

VERDANT PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS

MIASMA

BY COLIN MURPHY

DIRECTED BY SAMANTHA CADE



Insight 
RESEARCH IRELAND CENTRE FOR DATA ANALYTICS



erc
European Research Council



Taighde Éireann
Research Ireland



VERDANT PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS

MIASMA

by

Colin Murphy

Directed by

Samantha Cade

Lighting Design

Viko Nikci

Sound Composition

Carl Kennedy

Costume Design

Sorcha Ní Fhlionn



Insight 
RESEARCH IRELAND CENTRE FOR DATA ANALYTICS



Taighde Éireann
Research Ireland

This time six years ago, I was obsessed with the idea of contagion. As were most of us. But along with watching NPHET meetings online, and following epidemiologists on Twitter, I was also searching back through history, and literature. This brought me to Gerardine Meaney, in UCD English. Epidemics, she told me, were commonly used in literature as metaphors for blame. That felt familiar.

Amongst other things (Dracula, Dickens), we also talked about John Snow. Before long, I was teasing out a play on Snow. (Who was our pandemic's John Snow, I wondered.) I brought the idea to Gerardine, she brought it to Aoibheann Bird and Derek Greene in Insight Centre for Data Analytics, and together we developed a project to bring to Science Foundation Ireland, who funded us under their Discover programme. Writing it, I drew in particular on two books: Steven Johnson's *The Ghost Map* and Sandra Hempel's *The Medical Detective*. A workshop with Insight and digital humanities researchers allowed me tease out my ideas as the play developed. ANU Productions presented that first iteration of the play, directed by Sam Cade, in Richmond Barracks in 2022; we also brought it to Mountjoy Prison (where they had a whole other insight into the pandemic) and Trinity's Old Anatomy Theatre.

I had written the play as an elliptical way of reflecting on our collective experience of the pandemic - nobody was going to go to a play called *Covid*, after all. My hunch was that a play set in 1850s London could hold a mirror up, but without that mirror merely reflecting back blame. There had been enough blame.

It was in the post-show discussions, and in the response of those panelists who had been involved in the Covid response - particularly Philip Nolan and Luke O'Neill - that I realised we were onto something. We had been funded to use art to bring science to a general audience, but it was what happened when we brought art to a scientific

audience - particularly one that had been on the front line of a recent crisis - that I (and I think they) found eye-opening.

We teamed up with Verdant Productions and went back to Research Ireland (as it had become) and secured funding for a full production and tour. As we have left the pandemic behind (though, as I write this, the Covid-19 Evaluation is making headlines), the play has changed, in exciting ways: it is now less about a pandemic and more about science itself. There is a new crisis, and again our scientists are on the front lines: this one is called Trust.

As with science, we have made accidental discoveries along the way. Ronan Kelly had the idea to do a week-long workshop on the play with first-year medicine students in RCSI, culminating in a rehearsed reading for their classmates and staff. The discussion afterwards was revelatory. They wondered what they were learning today that might subsequently be revealed to be flawed, like miasma theory. They wondered if they would be doctors like John Snow, or doctors like the establishment that ignored him.

Verdant have put together a unique tour, visiting in particular institutions of science, of medicine and of learning - and Leinster House. We hope to bring *Miasma* to those institutions' audiences, *and* to bring new audiences into those institutions.

Thank you to Verdant, to the UCD team, to Research Ireland, to all our venue partners and, of course, to Sam and the designers, cast and crew, for making this possible. Thank you to our engagement team for deepening and broadening the experience. And thank you to you for coming to *Miasma*.

Colin Murphy

PLAYWRIGHT
colinmurphy@me.com



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Miasma depicts a city in turmoil, where fear, uncertainty, and urgency shaped the daily lives of ordinary citizens, as well as the political and medical establishment tasked with protecting them.

The play invites us to consider not only the medical theories and policies at play during London's cholera epidemic, but also the personal cost, the personal losses endured amidst the pursuit of these medical breakthroughs. In among these major medical discoveries, how does history record those individual stories of personal loss? And how, over time, do those individual stories become obscured within broader narratives, reduced to numbers and data in service of a theory?

Samantha Cade

DIRECTOR

There is a question that has hovered over this play since its inception, and that I suspect hovers over any attempt to bring science and theatre into the same room - what can the arts do that data cannot?

The facts of John Snow's story are well documented. They appear in textbooks, in lectures, and in public health curricula around the world. At their barest they are a physician, a pump, a map of deaths plotted street by street across Soho and a conclusion that the medical establishment did not want to reach. The evidence was there. It took years to be believed.

Ireland knows this history all too well. The cholera epidemic of 1832 tore through the country, claiming approximately 50,000 lives and returned in 1849 to a population already devastated by hunger. While Snow was mapping deaths in Soho, across the Irish Sea Sir John Gray, MP for Kilkenny, became chairperson of Dublin's Waterworks Committee in 1853 and drove the creation of the Vartry Water Scheme to pump clean water to Dublin city. It opened in 1863, just 8 years after Snow's theory was rejected by the Board of Health, and incidences of cholera in the city dropped. Throughout the 1860s the impact of schemes like this supported Snow's theory until it was proved by Robert Koch in 1883, 25 years after Snow's death.

This is history we know, but what the textbook cannot easily give you is the feeling of being inside that room. Or, just as importantly, inside the opposing one. Watching this play it is clear that Edwin Chadwick, whose miasma theory Snow was working against, was

not a villain. He was a reformer, driven by a genuine and passionate desire to improve the lives of London's poorest citizens. He was also wrong. The play allows us to hold both of those things at once, to understand how a person can be motivated by the best of intentions and still cause harm through the ideas they champion. It allows us to understand our history as his present moment, in which the future is unknown and undecided. That is a more uncomfortable lesson than simple heroism and villainy, and a more useful one.

Public engagement with research, both historical and contemporary, is fundamental to a healthy society - one that can ask difficult questions, sit with uncertainty, reflect, debate, and genuinely consider a perspective other than its own. The arts have always been one of the most powerful tools we have for doing exactly that, and that's what this project is for. To that end, these performances are one aspect but are accompanied by a wider programme of post-show talks, education workshops, and a forthcoming short story challenge focused on Sarah Lewis, the woman at the centre of this story, in collaboration with MoLI.

The world John Snow navigated in 1854 of contested evidence, institutional resistance, and the slow, painful work of changing minds is not as distant as we might like to think. It is, in some ways, the world we stepped out of this evening to come and experience this performance together. The question, then, is what we bring with us from the theatre when we step back in?

Dr Caitlin White

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT MANAGER

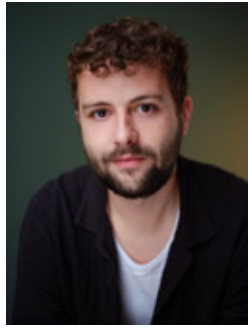
CAST

Jack Gavin

Jack is an actor from Dublin who trained at The Gaiety School of Acting. He recently performed his self-penned one-man show 'Lost in Asia' at Smock Alley Theatre.

His recent theatre credits include: 24 Hour Plays (Abbey Theatre); Hamlet, Macbeth, Under the Table, Made (Smock Alley Theatre).

Film/TV Credits include: The Ick (RTE), Harry Wild (RTE/Acorn), The Participants (Still Films), Little Women (BBC), A Grand Stretch in The Evening (Met Film School), Prosperity (RTE).



Karl Quinn

Karl Quinn studied Theatre at Trinity College Dublin from 1992-1994. Karl's recent theatre credits include: Love at the End of Time (Once Off Productions), Hamlet (The Mill Theatre), The Trolley Man (Carpet Theatre), Staging the Treaty (Anu Productions), Emporor101 (Performance Corporation), Breath (Carpet Theatre), Sham (Guna Nua).

Other theatre credits include: All in the Timing [Nominated Best Actor Dublin Fringe 2008] (Inis Theatre Company), Connected (Project/Finland)

Film and TV credits include: House of Guinness (Netflix/Kudos), There There (There There, LLC), Holding (ITV/Little Prince), The Castle (Monika Film Productions), Fair City (Radio Teilifis Eireann)

As co-writer of Connected, Karl was nominated for The Bewleys Little Gem Award (Absolute Fringe 2010). Karl is also an experienced voice-over artist and continuity announcer.



Niamh McGrath

Niamh McGrath is currently the Artist in Residence at the Hawk's Well Theatre. Her acclaimed one-woman show, GomBean, which she wrote and performed, was directed by Seamus O'Rourke and produced by the Hawk's Well, premiering there before embarking on a national tour. Niamh also wrote and performed in Glitchmas and Medium Rare, both recent productions at the Hawk's Well.

Niamh has worked with a wide range of notable theatre companies. Most recently, she appeared in The Quiet Man (Loco & Reckless/Civic Theatre) as part of the Dublin Theatre Festival and played in Peter Sheridan's Philo at The Gaiety Theatre. Her work with NOMAD includes Tarry Flynn (with Livin' Dred) and The Far-Off Hills (with Loco & Reckless).

Additional credits include co-writer and performer of Looking Deadly (Dublin Fringe Festival), as well as roles in Eclipsed (Mill Theatre) and Ireland: A Survivor's Guide.

An original cast member of John Breen's Alone It Stands, Niamh performed in over 500 shows during a three-year international tour including the West End, the Edinburgh Fringe, and Tasmania, alongside several national tours and runs at The Gaiety and The Olympia.

Other stage work includes collaborations with Big Telly (Department Story and One Sandwich Short of a Genius), Barabbas (40 Songs of Green at the National Concert Hall and Blowfish at The Ark), Two (Viking Theatre), and with Peter Dunne's Dummy (MORB) at the Peacock Theatre. She also appeared in Far Away from Me at The Ark.

Broadcast credits include Obituary Season 2 (RTÉ & Hulu), the short film Steve's Job (Hawk's Well), Seamus Goes Wild and Living with a Fairy (RTÉjr), the docudrama Waking the Titanic (TG4/Netflix), Sinners (BBC 1), the IFTA-nominated Primary School Musical (RTÉ2) and Amy Conroy's radio play Hold This (RTE R1).



CAST

Robbie O'Connor

Robbie completed his B.A in Acting at The Lir Academy, Trinity College Dublin.

His theatre credits include: The Ferryman (Gaiety Theatre); The Shadow of a Gunman (Druid/Abbey Theatre); Hangmen (Decadent Theatre/Gaiety Theatre); Glue, Northern Star (Rough Magic); Hamman, All Hardest of Woman, Lolling, Staging the Treaty, The Party to End All Parties, The Anvil, Hentown, Pals, Rebel Rebel, Laundry, The Boys of Foley Street & World's End Lane (ANU); The Lost O'Casey (ANU/Abbey Theatre); These Rooms (ANU/CoisCéim Dance Theatre); The Red Shoes (Gate Theatre); Hamlet (Second Age); All that Fall (Pan Pan Theatre); The End of the Road (Fishamble).

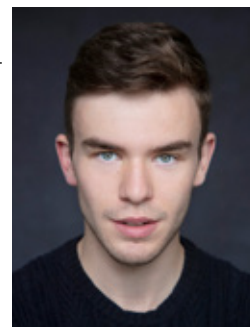
His screen credits include: Hidden Assets 3, Cold Case Collins, The Doireann Project, Fair City (RTE), Hawksnest (ANU) Tinderface, (The Lir) All Is by My Side (Element), Hidden (BBC), Two Hearts (Calippo), Civic Life/Leisure Centre (Desperate Optimists).



Peter Rothwell

Peter is a graduate from The Three Year Bachelor in Acting (Hons) Course at The Lir Academy (2022). Upon graduating Peter's screen credits include Finn opposite Isabella Gomez in feature film A ROYAL RENDEZVOUS for Mar Vista and Samson Films directed by Christine Luby, the role of Henry in CHRISTMAS IN NOTTINGHILL directed by Ali Liebert, Paul Branigan in HARRY WILD directed by Robert Quinn, and the role of Free State Sergeant in short film TROUBLE directed by Jonathan Shaw.

On stage Peter has appeared in VALLEY OF THE SQUINTING WINDOWS directed by Michael Scott, as Isaiah Conroy in HAMMAM in the Abbey Theatre directed by Louise Lowe, as Ken in BENCH TALES for Barnstorm Theatre Company and Kilkenny Arts Festival directed by Sally Stevens and the role of Eoin O'Duffy in STAGING THE TREATY for Anu directed by Louise Lowe



CREATIVES

Samantha Cade

DIRECTOR

Recent directing credits include *Little One* by Hannah Moscovich (Glass Mask Theatre), *Pink Parts* (Scene & Heard 2025), *Casements Defense* (International Shaw Conference 2024), *Splitting the G* By Shamim DeBrune (Beyond the Pale, Electric Picnic 2024), *Francis Darcy The Farting Ballerina* (Scene & Heard 2024), *MIASMA* by Collin Murphy (ANU, 2022), staged readings of *Burnt Norton* by Colin Campbell, *Homo Hibernicus* by Jimmy McAleavey (Rough Magics Rough Weekend 2022), *FETCH* by Lauren Shannon Jones (DFF 2019), *No One Sees The Video* (The Lir 2018), *The Handover* (Devised, The Lir 2018).

Since 2018, Samantha has worked as an assistant/associate director for ANU Productions. The work with ANU has included high-profile productions; *The Dead* (Landmark /MoLi /ANU), *Staging The Treaty*, *The Lost O'Casey* (Winner of 3 Irish Times Theater Awards), *Torch* (Arts Council England, Ambition for Excellence Award), *The Anvil* (Manchester International Festival), *Book Of Names* (Landmark/ANU), *Faultline* (ANU/The Gate), *Of the mouth of Flowers* (DCC), *All Hardest Of Women*,. Other assistant directing credits include *Steward of Christendom* (Dir. Louise Lowe, The Gate 2022). *An Old Song Half Forgotten* (Dir. Louise Lowe, The Abbey 2023). Previously Samantha worked as a professional actor in Canada's film/TV and theatre industry.



Colin Murphy

PLAYWRIGHT

Colin Murphy is a playwright, screenwriter, and journalist. A collected edition of his plays for Fishamble, *Colin Murphy's Political Plays*, has just been published by Bloomsbury Methuen. Other plays include *The United States vs Ulysses* (with Once Off Productions, Pavilion Theatre and Irish Arts Center), *The Asylum Workshop* (for TU Dublin Conservatoire) and *A Day in May* (produced by Pat Moylan). Radio plays include *#Antigone* (for Newstalk) and the award-winning *Hamlet*, *Prince of Derry* (for RTÉ Drama on One). He is currently the Rooney Writer Fellow at Trinity Long Room Hub. He writes a weekly column for *The Sunday Independent*.



Viko Nikci

LIGHTING DESIGN

Viko has worked in the arts ever since taking a wrong turn in Chelsea and stumbling into the Irish Repertory Theatre at age 15. With a fake ID swearing he was 18, he walked out with a job and the start of a lifelong journey into the world of storytelling. Viko works across stage, screen, and emerging media platforms.



CREATIVES

Carl Kennedy

SOUND COMPOSITION AND DESIGN

Carl Kennedy is a composer and sound designer for theatre. He trained at Academy of Sound in Dublin. He has worked on numerous theatre productions, working with venues and companies including The Gaiety, The Abbey, The Gate, Lyric Theatre, Landmark, Decadent, ANU Productions, Fishamble: The New Play Company, Graffiti, Rough Magic, Theatre Lovett, HOME Manchester, Prime Cut Productions and Speckintime among others. In 2023 he received The Irish Times Theatre Award for Best Soundscape, and he also has been nominated three times previously in this category. In 2024 he was part of the design team for *The Maestro and the Mosquita* which received the Dublin Fringe award for Best Design. He has made a number of audio pieces for installation and radio, working with ANU, Upstate Theatre Project, various museums in Dublin City and also his own work. Carl also composes music and sound design for radio, TV and video games. He was composer and sound designer for Mr Wall on RTÉjr which was shortlisted for an IMRO Radio Award in the drama category. Game titles include Curious George, Curious about Shapes and Colors, Jelly Jumble, Too Many Teddies, Dino Dog and Leonardo and His Cat. TV credits include sound design for *16 Letters* (Independent Pictures/RTE) and SFX editing and foley recording for *Centenary* (RTE).



Sorcha Ní Fhlionn

COSTUME DESIGNER

Sorcha has worked extensively as a costume designer, supervisor and maker. She has worked across theatre, film, TV and music videos in Ireland and the UK. She is a graduate of Drama & Theatre Studies at TCD, as well as holding a Postgraduate Diploma in Theatre Costume from RADA. Previous design credits include: *Heavenly Bodies* (The Lir Academy); *Three Sisters & A Misanthrope* (co-design with Molly O’Cathain for Sugarglass Theatre Company); *What Are You Afraid Of?* (Rough Magic), *Children Of The Sun* (The Abbey Theatre & Rough Magic); *The Tempest* (Rough Magic); *All The Angels* (Rough Magic); *Love + Information* (TUD); *Queenish* by Soulé (Diffusion Lab); *Close Quarters* (RADA Gielgud Theatre); *Test Dummy* (Theatre Upstairs); *Hornet’s Nest* (ANU Productions).



Verdant Productions

PRODUCERS

Verdant Productions (Producer), formed by Donal Shiels in 2011, produces and promotes a diverse range of live and virtual theatre and music programming in Ireland and internationally. Recent work includes **Mother of All The Behans** adapted by Peter Sheridan from the book by Brian Behan featuring Imelda May (Olympia Theatre, Everyman, Cork & Grand Opera House, Belfast), **Sandpaper on Sunburn** by David Horan for Dublin Theatre Festival 2024, **Falling To Earth** by Eugene O’Brien and **Isla** by Tim Price as part of Dublin Theatre Festival 2023, **Speed The Plow** by David Mamet (Civic Theatre & Pavilion Theatre), **The Blackwater Lightship** by Colm Toibin adapted by David Horan (Gaiety Theatre) for Dublin Theatre Festival, **Art by Yasmina Reza** (a filmed presentation from The Mill Theatre featuring the cast of Bachelors Walk (Sept 2021), **Triskel Courtyard Cork** – a 3 week programme of outdoor performances in August 2021, **Class** by Iseult Golden & David Horan (Irish Tour), **A Holy Show** by Janet Moran, (Edinburgh Fringe & Project Arts Centre), **Private Peaceful** by Michael Morpurgo (off Broadway at Barrow Group Theatre & Irish tour), the World premiere of **Copper Face Jacks the Musical** by Paul Howard (The Olympia Theatre); **My Romantic History** by D.C.Jackson (Irish premiere), **Trainspotting** by Irvine Welsh & Henry Irvine (Olympia Theatre); **The Spinning Heart** by Donal Ryan (Gaiety Theatre); **The Weir** by Conor McPherson (Gaiety Theatre); **Signatories at Kilmainham Gaol** & Olympia Theatre (UCD).

Past work includes **Brendan Behan’s Borstal Boy** (Gaiety Theatre), the World premiere of **Anglo the Musical** by Paul Howard (Bord Gáis Energy Theatre), **Hamlet & King Lear** by William Shakespeare, **Agrippina** by Handel for Irish Opera Collective (Dublin Fringe Festival), **My Brilliant Divorce** by Geraldine Aaron (Irish Tour), **Foxy** by Noelle Brown at Project Arts Centre, **Solpadeine is My Boyfriend** by Stefanie Preissner (Brisbane Powerhouse, Australia), **The Field** by John B Keane with Brian Dennehy, directed by Joe Dowling (Olympia Theatre).

CREDITS

CAST

Jack Gavin	Prime Minister / William Farr
Niamh McGrath	Narrator / Sarah / Housekeeper
Robbie O'Connor	John Snow
Karl Quinn	Chadwick / Sir Benjamin Hall
Peter Rothwell	Chancellor / Henry Whitehead

CREATIVES

Playwright	Colin Murphy
Director	Samantha Cade
Lighting Design	Viko Nikci
Sound Composition & Design	Carl Kennedy
Costume Design	Sorcha Ní Fhlíonn

PRODUCTION

Production Manager	Viko Nikci
Stage Manager	Jack Shanley and Pilar Smatla
Assistant Stage Manager	Rosie Turpin
Assistant to the Director	Molly Durack
Production Assistant	Cora Lynch
Hair & Make Up	Leonard Daly
Publicity & PR	Conleth Teevan
Photography	Carol Cummins
Lighting Hire	QLX
Sound Hire	One Louder Sound Ltd
Producer	Kerry Power (Verdant Productions)
Producer	Donal Shiels (Verdant Productions)

Miasma was first presented in rehearsed-reading format by ANU Productions, directed by Samantha Cade, with funding from Science Foundation Ireland, in 2022.

FOR UCD

Project lead Prof Gerardine Meaney, UCD Centre for Cultural Analytics
Research Development Officer Dr Jenny Knell
Public Engagement Manager Dr Caitlin White
Postdoctoral Research Fellow Dr Phoebe O'Leary

Advisory Board

Prof Sara Burke (TCD)
Prof Catherine Cox (UCD)
Dr Ronan Kelly (RCSI)
Mr Phil Kingston (Abbey Theatre)
Dr Marion McGarry (ATU)
Prof Philip Nolan (MU)
Ms Máire O'Higgins (Larkin College)
Prof Luke O'Neill (TCD)

The Miasma project is funded by the Research Ireland Discover Programme (grant number 24/DP/13227). It forms part of the ERC VICTEUR project (www.projectvictour.com), which has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement number 884951), and the Insight Research Ireland Centre for Data Analytics (grant number 12/RC/2289_P2).

SPECIAL THANKS

Aoibheann Bird; Derek Greene; Louise Lowe, Matt Smyth and all at ANU Productions; Vince McCarthy; Phil Smyth; Hugh Travers; Harriet Wheelock and colleagues at RCPI, Evi Numen Kontogoni at TCD, Maire O'Higgins at Larkin College, the team at Sean O'Casey Theatre, Richard Boyd Barrett, Rachel Iredale of Research Ireland, Aoife Demel and the team at Mermaid Arts Centre, Jessica Handy and Alison Boyle at RCSI, Darina Gallagher, Josh Newman and the team at James Joyce Centre, Ciara O'Connell at Dunamais Arts Centre, Sile Pinkert and the team at Garter Lane, Duncan Murphy at UCD (Trapdoor Theatre), the team at The Venue, Ratoath, Alison Baker, Joanne Coffey and Brendan Kelly at Tallaght University Hospital, all the team at Civic Theatre, Tallaght and Niamh Dowdall at Royal Irish Academy.

A special thank you to the contributors to our post-show discussion panels, and to the teachers and principals who have made it possible for their students to see the play.

Colin Murphy would like to thank Ruth, Zack, Iseult & Elena for being his first and best critics.



MIASMA

BY COLIN MURPHY

DIRECTED BY SAMANTHA CADE

2026 TOUR

Monday	13th April	Royal College of Physicians of Ireland
Tuesday	14th April	Royal College of Physicians of Ireland
Wednesday	15th April	Royal College of Physicians of Ireland
Thursday	16th April	Royal College of Physicians of Ireland
Friday	17th April	Old Anatomy Theatre, Trinity College
Monday	20th April	Larkin Community College
Tuesday	21st April	Sean O'Casey Theatre, East Wall
Wednesday	22nd April	Leinster House
Thursday	23rd April	Research Ireland
Thursday	23rd April	Bray Town Hall
Friday	24th April	Humanarium at Royal College of Surgeons
Tuesday	28th April	James Joyce Centre
Wednesday	29th April	Dunamais Arts Centre, Portlaoise
Thursday	30th April	James Joyce Centre
Saturday	2nd May	Garter Lane, Waterford
Tuesday	5th May	UCD, Trapdoor Theatre
Wednesday	6th May	The Venue, Ratoath
Thursday	7th May	Tallaght University Hospital
Friday	8th May	Royal Irish Academy