

## MICHAEL MOFFATT SHOW OF THE WEEK

**Dublin in a Rainstorm**  
Smock Alley until November 6

**K**athleen Warner Yeates, American-born actress, and vastly experienced writer, director and tutor, is back in the public eye big-time this week.

She's one of the three main lead roles with Mary Murray and Sarah Carroll in *The Letters*, the film set against the cervical cancer scandal, that opened in Irish cinemas on Friday. She's also doing a TV series, *The John Connors Acting Academy*, that began on RTE 2 last Monday – she's one of the teachers on the series.

And she has a major role live on stage, in *Dublin In A Rainstorm*, written and directed by Tzarina Meyler, that runs in Smock Alley from November 2 to 6.

She's particularly glad to be back in the theatre.

'After not being able to see live theatre for so long, it's such a treat to have a play that's really well written for the stage,' she tells me. 'It's one of those plays I'd love to see myself.'

**'Tzarini, who's a really talented writer, wrote the part for me'**

'It has many twists and turns and lots of humour in it, but it's also very moving, dark and surprising.'

'Tzarina has put together a really strong cast, each actor has a nice chunk of the action and there's great ensemble work as well.'

The setting is a Dublin tenement in 1923. In the basement, two washerwomen are working in a laundry.

'I can't give away too many plot twists,' says Kathleen, 'but the washerwomen have a little job on the side – doing seances. When other people arrive, things start to happen. There's a lot of beautiful costumes in it, along with elaborate lighting. The set is mostly furniture and props.'

'I get to play a character coming from New York City, who's a half-sister of one of the washerwomen. Tzarini, who's a really talented writer, wrote the part for me knowing I'm from America.'

'There's a local priest in there; he's suffering from what's now known as post-traumatic stress disorder, from the First World War. The other characters are a mixed bunch; one of them is the son of a washerwoman, and there's



**IN DEMAND:**  
Kathleen in  
*Dublin In A  
Rainstorm*

Actress, writer and director Kathleen takes the spotlight on screen and stage this week

# 'It's such a treat to have a play that's well written'

a very well-to-do woman trying to use the women's special talents to seek out her missing son. Then there's the beautiful stranger.

'It's all about people trying to recover from traumatic things in their lives.'

Kathleen is from Pennsylvania.

She lived in New York for ten years, and spent over 30 years acting, writing, directing and tutoring in the States, before she

moved to Dublin in 1999 to focus on her family life. She took leave of absence from theatrical work while she was building her own drama school in Ireland.

'Sixteen years ago I was the drama part of what was called The Abbey School of Music and Drama, because it was in Lower Abbey Street – it was founded by music teachers, nothing to do with the Abbey Theatre. The name was decided before I came along.'

'When I started teaching there, the drama really took off. John Connors was among those who studied with me, and they began calling it The Abbey School of Drama.'

'After the music section dissolved I moved to the Pearse Centre, at 27 Pearse Street, and I became Flying Turtle Productions, but everybody still called me the Abbey School of Drama, so I found it hard to get rid of the name.'

'I always made it clear that I had nothing to do with the Abbey National Theatre. Fortunately, the Abbey Theatre itself was so nice about it that if someone came to them, they knew me and sent them over to me.'

'There's a lovely little Black Box theatre in the Centre, and I do performances there with my students. I occasionally use the New Theatre for my students as well.'

**'If you choose this profession, you have to love the craft and the creation of stories'**

Kathleen specialises in directing actors for film and she has also done considerable work in the use of theatre as a means of teaching English as a foreign language, that involves using the mechanism of the whole body to help people bring their full selves into the learning process.

'There can be a layer of tension in the body that becomes an impediment for people expressing themselves in another language.'

Kathleen picked up on her acting career again when she did *Little Women*, a three-part mini-series with Angela Lansbury and Emily Watson for BBC in 2017.

She has no delusions about theatre as a glamorous life.

'If you choose this profession, you have to love the craft and the creation of character and stories.'

'And you really need to understand what that means in terms of your income, your planning, the balance in your life and taking care of yourself between acting jobs.'

'The lifestyle doesn't fit easily with family life, and it's really tough if you have children.'

And while Kathleen's Flying Turtle company remains strong and active, and her cinema and TV work plays on-screen, rain will batter the tenement, and banishes will howl during *Dublin In A Rainstorm* at Smock Alley until November 6.