

NOTICES

To sleep, perchance to scream

'SLEEP is freedom" says Cillian Murphy's nameless character in Enda Walsh's new play *Ballyturk*. Until suddenly, dreams enter the equation, and in terror Murphy and his older "friend" played by Mikel Murfi must deal with events which can come to seem more real than their circumscribed, manic existence. The dream is of a five-legged bunny, a nightmare in itself, but much less so than the unreal reality, lived on an edge between fantasy and insanity.

Ballyturk is more a state of mind than a village, because the two men live in blind interdependence, suspended in a grey space that has curious echoes of Beckett's apocalyptic *Endgame*, living on vast quantities of junk food, occupying themselves with pointless toys and inventions of the people whose pictures they have drawn and fastened to the walls. They play out invented scenes, selecting their characters, the local postmistress and her bingo-playing crony among them. But they hear other voices as well, conversations beyond the walls, between unknown and unseen characters who finally invade their self-imposed closeness with the entrance of Death himself, played by a conversationally laconic Stephen Rea. He "collects" things, he tells them. And now he has come to collect one of them: they can decide which.

And with sardonic amusement, he conducts a conversation with the voices beyond the walls. Suddenly, the self-protective Neverland cocoon thins and cracks for Murphy and Murfi: decisions have to be made before it is too late ... except that it is already too late because their world is about to end. They must leave *Ballyturk* ... or maybe they must go there.

Ballyturk is a further, disturbing, fascinating step along Enda Walsh's intense, dystopic world-view, painted with eerie paradox on a stage of children's games played by malfunctioning adults who point their manic fingers at the audience to ask, "Who then, is sane in this world of ours?" It is played to extraordinary effect by the cast under Walsh's own direction in Jamie Vartan's nightmarishly playful set.

Helen Atkinson's sound and Teho Teardo's music lend their own perfection to this production, by Landmark and the Galway International Arts Festival, playing at the Black Box in Galway, and transferring to the

Emer O'Kelly

THEATRE

Olympia in Dublin and the Cork Opera House later in the summer.



NIGHTMARE: Stephen Rea and Cillian Murphy in 'Ballyturk' at the Black Box in Galway as part of the arts festival, and later touring to Dublin and Cork