

Knock Me Down

By Rhona Trench and Holly Maples

Performed at the Dock Arts Centre, Carrick-on-Shannon, Sept 2020

Opening Lobby Soundscape

Spanish Flu Blues Song opening

Memory (Rhona): The pain was awful. I remember the terrible, terrible headache, the pain all over my body, in my legs, my stomach, my chest. We were all very, very sick. Our father made us drink chamomile tea. Our mother made plasters out of flour. She couldn't afford mustard plasters, so she heated up flour, put it in a warm cloth, and put it on our chests.⁴⁷

Narrator (Holly): Sore throat, headache, fever and black skin proved telltale signs. They had all sorts of names for the unknown illness. The blue fever as it turned its victims skin blue/black as they struggled to breathe. But other names persisted: Knock Me Down Fever, The Three Day Fever, the Fangs of Death, The Black Flu, the Spanish Lady, and of course, The Spanish Flu.

Person 1 (Tomas): Medical officers of health, mainstays of the Poor Law medical system, worked around the clock to treat their patients, paying 100,000 more home visits during the epidemic than in the previous year.

Nurse (Mary C): Until the epidemic, death had seemed kindly, coming to the very old, the incurably suffering or striking suddenly without the knowledge of its victims. Now, we saw death clutch cruelly and ruthlessly at vigorous, well-muscled young women in the prime

of life. Flu dulled their resistance, choked their lungs, swamped their hearts . . . There was nothing but sadness and horror to this senseless waste of human life.

Person 1 (Holly -male register): Doctors had no medicine to fight this new disease and it swept through the military camps, and into the cities and countries across the globe. People tried anything they could to ward off the illness.

Song: Bobby Vine COVID-19

Nurse (Holly): Obey the laws And wear the gauze Protect your jaws From septic paws. Wear a mask! Don't Spit! Stay inside! The disease is really endemic. I am sorry to say that several doctors and nurses have been knocked up. The beastly thing spares none, but, of course the person in good average health and regular habits will stand a better chance of getting it light and of soon getting rid of it. So remember, Clean your teeth regularly, chew onions and eat plenty of porridge. Keep your windows open at night and all will be right! Welcome all to the Dock. In our current fear of the Spanish Lady, we have some guide lines for your visit today. If you have a phone please turn it onto silent, but feel free to take pictures or record whatever you like. Remember you must keep a distance of two metres from each other. As you come up the stairs and go into our gallery space, we have personal places for you to explore objects, letters, and diaries from the time of the Spanish Flu. Do not worry, we will give you gloves to protect your hands from our microbes of the past and the present! Follow me. And yet again as in the first instance, Do not Spit!

Tune: *Sing a song as they come up the stairs to enter the space and hand out the gloves*

Narration (Tomas): One hundred years ago, what became known as the Spanish Flu, and related infections from pneumonia, claimed 23,000 lives and infected some 800,000 people in

Ireland over a 12-month period. No group, location or aspect of life in Ireland was spared from this devastating virus.

Major Scott (Holly): I don't understand where this infection came from.

The camp is as clean as a hound's tooth!

Dr Vaughan (Niall): The procedures followed in the mobilization of our soldiers into the World War brought into every cantonment infection. They came from every community; they came in their ordinary clothing; some clean, some filthy. Each one brought many samples of the bacteria then abounding in his own neighborhood. They brought these organisms on and in their bodies and on and in their clothing.

Sir Arthur Newsholme (Holly Male Voice): The Influenza is travelling too rapidly to be stopped and can not be controlled. I know of no public health measure which can resist the progress of pandemic influenza.

Dr Vaughan (Holly): These men start with what appears to be an ordinary attack of Influenza, and when brought to the Hospital, they very rapidly develop the most vicious type of Pneumonia that has ever been seen . . . and a few hours later you can begin to see the Blue tone of Cyanosis extending from their ears and spreading all over the face, until it is hard to distinguish the black men from the white. It is only a matter of a few hours then until death comes . . . It is horrible. One can stand it to see one, two or twenty men die, but to see these poor devils dropping like flies . . . We have been averaging about 100 deaths per day . . . Pneumonia means in about all cases death . .

Child's Song (Holly)

I had a little bird

And its name was Enza

I opened the window

and In-flew-enza

Person 1

(Niall): ‘The man in the street, having been taught by the war to take a keener interest in foreign affairs, discusses the news of the epidemic which spread with such surprising rapidity through Spain a few weeks ago, and cheerfully anticipates its arrival here.’

Person 2 (Holly): When the flu began, we Londoners basked in ‘the almost tropical heat.’ The beautiful weather, and the flowers made life seem positively idyllic. But it hasn’t kept the illness away. A glance at the calendar shows that the hot weather we’ve been having, so far from killing the charity and matinee microbe, has stimulated it to a pitch of feverish activity, with the result that the philanthropic have a busy time ahead of us for the next few weeks.

Clella B. Gregory (Rhona): In 1918, All the schools were closed, church services were cancelled, and crowds were not supposed to gather.

Child (Anna): For us it was pure joy to be free of school and the Palmer Method and the multiplication tables and Miss Sykes and her harmonica. The early mornings turned frosty, blackening the marigolds, but the afternoons were warm and sun-drenched and golden, heavy with cricket sounds, light as milkweed down. By Collins’ Pond the witch hazel was in bloom, the lemon-yellow filaments crisscrossed against the bare branches, on the Hill, on such bright days, we lost ourselves in the immediacy of the timeless present, as free to wander as any coma of milkweed.¹¹

Jack May (Kieran): When my parents were sick, the rest of the family prepared their meals, washed and sterilized their clothes; and passed these items to them through the door while wearing masks, to prevent contamination.

Person 2 (Rhona): From the moment I got up in the morning to when I went to bed at night, I felt a constant sense of fear. We wore gauze masks. We were afraid to kiss each other, to eat with each other, to have contact of any kind. We had no family life, no school life, no church life, no community life. Fear tore people apart.

Mike Walsh (Tomas): The flu silenced entire communities and towns. You might see 3,000 sick in a town like, say, Dundalk, or a thousand in a town like New Ross all under medical care at the same time.”

Nurse (Mary): I was seventeen years old and I thought I might like to be a nurse. So I went to our pastor and I asked what I could do. He told me to see Mrs Thomas who was making masks in a little side room of the hospital. Mrs Thomas made me dip a mask in disinfectant outside the sickroom. Then I put it on and went in. I carried bed pans, helped the Sisters the best I could. People were so weak, they almost seemed dead. Every once in a while, I’d stiffen up and get scared and wonder if I was going to get the flu. But I was surviving. I just lived from day to day. I didn’t think about the future.

Seamus Babbington from Carrick-on-Suir (Kieran): “I got it bad and was in bed for a month, and the blackest man in Africa was not blacker”.

Castlebar Official (Tomas): The strange thing is that young people aged between twenty-five and thirty-five are the worst affected. This means that the ‘breadwinners’ of many families are being hit with disastrous results. Canon Fallon, the newly appointed Parish Priest

of Castlebar is setting up a special fund with the local Urban District Council and will send food parcels to affected families all over the town.

Nurse (Holly): Many a morning after working hard over a patient, Dorothy, another nurse, and I bore the grim task of trying to find words of comfort for dazed parents, husbands and children. One dawn – a glorious morning with rose-colored clouds above the gray buildings across the street – after a particularly sad death, I knew the tears I had been shedding inwardly must find outlet. I rushed to the linen closet, always our place of refuge, and there ahead of me was Dorothy, sobbing her heart out.³⁴

Mortician (Niall): Usually a mortician sees people dying in their forties, their fifties, some older, some in their nineties. But in the fall of 1918, young people were dying: eighteen-year-olds, twenty-year-olds, thirty-year-olds, forty-year-olds. These were people who should not have died.

[Holly and Kieran enter space)

When we slowly woke up!

K: Mid Spring surrounds us. Crocuses and daffodils,

H: budding trees ripen in bright mornings.

K: But the air is about to turn.

H: Towns and streets are empty.

K: Iconic tourist locations vacant except for the odd person who are masked and gloved,

H: more like snipers than people,

Shooting invisible microbes.

K: A pink supermoon looms over us.

Reminding us that nature is and will always be bigger than us.

H: Countries close their borders and air traffic grinds to a near halt, desperate to curb the spread of the virus.

K: Chronic areas are out of bounds–

H: Italy, Spain as the rest of Europe faces the onslaught.

K: We watch.

H: We wait,

K: counting the ratio of those infected,

H: of those who died,

K waiting to see how many of us it will swallow.

K & H: There's uncertainty everywhere.

K: People sit in parks enjoying the long spell of good weather, others garden,

H: or go on long walks,

K: keeping the recommended distance.

H: Others sit in isolation terrified for their lives.

K: Nerve centres, where like Elizabethan inn-yards, people collect in droves to see entertainments,

H: friends, family, generously spreading their germs.

K: We abused the earth as it silently roars back at us.

It needs to mend.

H: We wait for things to worsen.

K: Head to toe armoured in a hooded suit, goggles, masks, gloves...

H: who look more ready for an expedition to mars.

K: The unreality of what we are facing make us talk endlessly about the virus... nothing else features...

H: even the jokes meant to distract from it direct us straight towards it.

K: Let the lawn mowers mow,

H: let the kids play.

K: Let the people work from home.

H: Let's be as 'normal' as possible.

SOUNDSCAPE

Newscaster (Tomas): The Influenza is spreading in Ireland at an “alarming” rate: Scarcely a household in Clonakilty does not have at least one person in bed with flu. At Carrigaline no letters will be delivered owing to the local postman being confined to his room with the disease. Doctors are on foot night and day but are baffled how to cope with the “mysterious malady”.

Belfast Official (Niall): In Derry there is an epidemic among factory workers. Bank staff have been similarly affected.

News Narration (Rhona): The fact that several Wexford hurlers have succumbed to the illness has forced the cancellation of the All-Ireland hurling final.

Clella B Gregory (Holly): All six of us children at home had the 1918 pandemic flu, as did our mother. Dad kept us warm and fed and he also helped others in our community who had the illness. He made sure our sick neighbors had drinking water, would milk their cows, fed their livestock, and made sure they had coal and wood for heat. One day, one of the doctors from Blackford came by and stopped and asked, “Eli, how is your family doing?” Dad said, “All are doing very well.” The doctor replied, “Keep doing what you are doing.” We all survived.

Mike Walsh (Kieran): Large gatherings are fatal. A week after wild celebrations at the announcement of the end of the war the flu struck at its most deadly.

C (Rhona): Everyone was ordered to stay off the streets. A designated runner was allowed to make deliveries to each household for necessities, but suppliers were limited and money was short. I lived with my five children in a boarding house. I struggled to care for the children all alone since my husband was often away, traveling with the railroad. Every day came stories of families who lost loved ones. No one was allowed to have a funeral or any gatherings during that time. Fortunately, we all survived.

Belfast Official (Niall): “If the Irish public would only wake up to the seriousness of the condition of things and avoid meeting in crowds, the risk of spreading the infection might be minimised.”

Beckett parody:

NURSE (Holly): (*Takes off his mask.*) Finished...is it?

It's finished, nearly finished. I'm finished.

It must be nearly finished.

I'll go now to my kitchen, ten feet by ten feet by ten feet, and wait.

PATIENT (Kieran): Me. To play.

(Patient reads the cleaning products that are sitting near him. An onion is on the table. Sprays himself manically.)

Can there be misery _

loftier than mine?

(Calls out) Nurse.

No. Alone.

It's time it ended.... And yet I hesitate...

(He hears Nurse moving around.)

Get me ready for bed.

NURSE: I just got you up.

PATIENT: And what of it?

NURSE: I can't be getting you up and putting you to bed. I've things to do.

PATIENT: Is my nose bleeding?

NURSE: No.

PATIENT: Get me the keys.

(Nurse gets the keys and places them at the back of Patient's neck)

NURSE: There is no blood.

PATIENT: What time is it?

NURSE: The same as usual. I'll give you some bovril

PATIENT: I hate bovril. Why are you here?

There's nowhere else.

PATIENT: There's no-one else. You're leaving me?

NURSE: I'm trying to. I can't leave. *(PAUSE)*

How is your cough?

PATIENT: Dry.

NURSE: How is your taste.

PATIENT: Gone.

You're hot?

PATIENT: Very.

NURSE: Take this. *(Hands him hydroxychloroquine. He can't reach it because of the window between them.)*

PATIENT: I'm taking it.

(He reaches. Can't get it. Struggles. Eventually he rolls it to her. He drinks it.

Realises he's wearing a mask. Lifts it up. Drinks it. Coughs really bad. Puts back on mask. Coughs into elbow.)

NURSE: Many front-line staff are taking it. People don't need to feel sick. I want you to feel good.

I'll leave you. I have things to do.

PATIENT: In your kitchen?

NURSE: Yes.

PATIENT: Outside of here it's death.

NURSE: I'll go now to my kitchen, ten feet by ten feet by ten feet, and wait for him to whistle me. *(Pause.)* Nice dimensions, nice proportions, I'll lean on the table, and look at the wall, and wait for him to whistle me.

PATIENT: No visitors? *(Pause.)* Don't we laugh?

NURSE: I don't feel like it.

PATIENT: Nor I. (*Pause.*) Zoom?

NURSE: No internet.

PATIENT: No. Just us.

NURSE: Yes.

PATIENT: Yes. Nature has forgotten us.

NURSE: Nature is angry at us.

PATIENT: There's no more nature.

NURSE: I've things to do.

PATIENT: In your kitchen.

NURSE: Yes.

PATIENT: Be off then.

Soundscape transition

Nile: A cupful of OXO two or three times a day will prove an immense service as a protective measure. The benefit to the community of a concentrated Fluid Beef like OXO is greater than ever in the present day; it increases nutrition and maintains vitality in the system, and thus an effective resistance is established against the attacks of the influenza organism.²

Tomas: Wash the inside of your nose with soap and water at night and morning" and do not "cover your neck with a muffler".

Kieran: To prevent influenza and colds in the head take occasionally a pinch of Gallaher's High Toast Snuff".

Rhona: "Influenza attacks can now be effectively repulsed after swallowing two Gensaprin tablets disintegrated in water"

Narrator (Kieran): Alongside over-the-counter products, frightened families also turned to folk remedies, traditional and reassuring cures familiar to their heritage, whether this be onions, asafoetida (a foetid-smelling herb historically used for chest complaints) or opium

Person 1 (Holly): Take drops of turpentine and kerosene on a lump of sugar

Person 2 (Tomas): Marshall's Well in [Gubacreeny](#), Co. Leitrim can cure any sickness in man or beast, but remember the collector of the water must go straight home and not enter any house after lifting the [water](#).

Person 1 (Rhona): The parish of [Kilkeevan](#) (Cill Chaoimhín), Co. Roscommon, is protected from the disease by St. Kevin who came to the River Suck and spread out his mantle and prophesied that any dangerous infectious disease would not have any effect on this [district](#).

Person 2 (Kieran): In [Belcarra](#), Co. Mayo, a priest blessed the village so that no epidemic or plague would befall it and it is said that not one villager was affected by the flu.

Viola Miller (Rhona): One night during this time, Aunt Lucy felt herself getting sick. She drank a quart of whiskey and stayed up caring for the others. She did not get the flu.

Child (Tom):

As a last resource [the doctor] asked my mother whether I drank whisky as, if I was not accustomed to it, it might have a shock effect on my body and cause the turning point. That

night I had a half tumbler of whisky and in a very few minutes was bleeding black blood from my mouth and nostrils. From that time I made slow but steady progress.²⁶

Narrator (Holly): One Doctor in Canada gave his patient 13 gins in quick succession to cure the disease. The results are unknown.

Holly Live Comes Out with onion:

Old LADY: "cut an onion in two halves and put one half in one corner of the room in which the person is sick and put the other half in one of the three other corners. The onion will attract the germ".

If you really want to avoid infection, cut an onion in two halves and put the onion in the corners of the room and the onion will absorb all the germs.

Man (Kieran):

'People thought the smell would kill germs. So we all wore a bag of asafetida and smelled like rotten flesh.' We smelled awful, but it was okay, because everyone smelled bad.'¹²

Transition actors into Zoom scene

Work from home scene – zoom meeting

MIKE: (*On Zoom*) John, can you hear me? Hi John. John? Sorry. John is just taking a moment to connect. And here's Catherine. Hi Catherine. We're just waiting on John. (*Mike goes on mute by accident but keeps talking.*) Sorry. I'll say that again. Catherine? Catherine? I was just asking if you can move your camera. We can only see the top of your head! Thanks. That's great.

Trump Video Sequence

(Transition into Home School Scene)

Home-school scene

PARENT: (*At the computer*) Okay, Wednesday, Wednesday... Wednesday.

CHILD: It's Tuesday.

PARENT: Tuesday only. Right. Let's see. Login. Login. I can't get into Seesaw? I can't login. Uhh! Right. Let's start with Maths. Right. Page 122. Create tessellating patterns on squared paper. What the hell does tessellate mean?

CHILD: It means patterns that fit together with no gaps.

PARENT: Right. Right. So can you answer 1 to 6?

CHILD: Yes. (*Child does them.*) Easy! Finished!

PARENT: Right. Next. Can you list the composite numbers from 1 to 50? For god's sake! What the hell is a composite number?

CHILD: Google it.

PARENT: (*Read from his phone.*) A composite number is a positive integer that can be formed by multiplying two smaller positive integers. What class are you in?

Jaysus...(*looks up integer*) integer, integer, an integer is a number that can be written without a fractional component. Ah here. Listen, did you get that?

CHILD: No!

PARENT: Okay. Skip that. Long division. 2 into 568.

CHILD: I hate long division.

PARENT: I don't care. You're doing it. We'll take it in steps. (*Parent begins the process.*) 2 into 5?

CHILD: 3

PARENT: How can there be 3 2s in 5? How? Do you 2 times tables? Say your 2 time tables...

2x1 is 2

2x2 is 4

2x3 is what?

CHILD: (*Sighs. Cups hand under chin. Swings on chair.*) I don't know how to do it.

PARENT: Watch how I'm doing it.

CHILD: Teacher does it better.

PARENT: I am the teacher for now so be quiet and listen. (*Explains in steps long division.*)

Stop swinging and pay attention.

CHILD: I'm paying attention.

PARENT: Right. Explain it back to me then.

CHILD: You put how many 2s into 568.

PARENT: Yes. But how do you do it.

CHILD: You put the first number here (*Struggles and then fails.*)

PARENT: You're not listening. How many times do I have to show you?

CHILD: Can I've a break?

PARENT: We're only here for fifteen minutes!

CHILD: I need to wee.

PARENT: Wee then. WASH YOUR HANDS AFTER!

When you come back, you're doing these. And then religion. Then you can have a break.

CHILD: You hate religion.

PARENT: No I don't. I just don't believe in it.

CHILD: Then I don' have to do it!

PARENT: Yes you do. You've a picture of Jesus to colour and the symbols of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John to draw.

(Bottle of wine poured into glass)

CHILD: Why?

PARENT: Because that's your work for today.

CHILD: It's boring.

PARENT: Just do the damn work and get it finished or you're getting kicked out of school.

CHILD: But I'm at home!

PARENT: Well you're getting kicked out of home then!

(Video of Multiplying Virus with with sound scape)

Belfast Medical Officer (Niall): "There is no reason for the general public to become unduly alarmed, and the rumours currently in the city may be accepted with the proverbial grain of salt. The general view from the medical profession is against the outbreak being any serious disease.

Person 1 (Mary): "What's the big deal with this silly illness that is content with three days' bed rest and a medicine cabinet?"³¹

London Medical Officer (Holly): A spell of wet weather or of moist winds will probably check the progress of the epidemic.

Dublin Medical Health Officer (Tomas): "Do not be afraid of influenza; you are much stronger than any microbe so long as you do not drug yourself, overeat or overclothe."

Person 1 (Niall): As influenza moved through towns and communities, schools, libraries and other public buildings were closed, and court sittings were postponed. Businesses closed sporadically on account of staff illnesses.

Boy (Tom): One day, my three best friends didn't come out of their houses in the morning. I realized no one in our neighborhood was visiting each other. No one was passing around food, talking on the street. Everyone was staying inside. Still, every morning, I went to my friends' houses. I knocked on the door and waited for them to come out and play. But nobody did. I didn't know what was happening.

Mid-century Mystic:

Hello! Welcome to Tarot Tuesday, featuring one of my most beloved decks, this is the Aquarian tarot. And I love this deck. I carry it around with me wherever I go. Here's the World card. Isn't it awesome? Yeah, they're fabulous. And since it's the Aquarian deck, I'm wearing my Aquarian sweatshirt. Yes I am. I know, like What! So why don't I start with, how about a card for the world right now. How about if I pull a card for the general ... ah... psychic weather that is happening right now? So I'm grounding myself (*shuffles the cards*) Well, that one popped up right away. It is the 10 of Cups. So the 10 of cups is about the sense of heaven on earth. I've been reading up on tarot cards, and a lot of tarot podcasts, and I've done a lot of research. And this tarot card is like, Gee. SO we're in this pandemic. And we're sheltering in place, and you know, you hear certain catch phrases, you know, like "*In These Unprecedented Times*" and like there's another catch phrase which I hope is not just a catch phrase, -but really comes from the heart. Which is "We're in this Together." So the 10 of Cups is about people coming together. The 10 is always the highest vibration of a suit. Cups is about emotion, it's about caring, it's about sharing. It's about Love. So this is the card that

is the psychic weather that is going on right now, and it's reminding us, to come together, for the greater good, and to lead with Love. (*pause*) So that's your 10 of Cups right there. Isn't it beautiful? Love that card.

(Lobby Sound Transition)

Mike Walsh (Kieran): "I was very young when the Spanish flu arrived in Clonmel, Dad got the Spanish flu... My mother didn't get the flu but I remember as he was getting better, she would let me peek in the door of his bedroom to see him. The warmth of his smile of welcome remains with me to this day – thankfully he survived ..."

Child Voice (Anna): When we all got the flu we couldn't do anything else but go to bed, because we just couldn't stand up. Your legs actually gave way, I can't exaggerate that too much. Everybody at our end of the street had it. Next door but one lived my grandparents and my three aunts. They all had it, but my grandfather was the only one who died in our family. The rest of us recovered but it took a long time, because the flu took charge of your whole body. I don't remember having a cold or sneezing. I just remember terrible pains in all my limbs, and I just didn't want to eat anything. I think my bout of flu lasted about two weeks until I started going back to school again. I was so lucky. That was the worst illness I've ever had.⁵⁷

(Holly might start handing out some public health pamphlets as Nurse)

Nurse (Mary): We didn't have time to treat them. We didn't take temperatures; we didn't even have time to take blood pressure. We would give them a little hot whiskey toddy; that's about all we had time to do. They would have terrific nosebleeds with it. Some were delirious and some had their lungs punctured. Then their bodies would fill with air.

LIVE NURSE MONOLOGUE (Holly)

NURSE: You can't see people's faces. But you can tell how someone is doing by their eyes. I make sure I look at people's eyes to see how they're coping so I can keep tabs on when someone needs a break and then make sure to catch up with them after and check they're okay.

I was getting home so late that I decided to stay away from home two days a week, and then I felt guilty for not being at home. But when I'm at home I feel guilty for not being at work.

Sound Scape Transition (Can guide them to look at more Posters ect.. in the lobby):

News Narration (Tomas): The Limerick Public Health Committee has decided to close all schools and places of amusement for the rest of this week to allow the authorities to arrange for the disinfecting of military personnel arriving from abroad. Similar precautionary measures have been put in place in Belfast.

Dr Kathleen Lynn (Holly): I, Dr Kathleen Lynn, urge steps to immediately be taken to prevent another outbreak of influenza. I have seen cases in the township of Rathmines and it is my experience that it is not only in the dwellings of the poorer classes where insanitary conditions are found. When Rathmines experienced an outbreak last year, the death rate was far higher than might have been expected. I do not want to be alarmist, but nonetheless much can be done in the way of prevention by inoculation. I fear a new outbreak as a recurrence of the epidemic in the United States. It is also reported to be spreading in Spain, Poland, and Japan. Ireland's chances of escape lie entirely in our insular position and in the maintenance of a good physical standard. The best protection against influenza is the maintenance of a

healthy lifestyle that involves good footwear, warm clothing, suitable exercise, good working and living conditions, including well-ventilated bedrooms, living rooms and workplaces. I urge you all, be vigilant. Do not let the silent killer return.

Narration: (Connemara) (Kieran): Connemara, 5 April 1919 - A public appeal has been issued by the Lord Mayor of Dublin on behalf of islanders of Gorumna and Lettermullen, Connemara, who are currently enduring great distress as a result of an outbreak of influenza. It is understood that the influenza outbreak has affected entire families and in some cases where both parents have succumbed, it has left behind completely helpless children. There are also stories circulating of single parents being left to take care of eight or nine children. Survivors, while slowly regaining their health, are not yet able to work and are in need of food and fuel. The need is urgent and the distress acute.

Nurse Matron (Holly): At least three quarters of our hospital staff in Castlebar is off sick, leaving the remaining staff to care for over eight hundred patients. The flu has claimed the lives of three nurse. When the epidemic passes, special bonuses will be given to our heroic hospital staff members who are working tirelessly to care for the patients.

Doctor (Tomas): ‘The hospital staff here are all good friends but I get so sick of pneumonia. We eat it, live it, sleep it, and dream it, to say nothing of breathing it 16 hours a day

Poignant piece referencing Nursing homes

Kieren: You sit in the ward wondering why you’ve no visitors. While you sit, I imagine this silent killer is going to get you. I see its tentacles latching onto door handles, walls, tables, particles of dust, floors and sinks crawling towards you, because onto everything and around every corner Covid lurks.

I feel sad because I can't be there to help. I feel sad because you can't leave. I feel sad because most of the time you're not aware that nature is still in birdsong, the sun shines on everything, the winds blows through everything. People are continuing to do 'regular' things that appear very ordinary in our long spell of Covid. Because while we may be in lockdown, your lockdown is padlocked by your fragility.

You must be frightened by the contemporary plague doctors, daily masked, who make you safe and comfortable. Because we don't know what we're dealing with; they have no option. We have no option. We need to keep everyone safe as best we can. That prowler isn't discriminatory. He could pounce on anyone, any time.

At least the government copped on when it was shamed into it. After you made Covid headlines. At least they started to feel bad for not feeling. For having no emotional connection to you, for you; the most vulnerable among us. From the window I watch you.

From the window I will continue to watch you.

End SONG(?)

Video words (or leaflet with image, or voice over to song?): Then, in March 1919 the flu suddenly abated, schools reopened, people got on with their lives and nothing much was heard again about the 'Great Flu of 1918'. In 2004, the staff of St. Mary's Hospital erected a memorial garden on the site of the old Asylum Graveyard, across from the present Fire Station. This is the principal memorial in the town to victims of the Great Flu of 1918 which reached its height one hundred years ago.

