



Background: Based in Belfast, Prime Cut Productions is one of Northern Ireland's leading independent theatre companies. Established in 1992, it has over the last 32 years produced some of the island of Ireland's most memorable and thought-provoking theatre. Our work is split into three distinct categories: Prime Cut delivers under three main strands: CREATE; INNOVATE and PARTICIPATE.

- **CREATE:** Producing excellent performance and writing from Northern Ireland for an international audience
- **INNOVATE:** Driving the development of Northern Irish Performing Artists by providing the finest professionals training, mentorships and opportunities.
- **PARTICIPATE:** Providing a creative resource promoting autonomy and artistic self-expression for communities across Northern Ireland with trust and collaboration at its heart.

Prime Cut's Mission: To create artistically engaging experiences for artists, audiences and participants. We will continue to build on our local and international reputation for making excellent, socially relevant art and work with integrity and trust.

Prime Cut's Vision: To deliver a programme that not only embraces its founding ambition of producing the finest international theatre for/in Belfast that is innovative, inclusive, artist-led, and impactful, with a meaningful artist development and community engagement at its heart while spotlighting Belfast as a cultural hub for artistic excellence.

Current Core Management & Governance

Prime Cut is currently governed by a diverse and experienced Board of 8 Directors, each of whom bring specialist skills and experience to the organisation. In 2023-24 these were:

- Edel Magill: Business Owner (Chair)
- Lesley Holmes: Media Relations Officer, Belfast City Council (Secretary):
- Kerry Teahan: Solicitor
- Stephanie Fitzsimons: Chartered Accountant, Corporate Finance Advisor (Treasurer)
- Darren Murphy: Playwright
- Jacqueline O Hagan: Arts Manager: Eastside Arts Festival
- Sophie Hayles: CEO Crescent Arts Centre
- Patrick Talbot: Independent Producer (appointed October 2023)

Prime Cut employs 3 x full time employees and 2 x part-time employees. In 2023-24 they were:

- Emma Jordan: Artistic Director

- Una NicEoin: Executive Producer
- Bobbi Rai Purdy: Outreach Manager
- Ronan McManus: Associate Producer
- Lorraine McBrearty: Finance & Administration Officer

In 2023-24 our Programme was the recipient of three international awards including Best Production (Revival) at the UK Theatre Awards for *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, First Finalist at the Popcorn Awards 23 and Best Theatre Script at the Irish Writer's Guild Awards for Ciara Elizabeth Smyth's *Lie Low*

CREATE:

The Beauty Queen of Leenane by Martin McDonagh

“Sometimes I dream... of anything! Of anything. Other than this.”

The Beauty Queen of Leenane tells the darkly comic tale of Maureen Folan, a woman in her early forties who lives alone, and Mag her manipulative ageing mother. Mag's interference in Maureen's first and potentially last loving relationship sets in motion a train of events that is as gothically funny as it is horrific.

Prime Cut's production of *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* played to outstanding audience and critical response over a 5 week run at the Lyric Theatre, Belfast and was the winner of the Best Production (Revival) at the 2023 UK Theatre Awards.

The Stage: ****

<https://www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/the-beauty-queen-of-leenane-review-lyric-theatre-belfast-martin-mcdonagh-ger-ryan-nicky-harley>

“Director Emma Jordan is uncannily insightful and sure-footed in her shaping of this hard-edged revival of the first play in McDonagh's Connemara trilogy.

British Theatre Guide

<https://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/the-beauty-queen-lyric-theatre-22019>

“A masterly display of Irish theatre at its best”

Northern Ireland World

<https://www.northernirelandworld.com/arts-and-culture/theatre-and-stage/review-the-beauty-queen-of-leenane-will-haunt-you-long-after-you-leave-the-lyrictheatre-4177608>

“With magnificent performances from all four cast members in an hauntingly atmospheric setting, this is one play you really don't want to miss”

The Irish News

https://www.irishnews.com/arts/stage/2023/06/03/news/review_the_awesome_beauty_of_martin_mcdonagh_s_the_beauty_queen_of_leenane-3319109/

“Nicky Harley, in a stunning performance ... Ger Ryan as Mag is also five-star..... brilliantly acted by Caolan Byrne... Emma Jordan's direction shines.”

Alan In Belfast

<http://alaninbelfast.blogspot.com/2023/06/the-beauty-queen-of-leenane-planting.html>

“Director Emma Jordan takes McDonagh’s recipe and boils the ingredients up into a bubbling pot of evil Galway stew.”

No More Workhorse

<https://nomoreworkhorse.com/2023/06/01/the-beauty-queen-of-leenane-lyric-theatre-review/>

“a thrilling theatrical experience that is macabrely funny, horrifyingly grim and superbly played.”

Cast:

Mag : Ger Ryan

Maureen : Nicky Harley

Pato: Caolan Byrne

Ray: Marti Breen

Creative Team:

Director : Emma Jordan

Set & Lighting Designer : Ciaran Bagnall

Sound Designer & Composition: Neil Martin

Costume Designer : Enda Kenny

Movement Director : Paula O Reilly

Fight Director: Philip Rafferty

Assistant Director: Ross Fitzpatrick

Lie Low by Ciara Elizabeth Smyth

Faye's afraid. She's not sleeping, she doesn't trust ducks and all she's had to eat this week is a box of dry Rice Krispies. Desperate to shake her insomnia, Faye enlists the help of her brother, Naoise, to try a form of exposure therapy. But Naoise has a devastating secret that's about to explode.

Lie Low is the award-winning, critically acclaimed dark, funny and surreal new play by Ciara Elizabeth Smyth. Playing to sold out audiences at Dublin’s Abbey Theatre (2023) Traverse 2 as part of the Culture Ireland Showcase, for Edinburgh Festivals (2023) Belfast’s Lyric Theatre and Dublin Fringe (2022), it has been variously described by critics as “a masterclass” “the standout performance” “gripping entertainment” and “breathtakingly intense”.

***** **The Arts Desk:** “ Charlotte McCurry is breathtakingly intense”

https://theartsdesk.com/theatre/edinburgh-fringe-2023-reviews-heaven-lie-low-after-act?fbclid=IwAR2DKoEKj1VEmI5HzcEXiaR8T2RO0QlouRAeyUk-qrrY_-FCiEwo1nd4YM

***** **The Irish Times** “Outstanding” <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/stage/review/2023/07/19/lie-low-this-outstanding-irish-play-deserves-to-set-edinburgh-festival-fringe-alight/>

**** **The Scotsman:** <https://www.scotsman.com/whats-on/arts-and-entertainment/edinburgh-festival-fringe-theatre-musicals-opera-reviews-wiesenthal-lie-low-nobodys-talking-about-jamie-june-the-impresario-peephole-4266930>

**** **The Guardian:** “an absurdist approach to themes of sexual consent and false memory, it shifts disarmingly from spiky humour to tense confrontation. We’re not in Narnia now”
<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2023/jul/21/lie-low-review-abbey-theatre-dublin>

**** **The British Theatre Guide:** “ a funny, dark dream written deftly by Ciara Elizabeth Smyth and creatively directed by Oisín Kearney”
https://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/lie-low-traverse-theatre-22257?fbclid=IwAR0naP_H4DqRxSc9eMvIN10IX8XbI5pMdrlGz6HFcj7XhX_YmSEvoemWaM

**** **The Telegraph:** https://www.telegraph.co.uk/theatre/what-to-see/edinburgh-fringe-2023-theatre-reviews-plays-shows/?fbclid=IwAR0B7i2QSyLb_V39AorUzC_62zb4C-gu8kEctpJLD6iJLY9Q0M-k7kK4Qs

**** **Fest Magazine:** "Lie Low is at the same time funny, surreal and deeply unsettling"
<https://www.festmag.com/edinburgh/theatre/review-lie-low>

**** **The Skinny:** "Lie Low is a fitting testament to the existential contortions demanded of survivors who dare to ask for help"
<https://www.theskinny.co.uk/festivals/edinburgh-fringe/theatre/lie-low-traverse-theatre?fbclid=IwAR1Rz4dIRIWx44BK7M913LkP51G1B1XYsy6UHsJXlp4mlZcvCw6QCQk97U>

**** **Corr Blimey:** https://corrblimey.uk/2023/08/08/lie-low-traverse-theatre/?fbclid=IwAR0B7i2QSyLb_V39AorUzC_62zb4C-gu8kEctpJLD6iJLY9Q0M-k7kK4Qs

**** **Broadway World:** "McCurry gives an exceptional performance as Faye, playing up to the comedic elements of the script brilliantly and also utterly heart-wrenching."
<https://www.broadwayworld.com/scotland/article/EDINBURGH-2023-Review-LIE-LOW-Traverse-Theatre-20230807?fbclid=IwAR0Bct8jOmJESB15u9kRdsZX3G9FUa5LBhBmiTS7-TQ5J9VNbxemPtMFDAG>

The National:

<https://www.thenational.scot/culture/23749508.edinburgh-fringe-round-classic-dance-jerry-sadowitz/>

Faye: Charlotte McCurry

Naoise : Michael Patrick

Duckman/Naoise: Thomas Finnegan

Doctor: Rory Nolan

Creative Team:

Director : Oisín Kearney

Set & Lighting Designer: Ciarán Bagnall

Sound Designer & Composition: Denis Clohessy

Movement Director : Paula O Reilly

Fight Director: Philip Rafferty

Assistant Director: Ross Fitzpatrick

Removed by Fionnuala Kennedy: Dream-Big Festival Adelaide

Awards and Nominations:

Fionnuala Kennedy: Winner of the Irish Writers Guild Awards Best Theatre Script 2021

Creative Communities Award: Arts & Business NI Awards 2021

Written by Fionnuala Kennedy, *Removed* is a funny, moving and shocking insight into the experiences of a young man sharing his story of living within the state care system. Told from Adam's perspective, yet based on the varying experiences of many young people in Northern Ireland's social care system, the narrative is informed via ups and downs, the hard-hitting, affecting and funny experiences.

Prime Cut first produced the World Premiere of the play at the Young At Art Belfast Children's Festival in March 2019. From there it was selected to play at the Montenegrin International Theatre Festival, Dublin Theatre Festival, Baboro Children's Festival Galway, a Northern Irish Tour and subsequently IPAY Showcase in Philadelphia in January 2020. Prior to the Pandemic it was scheduled to play at the Traverse Theatre for a full run at the Edinburgh Fringe in August 2020 followed by an Island of Ireland Tour. Through support from Culture Ireland a brand new hybrid digital version was subsequently made and this played at Traverse 3 Online for Edinburgh Festival 2020 to huge critical acclaim as well as Culture Ireland SEODA International Showcase (March 21) and Imagine Children's Festival (May 2021). It was also presented as part of the

Solas Nua Prime Cut Showcase in Washington DC in November 21. In January-February 2023, Removed toured to sold out audiences at The MAC Belfast, Centre Culturel Irlandais, Paris, The Bozar, Brussels, Zaal 3 for STET, The Hague and Adelaide's DreamBig Children's Festival in May 2023.

Reviews:

Glam Magazine (Adelaide) *****

"This is a play that should be mandatory viewing for anyone involved in state based care and the care and development of young people dealing with the trauma of being removed from their family environment. The fact that a young adult audience remained engrossed in this piece for the duration of the show tells us they are challenged, and have an empathetic response, to O'Donnell's brilliant portrayal of Adam. It sounds relentless, but O'Donnell and Emma Jordan, the director, have found a unique and accessible journey for the brilliant text of Fionnuala Kennedy." <https://glamadelaide.com.au/dreambig-review-removed/>

The Irish Times****

"Ciaran Bagnall's set evokes the snippets of Adam's life that exist as hazy memories. A dynamic audio visual display projected across a geometric set situates Adam's story as existing everywhere and nowhere simultaneously. This production does what it aims to do well: represent the stories of those who don't often get to be heard and do so with integrity and grit." <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/stage/removed-review-children-on-the-edge-told-with-integrity-and-grit-1.4046269?fbclid=IwAR0h82aLFG4Bi9MbpAwDLqHl4U1D3y0Nf1UlVw2rPyK17jyykAbP8cAXliM>

BritishTheatre.com ****

"The monologue is beautifully performed by Conor O'Donnell, a highly sensitive performance, making Adam likeable from the start, and he hits the right notes of vulnerability and defiance, anxiety and hope, and excitement and guilt... The piece works so well, however, because director Emma Jordan also edits the streaming very well, there is a strong rhythm to it" <https://britishtheatre.com/review-removed-traverse-festival-online/>

British Theatre Guide ****

Fionnuala Kennedy brilliantly gets into the head of Conor O'Donnell's Adam, a Northern Irish lad with more than his fair share of troubles...viewers will be engrossed by this section that concludes of a strong, well-acted piece which benefits not only from clever direction by Emma Jordan but also subtly placed, atmospheric videos created by Conan McIvor. https://www.britishtheatreinfo.com/reviews/removed-traverse-3-19336?fbclid=IwAR209vqJmiHHMrEMylooVk7Xfi78qqjONVxOo8QA_5xslUKGJESmxZBOex8

Edinburgh Elements

This play could so easily have been one long round of clichés, but Kennedy skilfully avoids this and actor Conor O'Donnell has just the right amount of ordinariness about his characterisation to convince the viewer they are watching real testimony.

https://2ndfrombottom.wordpress.com/2020/08/26/edinburgh-elements-online-review/?fbclid=IwAR3l3DFDz4T500BNQ8syBvfoAbpaSwC84jD3ON4mCG_kTiEXivxI2Zp-7U

Cast: Live

Conor O'Donnell: Adam

Creative Team: Live

Emma Jordan & Fionnuala Kennedy: Director

Fionnuala Kennedy: Playwright

Ciaran Bagnall: Set Designer

Paul Keogan: Lighting Designer

Conor Mitchell: Sound Design

Conan McIvor: AV Designer

Ronan McManus Production Manager

Ashley Smyth: Stage Manager

Cast: Digital

Conor O'Donnell: Adam

Creative Team: Digital

Emma Jordan: Director

Fionnuala Kennedy: Playwright

Ciaran Bagnall: Director of Photography

Sam O'Mahoney: Editor

Conor Mitchell: Sound Design

Conan McIvor: AV Designer & Camera

Callum Janes: Sound Recording

INNOVATE:

Through support from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the Jerwood Foundation we were able to deliver an outstanding Artistic Development Programme .

- Two new Reveal Artists, Michael McEvoy and Emily Foran as well as a new Associate Producer Ronan McManus were appointed in addition to existing Reveal Artists Dominic Montague and Katie Richardson.
- Increased this to include playwright Ciara Elizabeth Smyth through Arts Council NI's Commissioning Programme.
- Supported Reveal Artist Katie Richardson in a series of developments for Mirror Mirror at the Reveal Space in April 23.
- Supported Reveal Artist Michael McEvoy in a series of VR developments at the Reveal Space in April 23
- Secured a Residency Award for Reveal Artist Michael McEvoy at the Tyrone Guthrie Centre, Annamakerrig.
- Executive Producer Una NicEoin attended Edinburgh Fringe and Festival at a variety of networking events around our co-presentation of Lie Low throughout August.
- From August 2023 partnered with Ulster University to develop and deliver a ground breaking project that will marry animation and traditional set making design to create a new visual theatre model.
- Free Artist Training in VR and AR theatre making techniques delivered to 12 independent artists in collaboration with Bru Theatre, Galway at Reveal Space in September
- In November Artistic Director Emma Jordan, Executive Producer Una NicEoin and Reveal Artists Katie Richardson, Ronan McManus and Dominic Montague attended IETM Campus at Kosovo Theatre Festival.
- Lie Low was selected out of 100 applicants across the island of Ireland to feature at the Culture Ireland sponsored event Meet The Irish at Irish Arts Centre, New York in January 2024
- Delivered a week-long development of the animation tech for use in Aurora in Belfast Festival 2024 at The MAC in March, collaborating with Ulster University

In PARTICIPATE we have successfully delivered to 665 participants including:

- **Well Read** is an arts engagement theatre reading project developed for service users of secure mental health and addiction centres. Bringing together a team of 10 artist facilitators and in partnership with The Northern Trust it was rolled out in 5 centres across Northern Ireland throughout 2023-24 with extension funding sourced from the Trust and the D'Oyly Carte Trust to carry out further delivery in 2024-25
- **Re-Mix:** Workshopped, developed, rehearsed and delivered Re-Mix in partnership with Ulster University's Games and Animation Department to four Schools across Belfast) to approx. 440 P7 pupils. Re-Mix received overwhelming praise from students and teachers alike, with repeated requests for more work of this nature. A final evaluation is currently being compiled along with a documentary of the process and these will be provided to ACNI once received. In the meantime, some examples of feedback from teachers are included below:

"This project has been great for the children in building up their confidence and a lot of them have been able to speak out a lot more and say how they are feeling and maybe how they would communicate with a friend if something happened. I 100 percent would recommend this for other schools as it's been great for them to play outside and communicate with other groups in their class. They really love it. "

"I thought it was absolutely fantastic , just the set up alone when we came into the classroom was amazing. I couldn't believe you could do that in such a small space. I thought the project explored diversity in a successful way and I would promote this within the school again."

Conclusion:

In conclusion 2023-24 has been a highly successful year for Prime Cut Productions. Not only have we been able to produce some wonderful work that received both awards and critical acclaim, we were able to access new platforms on the Abbey and Traverse stages as well as Adelaide and New York, building audiences for our work and raising awareness of our brand. We got to work with an amazing range of artists, consolidating already existing relationships as well as forming new ones with artists from a wide range of disciplines and ages. We were able to create new relationships, new networks and take advantage of opportunities to collaborate in work that has truly taken us out of our comfort zone and it has been an outstanding experience.

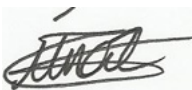
But it was not without its challenges. Losing our CRGF funding for the Ensemble Project was a heavy blow and one that resulted in a reduction of hours for two Core staff members. It created stress on an already stretched capacity and although we were still able to deliver a wide reaching and impactful outreach programme, its impact was not small.

It has been a highly successful year but not without cost. It took nerve and determination. We couldn't have done it without our funders whose investment and belief in and commitment to the company were second to none. We couldn't have done it without our artists, who kept the faith and whose resilience in the face of such adversity was unreal. We couldn't have done it without the determination and commitment of our core staff, who worked ceaselessly to make it all real, and we most certainly couldn't have done it without our colleagues across the arts, in Belfast and far beyond as well as our audiences, whose support, commitment and kindness can never be overstated.

Thank you to you all.

Key achievements in 2023-24

- **The Beauty Queen of Leenane at the Lyric Theatre – Winner Best Production (Revival) UK Theatre Awards**
- **Lie Low in co-production with Ciara Elizabeth Smyth at the Abbey Theatre and Traverse Theatre for Edinburgh Fringe – Winner First Finalist Popcorn Awards and Best Theatre Script: Irish Writers Guild Awards**
- **Partnership with Ulster University towards creating groundbreaking set animation model for Aurora**
- **New two-year cycle of Reveal underway.**
- **Hugely successful delivery of Re-Mix to schools across Belfast.**
- **Ongoing success and expansion of Well Read.**



Una NicEoin: Executive Producer