These multiple versions flow throughout the play, to help remind us that these selves exist as ghost witness to our present day action.

In multiplying Dessie and Christie, father and son, I also wanted to multiply questions about what it means to grow into manhood in times of hardship. What is it to become a man, a husband and father, in a world of limited resources? What kind of pressure faces a man at each step of that journey?

We make our worlds in movement, even our tallest and grandest of buildings are ever in motion, coming down and going up. At best we are but still points in a turning world. I hope that you enjoy the production and return home, a little changed, to your own friendly ghosts.

From T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*:

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,

Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.
I can only say, there we have been: but I cannot say where.

Thank you for coming!

Rebecca Holderness

DRAMATURGICAL NOTES

From These Green Heights

Stephanie Adela Barnett, BA in Theatre, Class of 2006

As a native of Finglas, Dermot Bolger witnessed the struggles of working class Dubliners, giving them a voice through his columns, poems, novels, and plays. In 1969, high-rise apartment blocks called "Green Heights" were constructed in the new town of Ballymun to alleviate Dublin's housing crisis. The lower class of Dublin had grown accustomed to the close-knit communal life of the tenements. There was a friend on every floor who was always ready to help a neighbor in need. When a man was out of work, the neighbor took his family in and fed them. When a child was ill, the entire tenement pulled together to get medicine and nourishment. Children played in the streets together while their mothers gathered in the doorways for gossip and the men went down to the pub. Being in the heart of the city made shopping and working easy. But the familiar old wooden tenements were condemned, and tall apartment complexes of unfamiliar faces, steel, and concrete were to replace them. Bolger spent the last four decades observing the rise, fall, and reconstruction of Ballymun. In 2004, Pearse tower was the first of the original seven to come down, prompting Bolger to interview tenants of Green Heights. Bolger wanted the inside story on why Ballymun needed to be redesigned. What he quickly learned was that the Ballymun housing blocks were no more immune to social problems than similar structures in the United States and Europe.

Ballymun was too far from civilization, making it difficult for people to find work. This meant that most of the tenants relied on welfare checks, which they cashed at the bank. The Bank of Ireland was no longer making a profit at the Ballymun location and closed its doors in 1972. The people of Ballymun found themselves cut-off and hungry. The children suffered from a lack of activities and stimuli. The tenants pulled together as a community to protest in the 1970s. They demanded the Banks reopen, that they receive medical assistance for their youth on drugs, security for the grounds, schools and activities for the young, and jobs for their men. It was twenty years before The Dublin City Council took notice and offered to help.

The Ballymun Regeneration Act was finally passed in 1997. This proposed the demolition of the towers to make room for homes and communities. There are plans to build shopping centers and schools. The people of Ballymun formed coalitions, task forces, and credit unions. In 2001, Ballymun opened a center for the arts dubbed "The Ballymun Axis Center," which hosted the premiere production of *From These Green Heights* on November 24th, 2004. Bolger's play, named the best new play of 2004 by the *Irish Times*, follows two families living in the Ballymun towers. While some soared, others fell from Ard Glas, the "Green Heights."

THE CAST

(in order of appearance)

Carmel	Jessica Marking
Christy (Age 40)	Bill Watson
Christy (Age 40)	Andy North (Understudy)
Christy (Age 27)	Rob Maass
Dessie (Age 27)	Michael Cotey
Dessie (Age 17)	Dan Koester
Dessie (Age 7)	Lawson Mitchell
	John Starkey
Jane	Kaija Rayne
Junkie	Emily Heitzer
Marie	Sarah Stashek
Sharon	Robyn Starkey
Tara	Megan Watson
Handler/ Ballymun Resident	Matt Belopavlovich
Handler/ Ballymun Resident	Alex Grindeland

The action takes place between 1966 and 2004 in Ballymun, Ireland; a Northern suburb of Dublin.

There will be one fifteen-minute intermission.