

BELFAST BLUES

press packet

Geraldine Hughes, in association with
Firefly Theater & Films, presents

Saturday & Sunday @ 5pm
September 20 – October 5
SIX SHOWS ONLY!



'Outstanding'
LA Times

'Takes your breath away'
Chicago Sun Times

'A bravura performance'
London Morning Star

'Awe-inspiring'
Talking Broadway

A true story told from Hughes' perspective
as a little girl coming of age in the war-torn
Belfast of the 1980s.

One wee girl's story about family, war, Jesus, and Hollywood

Belfast Blues

written & performed by Geraldine Hughes
directed by Carol Kane

Geraldine Hughes' one-woman play, BELFAST BLUES, has been
a hit in Los Angeles, Belfast, Chicago, London, and New York.

The show returns to the Barrow Street Theatre for a limited run.

27 Barrow Street
corner of 7th Ave, 1 block south of Christopher St.

produced by Steven Klein & Nick Micozzi
set & lights by Jonathan Christman

**'May be the best solo show
I've ever seen'**
Back Stage West

'One in a million'
British Theatre Guide

'Exceptionally moving'
American Theatre

tickets:
www.smarttix.com
(212) 868-4444

 

Contents:

- Press Excerpts & Awards List;
- *New York Times* article on 2014 Barrow Street run;
- *Irish Echo* article on 2010 run; and
- Program (2014 Off-Broadway run at Barrow Street).



Press Excerpts & Awards List
BELFAST BLUES
written and performed by Geraldine Hughes

Geraldine Hughes, the Virtual Theatre Project, and Firefly Theater & Films

"...impressive physical moments...a boisterous humor hums throughout...Geraldine is the engrossing anchor of this drama."

New York Times

"CRITIC'S CHOICE...a particular thrill accompanies the discovery outstanding ability, and this sensation attends 'Belfast Blues'...a mint fresh voice...outstanding...packs a potent wallop."

LA Times

"Geraldine Hughes is one in a million...she is both a poignant writer with a wicked sense of humour and a great solo performer."

British Theatre Guide

"...exceptionally moving...poignant..."

American Theatre

"...weighty and poignant...the emotions flickering in her big, round eyes of penetrating 'Belfast blue' are wide-ranging and complex..."

Daily Variety

"...a stunning solo virtuoso performance...a bravura performance."

London Morning Star

"...she brings to life the quirky and colorful inhabitants of that battle-scarred place...takes your breath away."

Chicago Sun Times

"...tour de force...a powerful evening of theatre..."

Backstage

"PICK OF THE WEEK...taut and energetic...uncompromising truthfulness..."

LA Weekly

“...a one-woman play the way it should be. You can’t take your eyes off Geraldine Hughes...”

West End Extra

“CRITIC’S PICK...may be the best solo show I’ve ever seen...a tour-de-force...”

Backstage West

“...fresh and uncompromising, and makes for an absorbing evening of theatre...”

Curtain Up

“...awe-inspiring...commanding...Hughes possesses the pinpoint timing of a stand-up comedian combined with a flawless ability to replicate the many colorful Belfast denizens that have populated her life...”

Talking Broadway

“The tour-de-force performance by Hughes is gut wrenching.”

Tolucan Times

“...a gem...a show you want to tell you friends about...”

showmag.com

Awards

- Ovation Award for Best Solo Performance
- LA Drama Critics Circle Award for Writing
- Garland Award for Lead Performance
- LA Week Award nomination for Solo Performance
- LA Drama Critics Circle Award for Digital Imagery Design
- Drama League Award Nominee, Distinguished Performance
- Top Acting & Top Storyline in the Wall Street Journal/Zagat Theater Survey





THEATER | THEATER REVIEW

A Child of the 'Troubles' of Northern Ireland

Geraldine Hughes Returns to New York With 'Belfast Blues'

By CLAUDIA LA ROCCO SEPT. 29, 2014

“Belfast Blues” is full of impressive physical moments, when the flow of Geraldine Hughes’s words is either emphasized or countermanded by the casually coiled force of her body. On Saturday afternoon at the Barrow Street Theater, where the show has returned to New York for a limited engagement, one moment in particular stood out: Ms. Hughes standing very still and straight, embodying a British soldier.

Would her trigger finger pull back, firing the gun aimed at the small boy whose provocations had worked just a little too well?

Of course, there is no gun, nor a little boy — not onstage, at any rate. Save for a shifting backdrop of evocative images designed by Jonathan Christman and spare lighting (Mr. Christman) and sound (Jonathan Snipes), everything that exists in this 90-minute monologue is brought to life by Ms. Hughes, its author. Carol Kane, who directed, must have quickly seen that her writer-actress didn’t need that much theatrical support.

Ms. Hughes has good source material: her childhood in a working-class Catholic household of eight in war-torn Northern Ireland. A boisterous humor hums throughout, but it cannot stave off the stress and fear of such an upbringing; not surprisingly, Ms. Hughes dedicates her performances “to all the children who live in places of conflict.”

And though she convincingly inhabits a colorful crew of characters (including the inevitable alcoholic gambler of a father whose horses always come in second), little Geraldine is the engrossing anchor of this drama, which robustly juxtaposes childish wonder and brutal reality. As she grows older, the balance slides toward understandable teenage heartache in the face of relentless sectarian unrest, and

the writing doesn't always remain as taut.

"Belfast Blues" brings its audience to the edge of Geraldine's adulthood, when she is about to cash in on her ticket out of Belfast. She already has a film under her belt, having been spotted years ago by a visiting Hollywood director. And now she is headed to America. There are no clichés here about the land of opportunity, however. What's important, as is often the case, isn't so much what she's headed toward, as what she's leaving behind.

"Belfast Blues" runs through Sunday at the Barrow Street Theater, 27 Barrow Street, at Seventh Avenue South, West Village; 212-868-4444, barrowstreettheatre.com.

A version of this review appears in print on September 30, 2014, on page C2 of the New York edition with the headline: A Child of the 'Troubles' of Northern Ireland.

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By Peter McDermott
pmdermott@irishecho.com

Hughes borrows Barrow for 8 'Blues' Mondays

There's no surefire recipe for success in an acting career.

But Geraldine Hughes suggested some ingredients: "A lot of hard work, a lot of luck and timing."

She didn't mention talent, though one clearly would need that in abundance to have a resume as varied and interesting as hers.

In recent years, Hughes has starred in movies with Clint Eastwood and Sylvester Stallone, has executive produced a film in which she played a leading role and has appeared in episodes of marquee TV shows. She has also, since 2003, performed her own one-woman show in cities on both sides of the Atlantic. Most recently, "Belfast Blues" played seven times to a packed Brian Friel Theater at Queen's University in the title city in December. That success gave her an idea.

"It was in my system again," she said, "and people in New York had been asking me about it, so I thought I'd put it on here again."

So she will appear on stage at the Barrow Street Theatre in next Monday's sold-out show and the seven subsequent Mondays through the end of April. "It's very exciting and very scary," she said of appearing on the set of the hit revival of Thornton Wilder's classic "Our Town," which has been playing at the off-Broadway venue Tuesdays through Sundays for the past 12 months.

"Belfast Blues" was first staged in a 35-seat theatre that had once been a Los Angeles shoe shop. It ran for 15 weeks. She'd come a long way since she was cast in 1984 in a NBC Movie of the Week, "Children of the Crossfire." She moved to the city in 1989, got a degree at UCLA and stayed 16 years.

Hughes flew her mother - who is a character in the play as is the actor's late father - the 6,000 miles to L.A. for the opening of "Belfast Blues." She then brought it back to West Belfast,



Film and TV actor Geraldine Hughes will star in "Belfast Blues" in next Monday's sold-out performance and every Monday through the end of April.

and later to Galway, London and back to L.A.

It tells the story of the first 18 years of her life, some of which were spent in the since demolished Divis Flats.

"There are 24 characters, but it explores that world through the eyes of a young girl," she said.

"You don't have to be a Catholic from West Belfast to enjoy it," said Hughes, who was born in 1970 and is the second youngest of six children.

Her family and community liked it, which meant a great deal to her. "That made me feel that I had permission to tell the story

wherever I went," Hughes said. Normally, as an artist she wouldn't require that. "But it was about a specific place at a specific time," she explained.

It was important, too, that the groups of people who traveled in on buses from the Shankill Road, "on the other side of fence," also enjoyed it.

Hughes argued that an Irish sense of humor is key to the play's appeal. "You can't really tell a story about war without laughter, because people wouldn't want to watch it," she said.

The show led to film work, specifically opposite Stillone in

"Rocky Balboa." Said Hughes: "That happened because the casting director saw 'Belfast Blues.' She saw something in that performance she thought would absolutely work playing a working-class Philadelphia girl as the new love interest for Rocky."

The news that she got that part came as a welcome silver lining just days after she'd heard that plans for a Broadway production of "Shining City," with its playwright Conor McPherson directing, had fallen through. "That was heartbreaking," said Hughes, who was due to star in the show. When it was resched-

uled, a new director enlisted an entirely different cast.

Hughes has more recently played in Eastwood's critically acclaimed "Gran Torino." However, she had decided before the recent film roles came her way to move to New York.

"L.A. is a very strange place if you decide not to become part of the factory. I was difficult to cast because I look like a real person," she said. "I didn't and wouldn't buy into the idea of changing how I look - by starving myself or having plastic surgery, which is a huge part of that culture."

She cited other familiar complaints: the "monotony of one season" and the fact that one has to drive everywhere.

In any case, New York is more central for her.

She will soon begin work on a project that is inspired by the South African work "Truth in Translation." It will be staged in Belfast later in the year.

"We have an ensemble of 10 Northern Irish actors," she said. "We'll be work-shopping and developing the piece over the next couple of months."

Another Northern Ireland focus is writer Abbie Spallen, whose work she admires greatly. In 2009 she was executive producer for the film version of Spallen's "Pumpgirl." In it, she reprised the role of Sinead, the wife of a man involved with a woman who pumps gas. When she played it at the Manhattan Theater Club in December 2007, the New York Times' Caryl Chessman called it a "glorious performance."

Geraldine Hughes's biggest ambitions concern the New York stage. "I'd really, really love to have a beautiful part on Broadway," she said. "A big role. That would be an experience of a lifetime."

For tickets for "Belfast Blues," directed by Carol Kane, go to www.smarttix.com or call (212) 868-4444. The Barrow Street Theatre box office is located at 27 Barrow Street and 7th Avenue South in the West Village, 1 block south of Christopher Street.

Young N.I. artists feature in Scope New York

By Peter McDermott
pmdermott@irishecho.com

A video featuring interviews with taxi drivers who were shot and wounded during the Troubles will be featured at Scope New York, one of five major art fairs taking place in the city this week.

Artist Lisa Byrne herself worked for almost half a year driving a cab in Belfast to win the confidence of her subjects.

"It's pretty intense," said Peter

Richards, the director of Golden Thread Gallery, about Byrne's video.

Golden Thread has four artists, all between 29 and 36 years of age, featured in this year's Scope, which takes place at Lincoln Center. "They are four of the most talented emerging artists in Northern Ireland," said Richards about Byrne, Victoria J. Dean, Allan Hughes and Keith Winter.

Both Byrne and Winters have come to New York for the fair, which is being held from today through Sunday.

"We met them in Berlin," said

Richards about the initial contact with Scope. "They were impressed with what we were showing there."

"This is really big for us," the director said. He believes it is the first time that a Northern Ireland gallery, has been invited to such an event in New York.

Richards said the trip was made possible by the Creative Industries Fund and the Northern Ireland Arts Council. He couldn't travel as his wife is due to give birth very soon, but Golden Thread exhibitions officer Sarah McAvera will promote the

North's art scene along with Charles Walsh and Chris Downey.

The gallery, which is located on an interface in North Belfast, has also asked prominent Brooklyn artist and County Down native Tom Bevan to help with the trip.

Golden Thread Gallery is located at Switchroom, 84-94 Great Patrick St., Belfast. BT1 2LU. Website: www.gtgallery.fsnet.co.uk; Tel: 011-44-28 90 330920; Email: info@gtgallery.fsnet.co.uk

Barrow Street Theatre Operated by Scott Morfee and Tom Wirtshafter, BST is currently celebrating its 10-year anniversary. BST has been home to more than 50 shows and artists from around the world, including *Hit the Wall*, *Tribes*, *Cymbeline*, *Mistakes Were Made*, *Capsule 33*, *Our Town*, *Gone Missing*, *No Child...*, *Orson's Shadow*, *Bug*, *TJ & Dave*, *Eat the Taste*, Daniel Kitson and Jeff Achtem. In addition, Barrow Street Theatre has presented Colin Quinn *Unconstitutional*, *Red Light Winter*, an oak tree, *Floating*, *Two Men Talking*, *How Theater Failed America*, *The Strangerer*, *Baby Wants Candy*, *Die Rotten Punkte*, *My Dad Was Nearly James Bond*, *The Jesus Factor*, Jimmy Carr, *Todd Almond*, PigPen Theatre Co., *The Piano Store Plays*, *The Parting Glass*, *Hip Nos*, *My Girlfriend's Boyfriend*, *Belfast Blues*, and most recently last season's *Buyer & Cellar*.

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Firefly Theater & Films With equal footing in both media, Firefly Theater & Films has been telling compelling stories for nearly 20 years. Founded in 1996 by actor and producer Steven Klein, Firefly first focused solely on stage, and its productions have won more than two-dozen awards for shows in Boston, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Belfast, Off-West End London, and Off-Broadway. With a belief that films could be made with the same cross-disciplinary collaboration typically found in theater, Steven partnered with Oscar-winning producer Bruce Cohen to found a film collective, making 35 digital shorts from 2001 - 2005. The success of this effort led to the expansion of Firefly into Firefly Theater & Films, which has since screened award-winning films at dozens of festivals internationally. Firefly's LA Film Festival-winning documentary, *Make Believe* — one of Ebert's Top Docs of 2011 — is now being developed as a Broadway musical with Disney Theatricals, and it's annual *Unscreened* series of new plays just completed its fourth year. The award-winning documentary *Print the Legend* was just released for a limited theatrical run in NY and LA and as a Netflix Original Documentary, now available in dozens of countries around the world.

www.fireflyinc.com

Geraldine Hughes, in association with Firefly Theater & Films, presents

Belfast Blues

written & performed by Geraldine Hughes at the Barrow Street Theatre

**directed by Carol Kane
 produced by Steven Klein & Nick Micozzi**

**set & lights by Jonathan Christman
 sound by Jonathan Snipes
 projection design by Jonathan Christman
 stage managed by Kat West
 associate produced by Natalia Duncan**

run time: 90 minutes, no intermission

Geraldine Hughes appears courtesy of the Actors' Equity Association.



Belfast Blues

Belfast Blues was developed and first produced in collaboration with members of The Virtual Theatre Project. The Project is a non-profit artists' collective committed to identifying, developing, and staging new work. For information, see www.virtualtheatreproject.com. Belfast Blues was first presented by the Virtual Theatre Project (Kim Terrell, Artistic Director) in association with the Black Dahlia Theatre (Matt Shakman, Artistic Director) and was performed at the Black Dahlia Theatre in Los Angeles, CA (USA). It was produced by Steven Klein, directed by Charles Haid, designed by Jonathan Christman, production stage managed by Andy Scheer, technical directed by Rad Hallman, and publicity was handled by Ken Werther Publicity.

Special Thanks The production sends special thanks to Wake Forest University, Clifford Capone, Conor Allen, and to the staff of the Barrow Street Theatre, including:

Managing Directors - Scott Morfee & Tom Wirtshafter

General Manager - Amy Dalba

Company Manager - Victoria Gagliano

Literary Department - Joy Besozzi & Kristina Olson

Technical Supervisor - Josh Kohler

Technical Consultant - Brian Dua

Front of House Staff - Ciara Constanti, Sasha Diamond, Catherine Koutsavlis, Dean Linnard, Evan Maltby, Beth Miller, Ghenet Pinderhughes, & Emily Verla

Bios

Geraldine Hughes received the Los Angeles Ovation, Garland, and Drama Critics' Circle Awards and a Drama League Award Nomination for Outstanding Performance for *Belfast Blues*, which she also wrote. Stage credits include *Gyranò De Bergerac*

(Broadway), *Jerusalem* (Broadway and The West End), *Molly Sweeney* (Irish Repertory Theatre), *Pumpgirl* (MTC), *Translations* (Broadway), *Orson's Shadow*, *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, *The Weir*, and *The Architect*. Hughes' TV credits include: "The Blacklist" (recurring), "Blue Bloods," "Nurse Jackie," "Mercy," "The Good Wife," "ER," "Law and Order CI," "Law & Order SVU," "Law & Order," and "Murder She Wrote." She also narrated Colum McCann's book *Transatlantic* and has starred in the features *Gran Torino*, *Rocky Balboa*, *Dead Souls*, and *Killing Lincoln* and will be seen soon in Oren Moverman's *Time Out Of Mind*, with Richard Gere.

Geraldine dedicates her performances to all the children who live in places of conflict.

Steven Klein, founder of Firefly Theater & Films, is an actor and producer who began collaborating with Geraldine Hughes when appearing with her in *Orson's Shadow*, and he subsequently produced the world premiere of *Belfast Blues* along with runs in West Belfast's Feile an Phobail, Belfast's Grand Opera House, London's Soho Theatre, and previous off-Broadway runs. In addition to *Belfast Blues*, stage highlights include: the annual *Unscreened* series in Los Angeles, debuting the work of Itamar Moses to LA with *The Four of Us*, and returning Jane Martin's work to NY with her *Flags* at 59E59. Film highlights: the award-winning documentary *Make Believe* and the Netflix Original Documentary *Print the Legend*, which starts streaming exclusively on Netflix on Friday, September 26. As an actor, Steven will next be seen in the LA premiere of Itamar Moses' *Completeness*, opening in November, and as a lead in the film *Kensho at the Bedfellow*, shot in NY last fall.

Nick Micozzi is a producer, director, actor, and a co-founder of the Innovative Theatre Foundation. Producing credits include *New York Innovative Theatre Awards*, *Flags*, *Night at the Trojan Wall*, *Last Supper*, *Morgan Street*, *Devil in the Hole*, and the upcoming *Macbeth* at LA's Edgemar Center. Acting work includes Lucio and Pompey in (separate productions of) *Measure for Measure*, Bernard in *Death of a Salesman*, Iago in *Othello*, Misha in *Nick (Ivanov)*, and *ArtCamp Sexy Time Football*. He also works in production of large-scale live events, including Times Square New Years Eve.

Jonathan Christman is a professor of scenic and lighting design at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, NC. Notable productions include *Eurydice*, *Marisol*, *King Lear*, *Wings*, *Grapes of Wrath*, *The Laramie Project*, and *Angels in America*. Jonathan was a founding member of The Virtual Theatre Project. The world premiere of Virtual's *Belfast Blues* earned him the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Award for best digital imagery design. Jonathan has continued

to refine his vision for *Belfast Blues* for venues in Los Angeles, Chicago, Belfast, New York, and London, and was nominated for two LA Ovation Awards for scenic and lighting design for the Rubicon Theatre production. He has also designed *Next Fall*, *Kimberly Akimbo*, *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, and the 2013 world premiere of Daniel Singer's *A Perfect Likeness* for North Carolina-based Paper Lantern Theatre Company. Jonathan's original projections were featured in a 2013 collaborative production of Moises Kaufman's *33 Variations* by Wake Forest University and the Winston-Salem Festival Stage.

Jonathan Snipes Jonathan Snipes is a composer and sound designer for Film and Theater living in Los Angeles. He occasionally teaches sound design in the theater department at UCLA, and is a member of the rap group clipping. www.jonat8han.com

Kat West is a stage manager and is thrilled to join *Belfast Blues*. Off Broadway: *Murder For Two* for Jayson Raitt Productions; *Altar Boyz & My Big Gay Italian Wedding* for Davenport Theatricals; *President Harding is a Rock Star*; *Boozy*, *Heddatron* for Les Freres Corbusier; *Little Flower of East Orange* for The Public/LABrynth Theater Company; *Unlocked*, *Iron Curtain*, *The Flood*, *Illyria*, *Golden Boy of the Blue Ridge*, and others for Prospect Theater Company. Opera: *La Boheme*, *Cavaleria Rusticana* (New York City Opera). Thanks to her husband and family.