



THE WALWORTH FARCE AT IPAC 10 – 13 MARCH

A Q&A with Director Mikel Murfi

Tell us about what Wollongong audiences can expect from your show, *The Walworth Farce*.

A very entertaining night in the theatre! It's a very funny piece, fast, high energy and it's woven through with a family tragedy. A father makes his two teenage sons re-enact a play *The Walworth Farce* in their grimy flat every day. But when one of the sons brings home the wrong shopping one day it has severe consequences. It's a real rollercoaster!

Can you give us some insights into the story and characters?

The tragic element of the show stems from the father Dinny's story; what he did 20 years ago, back in Cork, before running away to London. His two boys are sent after him by their mother. He then effectively keeps his children locked in the apartment on the Walworth Road for the next 17 years. Now in their teens, one son Sean leaves the apartment for about 20 minutes each day to buy provisions. So while they are very funny actors in the play within the play, the sons are almost feral in their day-to-day behaviour. And it's this surreal mix of comedy and tragedy that makes the play compulsive. The father is part comic genius, part psychotic. The boys are a strange mix of the comic that is their father and the fragile, still child-like young men. The fact that the audience can

still laugh almost to the end of this show is remarkable.

What kind of stand-out audience reactions have you had?

The show has been fantastically well received. It first started in 2005 and has been touring on and off since then. It's a measure of how engrossing the audience find the piece that keeps it on the road. It's not for the faint hearted but when it toured in America before Christmas it got standing ovations almost every night. People really respond to Enda Walsh's writing in a way that they don't normally do in an audience. And Australian audiences really respond to his plays. They have a very similar spirit and sense of humour to the Irish.

How did the actors prepare for their roles?

Tadhg Murphy: I do a vocal warm up for about 30 mins and some stretching exercises for about 20mins. Then I tend to have some quiet time, staying calm and trying to focus on the role for about another 20 mins before lights up.

Ray Scannell: I do about a half an hours yoga and meditation and then about a 20 min vocal warm up. I have a picture of each character that I play that I look at just before I go on.

Have any of the cast/creatives been to Wollongong, or have any comments about coming to Wollongong?

Yes! Mikel the director of the show was in Wollongong only recently. He says it's a great place! Hanging out at the lighthouse on Sunday morning watching the surfers jumping in behind the waves off the cliff! Sounds like the Wollongong folk know how to live. Come to think of it *The Walworth Farce* in the theatrical equivalent of one of Wollongong's favourite pastimes, jumping off a cliff! So we're looking forward no end to being there!

What inspired Enda Walsh to write this play?

After he moved to London, Enda wanted to explore the Irish Emigrant story which a lot of our writers seem to do as a kind of rite of passage. But as he was settling in London he was passing the same house every day. Looking in the window he saw a family (evidently Irish because of the paraphernalia on the walls) who always seemed to be in exactly the same place in the room all the time. He began to imagine how or why they never seemed to leave the house. This image coupled with Enda's obsession with story and family story telling lead him to create a hilarious and horrific version of the Irish Emigrant's story all wrapped up in a Farce.

Tell us something we should know.

It's quite a challenge for an audience. But it is hilarious, frightening and thrilling theatre.