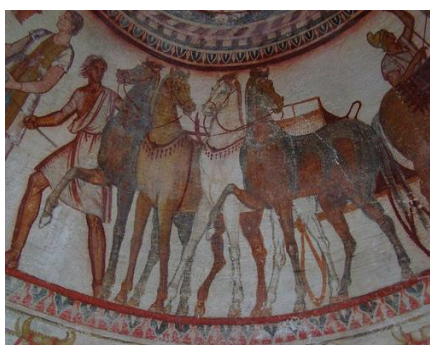


A little of my Quest, by Alice Coghlan



Some of my earliest inspiration for *Sylvia's Quest* came from my time in Bulgaria as a Staff Director at Bourgas Opera in the long, hot, happy summer of 2007. That January Bulgaria had joined the EU, prices were rocketing, and the fountain pen that had sealed the deal was proudly displayed in the National Museum in Sofia. At home in Dublin, people were nervous and tabloids ran paranoid headlines of how Bulgarians and Romanians intended to exploit our Social Welfare system – an almost impossible feat since neither country's citizens would enjoy our work permits until 2014.



Before joining the Opera I travelled solo from Sofia to Bourgas on the Black Sea Coast. On the way I visited Kazanlak – a small Turkish built town in the Valley of the Roses that was to become Sylvia's hometown. My first stop was the UNESCO World Heritage listed Ancient Thracian tomb (pictured) that soldiers had literally fallen into in 1944 when they were digging a bomb shelter for the town. I wished that I'd had just this kind of adventure as a girl archaeologist, when I used to survey Northamptonshire's ridge and furrow fields on wintery afternoons, in search of Iron Age treasures that could never be found.

After feasting on Shopska Salat, I went to the Iskra Museum, where I was the original Uncle Petko's only visitor. As I nosed around the Museum, he followed, patiently flicking the neon lights to reveal Ancient Thracian treasures to rival any Museum's in the world, and asking about my life in theatre. Thanks to the Communist's obsession with proving a Slavic past which could be shared with their Soviet brothers, he said, nearly all of Ancient Thrace was still waiting to be discovered – excepting its 'capital' Seuthopolis which now lay flooded by a the communist's Koprinka Dam. It lay just outside the town, in the Valley of the Thracian Kings where a recently discovered 4th century BC pyramid tomb had attracted 15,000 visitors in its first month of opening. I took a taxi out to it at once. It was magnificent.

But later as my train rattled on into the Balkan night, I couldn't help thinking of my own culture. How many of us knew where Bulgaria was on the map, let alone of the treasures of Ancient Thrace? And later of Sylvia, an illegal cleaner I had once worked alongside in a London Museum... a girl for whom £4 an hour meant more than risking it all at our borders to visit her terminally father in Poland. And of the day when I asked how her father was, 'He die' she said simply, and went back to her yellow duster and her silence. Why?



Ancient Thrace

The Ancient Thracians were Indo-European tribes who settled in the area of the Balkans, whose heartland is now Bulgaria, five thousand years ago. As Thracians were mostly illiterate much of what we know of them comes from their archaeology, and their neighbour, Greece, who saw them as primitive northerners. Homer first recorded Thrace in written history in his *Iliad*. Here the arrival of the Thracian King

Rhesus at Troy is described. 'His chariot is arrayed with silver and gold, and his marvellous golden armour is of the rarest workmanship - too splendid for any mortal man to carry, it is for the Gods.' Then, as now, the Thracians were famous for the extraordinary beauty of their craftsmanship, their weaponry, their horse-breeding and Orpheus being a Thracian, their singers and musicians.

Although all Thracian tribes had common culture and language, from the political point of view they never went far beyond a primitive tribal order. Many had red hair and blue eyes, and the nobility tattooed their bodies and wore extravagant clothes and jewellery. They lived in open farming communities where they grew cereals, fruit trees, hunted in the forests, feasted on game and dark sweet wine, and kept slaves. They had no cities yet built religious sanctuaries, royal residences and elaborate dome and pyramid tombs.

Ancient Thracian life was rural and tribal until the territory was attacked by Philip of Macedonia in 356 BC and later subdued by his son Alexander the Great. As with the fictional Sylvtopolis of *Sylvia's Quest*, recent archaeology has revealed that Thracian settlements who rebelled against Alexander, were ransacked and burned by General Antipater, with their treasures looted to fund his military campaigns in India, and their people presumably sold into slavery.

The last Thracian coastal states were conquered by the Romans in 74 BC. The martial Thracians went on to be the most successful gladiators in Rome, and Spartacus, the escaped gladiator who led the greatest slave's rebellion against Rome in 73-71 BC, and who was later crucified for it, was a proud Thracian.

The Worship of Orpheus

Orpheus was a God of music whose lyre could charm the plants, the birds from the trees and move the Furies to tears. His was a healing music that symbolised the perfect order of the universe. Orpheus was born in the Rhodope Mountains in southern Bulgaria where archaeological remains, like Sylvia might



have unearthed, reveal that the mystic cult of Orpheus was practiced in underground caves or deep clefts in the mountainsides, perhaps because these dark openings might eventually lead into the Underworld, and its labyrinths that only Orpheus had mastered.

Aristocrats and royalty would gather in such caves for rites where Orphic music acted as a transformative power, where

animals were sacrificed and where Thracian kings, warrior-priests of the Orphic cult, were consecrated to the God. During these ceremonies worshippers used magnificent objects of gold, silver and platinum to perform mystical rites which promised eternal happiness, immortality and association with the Gods. For the soul was immortal and, once a life cycle began in birth, it was eternal, a then revolutionary teaching that was to lay the very foundation for the Christian theology on birth and the soul. Orpheus was later absorbed into the pantheon of Classical Mythology by Greece, and in the early centuries after Christ, his cult rivalled even Christianity itself in popularity.



Oracles

Whilst the Ancient World's most famous oracle or seer of the future was at Delphi in Central Greece, oracles like the prophetess Pagané were found throughout Thrace and the Ancient World. These oracles were usually chaste women and their business came from

individuals or states, who came to ask divine guidance as to which sacrifices were most pleasing to a deity or whether the current cult practices were acceptable or not, or whether to make war or not, after which came the more personal enquiries as to whether a son might be born or whether to travel, to marry, to sail, to sow seeds, to lend or to borrow and so on. To this the Oracle would generally reply with a yes or a no and a sacrifice to X.

In order to predict the future the Oracle usually entered a trance like state, often using burnt barley and laurel leaves, which invited the person of a God to enter their person and to speak through them. As such speech was full of music, muddle and contradiction an interpreter was usually employed –

ambiguity being the medium of the Gods when communicating with a mortal who cannot fully see or understand his/her future. Other consultation methods included drawing bean lots, reading omens from the flight of birds, or sleeping in the Temple so that the Gods might issue instructions to you in your dreams.

The most important oracular site in Bulgaria was discovered on a mountain top at Perperikon (pictured) twenty years ago. Archaeologists here have excavated a large, oval hall, open to the sky, containing a round altar cut out of rock. Sacred wine was poured onto this altar and divination was based on how high the flames leapt. It was a site for which archaeologists had searched for centuries, a Temple to Dionysus from where Alexander the Great was once told he'd conquer the known world, a sanctuary which once rivalled that of Delphi.



Labyrinths

The original labyrinth of legend was built at Knossos on Crete, to contain the Minotaur, a half-bull, half man monster who fed annually on the Athenian virgins, until he was slain by Theseus. In the Classical World such labyrinths were viewed as maps which guided the soul to the Underworld - by their very nature they suggested a sacred path home. (Archaeologists have also speculated

that Ancient Celtic spirals suggest the same.) The pictured 1205 labyrinth from the floor of Chartres Cathedral in France shows this idea clearly, when you walk its path.

Labyrinths differ from mazes, where the aim is to have fun getting lost, as they have a centre and a purpose – the purpose being to find one's way in and out. Psychologists have proposed labyrinths as a manifestation of our lack of knowledge and understanding, our struggle between conscious thought and unconscious intent, our journey to self-awareness and our spiritual journey towards death. At our labyrinth's centre lie our most primal motivations.

Today labyrinths are as popular as in ancient times. The symbolism and self-knowledge that can come from a walking meditation in a labyrinth is used in rehabilitation centres, in churches, in spiritual healing centres and by therapists treating mental health disorders.



A History of my Country

By Elitsa Dimova

Bulgaria has existed since the year 681 when there was a food shortage in Asia, and the "Bulgars" followed their leader Asparuh and Tangra their God, to the lands along the River Danube. Here they fought the Slavic tribes

inhabiting the land and laid the foundations of the oldest country in Europe. They called it Bulgaria.

In their early days, the Bulgarians were attacked numerous times by the Byzantium Empire, but despite the difference in size and in numbers, the newly-founded country rose to become the Empire's greatest enemy and, for a time, the biggest threat to its existence. But Bulgarian power dwindled away as the time passed. As one by one all the Balkan countries became Christian, the Bulgarians continued to worship their Gods, which earned them the loathsome nickname "The Barbarians".

With everyone turning their backs on them, they had no choice but to accept Christianity as well, and to integrate into the modern European world. That wasn't an easy task, but was eventually achieved by the determination of Knyaz Boris, in 865. He destroyed anyone who stood in his way, including his own son, Vladimir Rassate, whom he blinded and left to suffer a long and painful death from his wounds. During his rule, Bulgaria introduced the first draft of the Cyrillic alphabet, used by many East European countries today.

Knyaz Boris was succeeded by his second son, Simeon, who earned the nickname "The Great". Simeon's successful campaigns against the Byzantines, Magyars and Serbs led Bulgaria to its greatest territorial expansion ever. During his rule, Bulgarian territory extended to three seas – to the east the Black sea, to the west the Adriatic Sea, to the south the Aegean Sea.

His reign was also a period of unmatched cultural prosperity and enlightenment, which was later deemed the Golden Age of Bulgarian culture. However, after Simeon's death in 927, wars again broke out with Croatians, Magyars, Pechenegs, Serbs and the Byzantine Empire.

In 1014 Bulgaria had a dramatic battle with Byzantium at Kleidion. After the Battle, on the order of Basil II, the captured 14,000 Bulgarian soldiers were blinded; one of every 100 men was left one-eyed so as to lead the rest home. The blinded soldiers were sent back to Samuel who reportedly had a heart attack upon seeing them. He died two days later, on 15 October 1014. By 1018 the Byzantines had ended the First Bulgarian Empire.

The Byzantium occupation of Bulgaria lasted until 1185, when the Asen dynasty nobles Ivan Asen I and Peter IV organised a major uprising which re-established the Bulgarian state. Ivan Asen and Peter laid the foundations of the Second Bulgarian Empire, which lasted until it fell under Turkish Ottoman rule in 1396. Five centuries were to pass before Bulgaria would be free again. In 1876, 30,000 Bulgarian soldiers were killed in The April Uprising. It won the attention of other powerful forces, particularly Russia, and with its help Bulgaria won its freedom in 1878.

Between 1912 and 1918, Bulgaria became involved in three consecutive conflicts—two Balkan Wars and World War I. After a disastrous defeat in the Second Balkan War, Bulgaria again found itself fighting on the losing side as a result of its alliance with the Central Powers in World War I. That led to the post-war establishment of a Royal authoritarian dictatorship by Tsar Boris III (1918–1943). Bulgaria entered World War II in 1941 as a member of the Axis but declined to participate in Operation Barbarossa and its people uniquely saved its Jewish population from deportation to concentration camps, through mass protest. The sudden death of Boris III in the summer of 1943 pushed the country into political turmoil as the war turned against Germany and the Communist movement gained power. Following strikes and unrest, in September 1944 the Communist-dominated Fatherland Front took power, ending the alliance with Germany, and Bulgaria joined the Allied side until the war ended. After the war it became a part of the Soviet sphere of influence under the leadership of Georgi Dimitrov.

The Soviet-style, planned economy saw some market-oriented policies emerging on an experimental level under Todor Zhivkov (1954–1989). Under the influence of the collapsing Eastern Bloc, the Communist Party leader, Todor Zhivkov, resigned on 10 November 1989, and Bulgaria embarked on a transition to a parliamentary democracy. The first free elections, in June 1990, were won by the Bulgarian Socialist Party. The new constitution provided for a relatively weak elected President and for a Prime Minister accountable to the legislature. The new system failed to improve living standards, which have remained lower than when under Communist rule. Bulgaria joined the European Union in 2007.

When we were researching and devising Sylvia's Quest we interviewed many Bulgarians and other 'East Europeans' now living in Ireland. Here are six of their stories.

Tsvetlina Chakova, from Sofia Bulgaria.

I am an architect. I came to Ireland when I was fourteen years old. My Dad is an engineer and found a job in Ireland. It wasn't my choice - I was part of the package sent out of the Sofia house, together with my brother, mother and 'household utensils' and landed in Bray. I was excited - I had no notion of where Ireland was, so I had to search it up on the Europe map.

What were your first impressions of Ireland?

It was an orderly, nice place where people are happy. The quiet neighbourhood was one of the hardest things to get used to. The weather sucked and still does.

How do you think Irish people see Bulgarians?

Most Irish people have no clue where my country is or wouldn't know any people from there. Quite possibly they think we, Romanians and Gypsies all come from the 'same place over there.' To us this is like saying the English and Irish are all the same people from the same islands.

Back home, how do your people see Irish people?

Ireland is a kind of fairy land, the perfect place where everybody has money and lives happily ever after with no problems. Bulgarians love foreigners, especially the Irish – only fun drink-related stories reach my country across Europe. And we do love our Irish pubs in Sofia!

What is the best thing about living in Ireland?

In Bulgaria people are angry. It is so hard to get money and pay the bills. I love the easy life here- but still it's recession times! It's peaceful and I have some great friends. I feel like Ireland is the world's centre, a centre from where I can go off and travel the world. My first leap from Sofia to Dublin was only the beginning! Still, Bulgaria will always be in my heart. Being Bulgarian and Irish is becoming like a Split Personality Disorder.

What do you miss most about Bulgaria?

I miss my family, the culture, the food and people thinking as I do.

Have you ever known anyone in Sylvia's situation?

Every Bulgarian knows an immigrant in this situation. Such a repetitive story that we had to study a novel called *Under the Yoke* about it at school. It's an eternal struggle of our minds, as we all want to have a peaceful life in Bulgaria, but its poverty and bureaucracy won't let us. Lacking money can bring out the worst in us. In Bulgaria there is no space for a fantasy world like Sylvia's— no time for nonsense, you must pay the household bills next month.

Margarita Chakova from Sofia, Bulgaria.

Before I left Bulgaria I was an Electronic Engineer in National Centre of Metrology, now I'm sorry to be unemployed. We left as my husband got a good job offer, and I came to be with him and our children. When I got to Ireland I found it so green and friendly!

How do you think Irish people see Bulgarians?

Irish people aren't too open to new friendships, maybe as they already have big families. Or maybe I'm not fair, but I'd like to share our culture with them.

How were you first few months here?

Strange and quiet. I couldn't find work because I needed a work permit. My husband rented a house in Bray before I and the children arrived. The tenant, one neighbour and a woman from ICOS were kind and help us. Who was not – I don't want to remember them...

What is the best thing about living in Ireland?

I have my family here, and my daughter finished Third Level education!

What do you miss most about Bulgaria?

I miss my family members, my friends there. I miss them most at Christmas and Easter time. But when we're ready we'll return to live with them there.

Eva Altayeb from The Czech Republic.

I am from a small town in the Czech Republic near Brno. Now I am married to my Irish/Sudanese husband. He is a software developer and we live in Dublin 22 with our two children. I also teach a little violin - and Czech language to students such as Alice Coghlan! I came to Ireland nine years ago to

complete my MA thesis on eco-ethical aspects of Christianity at NUI Maynooth. I wanted to come closer to the Christianity that was partly influenced by Celtic spirituality, to experience it for myself.

What were your first impressions of Ireland?

I found people very positive and happy, but I still find it shocking how some Irish people litter the parks and streets and how careless they can be sometimes.

How do you think Irish people see people from your country?

Whenever I mention I`m Czech, they are very pleasant and remember Prague and maybe our beer. Many people would talk about our playwright and former President Václav Havel, some would mention even Alexander Dubček. Many of them know names of Czech footballers, some would know Kafka or maybe few Czech composers... However, they would often refer to my country as Czechoslovakia even though we split nearly 20 years ago.

Back home, how do your people see Irish people?

The Czech tourist imagines an emerald, rainy island full of happy people eating potatoes and drinking Guinness and whiskey. Czechs love Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw and love to read *The Happy Prince* to their children.

How were your first few months here?

As my Socrates-Erasmus scholarship was only €300 a month and my rent €200, the first few months were difficult enough. I and another Czech student lived in a converted garage room with no insulation so we slept in our hats and gloves. We could only eat a little and picked cooking apples from the garden of St. Patrick`s College. Until today I am grateful to the wonderful Salesians in St. Catherine`s House, Maynooth. Father Michael, the director of the community at that time, gave us a roof and basic food. They charged us what we could afford, not what the outside prices were.

What do you miss most about your home country?

I miss my wider family and friends deeply. I miss the spring smell of the air. I miss the yellow fields of wheat... I miss our woods that anyone can walk in. I miss picking wild berries and mushrooms in those woods. I miss the Czech railways that bring you to almost every village. I miss Czech bookshops and

sweets. I miss the cherries from our cherry tree. I never saw a bee hive around Dublin and it seems like there are no cherries here either.

Have you ever known anyone in Sylvia's situation?

Yes, many. Even in more difficult refugee situations. I once met a Lithuanian girl who was on the run from the Mafia; herself and her small son. She told me that when they came here and before they were helped by Social Services, she would eat sometimes even plain flour as she could not afford anything else for herself. She too could hear voices and suffered terrible fears until she found professional help and a safe place to stay. In many cases Ireland and the Irish people offered people like her a great hope, help and shelter. They could make a new home here and find peace.

Petar Mladenov from Galabovo, Bulgaria

I work as a car mechanic in Ireland. In Bulgaria I was working in a mine. My mining job was neither safe nor well paid. As I already had a Russian friend here I came to look for new opportunities, and I have found them.

What were your first impressions of Ireland?

Irish people drink too much and work too little. They're late and disorganised.

How do you think Irish people see Bulgarians?

That if we are here, we are here to live on Social Welfare. I have never been on social welfare in my life, and anyway how can I? I'm illegal!

Back home, how do Bulgarians see Irish people?

Many of us can't afford to travel so we are very excited when a foreigner comes to Bulgaria. We see it as a compliment to our beautiful country!

How were you first few months here?

Terrible. I slept on the floor in my Russian friend's house and got paid €4 an hour. Nobody was kind to me, probably because I don't speak much English.

Have you ever known anyone in Sylvia's situation?

Me, perhaps? I don't hear voices but I still sleep in the garage where I work so I don't have to pay rent, and to save enough money to start my own garage business soon.

Cast List

Sylvia Sylvana
Prophetess Pagane
Orpheus
Baba
Uncle Petko
Yvette
Mrs Evelyn Mulhall
Mr Brooke Mulhall
Homeless Hazel
Michael
Ms Deadlaus
Devising Actors

Elitsa Dimova
Elitsa Dimova
Damien Devaney
Elitsa Dimova
Damien Devaney
Anne Marie O'Donovan
Anne Marie O'Donovan
Damien Devaney
Anne Marie O'Donovan
Damien Devaney
Anne Marie O'Donovan
Mirjana Rendulic, Elitsa Dimova,
Anne Marie O'Donovan, Emily
Elphinstone and Claire Jenkins.

Production Team

Writer, Director & Producer
Associate Producer
Sound Design and Composition
Costume Design
Jewellery Design
Movement and Dance Director
Assistant Directors
Sound Assistants and Operators
Props, Hair and Make Up on the show
Hair and Make Up on Publicity Images
Photography & Graphic Design
Program Articles
Website
Accountancy

Alice Coghlan
Natalie Hans
Tommy Foster
Maria Tapper
Paula Boyle
Amy Therese Flood
Lianne O'Shea & Amy Flood
Paul O'Connor & Paul Murphy
Jill Beecher
Joan Thorpe
Stephen Delaney
Alice Coghlan & Elitsa Dimova
Caoileann Appleby
Brooke Johns



Elitsa Dimova

Sylvia, the Prophetess Pagane and Baba.

Originally from Stara Zagora in south central Bulgaria, Elitsa came to Ireland in 2008 to study Drama (Performance) at DIT Drama and Music Conservatory, from where she graduated in 2011. There, favourite roles included Tortoise, Chief of Police and Clarinettist player in *Arabian Nights*, and First Witch in *Macbeth*. Lately she appeared in *Dubliners in 12 languages* as a Bulgarian Narrator of *Evelyn*.

Elitsa is delighted to have worked with Wonderland Productions since *Sylvia's Quest* was first a work-in-progress in May 2011 and is excited to make her professional debut as Sylvia in *Sylvia's Quest*. During this time she has also collaborated with Wonderland as a Drama Coach at Wonderland's Children's Workshops in Bray.



Damien Devaney

Mr Mulhall, Orpheus, Uncle Petko and Michael.

Damien Devaney is a graduate of the Gaiety School of Acting. His theatre credits include: Wonderland's audio walk of *James Joyce's Dubliners* where he played Gabriel in *The Dead* amongst numerous other ensemble roles, *The Wonderful world of Dissocia Calypso*, *Talking to Terrorists Calypso*, *On This One Night* Brokentalkers, *The Merchant of Venice* Corcadorca, *Lost letters of a Victorian Lady* Bewleys Cafe Theatre, *Candide* Performance

Corporation, *Coyote on a Fence* Purpleheart Theatre Co, *The Field* Scott/Rellis, and *Car Show 2* Corn Exchange. Film and television credits include: *The Clinic* RTE, *Raw* RTE, *Rock Rivals* ITV, *Small Island* BBC, *This is Nightlife* RTE, *The Running Mate* Tg4, *Studs* Brother Films. Hope you enjoy the show, I love you, goodnight.



Anne Marie O'Donovan

Homeless Hazel, Mrs Mulhall, Yvette & Ms Deadlaus

AnnMarie trained with the Gaiety School of Acting and later with the Abbey School of Music and Drama. Her most recent theatre credits include Kirsty in Gutsy Productions Fringe Festival play *Love songs for Losers*, Jackie Coryton in Shift Theatres of Noel Cowards *Hay Fever*, the V Day show of the *Vagina Monologues* and the role of Ellen Terry in *Stoker*. She has worked on numerous shorts including Dwarf Films *The Darkside* and

Little Squirrel's of *Another Day*. AnnMarie qualified with the Royal Irish Academy as a Speech and Drama teacher and currently teaches youth acting and drama.

Production Team



Alice Coghlan

Writer, Director & Producer

Alice holds a Directing MA from Middlesex University and graduated with First Class Honours in Drama & English from Trinity College Dublin and The University of California at Berkeley in 2001. In 2003 Alice founded Wonderland Productions for whom she has written and directed *Sylvia's Quest*, *Life Shop till you Drop!* and *The Spook Show*; translated and directed Goldoni's *La Locandiera*, Molière's *The Miser* and the opera *Pagliacci*

and directed and adapted *Dubliners*, *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and directed *The Hostage*, *The Seagull After Chekhov*, *The Christmas Cabaret* and Molière's *L'Amour Medicin*. Other recent directing credits include *King Lear Review* Theatre Royal Waterford, *Sensual Food* and *The Red Shoes* both for The Patravadi Theatre, Thailand and *A Tourist's Guide to Terrorism* for The Edinburgh Festival.

Alice has Staff/assistant directed for Opera Ireland, Scottish Opera, Bourgas Opera Bulgaria, Opera Academia Europea Florence, California Shakespeare Festival and The Abbey Theatre, and has been an Assistant Director/Observer at The Royal Opera House and Opera North. She is a script reader for The Abbey Theatre Literary Department, and is a regular participant on The Next Stage. She also teaches at, and is the director of, Wonderland's Children's Workshops.



Tommy Foster

Sound Design and Composition

Tommy has worked as a Sound Designer and Composer with Wonderland for a number of years, having also designed and composed on *James Joyce's Dubliners* and *Gulliver's Travels*. He also teaches sound at Wonderland's nationwide Children's Workshops. Aside from sound design, his main areas of focus are live music and sound engineering. He is a multi-instrumentalist and song-writer and is active in a number of bands including The Groovy Gloom (thegroovygloom.org).

He also does on-location recording for bands and song-writers, ranging in style from solo acoustic to improvised electronics.

Tommy has a BA in Music Technology and English and an MA in Computer Music from NUI Maynooth.



Maria Tapper

Costume Design & Construction

Swedish born and self-taught costume designer, Maria Tapper, has been living and working in Dublin for the last 13 years. With various projects under her sequined studded belt, such as working with prominent Irish fashion designers, theatre companies, TV/Film and ethical fashion and textile activists, Maria is an eclectic and unique designer who loves to combine both her vibrancy and individuality in all her work.

In 2010 she designed and made the costumes for the Land of Brobdingnag for Wonderland's *Gulliver's Travels*. Maria's most recent endeavours has been *Blooming Rides*, a short film about female cyclists in 1900s, working in sewing room for the

BBC production *Loving Miss Hatto*, as a seamstress for *Titanic - Blood and Steel*, as a costume designer for the art documentary *WonderHouse*, written and directed by Oonagh Kearney, and as a costume designer for the Focus Theatre.



Amy Therese Flood

Movement & Dance and Assistant Director

Amy holds a B.A. (Hons.) in Drama Studies and German from Trinity College, Dublin, and has also studied Dance at Sallynoggin College of Further Education. Amy has been working with Wonderland since 2010 and has been the Stage Manager of the tour of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* for over a year. Her other work with Wonderland includes playing various roles in its national tour of *Gulliver's Travels*, playing Mary Jane Morkan, Annie Chandler and Miss Mary Sinico in Wonderland's audio walk of *James Joyce's Dubliners* and working as a Drama, Dance and Choreography Facilitator in their Easter and Summer workshops for 7-12 year olds.

Amy's theatre credits include Chorus in *Iphigenia in Aulis*, Classic Stage Ireland, various roles in *Love in the Time of Social Networking*, Neon Fringe Productions, Veronica/Martha in *The Passion*, Ruth Pe Palileo, and Erin in *Ismene*, which she co-directed with Aislinn Ní Uallacháin, both co-founders of TattleTale Theatre Company.



Leanne O'Shea

Assistant Director

Lianne O'Shea has been directing since 2006. Her most recent directing credits include *Romeo + Juliet* The Complex, Smithfield & The Moat Theatre, *The Merchant of Venice* The Complex, Mermaid Arts Centre & The Moat Theatre and *Skullduggery* Bewleys Café Theatre. Previously she worked on adaptations of *Macbeth*, *Romeo & Juliet* and *Henry V* at The Moat Theatre. She recently participated in Text|Messages at Project Arts Centre, where she was also a participant in the Power of Words programme lead by Annabelle Comyn. Lianne has previously worked as an Assistant Director to Raymond Keane, Jason Byrne and Annabelle Comyn, and most recently with David Horan on *Macbeth* as part of Second Age Theatre Company's Developing Direction Programme. She holds a Masters in Directing from UCD.

Sylvia and Baba's hero

Haji Dimitar



Haji Dimitar was a passionate Bulgarian revolutionary and a national hero. He lived when Bulgaria was under Turkish occupation, and endured dreadful tortures and injustices. In 1862, when he was 22, he joined a group of rebels and together they worked against the Turks. They hid in the mountains in the area of Sliven town and mainly attacked wealthy Turks. Whatever they stole they gave to the poor Bulgarian population. Although small in numbers, the band was a huge annoyance to the Turkish government. There were many attempts to

arrest the rebels and whilst huge bribes were offered to Sliven town citizens, nobody agreed to betray their heroes. When bribes didn't help, the Turks started an act of mass torture against the peasants, but that also didn't help. Nobody wanted to become a traitor. But Haji Dimitar wouldn't leave innocent people to suffer for his own sake. In 1865, along with some of the rebels, he went to Romania, where he met another revolutionary, Georgi Sava Rakovski. In 1868, their joined forces crossed from Romania, led by Hadji Dimitar and Stefan Karadja. However, now that they were back on their native soil, they wanted more than to avenge innocent blood. They wanted freedom! Through naivety or bravery, with less than 1000 people they rushed back to save Bulgaria. After a few small victories the band was defeated at Kanladere (meaning "river of blood") and Stefan Kradja was arrested. With the 58 survivors, Hadji Dimitar fled to Buzludja Peak where he led their last fight. Heavily outnumbered, the rebellion was completely crushed. Hadji Dimitar was lethally wounded during the fight. He was brought to Kardafil Peak by three of his fellow rebels, carried on a stretcher, beyond the reach of the Turks, where they were supported by the local population. Six weeks later, high up in the mountain, he died at the age of 28. It was reported that not a single beast attempted to attack the wounded hero, and many poems and songs have since been written in his honour.

Liliana Taneva from Sofia, Bulgaria.

I am a Make Up Artist. I came to Ireland with my family to work and study, after I graduated from secondary school. I left Bulgaria because if you want to succeed in something, Bulgaria does not offer many opportunities.

How do you think Irish people see Bulgarians?

For some Bulgarians, Romanians, Lithuanians are all the same, which means they are either criminals, or illegal workers. I don't discriminate so I don't like being discriminated against. I am a good, honest and helpful. I would like to be called a Bulgarian, not an East European.

How were your first few months here?

I was working in a restaurant and had no friends. My landlord and my boss - they were nice to me. Some of my colleagues and classmates weren't as kind. Still I had my family, and these days I have friends and a well-paid job.

Do you have any plans to return to live in Bulgaria?

Maybe. The Bulgarian economy isn't very stable and I probably wouldn't be able to do the work that I'd like to. But I miss my old friends, my extended family, our Christmas and our Easter...

Ludmila Kozak from a small town in Ukraine.

When I first came to Ireland I was cleaning all over Dublin, but now I am a qualified Interior Designer, living in Dublin 8 with my husband and nine year old son. I'm proud to be getting my Irish passport soon!

What were you doing before you left Western Ukraine?

I had qualified at Agricultural College and was working in an Army Recruitment Office. I was living with my husband's parents and I made just enough money to buy one outfit and one lunch out a month. It wasn't enough to live to work. I wanted to work to live!

Why did you first decide to leave your country?

We were young and wanted an adventure. All our friends were leaving too - to Canada, Spain, Italy and America. We weren't suffering, but in 2001 a cleaner in

Ireland could earn the same money as Ukrainian doctor. I couldn't believe people were paying so much for cleaning over there!

Why did you choose to come to Ireland?

It's uncomfortable to say this now, but I was pregnant with our first child, and we knew that if he was born here, he would be an Irish citizen. But for three years after he was born the government didn't know what to do with us, we were not allowed to work, but they gave us Social Welfare. However the first day we could work, we did, we went back to college and I loved every day.

How were you first few months here?

How did we survive it? It was right before Christmas, I was heavily pregnant and my husband and I were walking a lot. When we found a place to live our landlords choose us because they felt we were like Mary and Joseph! When my tiny son arrived, all I had was my husband and a Baby Book – but my son was exactly how book was written. A pure joy! But I missed my Mother so much, and the traditions our women normally share with new mothers.

Did you like being a cleaner?

My Mother always kept our windows clean – she said it's not nice for passers-by to see a dirty window or an untidy garden. So I enjoyed it – I got paid for my OCD! I always clean, it's who I am. My home used to be like a pharmacy, I walked about in white socks, bleaching everything. But now I'm a relaxed Mum!

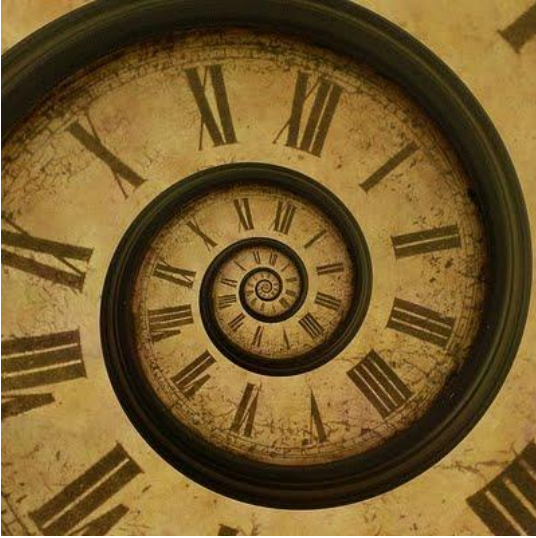
Back home, how do your people see Irish people?

I was raised to never put things off till tomorrow, but for Irish people tomorrow is another day, and so I started to do the same and to enjoy my life more!

Do you miss the Ukraine?

When I smell fresh vine tomatoes in the supermarket it reminds me of home. My mother grew 5000 tomatoes in our garden. It's how she fed her family. She would wake up at 5am for this and then go to work as a college teacher.

Do you have any plans to return to live in the Ukraine? I'm happy to stay in Ireland for as long as I can. I love the book *The Power of Now*. My son is happy in school in Inchicore, and we send him to home to Ukraine for three months each summer. I would like to stay and have a house but not a mortgage. We Ukrainians don't borrow money we can't repay.



Time Travel and *Sylvia's Quest*

According to the equations of Albert Einstein's Theory of Relativity (the best theory we have), there is nothing in the Laws of Physics to prevent time travel.

This is because in Einstein's theory of space and time, black holes offer, in principle, a way to travel through space, as well as through time.

At the heart of such a black hole is a point known as a singularity, where space and time cease to exist and where matter is crushed to infinite density. More recently, the New Zealand mathematician, Roy Kerr, found that if the black hole is rotating, a singularity still forms, but in the form of a ring, with a hole. Thus it could be possible to dive into such a black hole and through the ring, to emerge in another place and another time.

That is the theory on which *Sylvia's Quest* is based. According to Sylvia, the labyrinth is a parallel of an ancient star map (follow the yellow) which has its centre in the star map and Thracian time portal of the end of the play. And the rotation necessary for turning a black hole into a time machine is created symbolically by the spirals and circles of her dancing and latterly her sisters at the temple "swirling" all around her. The rest is magic.

Acknowledgements

Wonderland would like to warmly thank you our audiences for questing with us today and our very generous funders The Arts Council, Dublin City Council, Temple Bar Cultural Trust and our touring venues. There are many people without whom *Sylvia's Quest* would not have been possible, Lorraine Maye, Alastar Mac Aongusa, Cecilia, Denise, Emer and all at Temple Bar Cultural Trust thank you for supporting *Sylvia's Quest* through its epic six months of work in progress showings in 2011; Mirjana Rendulič and all of the actors who devised the play with such talent, dedication and good humour, Nora Hickey M'Sichili at Mermaid Arts Centre for suggesting the 'play on headphones' idea to Alice Coghlan when Wonderland were resident at Mermaid in 2010; our 2011 work in progress audiences for all their brilliant ideas, honesty, enthusiasm and encouragement, Gordon Gaffney, Jennifer Killelea and all at Filmbase for your continuing support for Wonderland's shows; Lee Sim and all at the Porter House Pub Group for our dressing room spaces, all at Phizzfest, Riverbank Arts Centre Mermaid Arts Centre and the James Joyce Centre, Graham Watson at the gorgeous www.theredhandbottlingcompany.com studio where *Sylvia's Quest* was recorded, www.uccelljewelery.com for our necklace and earrings, the casts of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *Dubliners* and *La Locandiera*, Brian Carty at The Sound Training Centre, Joan Thorpe for the hair and make up on the publicity images, The New Theatre, The Stag's Head, Devon Roe, Sara Cregan, Sam Ford, Jesion, Steve Wilson, Angela O'Reilly, Mary Enright, Vicky Lowsley, Iseult D'Arcy, Radek Žemlička and Des Gunning. Music and sound used by Tommy Foster is sourced from The Freesound Project freesound.org and musopen.org.



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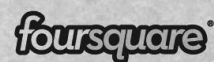
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 and hope it meets the success of
 "La Locanderia"
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Welcome to Wonderland! At Wonderland we love to offer our audiences a thrilling night out. Through our portfolio of site-specific performances, classic comedies, new writing, dinner theatre, opera, audio theatre, audio walks and drama workshops, we are committed to engaging with our audiences, in a meaningful, spirited and more often than not, fun and surprising way.

In 2010 we were resident at Mermaid Arts Centre Bray with whom we have developed a fruitful relationship, touring over twenty performances of our two dinner theatre shows *La Locandiera* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* to restaurants and country houses throughout County Wicklow, producing our most fantastical spectacle to date *Gulliver's Travels*, and initiating our weeklong children's drama workshops, which has since gone on to expand to Arts Centres nationwide.

It is wonderful to think, that since our foundation by writer/director Alice Coghlan in 2003, we have staged over six hundred successful performances, and we're looking forward to many more, including two autumn tours of our hit dinner theatre shows so if you'd like to keep in touch with our work please sign up to our mailing list at

www.wonderlandtheatre.com

☆☆☆☆☆ "Quite simply superb! Witty, wonderful, Wonderland... the most promising company since the debut years of Rough Magic ... Without any risk of overstatement, Wonderland is a company that is really going places" The Irish Times

Wonderland's Recent Production History

- *James Joyce's Dubliners*. An audio walk of Dublin starting at the James Joyce Centre. Opened April 2012 - daily & ongoing. Adapted & directed by Alice Coghlan.
- *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift. Adapted and directed by Alice Coghlan.
- *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde. Adapted & directed by Alice Coghlan. Four 3-week-long Bewleys revivals & four National Tours to date.
- *The Hostage* by Brendan Behan, site-specific at Pearse Centre 2009
- *La Locandiera* by Goldoni, The Port House, Edinburgh Festival & six National Tours 09 -12
- *Life Shop till you Drop!* by Alice Coghlan Six National Tours 2007-10, and international tour to Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.
- *Pagliacci*, by Leoncavallo, Lunchtime opera at Bewleys Café Theatre 2008.