

Oddness on the edge of town

THEATRE REVIEW

BALLYTURK★★★★☆

THE fecund imagination of playwright Enda Walsh (*The Walworth Farce*, *The New Electric Ballroom*) has yielded yet another gripping head-scratcher, performed with brio by a triumvirate of Irish acting talent: Cillian Murphy, Mikel Murfi and Stephen Rea. To describe *Ballyturk* as bewildering is by no means meant as a criticism; it's the fact this chaotic 90 minute show elicits so many potential interpretations that lends it vitality.

The plot, such as it is, sees a pair of unnamed men (Murphy and Murfi, main picture), identified as One and Two, sequestered in what appears to be a warehouse-cum-waiting room. Here they pass their time in a state of frenzied animation, ruminating on the day-to-day lives of the residents of a town called Ballyturk – which may or may not exist. When the sinister Three (Rea, pictured right) arrives spouting gnomonic utterances – ‘for everything is here and we are here to lay down legacy’ – he



threatens to dissolve the oddball partnership by offering one character a brief taste of liberty.

Ballyturk demands a level of physicality from its two central characters that even the nimblest dancer might blanch at, so kudos has to go to Murphy and Murfi – both outstanding – who not only embody an entire rogue's gallery of *Ballyturk* eccentrics, but do so while scrambling about the stage at break-neck speed.

If *Ballyturk* remains a particularly elusive piece of work, it scarcely matters. As a study of the bonds of friendship, it's strangely touching; as a meditation on the brevity and strangeness of human life, it's thought-provoking; and in its day-glo battiness it's like nothing you'll see on the Irish stage this year.

Daragh Reddin

Until Aug 23, Olympia Theatre, 72 Dame Street D2, 7.30pm, from €27.50. Tel: 0818 719 300. www.olympia.ie

CILLIAN MURPHY ON STAGE

He's renowned for his big screen turns in films such as *Batman Begins* and *Breakfast On Pluto*, but Murphy also has pedigree as a stage actor. Here are three of his best

The Seagull (2003)

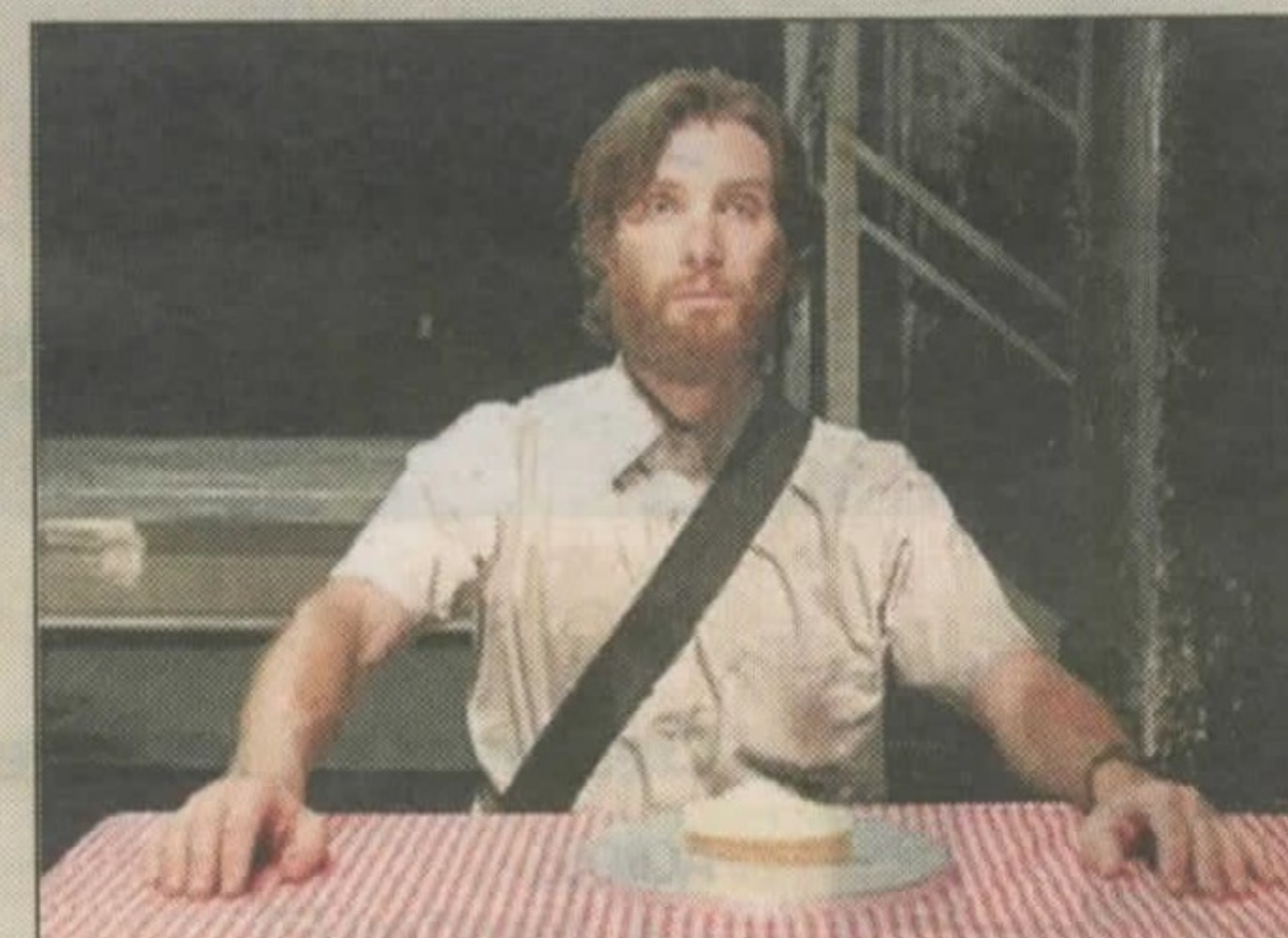
In Chekhov's melodrama, Murphy starred opposite Fiona Shaw as Konstantin and was praised for providing a suitably withdrawn, troubled presence.

Playboy Of The Western World (2004)

Under the aegis of Ireland's pre-eminent theatre artist, Garry Hynes, Murphy deployed his effortless charm and boyish good looks to scintillating effect as Christy Mahon in Synge's classic.

Misterman (2012)

In Enda Walsh's ferocious one-man play, Murphy gave a searing turn as Thomas Magill (pictured), self-proclaimed prophet



of God who lives as an outcast in a bleak industrial space.