

BACKSTORY



# Dolly West's Kitchen



Your behind-the-scenes look at TimeLine productions

YESTERDAY'S STORIES.  
TODAY'S TOPICS.

**TimeLine**  
Theatre Company



Dear Friends,

We are delighted to present the Chicago premiere of *Dolly West's Kitchen* — a moment we've anticipated for many years.

TimeLine company members first fell in love with this play after its triumphant runs in Dublin and London. It spoke to the heart of our mission, and it was filled with characters we knew would enliven our intimate stage. As is sometimes the case, there was a delay before this European hit found its way to the United States, but it recently had its American premiere at TheaterWorks in Mountain View, Calif., and TimeLine is thrilled to present its second major U.S. production.

Another long-standing wish is being fulfilled with this production — Kimberly Senior is directing at TimeLine! Certainly one of the most spirited and hardworking artists in Chicago, Kimberly's acclaimed work at companies such as Collaboraction, Next and Strawdog has distinguished her as one of the hottest directors of new plays in

Chicago. The acerbic wit and great heart of *Dolly West's Kitchen* are a perfect marriage with her infectious personality, intelligence and, at times, wonderfully dirty sense of humor. We are thrilled to work with her for the first time.

When I first shared this script with Kimberly she had two immediate responses: "This is a play that makes me want to call my mom," and "I expected a 'typical Irish play,' and this is really not it."

## "What does it mean to be neutral?"

While I hadn't quite captured the play in exactly those terms, I agreed with her on both points.

Pulling out your cell phone to give mom a jingle as you exit the theater may not be your first response, but I'll bet the play will trigger more than a few memories of the battles and joys you shared in that epicenter of your home — the kitchen.

And as for *Dolly West's Kitchen* being unlike a "typical Irish play," I suppose that is at the heart of what attracted us. It has a freshness and contemporary voice that contradicts the connotations many of us

have of Irish family drama. Don't get me wrong (or in trouble with my relatives!); I mean not an ounce of disrespect to the gorgeous canon of Irish drama. My initials stand for Patrick Joseph, and you probably don't need many more clues to determine my ancestry. But even with an inbred appreciation and sincere love for the lyrical works of O'Casey, Yeats and other Irish greats, there is something about Frank McGuinness' writing in *Dolly West's Kitchen* that is surprising, contemporary and invigorating in 2008.

Although the play is set during World War II, there is a modern voice at work as the characters wrestle with issues of sexual identity, jealousy, nationalism, bitterness and how hearts and loyalties can break in the blink of an eye.

With a nod to Chekhov, *Dolly West's Kitchen* is uproariously funny one moment and utterly heart-rending the next. The West family is literally and figuratively invaded by British and American soldiers,

and McGuinness uses that premise to examine a fascinating central question: What does it mean to be neutral?

That question is examined through the political lens of Ireland's attempt at neutrality during the war, but McGuinness takes the question into much more personal territory as his characters start to recognize that passivity may not

be the best solution for what ails them.

They come to discover that, although it is much more dangerous, it is much more enriching when borders are crossed. And not just the lines separating regions and nations, but the boundaries of political and religious ideology, the barriers of self-protection and vulnerability, and the limits put upon sexuality and intimacy.

It's a thrilling ride that we're eager to share with you. Whether you run to a phone to call your mom, or you stroll to a pub to raise a toast or drown your sorrows with a pint of Guinness, all are acceptable options in Dolly West's kitchen.

Enjoy your stay in the Ports of Buncrana. I'll see you at the pub to chat about it!

Sláinte!

## Special Events and Resources

# the conversation

TimeLine hosts several opportunities for you to hear from TimeLine artists, ask questions about and comment on the production and converse with fellow audience members about the themes of the play. We hope you will join us for one or more during the run of *Dolly West's Kitchen*:

### Sunday Scholars Series

Immediately following the performance on **Sunday, February 10**, TimeLine will host our Sunday Scholars Series. This one-hour panel discussion features experts talking about the themes and issues of the play. **Tickets are \$10; \$5 for TimeLine subscribers**; call the Box Office to order.

The panel is moderated by TimeLine Board member **Peter H. Kuntz**, managing director of programs and production for the Chicago Humanities Festival.

Visit our Web site at **timelinetheatre.com** to learn more about Sunday Scholars, including panelists and their biographies.

### Post-Show Discussions

Stay after performances on **Thursdays, January 31, February 7 and 14** and **Sundays, February 3 and 17** for **free post-show discussions** moderated by a TimeLine Company member and featuring the production dramaturg and members of the cast.

### Company Member Discussion

The heart of TimeLine is our Company members, who shape the artistic vision and choose the programming for the organization. Join them after the performance on **Sunday, February 24** for an informal discussion to hear more about how the Company works and the process that brought *Dolly West's Kitchen* to TimeLine's stage.

### Other Resources

Don't miss our **historical lobby displays** and **production study guide**, available for perusal in the lobby and via download at **timelinetheatre.com**.

Frank McGuinness spent his childhood in the Irish Republic's Inishowen Peninsula, in County Donegal, where *Dolly West's Kitchen* takes place.

As a playwright, his work is often concerned with questions of Irish identity, nationalism and history. It's no surprise that many of his new plays premiere at Dublin's celebrated Gate and Abbey Theatres.

McGuinness' most beloved works include the World War I drama, *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme*. Over

**After seeing a production of *The Gentle Island* by fellow Irish dramatist Brian Friel, McGuinness was electrified by the possibilities of theater.**

the last two decades, the playwright also has produced many translations of classic plays by Henrik Ibsen, Bertolt Brecht, Anton Chekhov and Federico Garcia Lorca.

McGuinness began his life in writing in the 1970s

as a poet and a university lecturer. But after seeing a production of *The Gentle Island*, written by fellow Irish dramatist Brian Friel, McGuinness was electrified by the possibilities of theater. He wrote his first full-length play, *Factory Girls*, just a few years later. This work was followed by *Observe the Sons ...*, *Carthaginians* and *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me*, among many others.

*Dolly West's Kitchen* premiered at the Abbey in 1999. It is part of a select group of McGuinness' plays, including *Gates of Gold*, the story of the closeted love affair between the founders of the Gate Theatre, that explores homosexual love and identity. Openly gay, the playwright often explores the tension homosexual attraction and gay relationships create in often hostile Irish communities.

Playwright Frank McGuinness.  
(Photo by Michael Mayhew)



Éamon de Valera, the Republic of Ireland's prime minister, declared a policy of Irish neutrality in World War II shortly after early hostilities broke out in Western Europe. With its own civil war only recently ended, the newly minted republic was still vulnerable to internal insurrection, and the young government was loath to publicly align itself with England so soon after its declaration of independence from Great Britain.

The republic's neutral stance reflected an interest in self-preservation and self-government. As such, Dáil Éireann, the Republic's parliament, fully supported the national policy, as did the majority of citizens.

In accordance with the nation's neutrality, a general state of emergency was declared, and the Emergency Powers Act was instantly enacted, giving the government war-time powers to control the press and economy. "The Emergency" would become the euphemism for World War II in Ireland.

The Republic's supposed neutrality actually favored the Allied forces in several important ways. Republic citizens were permitted to enlist in the British army,



Éamon De Valera in 1932.  
(Photo by George Morrison, The Irish Civil War)

and nearly 40,000 joined up. Perhaps more significantly, Ireland allowed British forces to mine the coasts for German U-boats, accepted thousands of women and children fleeing the blitz in London and gave food, munitions and medical care to Allied forces. These Allied troops included thousands from the United States, sent to patrol Northern Ireland and vulnerable sections of the Irish Republic's coastline against Axis

invasions. American soldiers gradually became a familiar, although exotic, presence in many Irish towns. Irish Republic intelligence agents also worked closely with Britain to ferret out German undercover agents working in the Republic.

In sharp contrast to the preferential treatment given Allied troops, downed Axis pilots were held in Spartan detainment camps until the war's end.

Further, in spite of Ireland's neutrality, the Republic's citizens endured hardships nearly identical to citizens in the countries at war. They were subject to strict food rationing, frequent supply shortages, frightening air-raid drills, being issued mandatory gas masks, foreign and domestic troop encampments and rampant media censorship.

Irish soldiers serving in the British Army at a briefing session, circa 1942-44.  
(Photo from Hulton-Deutsch Collection, Ireland: Nations in Transition)





Though the Republic of Ireland was besieged by war, insurrection and civil strife during the first half of the 20th Century, the passion for upheaval and revolution didn't affect the governing beliefs of Irish society. 1940s Irish social values were keenly influenced by deeply ingrained religious beliefs. Catholicism, the dominant religion in the Republic, dictated many Irish citizens' attitudes toward marriage, women, education, sexuality and family.

Marriage and family were the bedrock of Irish culture. Women were celebrated as the nurturers of children and the keepers of the hearth, but their status was circumscribed by a widely-held belief in male superiority. The patriarchal structure of the Catholic Church, with its emphasis on male leadership, was influential in diminishing female independence. Women like the character Dolly West, who pursued higher education, traveled alone outside the country and eschewed marriage in favor of work, defied every belief about the Irish female.

For non-practicing Catholics and non-believers, like Dolly and the character of Rima, the social censure resulting from their failure to conform



to dominant values could be daunting. In small, tightly-knit Irish communities like Buncrana, rebels were unwelcome. Men and women who remained unwed or childless were viewed with a mixture of confusion and pity. People who engaged in sex outside of marriage were the source of scandal. And the idea of anyone finding love with a person of the same gender was verboten.

*Above: Deep in the countryside outside Tipperary, in the shadow of an ancient abbey, a statue of the Virgin Mary watches over the abbey graveyard. (Photo by Klaus Franke, Ireland)*

*Right: Catholicism was woven into the daily routine of Irish communities. This storefront in Tubbercurry was decorated with floral wreaths and religious statuary in honor of the annual Corpus Christi procession through town, circa 1932. (Photo by Father Frank Browne, Fr. Browne)*



## TIMELINE:

### The Bloody Road to Irish Neutrality in World War II

**1913** The third Irish independence (or Home Rule) bill is defeated in the English House of Lords.

**1914** A tentative Home Rule bill is passed in England but is suspended until the end of World War I.

**April 24, 1916** In Dublin, a group of Irish nationalist rebels led by Patrick Pearse occupy the Dublin post office and fight to establish an Irish republic. The so-called Easter Rising insurrection is neutralized within the week by British forces, who execute the rebellion's leaders and arrest thousands of citizens. The actions of the English heighten Irish disgust with British rule. Five years later, the memory of the Easter Rising rebellion helps lead to the declaration of an Irish Free State.

**1919** The Irish fight for independence in a bloody guerilla conflict known later as the Tan War. The war drags on until an uneasy truce is declared in 1921.

**December 6, 1921** The Irish Free State is declared after the establishment of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. The six Irish counties that remain loyal to British rule become Northern Ireland. Many Irish nationalists, including Éamon de Valera, decry the treaty's provision for a constitutional link to Great Britain.

**June 1922** A short but bloody civil war breaks out in the Irish Republic. The anti-treaty group Sinn Féin, led by Éamon de Valera and Michael Collins, fights with other Irish Nationalist factions to preserve Irish unity and destroy all bonds with Great Britain.





Above: Farm land meets the sea on the green shore of Gweebarra Bay in County Donegal. (Photo by Jill Uris, Ireland Revisited)

Below: Donegal is home to many cliff-strewn beaches like this one in Donegal's town of Cnoc Fola, near Buncrana. (Photo by Jill Uris, Ireland Revisited)



The West family lives in the port town of Buncrana, on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean in County Donegal. The county is home to mountains, glens, staggering fjords, heather-dusted moors and rocky cliffs. Little Buncrana is best known for its sandy beaches and wave-carved ocean cliffs.

Situated on the Inishowen Peninsula and just a few miles away from the Northern Ireland town of Derry, Donegal is one of only three independent Irish Republic counties in the otherwise British province of Ulster. Because Donegal is surrounded on three sides by Northern Ireland, it is isolated from the rest of the Republic. Donegal residents speak with a distinct accent in English and Irish Gaelic.

Buncrana's precarious geographic position made it particularly vulnerable to attack during World War II. As a result, the Irish Republic's defensive forces maintained a constant presence in the town during the war. Friendly Allied forces (mainly American and British troops) also crossed the border into Buncrana occasionally, in an effort to survey and protect the exposed peninsula from Axis invasion.

"A Soldier's Song" was declared the national anthem of the Irish Republic after its 1922 civil war, and became a rallying cry for free Ireland's people during "The Emergency."

## "A SOLDIER'S SONG" LYRICS

We'll sing a song, a soldier's song

With cheering, rousing chorus

As round our blazing fires we throng

The starry heavens o'er us

Impatient for the coming fight

And as we wait the morning's light

Here in the silence of the night

We'll chant a soldier's song.

## Refrain:

Soldiers are we, whose lives are pledged to Ireland

Some have come from a land beyond the wave

Sworn to be free, no more our ancient sireland

Shall shelter the despot or the slave

Tonight we man the bearna naoghail

In Erin's cause, come woe or weal

Mid cannon's roar and rifle's peal

We'll chant a soldier's song.

**"Soldiers are we, whose lives are pledged to Ireland"**

**May 1923** The Irish Civil War ends after the deaths of more than 8,000 Irish Republic citizens. Thousands of anti-treaty Irish citizens are arrested and imprisoned, including Éamon De Valera.

**1932** After serving as a military officer, activist, legislator and orator for the cause of Irish independence, De Valera is elected Prime Minister of the Republic of Ireland.

**1933** In Germany, Adolf Hitler comes to power as Chancellor.

**1937** The Irish Free State's name is officially changed to Eire. The change reflects a resurgence of speaking and writing the Irish language, after decades of British efforts to squelch its use.

**September 1939** A state of war is declared between Germany and England. France, Australia and New Zealand also declare war on Germany. The Irish Republic government announces a policy of "benevolent" neutrality in the conflict and declares an internal state of emergency. 160,000 Irish Republic citizens will go on to enlist in the British Army and fight against the Axis powers.

**June 1940** The fall of France to German troops brings the war's progress dangerously close to Ireland.

**1940** De Valera condemns the German invasion of Belgium and Holland.

**1941** In the thick of the London blitz, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill sends a telegram to De Valera offering Irish unity in exchange for the Republic's abandonment of its neutrality. The offer is roundly rejected by De Valera and his cabinet.

# Living History Education Program

## the outreach

TimeLine's Living History Education Program was launched in September 2006. Created and led by TimeLine Company member Juliet Hart, the program has connected with nearly 200 Chicago Public Schools history and English students through TimeLine's productions of *The General from America*, *Widowers' Houses* and *Paradise Lost*.

Since the start of the education program, TimeLine has partnered with Carl Schurz High School, located at 3601 N. Milwaukee Ave. Although it is the third-largest high school in Illinois with more than 2,500 students, Schurz has no drama classes available for students.

*Cast members talk with students from Carl Schurz High School after a matinee performance of Widowers' Houses at TimeLine.*



TimeLine's program aims to humanize and personalize historical events and issues by engaging students in acting and writing exercises related to our productions. The use of imagination and self-expression deepens the impact of what the students learn in class and provides them with a greater understanding of the world and their role in history. Our goal is to generate greater interest and appreciation for studying history and dramatic literature and to encourage students to become active participants in the performing arts. We recognize that exposure to theatrical events at an early age fosters a lifelong appreciation

for the arts and better prepares students to approach life's challenges with thoughtful reasoning and creative decision-making.

Our education program begins with a series of in-class workshops that help students appreciate and understand the process of putting on a play, provides a different context for students to talk about the history and literature they are studying in class, provokes discussion while working with the script and prepares students to attend the plays at TimeLine. Next, each class comes to the theater to see a special matinee performance of the production they have been studying. For a majority of students, it is their first time seeing a play. After the show, students are able to engage in a discussion with the actors.

Megan McCarthy is a history teacher at Schurz who has participated in the program. "Never have my students experienced anything like this. To actually work with the script with people from the theater company instead of just showing up for a performance with no preparation was invaluable," she said. "Now the students know all



*TimeLine Company member Juliet Hart created and runs the Living History Education Program.*

the work and preparation that goes into a theatrical performance and they have a much better understanding of the time period they have been studying."

Juliet is passionate about the positive results of the Living History program. "Back in the classroom after students saw the play, they were given the opportunity to act with the professional

actors in one of the scenes. Two quiet young women volunteered to try, and the results were very moving and interesting to watch," she said. "Students need encouragement to express themselves and speak out loud — that's another reason why this way of learning is so valuable to them."

The launch of the Living History program has been made possible through the support of the Michael and Diane Hora Family Charitable Foundation and the Lloyd A. Fry Foundation. The program continues this spring with our production of *Fiorello!*

We look forward to forging additional academic partnerships and growing the program's impact in the future. If you would like to learn more, please call or email us (773) 281-8463 x23 or [info@timeline-theatre.com](mailto:info@timeline-theatre.com).

## "Never have my students experienced anything like this ... it was invaluable."

— Megan McCarthy, teacher, Schurz High School

**1941** Leaders of the violent, ultra-nationalist splinter group known as the Irish Republican Army (or IRA) are suspected of collaborating with Axis forces and imprisoned in a Curragh internment camp for the duration of the war.

**April 1941** In Northern Ireland, Belfast is repeatedly bombed by the Luftwaffe, Germany's air force. The Republic sends medics and fire engines across the border to aid the injured.

**May 1941** Dublin suffers its own Luftwaffe attack. The German government declares the bombing a mistake and offers compensation, but some citizens wonder if the attack is retaliation for the Republic's assistance during the "Belfast Blitz" in Northern Ireland.

**June 6, 1944** The Battle of Normandy on the south coast of France is the first engagement in the Allies' campaign to retake Europe. The "D-Day" forces deploy from bases in Southern England and Northern Ireland.

**May 2, 1945** De Valera publicly expresses condolences to German Ambassador Eduard Hempel after the April 30 death of Adolf Hitler. Responding to outrage expressed by British and American press, he defends his action as a diplomatic nicety, saying that to do otherwise, "would have been an act of unpardonable discourtesy to the German nation and to Dr. Hempel himself. ... I certainly was not going to add to his humiliation in the hour of defeat." However, De Valera's controversial decision widens the schism between Northern Ireland and Eire, and paves the path for future violence between the two nations.

**May 8, 1945** German forces surrender to the Soviet Union army and VE Day is declared in Europe and America.



## the interview

One of the unsung heroes of many TimeLine productions is Eva Breneman, our dialect coach. Her credits include *Tesla's Letters*, *Paradise Lost*, *Widowers' Houses*, *The Children's Hour*, *The General from America*, *Fiorello!*, *Guantanamo: Honor Bound to Defend Freedom*, *A Man for All Seasons*, *This Happy Breed* and *Martin Furey's Shot*, and she is at work once again with us for *Dolly West's Kitchen*.

Eva's work at TimeLine has included Pakistani, Afrikaans/South African, Serbian, southern American and various British accents. She is now working with actors on numerous dialects for *Dolly West's Kitchen*.

TimeLine Artistic Director PJ Powers (PJP) chatted with Eva (EB) about her career and how she became the woman of a hundred voices.

**(PJP)** I've been working with you for many years as a dialect coach, but only recently discovered what an incredible actress you are. What is your background and training? Was acting your first passion?

**(EB)** Yes, acting was my first passion. I started as a kid in community theater with my folks, then acted all the way through college and beyond. I went to undergrad at New York University and had a theater company in New York for a couple years after that, then moved to Chicago and did the acting thing for a while. After a while I got tired of the auditioning part of things and started working as a coach and eventually decided to get my master's in voice and speech in London.

My favorite thing about both acting and dialect coaching is the access to other cultures and worlds it gives me.



**(PJP)** How did you start doing vocal coaching and teaching dialects?

**(EB)** I was always good at dialects, partially by virtue of heredity — my mom is amazing at languages — and partially by virtue of living in a bunch of different countries as a kid. Fitting in is always a priority for kids, and I figured out a good beginning was at least trying to sound like the others! As an actor I loved doing

dialects, because it always gave me an instant “in” to the character.

About 10 years ago, I auditioned for a show where I needed a Northern Irish accent. I didn't get the part, but the director asked if I'd help with the accents. From there I kept getting referrals for other shows, and I've been doing wacky accents ever since.

**(PJP)** One of the things I admire most about you

is how well you communicate with directors and actors about how to make a dialect a part of building the character — not something pasted onto a character, but acknowledging that the way a character talks is a reflection of who he or she is. How does your background aid in that communication?

**(EB)** I really try to help actors stay out of their heads, which is always something that I, as an actress, had issues with. So I know how frustrating it is to deal with. My process as a coach is to try and make the dialect a physical experience rather than an intellectual one. I work with the actors to help them feel the way the right sounds are created in their mouths so they can access those sounds without doing too much thinking.

I have also had experience as a director, and that helps me to understand that part of a director's job is to create a world in which the actors can do their jobs. I try to facilitate the creation of that environment without cluttering it up too much!

**(PJP)** Where do you begin in your research with each show and each new dialect?

**(EB)** I begin by reading the play to gather any clues

about the characters and their backgrounds: Where they were born, where they have lived, what their educational background is, what their class is. Once I've decided what those clues add up to in terms of the accent, I start researching online for sound samples that are appropriate.

If it's an accent I know how to do already I just make sure that I've got samples for the actors to use. If I don't know the accent, I start breaking it down. I determine the fundamental sound changes from a general American accent to, say, Donegal Irish — not every sound in every word, just the major changes.

I figure out how my mouth has to move in order to make those changes stick. Then I create a dialect breakdown that lists those sounds and how to achieve them. The actors receive the breakdown and a CD with samples.

**(PJP)** I've worked with many dialect coaches, and I've felt the tension level rise in a rehearsal room when actors see a dialect coach at rehearsal, pen and pad in hand, ready to tear them to shreds. The terror level goes to red! But you are the most welcomed person

I've ever seen in a rehearsal room because you're so unthreatening. And you are, without a doubt, the greatest audience member, always smiling and laughing. I hear actors ask, “When is Eva coming back?” You're that appreciated during the process.

Can you walk me through your role during rehearsals and what you do from the first reading of a script through opening night?

## ACCENTS AT TIMELINE

Eva Breneman has coached a wide variety of accents over nearly a dozen shows here:

***Dolly West's Kitchen*:**

Donegal, Standard British, New York

***Tesla's Letters*:** Serbian, Virginia

***Paradise Lost*:** New York

***Widowers' Houses*:** Standard British, Cockney

***The Children's Hour*:** Standard American

***The General from America*:** Standard British

***Fiorello!*:** New York, Italian

***Guantanamo: Honor Bound to Defend Freedom*:** British, Iraqi, Pakistani

***A Man for All Seasons*:** Voice & text coaching

***Martin Furey's Shot*:** White and Black South African

***This Happy Breed*:** Cockney

## DIALECT BREAKDOWN: DONEGAL

by Eva Breneman (as provided to the actors performing in *Dolly West's Kitchen*)

**General Notes** The primary characteristic of this accent is the upward lilt at the end of phrases and sentences. Another characteristic is the strong R in all positions, a sound reminiscent of the Minnesota R. This constant strong R creates a tongue position and resonance that is very obvious.

**Consonants** In American English we have two forms of “L”. One of these is used for “L” before a vowel, as in LIKE, while the other is used after a vowel, as in FEEL. The difference between the two forms of “L” has to do with the back of the tongue. In the LIKE sound, only the tip of the tongue rises to just behind the top front teeth. In the FEEL sound, two things occur simultaneously: the tip of the tongue rises to the back of the top front teeth, AND, the back of the tongue rises towards the back part of the roof of the mouth. In this accent, however, only the first form is used for everything. In other words, whenever the “L” is used, only the tip of the tongue is activated. ALL, LIE, LITTLE

Unlike in other Southern Irish, the medial “T” sound, as in THIRTY, will often be unreleased, resulting in a more American D sound. LITTLE, HEARTY, SIXTY

### Vowels

/e/ (BEND) goes to /e-yuh/ — The short E sound in BEND is drawled by adding a small YUH sound after it. SEND, GET, SLEPT

/AY/ (BAY) goes to /e/ — RAY, CRANE, PAIN

/long OH/ (BOAT) goes to /O/ — PHONE, MOAN, CONE

/short a/ (CAT) goes to /intermediate A/ — THAT, BACK, HAT

/short uh/ (BUT) goes to /U/ (BOOK) — BUT, LUCK, MUD

/long AH/(HOT) goes to /short oh/ (HOT) — This is the RP hot onion sound. ON, GOD, COMMA

/long OO/ (BOOT) ==> /ü/ (EW) — Like the French u in RUE, but longer. DOING, SOON, TWO

/short i/ (BIT) goes toward /' / (the uh in ABOUT) — This sound gets significantly more uh-like in nature. LIT, FILM, SIFT

**Diphthongs** The sound OW in American is made up of two sounds, the AH in FALL and the OO in BOOK. In Donegal, however, the sound is changed to different vowels. The first one is UH as in UM, and the second is U as in POOL. It's helpful to try to make this sound by barely opening your mouth at all and then making the two sounds, one after the other. In fast speech this sound can turn almost to the diphthong in the word LIKE.

/aU/ (OW) goes to /'u/ (uh-OO) — DOWN, ABOUT, OUT

The diphthong AI in NIGHT gets stretched out and widened. TRIAL, MINE, CRY

(EB) Basically, my role changes over the rehearsal process. I start out the first week, or sometimes even before rehearsals begin, as a dialect teacher. I spend a minimum of an hour per accent teaching the actors. My next role is as a coach — for example, I might come in and help an individual actor with any trouble spots. My third role is as a monitor: I come in and listen to rehearsals, usually runs of either acts or the whole show. I listen and take notes for the actors. My final role is as a cheerleader. I come to final runs and/or previews and listen for minor issues and try and make sure the actors feel confident enough to face an audience.

(PJP) What dialects have you found to be most challenging for you to teach and for actors to easily pick up?

(EB) One of the most challenging accents for actors to learn is Afrikaans/South African. Partially this is because it is quite a complex accent, filled with references to other accents — Australian, German, Dutch and British. Partially it's because the accent is not one that actors have heard frequently; unlike the British accents, for example,

## “I determine the fundamental sound changes from a general American accent ... and figure out how my mouth has to move to make those changes stick.”

we Americans don't get to see a lot of South African television.

Cockney is surprisingly tricky for actors to grab hold of — I think because we conceive of it as a “lazy” accent, while in fact it requires quite an athletic mouth.

(PJP) Talk about your work on *Dolly West's Kitchen* and the dialects you're dealing with now.

(EB) There are three accents represented: Donegal Irish, Standard British and American. Luckily for me, you cast a couple of actual Americans, which cut my workload by a third! And the actor playing the British character had a wonderful facility with the accent coming in, so this gig has been a cakewalk! The Donegal accent is quite tricky, so it has been great to be able to focus only on the actors who play Dolly and her family.

(PJP) What are some of the other projects — and

sounds — on the horizon for you?

(EB) Well, right now I'm working on a play called *The Bay at Nice*, which features the Russian dialect, and soon I'll be working on *Top Girls*, which will feature a multitude of British dialects. After the holidays I'm going to start working as the dramaturg and dialect coach for TimeLine alum Kevin Fox, who's directing *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* for The Gift Theatre. That show features Egyptian, Albanian and New York accents, among others.

I'm also working on the set of a TV pilot, helping an Australian actor sound like a reg'lar Yank. If the show gets picked up, I may be working on the series come spring; if it doesn't I'll be working on *Around the World in 80 Days* at Lookingglass Theatre, which I'm assuming will feature several wacky accents! And then it's back to TimeLine for *Fiorello!* in the spring.

## BACKSTORY: THE CREDITS

*Dramaturgy & Historical Research*  
by Becky Perlman

*Written by* Becky Perlman, Eva Breneman, PJ Powers and Lara Goetsch

*Edited by* Karen A. Callaway and Lara Goetsch

*Photography and Graphic Design by* Lara Goetsch

*Dolly West's Kitchen Cover Photo by* Ryan Robinson

*Backstory* is published four times each season.

*Pictured on front cover (from left):* Costume designer Christine Conley; cast members at the first rehearsal; actor Niall McGinty; actors Sarah Hoyer and Cliff Chamberlain; and director Kimberly Senior.

*Pictured on back cover (from left):* Lighting designer Charles Cooper; actor Kat McDonnell; actor Mark Richard; scenic designer Brian Sidney Bembridge; actor Kathleen Ruhl; actor Cliff Chamberlain; and actor Danica Ivancevic.





January 26 - March 22 *previews 1/22 - 1/25*

## CHICAGO PREMIERE

by **FRANK MCGUINNESS**

directed by

**KIMBERLY SENIOR**

In Ireland during World War II, the close-knit West family has love and laughter to distract itself from fears of the war nearby. But when one of their own brings soldiers across the border and into their midst, clashes over loyalty, jealousy, sexual identity and love invade the neutrality of Dolly West's kitchen. This hilarious and poignant play invites us to feel the souls of its characters and reflect on the uncharted paths we're led to by our choices.

## The Cast

(in alphabetical order)

Cliff Chamberlain: *Alec*

Aaron Golden: *Jamie*

Sara Hoyer: *Anna*

Danica Ivancevic: *Esther*

Kat McDonnell: *Dolly*

Niall McGinty: *Justin*

Mark Richard: *Ned*

Joshua Rollins: *Marco*

Kathleen Ruhl: *Rima*

## The Production Team

Brian Sidney Bembridge:

*Scenic Designer*

Christine Conley:

*Costume Designer*

Charles Cooper:

*Lighting Designer*

Tamara Roberts:

*Sound Designer*

Galen Pejeau:

*Props Designer*

Becky Perlman:

*Dramaturg*

Ana Espinosa:

*Stage Manager*

Seth Vermilyea:

*Production Manager*

Lara Goetsch:

*Director of Marketing*

*and Communications*

PJ Powers: *Artistic Director*

Elizabeth K. Auman:

*Managing Director*

## Running Time

*Dolly West's Kitchen* runs approximately two hours, including one intermission.

## JANUARY 2008

Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

## FEBRUARY 2008

Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	

## MARCH 2008

Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22

Regular Performance

Preview Performance

Opening #1 featuring post-show reception *Sold Out*

Opening #2 featuring post-show reception *Sold Out*

Post-Show Discussion with cast & production crew *Free*

Sunday Scholars a one-hour post-show panel discussion with experts on the themes and issues of the play *Tickets \$10; \$5 for subscribers*

Company Member Discussion post-show discussion with TimeLine's Company members *Free*

## SHOW TIMES

PREVIEWS 8 PM

WEDNESDAYS & THURSDAYS 7:30 PM

FRIDAYS 8 PM

SATURDAYS 4 PM & 8 PM

SUNDAYS 2 PM

No performance at 4 pm on Saturday 1/26

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