

Gate Theatre and Theatre Lovett

The Tin Soldier

written by **Louis Lovett** and **Nico Brown**
after **Hans Christian Andersen**



BLACK BOX THEATRE
DYKE ROAD

GALWAY INTERNATIONAL
ARTS FESTIVAL 2022



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The Tin Soldier

written by **Louis Lovett** and **Nico Brown**
after **Hans Christian Andersen**

CAST

Performer [Dancer]
Young Boy
Performer [Pianist]
Narrator
Young Boy
Performer [Vocalist]

Kévin Coquelard
Theo Cosgrove
Conor Linehan
Louis Lovett
Arthur Peregrine
Olesya Zdorovetska

CREATIVE TEAM

Director
Composer
Set Designer
Costume Designer
Lighting Designer
Sound Designer
Choreographer

Muireann Ahern
Conor Linehan
Jamie Vartan
Sinéad Lawlor
Sarah Jane Shiels
Carl Kennedy
Kévin Coquelard

Stage Manager
Assistant Stage Manager

Leona Nally
Aoife Byrne

Additional Songs
Additional Music

Olesya Zdorovetska
Conor Linehan and Louis Lovett

Theatre Lovett would like to thank their co-producers, The Gate Theatre and to acknowledge Kévin Coquelard, Conor Linehan and Olesya Zdorovetska's invaluable contribution to the full creative process of *The Tin Soldier*.



Theatre Lovett

Theatre Lovett are a Dublin based theatre company and tour extensively both nationally and internationally. Their most recent production was a co-production with Irish National Opera and The Abbey Theatre of Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*, directed by Muireann Ahern and Louis Lovett. This production recently won the award for 'Best Opera – Overall Theatrical Experience' at The Irish Times Theatre Awards 2020/2021. They were previously nominated for an Irish Times Theatre Judges' Special Award for the inventiveness of their work.

Previous productions include *FRNKNSTN* and *They Called Her Vivaldi* [Peacock, Abbey Theatre]; *The Girl who Forgot to Sing Badly* [The Ark/Theatre Lovett]; *A Feast of Bones*, *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*, *Mr Foley The Radio Operator*, and *The House that Jack Filled* [Dublin Theatre Festival]. For the National Concert Hall, Theatre Lovett produce and direct the seasonal family spectacle *This Way to Christmas!*

Their international tours include The Kennedy Center, Washington DC; The Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, Los Angeles; The New Victory Theater, New York; The Sydney Opera House; Melbourne Arts Centre; Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh and Southbank Centre, London.

Muireann Ahern and Louis Lovett are Joint Artistic Directors of the company and work closely with a family of associate artists who share their ambition, spirit and love of play.

They share their experience via Theatre Lovett's performance training course *Playing for your Audience* and *Teddy Talks*, an ongoing series of curated dialogue focused on producing work across generations.

Theatre Lovett are proud to be supported by the Arts Council and are grateful to Culture Ireland for the continued generous support of their international touring.

www.theatrelovett.com

Andersen's Journey

Nico Brown

Leaving home, penniless, to seek his fortune in the wider world – like Aladdin in the old tale – Hans Christian Andersen ended up with his own sort of magic lamp. His imagination contained the genie, and it delivered on his desire for celebrity, wealth, and recognition. But he had other, lifelong wishes which went unfulfilled. He never found a loving partner, never felt himself fully included in a family life of his own, or accepted in wider society. He never lost the sense of being an outsider, of his admirers' condescension.

Born to poor parents in 1805 in the remote fishing port of Odense, Denmark, Andersen is now seen as the father of the fairy-tale; but his achievement is to have taken the tradition and used it as a springboard for his own vast creativity. He wrote to appeal to the child, but his style was revolutionary; his tales spoke, simultaneously, to the child in every adult. Lonely, hungry for sympathy himself, he gave character and feelings to toys, animals and objects, in timeless stories that glow with empathy.

His father died, after returning from defeat with Napoleon, when Hans was eleven. His mother was alcoholic. Hans took refuge within his own play-world of puppets and fairytales, improvising poems and songs in the factory where he worked. Sensitive, he absorbed the rich culture of Danish folk-story at his grandmother's knee. His amazingly pure soprano voice led to local fame, but also to bullying and ostracism.

He left for Copenhagen at fourteen, to audition for the Royal Danish Theatre. Finding no ready welcome there and alone in the city, he sought the support he needed by performing door-to-door, singing, reciting and making extraordinary paper cut-outs to amuse the children of

rich families. One such family, the Collins, adopted him and undertook his neglected education. His performing career slowly gathered momentum, and he began to write. But he never lost the sense of being an outsider. Although he lived feted by royalty, he died a public shadow of his real self.

An outlandish figure – his feet, nose and hands were enormous, and brought him lifelong ridicule from the insensitive – he seemed a child in a giant's body. Within, he seethed. Fervently devout, he mistrusted his own desires as sinful, saw the workings of a vengeful god in his misfortunes, and chafed at the slights and condescensions of his wealthy and noble patrons.

Only 'for' children could he write with the licence he did, and with such commercial success; but as the generations pass, his material has seemed more and more transparent in its oddness, sexuality, violence. We can now read, in the Tin Soldier's strange passivity, or in the Little Mermaid's hopeless longing for her Prince, Andersen's helplessness in the arena of love. Never able to have a fully reciprocal relationship with anyone of either sex, he failed again and again to take the necessary steps towards the object of his affection – like the Tin Soldier with his ballerina. The awful punishments his female characters endure, of losing their voices, or feet, or heads, seem bizarre and over the top. Now they appear as Andersen's own truth, expressed with an imaginative freedom unprecedented in the context of his time, but taken for granted by us today.

Andersen's tales have influenced countless writers. Charles Dickens was a fan [although he found Hans himself too odd to put up with in person, and regretted



inviting him to stay.] The swallow, as a symbol of freedom in Oscar Wilde's *The Happy Prince* [1889], comes directly from Andersen's *Thumbelina*. The most famous talking animals of literature and the screen – from Beatrix Potter to Disney – descend, largely, from his.

Andersen, perhaps, is Denmark's Edward Lear – solitary, eccentric, improvisatory, naïf, highly individual, an adult who retained all his life the memory of his childhood's imaginative freedom. The child for whom modern theatre for children is now written is Andersen's creation – an imagination ready and primed, but who yet sees the world, and the adults in it, with clear-eyed truth. From that essential child comes the voice in *The Emperor's New Clothes* who cuts through grown-up self-delusion with

'He hasn't got anything on!'

Hans Christian was pilloried for his physical oddness and his ambivalent sexuality, but he was also treated with suspicion for his very originality, the way his emotions

were unconventionally apparent at the surface of his personality. He represents a type we now find familiar and love to joke about – a Celebrity, a Household Name: the Idiosyncratic Artist, the Over-The-Top Performer. But he persisted all his life, against mockery and prejudice, in refining his storytelling to an art that remained integral to his personality.

It's become, triumphantly, a vehicle so fluid, powerful and influential that now we automatically regard it as a part of our own modernity. Cradled by our education, in the theatre, by our support of the arts, we recognise our imaginations – our innate freedom to make stories, images, music, dance – as common to us all, as every child's birthright. We now all encourage the finding of each individual's creative voice, from infancy right through childhood, into adulthood and beyond, to the level of each person's ability – as an Aladdin's journey.

Don't we?

