

# SPOTLIGHT

Newsletter of the Geneva English Drama Society  
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## IN THIS EDITION

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# Success for GEDS at FEATS!

## GEDS writer wins Best Original Script award

A stellar GEDS team took *Working Girl*, written by our very own Béibhinn Regli, to compete in the Festival of European Anglophone Theatrical Societies (FEATS) in Brussels this May – and

we are delighted to report that Béibhinn came home with the prize for Best Original Script! Here she is, on the red carpet, holding her trophy. Read on for more details of the FEATS experience and a review of *Working Girl*.



## Welcome to your summer *Spotlight*

The sun is shining (cross fingers), the lake is glistening, the BBQ is sizzling, the cocktails are chilling... What more can you possibly need to complete this picture of aestival Swiss bliss than some scintillating theatrical reading from your favourite drama society?

After a successful first half of 2016, we have lots more wonderful activities lined up in the coming weeks and months. As you will read, there is plenty to look forward to – from an original open-air staged reading of *Julius Caesar* and our summer party, to a fabulous line-up of shows for next season.

This is my first – and last! – stint as

*Spotlight* Editor. Yes, that's right! GEDS is seeking Guest Editors to step up and take a one-off turn at pulling together the society's newsletter. We are also on the look-out for reviewers and reporters on all things thespian. Sound like you? Please reach out to with Daire O'Doherty, publicity coordinator, to get involved.

My personal highlight from this edition was interviewing the brilliant Béibhinn Regli (and the delicious coconut vegan cheesecake we discovered in the Grütli bar).

Have a lovely summer, everyone – and I hope to see you all soon at our exciting forthcoming events!

*Gemma Parkes*

# WHO'S WHO ON YOUR NEW GEDS COMMITTEE?

**O**n 19 April GEDS held its Annual General Meeting at the English Church Hall in Geneva, where a new committee was voted upon and elected for the next season.

This committee sees a big change in personnel with many new faces stepping up to the plate. This also means, however, that we have had to say goodbye to quite a few stalwart and valued members of the committee.

We give a very special thanks to all of the outgoing members of the previous committee for their hard work (some for the best part of 30 years) as they take a well-deserved break. In alphabetical order: Andrew Brookes, Mark Clayton, Malcolm Grant, Neil-Viki Lazar, Jon Morphy, Béibhinn Regli and Nic Sommer.

So, without further ado, we welcome on board the members of the GEDS incoming committee for the 2016–17 season.

We look forward very much to working with you all for the coming season!

## Officers of the committee

- Chair – Siân Ackroyd
- Vice-Chair – Charles Slovenski
- Treasurer – Jane Easton
- Secretary & workshops coordinator – Christopher Bailey
- Technical coordinator – Nathalie Stump
- Publicity/Spotlight/GAAG coordinator – Daire O'Doherty
- Playreadings coordinator – Jan Auke Dijkstra
- Events coordinator (social) – Christina Vasala Kokkinaki
- Membership secretary – Margaret Byskov
- Minutes secretary – Tim Hancox
- Ad hoc assistance to Secretary and Publicity – Des George

Further to the members on committee, our publicity coordinator Daire O'Doherty has been busy recruiting GEDS members to help out off-committee. As some of you may know, there is a lot of work needed to keep this society rolling and to try to bring the best theatre and activities as possible to our members, as well as promoting the work of our beloved society as far and wide as possible. It is impossible for all of this work to be done by just those few on committee, so Daire has set about to implement an off-committee,

minimal commitment, work-as-you-like team of enthusiastic members to help him out in any capacity with GEDS publicity. We therefore wish to welcome and thank the fledgling publicity team:

- Publicity coordinator – Daire O'Doherty
- Sponsorship & advertising team – Tamaam Madi-Nassar, Janet Fremeaux
- External websites coordinator – Noelle Rentsch
- Social media coordinator – Genna Meredith
- Webmaster & email – Viki Lazar

## Committee update

It's a case of having to hit the ground running at the moment on committee, with so many activities still to happen in the current season and planning for the next season in full swing it's a busy time for everybody. This coming 2016/17 season is shaping up to be an extremely exciting season with many many things to look forward to. Here are just a few of what we are working on right now:

### Theatre screenings:

As well as hosting our playreadings at UpTown next season, we are more than happy to announce that we will be hosting 4 theatre screenings there. These screenings are an excellent way to see the best live English-speaking professional theatre directly from London here in Geneva. This will be a members-only benefit and entrance will be free.

### Theatre festivals in

**Geneva:** Daire & Christina are in full negotiations and organisation to bring GEDS to the local theatre scene where we are looking to participate in one of the main theatre events in Geneva. More to follow.

**Members' benefits:** Further to the addition of the theatre screenings, we are currently reviewing and trying to improve the benefits received by our members. To this end, our publicity team of Tamaam and Daire are currently in negotiations with theatres in Geneva to create partnerships that will bring benefits to GEDS members. More to follow.

### Productions for 2016–17 season

27 Sept–1 Oct: *Crimes of the Heart* by Beth Henley, directed by Christopher Bailey, in special association with the Mission of the United States of

America in Geneva at Théâtre de l'Espérance, Eaux-Vives.

15–19 Nov: *Relative Values* by Noël Coward, directed by Charles Slovenski at Théâtre de Terre-Sainte, Coppet.

21–25 Mar: *Lost in Yonkers* by Neil Simon, directed by Neil-Jon Morphy at Theatre de l'Espérance, Eaux-Vives.

### Summer BBQ

We are delighted to announce the details for this year's GEDS summer BBQ. It will take place on Sunday 24 July starting at 4pm at the GEDS barn. Entry will be 15CHF for members and 20CHF for non-members. We will provide the meat (traditional roast legs of lamb) but we would like to hear from people who can bring salads and desserts. To sign up, please email Jane Easton at [jane.easton@wanadoo.fr](mailto:jane.easton@wanadoo.fr). Keep an eye on *GEDS* at a *Glance* for updates!

**We are especially seeking editors and writers for *Spotlight*. If you would like to help out in GEDS but are not sure how much time you can commit, please write to Daire at [geds@geds.ch](mailto:geds@geds.ch) to discuss how you can get involved.**

# REVIEW OF 'WORKING GIRL' BY BÉIBHINN REGLI

by Christopher Bailey

In April, GEDS staged two one-act plays by home-grown playwrights: *Working Girl*, by Béibhinn Regli, and *A Business-Like Affair*, by Bill Lloyd. Audience members commented on how well these two original works complemented each other, and were glad to see a showcase being provided for our own writing talent. The events raised CHF 3,000 for the AIDS charity 'Aide Suisse contre le Sida' in memory of Sue Leather.

Geneva amateur theatre is not necessarily known for its risk-taking, neither in challenging subject matter nor in its use (or not) of original material.

This spring the Geneva English Drama Society challenged both assumptions with its production of Béibhinn Regli's *Working Girl*, a gamble that paid off with its appreciative audiences and taking home the prize for best original script at the annual FEATS (Festival of European Anglophone Theatrical Societies) in Brussels this year.

Regli's play takes place almost entirely in a sex shop and centres around a young woman Sophie, played by the author, who after getting a job working behind the counter at the shop, finds herself at the nexus of her community's



Masha Neznansky, Béibhinn Regli and Colin Paterson in *Working Girl*

attitudes to sex and gender relationships, as she herself tries to make sense of her own.

In her journey, Sophie not only deals with a panoply of townspeople (both the furtive customers, and the obligatory protestors are inordinately interested in the subject matter),

but also finds herself exploring her family's past and its hidden secrets.

Regli performs her role with understandable ease, given that she wrote it, but also with a knowing spunk and humour which never crosses the line into cliché or stereotype. Her budding

romantic relationship with Sean (Colin Paterson), whose performance captures the character's conventionality with wit, has its twists and turns but at no point feels false or manipulative. The strength of the play is the quirky world Regli creates then allows her characters

to exist in - without judgment, only a sense of play. When the plot twists, and it does so in some very entertaining and unpredictable ways, it has the feel of something inevitable to the characters, not part of a writer's plan.

Colman O'Criodain gives a warm and charming performance as the conflicted father, who has deep misgivings about his daughter taking a job in a sex establishment, but not for the reasons one might normally expect. Barry Gilbert Miguet plays the ambiguous shop owner with a secret past, whose secret longing for family stands in stark contrast to his choice of business.

But perhaps the most delicious aspect of the show are the eclectic and eccentric townspeople themselves, a small horde of them played by only two actors, Daire

O'Doherty and Masha Neznansky, who play each bit part as if they are the star of the show, which of course from their characters' point of view, they are.

The result is a rich if slightly tawdry tapestry which entertains, deceives and illuminates on many levels. I only hope with this success GEDS does more original material in the future, as clearly there is a welcome audience for this.

## Cast

Sean – Colin Paterson  
Sophie – Béibhinn Regli  
John – Colman O'Criodain  
Harry – Barry Gilbert Miguet  
Seamus/Jimmy/Declan/Fionn/Man at Window/Biddy No.1 – Daire O'Doherty  
Fionn's mother/Mrs Barry/Biddy No.2 – Masha Neznansky  
Directed by Malcolm Grant

# REVIEW OF 'A BUSINESS-LIKE AFFAIR' BY BILL LLOYD

by Béibhinn Regli

In this hilarious comedy of errors, Bill Lloyd achieves the seemingly impossible by injecting romance into the world of corporate communications and turning management speak into a language of love.

Ted Deary, human resources manager of FlexyTools, and his colleagues Tam Bagshot and Jack Scheele, are attending a business meeting with a potential partner at a London hotel during the Wimbledon tennis tournament. Upon arriving at the hotel, they discover that they have mistakenly been provided with a bedroom instead of a meeting room, the first in a series of unfortunate misunderstandings and mishaps around which the story revolves. Unable to correct the error due to the chaos caused by the many tennis fans currently occupying the hotel, they stoically resolve to make the best of a bad situation.

Things quickly go from bad to worse, however, when they discover that the representative they are about

to meet with is none other than Ted's ex-fiancée, Natasha Stewart. Ted and Natasha ended their engagement two days before the wedding over an argument about crispy noodles in a Chinese restaurant and haven't spoken since. Ted begins to panic at the thought of an uncomfortable reunion under such incongruous circumstances, so he and Tam decide that he should hide in a closet until they can find a way to sneak him out of the building.

But things do not go according to plan and Ted somehow manages to lock himself inside the closet until the end of the play. Natasha discovers he is there and they end up holding crisis relationship talks through the closet door - punctuated by Natasha's highly entertaining and comically long-winded master class on the Chinese restaurant menu numbering system - before Ted finally escapes from the closet and into the arms of his darling Natasha, clinching an important deal for FlexyTools in the process.



Ana Veljkovic, Julian Finn and Joseph Gaylord

Robert Bartram delivers an excellent performance, perfectly balancing humour and poignancy, despite being in the unusual position of spending the majority of his time on stage hidden from view. Bartram's Ted is a slightly bumbling, ever-so-endearing and quintessentially British leading man, even during those times when the situation demands a slight quiver in his stiff upper lip. Ted may be head of human resources, but when it comes to romantic

relationships, he clearly needs all the help he can get. His colleague Jack Scheele (played with delightful eccentricity by Joseph Gaylord) proves to be an unexpected source of wisdom on the matter, and he engages Ted in a somewhat off-the-wall but somehow sensible discussion comparing relationships to bicycles with warning lights.

Natasha Stewart, played by Ana Veljkovic, is a consummate professional with a no-nonsense attitude and

a propensity to get bogged down in details; she visibly struggles to keep a cool head when faced with other people's ignorance and incompetence. However, beneath her veneer of cool professionalism there is warmth, humour, and a gentle, loving heart, and Veljkovic succeeds brilliantly in portraying this duality.

Julian Finn is a commanding and dignified presence on stage in the role of Tam Bagshot, the brains of the operation who is doing his best to mitigate

the mishaps brought about by bungling hotel staff and his employees' complicated personal lives. His flawless English accent deserves a special mention!

Finally, Randy Grodman and Anna-Lena Schluchter are a delight as the caricature-ish, over-amorous, tennis-loving French couple. They had English- and French-speakers alike in stitches with their exaggerated accents and mannerisms. Très drôle indeed!

This polished production certainly does justice to Bill Lloyd's wonderful writing, and is all the more impressive when one considers that this was also Lloyd's directing debut.

## Cast

Ted Deary – Robert Bartram  
Tam Bagshot – Julian Finn  
Jack Scheele – Joseph Gaylord  
Natasha Stewart – Ana Veljkovic  
Marcel Duprivet – Randy Grodman  
Charlotte Aumonier – Anna-Lena Schluchter  
Directed by Bill Lloyd

# NOTES FROM THE ROAD: GEDS GOES TO BRUSSELS

It was bright and early one Thursday morning in May when Viki Lazar and Daire O'Doherty set off from Geneva heading north in a hired van, carrying costumes and set and grease paint and protest placards and a large box of adult entertainment items (props for *Working Girl!*).

This year's Festival of European Anglophone Theatrical Societies (FEATS) was hosted in Brussels, and a GEDS team descended on the Belgian capital to enter a production of *Working Girl!*, an original play written by our very own Béibhinn Regli (see review on page 3, and a profile of Béibhinn on page 8).

Aside from the staging of plays competing in the festival, FEATS offers workshops and other meetings in the sidelines. Daire O'Doherty and Viki Lazar also flew the GEDS flag with an 'Introduction to Improv' session during the Friday Fringe – which by all accounts was slick, lively, and very well received.

Béibhinn's exciting award of Best Original Script – against



Clockwise from top left: *All set! Viki Lazar squeezes in the last items; On the road... Daire O'Doherty takes the wheel; Members of cast and crew in a pre-show GEDS pow-wow; The glitter and sparkle of FEATS!; Centre: A moment of celebration as the cast and crew enjoy Béibhinn's success*

four other competitors – was a great and fitting tribute to a very well written, funny play. And it is in fact the third time, no less, that a GEDS member has won this award. Charles Slovenski was recognised at FEATS in 2005 for *My Irish Pal*, and Neil-Jon Morphy in 2000 for *Moonlight on Water*. Who's next?!

Béibhinn Regli and Daire O'Doherty both got special honourable mentions from Bev Clark, this festival's GoDA accredited adjudicator, for their acting performances, while all performers received very positive comments.

The adjudicator's full report is highly complimentary and

speaks for itself. Here are a few pullout gems...

"This original script told us a delightful story with some really good characters. The dialogue was believable and funny yet also had pathos in parts and genuine tenderness. The characters were all charming and well drawn

and observed. We cared about the people and their relationships. A good piece of comedy writing, showing great potential. (...) Sophie was an enchanting and natural actress with a great deal of talent, being the writer as well. Lovely voice and charming persona. A good

performance; very believable. (...) Sean was a likeable character who we believed. Delivered the comedy well. Lovely dynamic between him and Sophie, which was natural. (...) Seamus/Jimmy/Fionn/Declan was an extremely funny actor with great timing and physicality. Good body language, facial expressions – each character slightly different but all very well observed. He really owned the stage. (...) Mrs Barry/woman was a strong actress – lovely cameos. Good change of character; very different. Liked the facial expressions. The comedy scenes with customers were really well played. (...) There was lovely interplay, and enjoyable performances. The whole ensemble were very natural and honest in their tone, and that's what gave this play its charm."

(Note – Sophie was Béibhinn Regli; Sean was Colin Paterson; Seamus/Jimmy/Fionn/Declan was Daire O'Doherty; Mrs Barry/woman was Masha Neznansky.)

# PLAYREADING CORNER

JUNE 25

## Garden Playreading of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*

The last playreading of this GEDS season is Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* on 25 June at 5pm (for a 5.30 start), arranged by Chris Bailey. This special summer event is taking place in David Lewis's garden at 22 Rue de Genève in Ferney-Voltaire (tel: +33 450 40 52 92) – see directions below. Bring your own picnics, rugs and chairs. This promises to be an entertaining and enjoyable gathering.

Chris Bailey says: "*Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare's classic tale of power politics and mob psychology is being presented by GEDS as a special end of the year garden staged reading. This particular interpretation of Shakespeare's text transposes the Roman Empire for an International



Technical Agency of the United Nations. With a multinational cast, and all the back room politicking any one working in large global organisations is bound to enjoy (and the Roman Empire was nothing if not a bureaucracy) this special GEDS production

speaks to our community and our times. Follow Brutus, Cassius, Antony, and of course Caesar herself, as they bargain, flatter, cajole, bully and speechify their way to the Director Generalship! No resemblance to any Geneva-based international

organisation should be implied or inferred. Come and enjoy the political mayhem! Have your UN ID ready and a drink in hand, and take your bets on who wins."

### Directions

Rue de Genève is part of

the road which goes through Ferney-Voltaire in a straight line from Geneva and the tunnel under the airport towards Gex.

By car, at the big roundabout after the douane coming from Geneva, take the exit marked "Centre Ville", with the Buffalo Grill on your left. That is Rue de Genève.

Number 22 is on the left of this road down a private gravel drive immediately after the third speed bump and opposite a public phone box. (Misleadingly, the number "22" is actually fixed to a grey house on the road, but number 22 is in fact the off-street house at the end of the gravel drive.) Please park in Rue de Genève or in the car park on the other side of the road (where the phone box is).

By bus from Geneva, take the F or Y and get off at the second bus stop after the tunnel and douane, that is to say "Brunette". Then cross the road, retrace steps towards the big roundabout and turn right into Rue de Genève.

## Next season's playreadings

The 2016–17 season's playreadings are taking place in a new venue for GEDS – Uptown Geneva, just behind Cornavin train station at 2 Rue de la Servette.

Twenty evenings have been booked there, 16 for playreadings (currently open for proposals) and four for digital streaming of live theatre.

We will still use the English Church Hall for social events, including one in September (watch this space!). There will be at least one playreading for newcomers to GEDS, and an evening of short plays.

Keep an eye on *GEDS* at a *Glance* for more details, and if you have an idea for a playreading for 2016–17 write to [Jan Auke Dijkstra](mailto:Jan.Auke.Dijkstra@geds.ch).

# REVIEW OF 'MY OLD LADY' BY ISRAEL HOROVITZ, A THEATRE SOMEONE PRODUCTION

by David Lewis



Annelies Breman and Gary Bird

**Theatre Someone is a small (but perfectly formed) group of drama enthusiasts, mostly GEDS members, who work under the slogan "Innovative Theatre in Interesting Places". Run by Sue and David Humphreys from their home in Divonne, the group has performed in galleries, cafes, bars, clubs, hotels, schools and universities in France, Switzerland and the UK – including at the Edinburgh Festival. Some of their productions have been original works – notably by the late Sue Leather, a founder member, collaborating on two occasions with Lesley Sherwood. Others have been modern classics, including Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me* (Frank McGuinness). Key features have always been high quality – writing and acting – and intimate theatre spaces. David Lewis reviews *My Old Lady* by Israel Horovitz, the latest successful production by this distinctive amateur group.**

The eponymous heroine is a 92-year-old Frenchwoman called Mathilde. Beautifully played by Annelies Breman, Mathilde lives with her 60-ish daughter Chloe (Lesley Sherwood) in a large apartment overlooking the Jardin du Luxembourg, Mathilde and Chloe are (or have been) teachers of English, which comes in handy when American Mathias (Gary Bird), a thrice-divorced failed writer who drinks too much, turns up in Paris to claim the flat.

Alas for Mathias, the flat he has inherited from his father is entailed to Mathilde until her death through the French system of *viager*. France's law on sitting tenants obliges him to pay Mathilde thousands of euros a month in charges until she dies. And as the play reminds us, even old ladies can live a long time. The world's oldest woman, Jeanne Calment, lived to the age of 122 – far longer than the solicitor who bought her home *en viager* in what he was sure would prove a shrewd investment.

But the meat of this three-handed play goes way beyond

an exploration of French real estate law. A moving backstory comes out in a series of scenes between each two of the three characters.

Initially hostile to Mathias, whom Mathilde has allowed to stay in one of the apartment's empty rooms, Chloe falls in love with him – and vice versa. Mathilde confides to Mathias that his father had been the love of her life, and that he, Mathias, had been named after her. Mathias reveals that his mother killed herself because of her husband's relationship with Mathilde. Chloe recalls how her mother used to abandon her for trysts with Mathias's father, and how she never felt truly loved by either of her parents.

We also come to realise that the lives of both Chloe and Mathias have been blighted by the adultery of their respective mother and father. Chloe has never married – although she has received two proposals. Mathias has been married three times, and he is honest enough to realise that the marriages failed because of his failings, not those of his wives.

Although Mathilde claims not to know the truth on this point – but can we believe that Mathilde has not seen any resemblances between Chloe and either her husband or lover? – we realise that Mathias and Chloe are probably half-brother and half-sister. And that their love is therefore incestuous.

The incest factor does not prove to be an obstacle, however, so there can be a happy ending of sorts. Not only will a union between Chloe and Mathias save Chloe's home for her after Mathilde's death, and solve Mathias' financial problems. We also feel that the relationship between the presumed half-siblings may heal the wounds caused by their parents' adultery. Mathias and Chloe may find salvation by – to quote the title of John Mortimer's memoir – "clinging to the wreckage".

This play is deeper and more thought-provoking than the opening scene leads an audience to expect. And it was so well acted by all three. Gary Bird had the lion's share of the lines, and delivered them all with

mastery and conviction. Lesley Sherwood was a bewitching and physical Chloe, her initial fierce hostility to Mathias melting to love after she reads a story he has written about the situation. And Annelies Breman, adding decades to her age without resorting to caricature, was the perfect old lady – sharp and witty and finally emotional when she learns that her lover's wife did not die of natural causes.

The 2014 film of this play starred Maggie Smith, Kristin Scott Thomas and Kevin Kline. With all respect to those fine actors, I took more pleasure from the performances of Annelies, Lesley and Gary. Congratulations to them, and to director Sue Humphreys, for playing so beautifully from the heart in an intimate theatrical space in Divonne.

Theatre Someone presented *My Old Lady* in the Emmanuel Church Hall, Geneva, on 20–21 May, and in the Salle Ausone of the Esplanade du Lac in Divonne on 24–26 May.

For more information about Theatre Someone: [www.theatresomeone.com](http://www.theatresomeone.com)

# 'CRIMES OF THE HEART' HAS BEEN CAST!

Our first production of the 2016–17 season will be *Crimes of the Heart* by Beth Henley, directed by Christopher Bailey. Performances will be on 27 September to 1 October, in special association with the Mission of the United States of America in Geneva at Theatre de l'Espérance in Eaux-Vives.

*Crimes of the Heart* is about three sisters who come together at a crossroads in each of their lives and the fireworks that happen when their lives collide. In the tradition of Harper Lee and Flannery O'Connor, this play set in the American South combines wry observation of unforgettable characters, dark humour, and moving drama in a brilliant work that won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama.



## Synopsis:

The sisters were abandoned by their father and then abandoned again when their mother hanged herself, along with her cat. The eldest sister, Lenny, has sacrificed her life to care for the grandfather who raised them. Her loneliness is deepened by her belief that she is undesirable because she cannot

Mississippi, their childhood home, because the youngest sister, Babe, has shot her husband and is facing trial. The sisters confront their pasts in ways that enable them to redefine their own identities as stronger, independent women.

## Cast list

Anita Beck as Babe Botrelle, the youngest sister  
Christina Conti as Chick Boyle, their first cousin  
Tamaam Nasser as Lenny Magrath, the eldest sister  
Paul Darrell McGuire as Doc Porter, Meg's old boyfriend  
Genna Meredith as Meg Magrath, the middle sister  
Jona Zeschke

as Barnette Lloyd, Babe's lawyer

The director, Christopher Bailey, will be using a unique rehearsal process which will involve a workshop-like



From the audition – above: Genna Louise Ingold as Meg, Tamaam Nasser as Lenny, Christina Conti as Chick; left: Anita Beck as Babe, Jona Zeschke as Barnette

atmosphere covering the fundamentals of Meisner Technique and Stanislavski Method. As a special benefit to society members, the cast has agreed to allow a limited number of observers to

audit the early rehearsals in June and July if they would like to learn more about the techniques and watch them in action. Please contact [Christopher Bailey](#) for more information or to reserve one

of the limited spots.

We are also looking for help with props and backstage crew. Please contact Christopher Bailey for more information or to volunteer. Thank you!



# INTERVIEW WITH BÉIBHINN REGLI

Theatre translator, actor, writer and erstwhile GEDS committee member Béibhinn Regli talks to *Spotlight* over coffee and cheesecake...

## **Béibhinn! Lovely to talk with you. So what's your story in a nutshell?**

I come from Ireland, mostly. Born in Oxford, I lived in Dublin for the first ten years of my life before moving to County Clare in the west with my family, and at 18 I went back to Dublin for university. I studied French and English literature and spent a year in Geneva on the Erasmus programme in 2008–09. It so happens that that's how I met fellow GEDS member, Daire O'Doherty, and we've both ended up living in Geneva again now! I moved back myself in 2011 to do my Master's in Translation, focusing on literature including theatre, along with finance and law. I live in Lancy with my Swiss husband, Nathan, and our rescue dogs, Tiny and Tweedy.

## **Why theatre translation?**

I love the idea of introducing otherwise unknown works to new audiences. I enjoy creative work that has constraints – staying true to the spirit of the text and the



meaning, while respecting the confines of style, era, and sociocultural context, as well as the creative constraints of translating songs, poems, wordplay, intertextuality and anything else a playwright has integrated in their work. Subtitling adds an extra dimension of constraint, as audiences can only read a certain amount in the time it takes the actors to say their lines, and you must equally allow them time to soak up the acting and not get too distracted by reading – so

translations need to focus on the essence, without losing subtleties and nuances.

After my Bachelor's degree in literature I worked for an airline for a year, and then decided to retrain with a Masters in Translation. After various in-house positions – from a bank to an automobile association! – I now focus on what I love most, theatre translation. I've done some work with Théâtre de Carouge, and recently finished working on the 'Rencontre du Théâtre Suisse' festival

here in Geneva. This involved translating a range of quite different contemporary Swiss plays and operating subtitles during live productions, which gave me a wonderful connection to the writers and performers alike.

## **Is there a risk to translation quality from apps and digital tools? Or do they enhance the art?**

I would say it depends on the tool. Sometimes digital translation is helpful, for a quick and approximate fix, but there is a lot of hit and miss. These tools usually work by matching parallel texts sourced on the internet, very often by search engines – but the margin of error can be great, and of course technology lacks contextual sensitivity. This can help people appreciate the value of actual human translators, especially in literary translation which relies on emotional, cultural, social, political, temporal, and geographical understanding and awareness. Digital translation is no good with subtext, connotations or

degrees of nuance. But there are very helpful translation memories out there that help you save time if you do a lot of repetitive work. And online dictionaries have really improved in quality.

## **As Spotlight readers will most likely know by now, you are also an award-winning playwright! Congratulations! How did that come about?**

I was so chuffed to win Best Original Script at FEATS (Festival of European Anglophone Theatrical Societies) in Brussels this year for my play, *Working Girl*. I am immensely grateful to my fellow cast and crew who helped bring it to life. It is nerve-wracking to put your work out in front of a bunch of strangers like that – you feel quite vulnerable.

I wrote my first "play" when I was 11 years old, and got the kids from our neighbourhood to be my theatre company. I hand-copied everyone's script. It was a story about two competing local shops (I have a thing about shops it would

seem), with lots of intrigue and conflict – but they all made up in the end. Fortunately no copies of that script remain! I'm sure it was cringeworthy.

My inspiration for *Working Girl* came from my own experience of trying to find work as a student in post-Celtic Tiger Dublin. I saw a job advertised in the window of a sex shop on my bus route, and while I didn't apply for it, I did seriously consider it and I remember wondering how friends, family and people in my family's small town in the west of Ireland would react if I did. That got me thinking about various comic scenarios involving a young woman working in a sex shop. The central love story in *Working Girl* evolved as I was writing – one day I saw it all clearly and the story just fell into place. I suppose in the back of my mind I was very aware of the referendum on marriage equality that was due to take place in Ireland in May of that year, and the issue of LGBT rights in Ireland was playing on my mind as I was writing.

# INTERVIEW WITH BEIBHINN REGLI

## How was it to act in your own play?

I definitely couldn't have done it without a director, to provide an objective viewpoint. Malcolm helped me a lot. When I was writing the script I had to keep an overview of the whole story, think about each character in detail, and work carefully to shape them all into natural and believable individuals.

So I only got under the skin of Sophie properly when I started rehearsing the part. I didn't even initially want to be involved as an actor – I attended the auditions as assistant director and just happened to read in for someone.

It was only after I read in at the audition that I realised how much I would enjoy playing Sophie, so I was excited to be offered the part! I was so impressed with how each actor embodied their role (or roles) so completely. I feel lucky to have had such a talented group perform my writing and we had a lot of fun together.

## Any plans to publish *Working Girl*?

Possibly! A few people have asked me that, including the FEATS adjudicator. I had been planning to offer it to the drama society of my university in Dublin, which is where I really first got involved in theatre. They stage a freshers' production in the autumn, where new students get to perform together regardless of experience. I'd be very happy if they chose *Working Girl* for that event. Further than that, who knows!



*(Ed: Please publish! Working Girl is a sharp, witty, interesting, provocative, zeitgeist-tapping, highly entertaining play... and we'll all be so proud to say we know you! :-)* And please do keep writing.)

## You were also recognised for your acting prowess with a Special Mention at FEATS. Which do you prefer, writing or acting?

I wouldn't call it prowess, haha! I love both, for different reasons. With performing there is such a buzz and a rush from the immediacy of it; a kind of instant gratification. Writing, meanwhile, is all about reflection and taking the long view, and it's a pretty special feeling when an idea you've been working on for ages falls together.

## Geneva theatre-goers have had the pleasure of seeing you play roles as diverse as Rose in *Dancing at Lughnasa* and Phoebe in *As You Like It*. What has been your favourite role ever?

I would actually say Sophie in *Working Girl*! I guess it is pretty rare to get a chance to play a role you've created yourself. While I love playing characters like Rose and Phoebe – characters that are so different from my own – I poured a lot of myself into Sophie when I was writing her, and I found her skin easy and natural to live in.

## So what's next for you?

I hope to continue acting, writing and translating for the theatre as much as possible! I do have an idea for a new play, but it feels like there's so much more pressure now. Hardly anyone knew I was writing *Working Girl* at the time, so I was entirely relaxed and able to go at my own pace. But it was also helpful to have the focus of the GEDS playreading last year, to motivate me to finalise the first draft of the script.

## How can GEDS better publicise our productions?

When I was at university we used to do flashmob type



presentations in public, that we called lecture addresses – basically showing up five minutes before a lecture or presentation to perform an excerpt from a forthcoming play, and hand out flyers. It would be fun for GEDS casts to do this around Geneva where we know our target audiences might hang out,

if those places agree to let us – cafés like Boréal, bars like the Grütli or lakeside café terraces, on the street in town, in cultural centres, or maybe outdoor events like Ciné Transat. It's worth a try!

## In three words, what does theatre mean to you?

Being completely alive.

## GEDS at the Globe

by Neil-Jon Morphy

Did you know that, in 1996, GEDS sponsored a flagstone in the Globe Theatre courtyard? They even made an exception for us as the inscription is longer than they normally allowed.

If you are visiting London this summer, it's a great experience to see a production at the Globe. Our flagstone is not too difficult to find. If you exit from the groundlings entrance and head towards the exhibition building, it is right in front of the door.

If you are having a problem finding it, speak to the Friends of the Globe in the theatre lobby



and they will help you find it. It is interesting to see how many celebrities also sponsored stones.

## Renegade Saints

This extremely funny Geneva-based comedy improv group is hosting their last show of the season on Thursday 23 June at Mr Pickwick's pub on Rue de Lausanne. The show starts at 7:30pm and the CHF 10 entrance ticket includes a drink from the bar.

## Live theatre transmissions in English at Balaxert

Top professional theatre productions are being screened live to the Pathé Balaxert cinema in Geneva on standalone dates at 20:00 over the coming months, as follows:

7 July – *One Man, Two Guvnors* (transmitted from the

National Theatre in London) starring James Corden  
28 September – *Cymbeline* (Royal Shakespeare Company, Stratford-upon-Avon)

12 October – *King Lear* (Royal Shakespeare Company, Stratford-upon-Avon)

For more details see [www.pathe.ch/fr/pathelive/theater](http://www.pathe.ch/fr/pathelive/theater)

## GEDS workshops

The GEDS workshop programme has been extremely popular, with six workshops this year and enthusiasm for more. Topics this season covered include improvisation for actors, voice, and character development.

The general GEDS orientation evening for new members was also very popular and likely to be repeated. Suggestions received from members for more training, meanwhile, include stage movement, stage combat, more acting and improv, vocal production, scene studies, and more.

Chris Bailey, workshops coordinator, will be happy to receive any ideas for workshops – and any volunteers to lead them – email [christophertomlinbailey@hotmail.com](mailto:christophertomlinbailey@hotmail.com).

## Geneva's Got Talent

Geneva's Got Talent was an explosive success and exceeded all expectations. Some 200 people attended, treated to a variety of acts performed by groups and individuals ranging from under-10s to ... a lot more than that. There was a convivial atmosphere and a lot of fun was had by all.

Gemma's five-Shakespeare-extracts-in-three-minutes one-woman-show earned her the comment from adjudicator Pam Walsh that "she made an excellent ambassador for GEDS". The enormous amount of work put in by Tamaam, as stage manager, with her team of GEDS stalwarts was also very much appreciated.

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