**Programme Notes for Dear Arabella**

**Costumes and Characters**

Dear Arabella is the new play by renowned playwright Marie Jones. The director is Lindsay Posner who worked with Jones on her funny and moving play Stones in His Pockets in 2017. The set and costume design are by Peter McKintosh, an Olivier and Tony Award nominated designer.

Set between the war and the Troubles in the heartland of Belfast the play consists of monologues delivered by three very different women, entrapped in their hum drum lives in various ways. All three lives are changed by a small act of kindness and as Jones says “The door to destiny can open upon tiny hinges”.

CAST

**JEAN** (Miss Timpson to the street children) is played by **Katie Tumelty** who is well known both in theatre and television where her roles include Divorcing Jack and Game of Thrones to name but a few. Jean is single and when not working in the bakery looks after her demanding mother who suffers from “nerves”.

Jean is of medium height with long black wavy hair swept back from a high forehead and held at the back with a slide. It flows about her shoulders. Her skin is tanned and she has a long neck and high cheek bones. Her dark eyes are set far apart and she has a wide expressive mouth and small ears. She wears no jewellery. She has a slim figure and has a full bust. Her brown knee length dress has reveres and a v neck. It has an overall pattern of pink and cream flowers. It is buttoned down the front and gathered at the waist with a narrow belt of the same material. Over her dress she wears a cream coloured cardigan with pockets on each side, it is unbuttoned. She wears tan coloured shoes with a small block heel. Her nylons are natural coloured and her legs are shapely. Later when she visits the beach she wears a cream coloured dust coat with deep pockets in which she carries a flask.

**ELSIE** is played by **Laura Hughes** whose theatre credits include Feast of Lupercal for which she was nominated as Best Supporting Actress in the ESB/Irish Times Theatre Awards. She has appeared on television in Sunday Bloody Sunday and Good Vibrations. Elsie has a war veteran husband, Cecil who has lost an arm, - and any kindness he previously had towards her. She is of medium height and is a heavy built older woman. Her brown hair is coiffed in a fifties style, rolled in side waves, held in a bun at the back. She has a round face and chubby cheeks that dimple when she smiles. She wears red lipstick on her small mouth and takes care in her appearance. She wears a wrap over taupe coloured dress with white polka dots and three quarter length sleeves. It has a dropped waist line from which the skirt falls in drapes. She wears a wedding ring on her left finger and has a habit of clasping her hands on her knees when sitting. She has thick ankles and wears sensible flat black shoes.

**ARABELLA** for whom the play is named is played by **Lucia McAnespie** whose theatre roles include Factory Girls as well as a large body of Shakespeare, she has played everywhere from Elsinore Castles to a ladies loo at the Assembly Rooms in Edinburgh. She has starred in Holby City and Line of Duty on the BBC. Arabella, a piano tutor, is the “posh” lady of the three who lives alone in the Beresford’s large family home mourning the life she should have had with her husband who was lost at sea. Arabella looks quite refined and is well groomed. She is tall and thin with high cheekbones in a long face and blue eyes. Her sleek auburn hair is parted on the right of her forehead and is back-combed to add to her height. It is clasped into a rolled bun at the back. She is well presented with nicely shaped eye brows and wears a pearl necklace on her elegant neck, and matching earrings. She wears a knee length shift dress with three quarter length sleeves that Jean describes as “primrose coloured”. It has a round neck and an overall pattern of flowers in paler yellow and cream. It buttons down the front and has a cream coloured belt. A cream coloured cardigan is draped around her shoulders which as Jean observes “never moves”. She has elegant hands with long fingers, her left one bearing a wedding ring. She has slender legs, wears open toed cream sandals with an ankle bar, and a small square heel.

There are only three characters on the stage throughout. Occasionally we will hear short strands of piano music: Schumann – Kinderszenen opus 15, Scenes From Childhood as Jean listens to Arabella playing the piano, but otherwise there is hardly any music in the play.

**THE SET**

A black frame surrounds each side and across the top of the stage.

There are three black floor- to- ceiling exits on each side.

Filling all of the rear wall of the stage is a seascape of a calm sea, with gentle waves,

a wet expanse of sand and a big blue sky full of white fluffy clouds.

The floor is painted pale blue, while a large circle of different shades of natural

wood, in a herringbone pattern takes up about a quarter of the stage, in the middle.

The scenery consists of three wooden dining room chairs placed in an evenly spaced

row across the rear. The backs of the chairs have three vertical slats, and the seats are

upholstered in a blue and white pattern.

 The chair on the left has a sandwich box and a thermos flask pushed underneath.

**LIGHTING:**

A bank of spotlights stretching from the floor to the ceiling is in front at each side of

the stage. When one of the characters is speaking, she is lit by a spotlight, and the lighting is

dimmed above the two other characters.

At the end of the performance, the seascape is illuminated as a pink sunset.

**PROGRAMME NOTES:**

The play is approximately 90 minutes in duration and there is no interval.

If you would like to hear the Programme Notes read before the play begins, please be

seated ten minutes before the start. This is a good time to test your head set.

The Audio Description is by Sara Duncan and Florence Stewart, of Sightlines.