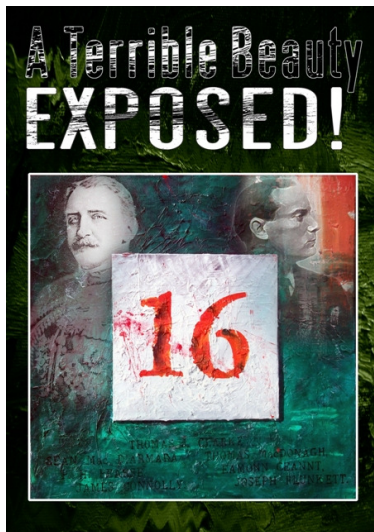


A Terrible Beauty — Exposed!

The Trial of General Sir John Maxwell and Pádraig Pearse



Always remember in your heart those three things:
whence you come, who you are and what shall become of you.

Friar Michael of Kildare

Kildare Poems – Early 14th Century

*Dedicated to
Colette, Eve Róisín, Jack and Rachel Corrigan,
and all the children of Kildare who will preserve our past in their
future.*

My mother Kathleen, brother Paschal

and

*to all who lost their lives and sacrificed so much in the 1916
Rising.*

A Terrible Beauty — Exposed!

The Trial of General Sir John Maxwell and Pádraig Pearse

A One Act Play

by

Mario Corrigan

Published by Kildare Decade of Commemorations Committee

www.kildare2016.ie



*Kildare Decade of Commemorations
@cilldara2016*

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COVER IMAGE

Front Cover: Maxwell and Pearse by Graham Coffey

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A Terrible Beauty Exposed!
The Trial of General Sir John Maxwell and Pádraig
Pearse.

Mario Corrigan

Background

A Terrible Beauty Exposed! is a play written by Mario Corrigan, Kildare Library and Arts Service and Kildare Decade of Commemorations Committee, to introduce the audience to the contentious issues surrounding the Rising in a different way; to encourage them to interpret or re-interpret the Rising and examine why it happened, how it happened and the impact it had not just on the nation's history but the nation's psyche. The audience become jurors in an imagined trial of General Sir John Maxwell and Pádraig Pearse, President of the newly proclaimed, Provisional Government of the Irish Republic.

Characters

The two chief characters are General Sir John Maxwell who was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in Ireland during the Rising and Pádraig Pearse, or rather the ghost of Pearse, for by the time Maxwell visits the Seminary in Maynooth where the trial takes place, Pearse, has been executed. By the end of the play the trial develops into a slogging match between the two as they are hauled over the coals by the Judge and members of the press. Some well-known and other more obscure events of the Rising are introduced to keep things interesting.

The idea of the play was to focus on schools and young people and it was designed to make them think, by exploring the issues and characters in-depth. Initially, it was

developed around the writings and speeches of the protagonists and 60% of the dialogue remains based on the historic character's own words. A storyline was developed to link events and people; to provide continuity, but keep it flowing and in consequence new dialogue had to be created.

There are some generic characters like Tommy Atkins, the Shawlie women, the Volunteer, the Priest, but the other characters are based on real people: Maxwell, Pearse, John Redmond, James Connolly, Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, Kate Foster and Nurse Elizabeth O'Farrell. Even the three soldiers are based on real characters: Christopher Power (59) from Athy; John Naylor husband of Margaret, and Paddy Byrne of Summerhill in Dublin were members of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers; Irishmen in the British army who were all killed at Hulluch in World War I.

Locations

Introduced by a 1916 tour guide, we move quickly through a city in rebellion, outside the G.P.O. and Moore Street to the courts martial and executions.

General Maxwell visited Maynooth in 1916 to enforce his will on the clergy and it seemed an ideal place for a bunch of rowdy, republican seminarians to put him on trial. Pearse had been a barrister in his earlier life and defended Domhnall Ua Buachalla, of Maynooth, in one of his only cases. It seemed fitting to resurrect him to prosecute the British General who had ordered the executions. The tables are turned as the ghost of Pearse is also put on trial. Some moving scenes unfold within the courtroom as Margaret Pearse and Hanna Sheehy Skeffington are called as witnesses; we are transported to North King Street and Glasnevin Cemetery, as other witnesses are called,

expanding the story to change the pace and introduce new locations.

The Rising cannot be understood or explored without coming to terms with the dichotomy of Irishmen fighting as soldiers in the British army and also as rebels against British rule. And so we find ourselves in a dug out in No-Man's Land as a raiding party tries to make its way back to their own lines. In the week of the Rising, at Hulluch in Northern France, over 500 Irishmen died in gas attacks. The tragedy of the Naylor family provides another dimension to the story, as Margaret, wife of John, was killed in the Rising on the same day as her husband was killed in France, leaving three orphaned girls.

The final scene returns to the courtroom for a classic summing up scene and closing arguments. Once again this is based on actual dialogue and the writings and testimony of the historical characters. To create tension, two newspaper reporters are allowed cross examine Maxwell and Pearse, pressuring both to explain their decisions and answer for their crimes. The final verdict is delivered not by the judge but by the audience who must decide who is guilty, or maybe more correctly, who can be held more accountable.

Ultimately, it is hoped that schools might perform the play or even sections of the play for their own enjoyment in their school.

Cast of Characters:

GENERAL SIR JOHN MAXWELL (a Senior Officer; Military Governor of Ireland)

PÁDRAIG PEARSE (a ghost)

NARRATOR (a tour guide of 1916 Dublin)

JUDGE

A VOICE (Clerk – Priest – Volunteer)

JOHN REDMOND (older leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party)

JAMES CONNOLLY (Socialist Leader and head of Irish Citizen's Army; older)

VOLUNTEER (young volunteer in the G.P.O.)

NURSE ELIZABETH O'FARRELL (31 year old Nurse in G.P.O.)

ROBERT DILLON (65, husband)

ELLEN DILLON (60, wife)

MARYDILLON (25, daughter).

BRIDGET KANE (young girl killed in North King St.)

SEAN MAC DIARMADA (young signatory of the Proclamation)

OFFICER (British officer in charge of Firing Squad; late forties)

MARGARET PEARSE (59 year old mother of executed Pádraig and Willie)

HANNA SHEEHY SKEFFINGTON (39 year old widow, suffragette, nationalist)

CATHERINE 'KATE' FOSTER (young grieving Dublin mother)

TOMMY ATKINS (British Private soldier in his forties)

CIVILIAN (Dubliner in his fifties)

GRAVEDIGGER (Dublin labouring man in his forties or fifties)

GRANDFATHER (old man – grandfather of baby Seán Foster)

CHRISTY POWER (59 year old Private in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers)

PATSY BYRNE (young Private in Royal Dublin Fusiliers)

JOHN RDF NAYLOR (middle aged private in Royal Dublin Fusiliers)

MARGARET NAYLOR (Dublin mother of 3 girls, 35 years old)

SHAWLIE WOMAN 1 (working class Dublin woman in her thirties)

SHAWLIE WOMAN 2 (working class Dublin woman in her fifties)

THE IRISH TIMES (Irish journalist in their forties)

THE DAILY SKETCH (English journalist in their forties)

Locations:

A One Act Play

Scene One — Dublin in Rebellion, outside the G.P.O. and Moore Street to the courts martial and executions.

Scene Two — A makeshift courtroom in a hall in Maynooth seminary. Scenes in North King Street and Glasnevin Cemetery.

Scene Three — A dug out in No Man's Land in Hulluch in Northern France during WWI.

Scene Four — Summing up and closing arguments in the court room.

Acknowledgements:

A terrible Beauty Exposed! was the brainchild of Mario Corrigan. It was agreed upon by Mario Corrigan, James Durney, Marian Higgins and Caroline Farrell in late 2015, but really only came together by the end of February 2016 and rehearsals began in March. It was performed for the first time in the Riverbank Arts Centre, Newbridge Co. Kildare, from 6 to 8 April 2016. A resource play was designed for schools to explore the Easter Rising and the issues involved in directing a play to encourage schools to adapt or perform the play themselves.

Thanks to Kildare County Council; Kildare Decade of Commemorations Committee; Alex Rosiak, Damien Dollard and Riverbank Arts Centre; Kildare Library and Arts Services; Marian Higgins, Co. Librarian; Lucina Russell, Co. Arts Officer; Bridget Loughlin, Co. Heritage Officer; James Durney, Historian in Residence and genealogist Karel Kiely; Caroline Farrell; Gonz Photography and Eugene Donovan of Donovan Printing; Graham Coffey for the superb artwork.

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Scene One

Dublin, Easter 1916 as the rebellion is about to erupt. The Narrator takes us on a journey with all the gusto of a tour guide to hurriedly explain how it came to this.

Set is completely black curtains all around.

NARRATOR: Welcome, welcome, welcome to the city of the welcomes – Céad Míle Fáilte Rómhat – A Hundred Thousand Welcomes to you. One hundred years ago Ireland was shaken to the core by a six day rebellion on the streets of Dublin. Today you become part of the story of the 1916 Rising. – We’re not going to focus on the historic facts or the buildings and locations – but on the people! To understand the rebellion, we’ll have to experience the rebellion.

It is 1916 and the decision is taken by a small select group of men to effect a rising at Easter. Ireland is part of the British Empire and Ireland’s sons are fighting for the Empire in France, Belgium and the Middle East as well as on the high seas. They fight not just for King and Country but for the promise of their own government – for Home Rule. At home, squads of Irish Volunteers train incessantly up and down the country to defend Ireland as the Ulster Volunteers have done in the north. At Woodenbridge in Wicklow John Redmond and the Irish Parliamentary Party called upon the Irish Volunteers to fight for the Empire.

JOHN REDMOND: This war is undertaken in the defence of the highest principles of religion and morality and right, and it would be a disgrace for ever to our country and a reproach to her manhood and a denial of the lessons of

her history if young Ireland confined their efforts to remaining at home to defend the shores of Ireland from an unlikely invasion, and to shrinking from the duty of proving on the field of battle that gallantry and courage which has distinguished our race all through its history.

NARRATOR: Redmond and his party represent, the political majority in Ireland who believe they have won for the Irish people the constitutional independence they craved – under the Rule of the English King, subservient to Westminster and part of the Empire, but free nonetheless to govern themselves. The issue of supporting the war effort splits the movement – the majority choose to fight for Home Rule and in support of John Redmond and the Irish Parliamentary Party.

JOHN REDMOND: The interests of Ireland – of the whole of Ireland – are at stake in this war. I say to you, therefore, “Go on drilling and make yourself efficient for the Work, and then account yourselves as men, not only for Ireland itself, but wherever the fighting line extends, in defence of right, of freedom, and religion in this war”.

NARRATOR: The issue of supporting the war effort splits the movement – the majority choose to fight for Home Rule and in support of John Redmond and the Irish Parliamentary Party. A smaller group of Irish Volunteers pledged allegiance to Ireland alone, supported by members of Cumann na mBan and Fianna Éireann. Within the ranks of the Volunteers, sworn members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood worked toward a free and independent Ireland, taken by force if necessary. James Connolly and his Irish Citizen Army joined the ranks of these would be rebels and

Connolly taken into the secret council's confidence – for Connolly has threatened to rise alone if needs be.

Republican ideals and Irish Nationalism are being shouted from the rooftops as army recruiters ply their wares on over crowded dank dirty streets among the tenements – all vying for the ear of the public.

PEARSE (off): They think that they have pacified Ireland. They think that they have purchased half of us and intimidated the other half. They think that they have foreseen everything, think that they have provided against everything; but the fools, the fools, the fools! – they have left us our Fenian dead, and, while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace.

NARRATOR: And suddenly it is upon us – all the secret plans and preparations are come to pass. It is Easter. British officers and Dublin Society enjoy the races at Fairyhouse; it is a bank holiday Monday and the capital is relatively quiet. The Volunteers have split again as orders are issued and countermanded and issued again. Less than 1500 men and women turn out and occupy key buildings in the city. The public does not understand that they are doing this on their behalf!

PEARSE: IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN: In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.

NARRATOR: At the GPO, a hurriedly printed Proclamation in his hands, Pádraig H. Pearse, shouts at

everyone who would listen and no one in particular. But the time for talk and speeches is over.

Rebellion begins around Pearse

PEARSE: We declare the right of the people of Ireland to ... be sovereign and indefeasible. The long usurpation of that right by a foreign people and government has not extinguished the right, nor can it ever be extinguished except by the destruction of the Irish people. ... we pledge our lives and the lives of our comrades-in-arms to the cause of its freedom ...

The Irish Republic is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman ...

NARRATOR: An Irish Republic has been proclaimed and force is met with greater force. The British Empire is forced to protect its back door as the threat of German aid is proven to be a reality. An unsuspecting city is torn asunder.

Rebellion Film: Grainy Newsreel; Noise – Gunfire – Shouts – Artillery – Mayhem – War; Rebellion can be pre-filmed – aged to look like old newsreel; black and white: sound effects

PEARSE: We place the cause of the Irish Republic under the protection of the Most High God. Whose blessing we invoke upon our arms, and we pray that no one who serves that cause will dishonour it by cowardice, inhumanity, or rapine. In this supreme hour the Irish nation must, by its valour and discipline and by the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves for the common good, prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called.

Signed on Behalf of the Provisional Government.
Thomas J. Clarke, Sean Mac Diarmada, Thomas
MacDonagh, P. H. Pearse, Éamonn Ceannt, James
Connolly, Joseph Plunkett.

*For the length of the Proclamation the theatre is the
battlefront – figures rush to and fro – carrying guns – a
pram is pushed amid the chaos – soldiers – Volunteers –
all caught up in the whirlwind of chaos – strobe lights –
old news clips – no screen the set is the screen and the
black absorbs the newsreel and lighting – explosions –
staccato of a machine gun and endless sniper fire and
shouts and cheers and taunts –*

VOICES (off): God Save Ireland – God Save the King
– Down with the Empire – Damn the Rebels – Damn the
Sinn Féiners – Watch it there Tommy Boy – my boy, my
Boy – they've shot my Boy – they've killed my infant son –
Murderers – Traitors – Villains – Break Down the walls –
Treat any man in civilian clothes as a rebel – Take No
Prisoners

British Officer on opposite side of stage

NARRATOR: By the end of the week command of the
British forces has passed to General Sir John Maxwell,
Military Governor who is determined to end the conflict and
make an example of the rebels.

MAXWELL: The most vigorous measures will be
taken by me to stop the loss of life and damage to property
which certain misguided persons are causing in their armed
resistance to the law. If necessary I shall not hesitate to

destroy any buildings within any area occupied by the rebels and I warn all persons within the area specified below, and now surrounded by HM troops, forthwith to leave such area.
Your Servant Sir, General John Maxwell

VOICES (off): *Simultaneously singing of The Soldier's Song, in English and God Save the King*

Soldiers are we,	God save our gracious King!
whose lives are pledged to Ireland,	Long live our noble King!
Some have come	God save the King!
from a land beyond the wave,	Send him victorious,
Sworn to be free,	Happy and glorious,
no more our ancient sireland,	Long to reign over us:
Shall shelter the despot or the slave.	God save the King!
Tonight we man the "bearna baoil",	God save our gracious King!
In Erin's cause, come woe or weal,	Long live our noble King!
'Mid cannon's roar and rifles' peal,	God save the King!
We'll chant a soldier's song	God save the King!

NARRATOR: As the GPO burned and became untenable the men escaped and fought their way through the back streets to a makeshift HQ established in Moore Lane. Densely over crowded tenements were not designed for street fighting. Men on the run burrow through the walls of houses to avoid being shot down in the streets. Terrified civilians, men, women and children, are now on the front line; atrocity and tragedy difficult to tell apart as innocents are caught up in the fighting and leaders lose control of their men. The question is not so much about individual blame but responsibility and it is the leaders who must be held responsible for the actions of their men.

NURSE ELIZABETH O'FARRELL: Would that it were up to us nurses to finish this? And what they did expect? Our rebels who dared to rise for their own end?

How did they think it would turn out when they chose to rise and fight their battles on the streets of Dublin amid their very own people whom they claim they are fighting for? And the military who at first stood back to lob artillery shells in the direction of suspected rebel positions and then forced men to find their way through burned out streets and broken barricades, where the enemy was dressed as civilians might be; ordered into private homes with crowbars and wrecking tools to root out the rebels from their hiding places – how did these great leaders of men expect it to turn out, other than a bloody mess?

The men from the GPO on the run – huddled together in Moore Lane – Connolly on a stretcher and left leg clearly strapped – being tended by a Nurse – who then leaves and a young Volunteer have a conversation – stage right. Pearse just off set stage left, immersed in his own thoughts, scribbling

CONNOLLY: All right there young man?

VOLUNTEER: Mr Connolly. Eh ... Sir ... eh
Commandant General Connolly Sir.

CONNOLLY: Don't call me or indeed anyone Sir.
After this week you owe nothing to any man, least of all me.

VOLUNTEER: What's to become of us now, Sir?

CONNOLLY: When the fighting stops and stop it will, you put down that gun and empty your pockets. Leave me and keep amongst the men, away from the officers you hear, amongst the men. They will look after you. Make sure you are unarmed and do whatever the English tell you.

VOLUNTEER: Take orders from the English?

CONNOLLY: For now. Just do as I say. Look. We went out to break the connection between this country and the British Empire; to establish an Irish Republic. Our call was noble. Irishmen and women ready to die to achieve that. As long as that remains the case, the cause of Irish freedom is safe. We have done our best to be honourable and to fight with dignity.

VOLUNTEER: But the dead Sir. I've seen things.

CONNOLLY: We had no choice lad. Terrible things happen in war. Slavery cannot be tolerated. Slavery of a people to the wealthy and the tyrannical ...

VOLUNTEER: But the boy... a baby... a bullet through the pram... it was ours... I think... it was m...

CONNOLLY: They are responsible. Do you hear me boy? We have shed blood and we have caused blood to be shed – it breaks my heart to see this beloved city pulled down stone by stone, but pull it down we must if we are to build it up again in our own manner.

VOLUNTEER: I can't stop thinking about it.

CONNOLLY: It is done. Nothing on earth can change what has been done. Do what I tell you and live. Live a life that is full, for you, and for all of us. Even for that child in the pram. No bravery now, keep with the men (*catching him before he goes*). This week testifies to our belief that the British Government has no right in Ireland, never had

any right in Ireland, and never can have any right in Ireland. I hope that what we have done will make it impossible for a whole new generation of Irishmen and women to tolerate their continued governance of our affairs.

I thank God that I have lived to see the day when Irish men and Irish women and young people like you, were ready to affirm that truth. Go on now, live and tell everyone that we did our best to make our country free,

Connolly looks up and sees the young Volunteer struggling to light a match with the butt of a cigarette between his lips

CONNOLLY: Put out that match....

Before he has a chance to say more there is a sharp crack and a splatter of blood across Connolly's stretcher. The young Volunteer falls victim to a snipers bullet, targeted in the dark by a lighted match. Connolly is clearly distraught. Nurse re-enters

NURSE O'FARRELL: Oh dear God another one to mourn for. No need for Nurses as they pick us off one by one.

CONNOLLY: ENOUGH!

The light moves to Pearse stage left who has been scribbling on scraps of paper with a pencil, we can only guess at what he does but he is concentrating and clearly in the midst of a great personal struggle. He is brought back to reality with the sound of the death of the Volunteer as he falls and his weapon crashes to the

ground. Again silence for a moment as Pearse and Connolly catch each others eyes

PEARSE AND CONNOLLY: ENOUGH!!

A sound amongst the silence, Pearse looks up to see three figures emerge into the open stage from stage left; from the Flag pub in Moore Street which is on fire. There is the father, Robert (65), Ellen his wife (60) and Mary (25). In the crouched father's hand, his arm extended, is a white flag which he is waving profusely

VOICE: Look at the Flag pub – there is someone coming out – it's ablaze – Dear God it's 'auld Bob Dillon and the wife Nellie – oh and pretty young Mary too – no no – go back – it's deadly out there.

SECOND VOICE: Thank God look he has a white flag – pray for them boys – pray for them – Run Bob – Run

A loud stuttering of a machine gun and father turned completely around and drops; mother bowled over as if cut in half and the daughter blown almost backward, hands in the air. All three dead in an instant

Absolute horror on Pearse's face. In time he looks for Connolly.

PEARSE AND CONNOLLY: ENOUGH!!

Three Volunteers – hats important to distinguish them from British soldiers – enter stage left behind PEARSE moving down stage.

VOLUNTEER: Watch out for British Tommies. Kick the door in. Quick. (*One kicks out into the wings; once, twice then the sound of a door breaking. Another Volunteer shoots without warning. Bridget Mckane, 15 years of age, is shot in the head and falls out dead onto the stage. Volunteers are distraught and hurriedly depart.*) Oh God!

MRS. MCKANE (off): (*a mother's scream*) Bridget – NOOOOOO – What have they done – murderers – she's only fifteen

PEARSE: (*Absolute horror on Pearse's face*) And the boy Mullen, nine years of age, yesterday ... shot in the neck. It is not only the English, we are killing our own people!

NURSE O'FARRELL: For God's sake. Give me the order. A white flag and let me go. Enough of this.

In time PEARSE looks for CONNOLLY

PEARSE AND CONNOLLY: ALRIGHT, ENOUGH!!

Pearse and Connolly and the Volunteers, some British soldiers and the entire cast from the wings and backstage – a crescendo

PEARSE AND CONNOLLY: ENOUGH!!

Sharp black out.

A White flag appears carried by Nurse O'Farrell across the stage. Surrender. A green flag torn down and ground into the dust. The Rebellion in Dublin is over.

Court Martial. Figure in Uniform with no cap, proof reading a letter he is about to send to the Prime Minister.

MAXWELL: Dear Prime Minister. This man was a member of the Irish Bar and Principal of a college for boys at Rathfarnham. He was active in the Volunteer movement from its inception, and joined the Sinn Féin or Irish Volunteers when that body became a separate organisation. He was a member of the Central Council of the Irish Volunteers.

He was one of the signatories to the Proclamation of Irish Independence which contains the following passage "... and fully supported ... by gallant allies in Europe ..." While we are fighting against the Germans in Europe these rebels were requesting their aid. Would they allow the Kaiser open up a second front to our rear? Their very collusion is a betrayal of all the Irishmen in service and a betrayal of this country. It is abhorrent Sir. Traitors all and there is only one punishment to be meted out to traitors. This man Pearse was "Commandant General of the Army of the Irish Republic" and "President of the Provisional Government".

A lone figure right of stage; on trial

PEARSE: From my earliest days I have regarded the connection between Ireland and Great Britain as the curse of the Irish nation, and felt convinced that while it lasted, this country could never be free or happy.

When I was a child of ten I went down on my bare knees by my bedside one night and promised God that I should devote my life to an effort to free my country. I have kept that promise.

We seem to have lost. We have not lost. To refuse to fight would have been to lose; to fight is to win. We have kept faith with the past, and handed on a tradition to the future...

You cannot conquer Ireland. You cannot extinguish the Irish passion for freedom. If our deed has not been sufficient to win freedom, then our children will win it by a better deed.

MAXWELL: I am going to punish the offenders, the first of them are to be shot tomorrow morning. I am going to ensure that there will be no treason whispered in Ireland for a hundred years.

It is dark. A post is seen centre rear with a lone figure tied to it, head hung low, a single white paper square over the spot where the heart is; X marks the spot. Hands bound behind his back, blindfolded. A Capuchin Priest, Fr. Aloysius Travers, stands to the left with Rosary, mouthing prayers

The figure stirs

SEÁN MACDIARMADA: I have been tried by court-martial and sentenced to be shot; to die the death of a soldier. The cause for which I die has been re-baptised during the past week by the blood of as good men as ever trod God's earth and should I not feel justly proud to be numbered amongst them.

Drum. A soldier – Tommy Atkins – enters from the back of the theatre and marches down through the audience. (General Maxwell could be the firing Squad).

OFFICER: Left, right – left, right. Halt – Atten–shun
– Firing Party – Take Positions

SEÁN MACDIARMADA: I, Seán MacDiarmada, before paying the penalty of death for my love of Ireland, and abhorrence of her slavery, desire to make known to all my fellow–countrymen that I die, as I have lived, bearing no malice to any man, and in perfect peace with Almighty God. I meet death for Ireland’s cause as I have worked for the same cause all my life.

OFFICER: Take Aim – Fire

Shots ring out; the figure slumps. Blood flows from the paper heart. The officer steps forward, un-holsters his revolver and delivers the coup de grace. The body jumps slightly. Lights go down at rear and all is black

OFFICER: (facing the audience – guns high to the ceiling) Firing Party – about turn

Screened list of those executed

*May 3rd 1916 Kilmainham Gaol
Thomas Clarke – Pádraig Pearse – Thomas MacDonagh*

OFFICER: Take Aim – Fire

May 4th 1916 Kilmainham Gaol
Joseph Plunkett – Edward Daly – Michael O’Hanrahan –
Willie Pearse

OFFICER: Take Aim – Fire

May 5th 1916 Kilmainham Gaol
John MacBride

OFFICER: Take Aim – Fire

May 8th 1916 Kilmainham Gaol
Éamonn Ceannt – Michael Mallin – Sean Heuston – Con
Colbert

OFFICER: Take Aim – Fire

May 9th 1916 Cork Detention Barracks
Thomas Kent

OFFICER: Take Aim – Fire

May 12th 1916 Kilmainham Gaol
Sean MacDiarmada – James Connolly

OFFICER: Firing Party – about turn

Squad facing the rear of the stage – guns trained n a
slumped James Connolly tied to a chair

OFFICER: Take Aim – Fire

Connolly slumps – blood flows from the paper heart – the officer steps forward – unholsters revolver and delivers the coup de grace – the body jumps slightly

Lights go down at rear and all is black

Scene Two

Makeshift courtroom in Maynooth seminary. There is a large podium/bench centre stage and rear; lone desk and chair to the front left; lone desk and chair to the front right

NARRATOR: The 1916 Rising lasted just six days but it changed the course of Irish history forever. It was not popular, for the rebels had no mandate from the people and few if any understood it. Most saw it as a betrayal of their men fighting in the war.

General Sir John Maxwell was sent to Ireland to quash the Rebellion, which he did quite quickly and brutally. Desirous of order he wrote strongly to the Irish Catholic Bishops condemning the activities of individual priests who blatantly supported the republicans. He personally visited the seminary at Maynooth where it was reported that men who fought in the GPO had received absolution.

It's hard to understand the true complexity of the issues behind the Rising and the British response to it. But if we had to choose between Maxwell who put on trial, and executed 15 Irishmen in addition to the death of innocent civilians by soldiers under his command. And Pearse who orchestrated the Rebellion, which resulted in the decimation of the nation's capital city and the death of some 250 civilians. If you had to judge them for their actions, based solely on the evidence presented, how would you vote? How might they represent themselves in a court of law?

VOICES (off): *A Nation Once Again, (couple of lines sung).*

A man bundled onto stage by unknown group and forced to sit at the table. A confused, outraged, beleaguered looking General John Maxwell (left of stage), his hat and swagger stick on the table

MAXWELL: This is an outrage. I am an officer in his Majesty's Army and Military Governor of this blasted country and will not be treated in such a fashion. I will burn this damned receptacle of rebellion to the ground.

He makes a move to go but is forced back into the chair and held for a few moments until he accepts his fate; the seminarians step back into the darkness

CLERK (off): All Rise. This Court is now in session; Judge Veritas presiding

The Judge enters and takes a seat at the bench

CLERK (cont'd off): Your Honour, today being the 21 May 1916, Rhetoric Hall, Royal College Maynooth; the case before the court today is that of the trial of General Sir John Maxwell, Military Governor of Ireland, for the murder of 15 Irishmen in May and an unverified number of civilians by forces under his command during the recent outbreak in Dublin.

MAXWELL: Murder, I am no murderer. This is a sham, an outrage. I demand you release me at once. I am General Sir John Maxwell, Military Governor of Ireland with plenary powers under martial law and the Defence of the Realm Act, and as such am the hand of the King in Ireland.

JUDGE: (*Banging gavel off the bench*) You, Sir are in my courtroom and are here in the capacity of defendant. You will be tried according to the rule of law and you will behave or be removed. I have no problem with the facts being presented with you in absentia but I suggest you prepare to defend yourself. This here Sir (pointing to the audience) is the jury – your fate is in their hands.

MAXWELL: But I tell...

JUDGE: You sir will tell me nothing. Sit down or be removed. This trial WILL go ahead with or without you. You have the right to cross examine any witnesses produced

Maxwell sits down

JUDGE: Ladies and gentlemen of the Jury – you have been called here to decide upon a very public case, based solely on the evidence presented. You will forget your personal likes or dislikes, loyalties or allegiances and will decide on the merit of the case as presented. Do you understand?

(*Bangs gavel*) Do you understand? Good. Prosecutor state your case and call your first witness.

Prosecutor Lawyer/Barrister enters the court – to table right – gown and wig – face hidden from Jury – state files – DORA under arm placed on table – slowly looks up – a powdered white face – maybe small trickle of blood at lip but certainly in eyes – paper heart with bullet holes and bloodstains – Volunteer Uniform under gown – It is the Ghost of Pádraig Pearse

PEARSE: My Lord (*coughs; blood on white handkerchief*) I am not clear how I came to be here but it appears that I have been given an opportunity to perform one last duty. I do not ask for revenge or retribution but for a fair hearing and for justice for those men dragged out to the Stonebreakers yard in Kilmainham Jail and murdered by the might of the British Empire. I outlined my case at my own court martial,

(Reads from court martial) "My sole object in surrendering unconditionally was to save the slaughter of the civil population and to save the lives of our followers who had been led into this thing by us. I was prepared to take the consequences of my act, but I would have liked my followers to receive an amnesty."

I admitted to having organised men to fight against Britain and having opened negotiations with Germany. I offered them my life but he (*pointing at Maxwell*) was not content until he had his fill of Irish blood (*boos and hisses from the court*).

MAXWELL: We Sir are at war with Germany! And this dead thing (*indicating Pearse*) would have them as allies. And I would ask the *court* is it/he the prosecutor or plaintiff?

JUDGE: Silence in the court or I shall have you all removed. Disruptions will not be tolerated. Is that clear? Continue Mr. Pearse but maybe with a little less melodrama – call your witness.

PEARSE: Considering the press coverage and the fact that the events mentioned are so fresh in people's minds I will defer to your wishes and call my first witness. Margaret Brady

Older lady enters

PEARSE: You are Margaret Brady

Mgt PEARSE: Yes in a former life. Pádraig...is it really you? Praise be to God and all his angels that I might have a moment with you once more.

Sorry Pádraig. I am, Mrs Margaret Pearse, sorry...

MAXWELL: But that is his mother

JUDGE: It may well be your mother for all I care. Be quiet. The witness will take the stand.

PEARSE: You have been called to give evidence against the defendant. How do you know him?

Mgt PEARSE: As a MURDERER! The General who murdered my two sons in cold blood.

MAXWELL: Objection

JUDGE: Ah...I see you are getting the hang of things!

MAXWELL: It is ridiculous to bring a distraught widow to give evidence based on maternal affection and hearsay. Her sons were rebels; they were tried as chief orchestrators of a traitorous rebellion, found guilty by

military tribunal and dealt with as traitors are dealt with in Dublin, the trenches or anywhere else.

Mgt PEARSE: You tied my boys to a post and had some of your big brave men shoot at a paper target over their loving hearts. I told them not to do anything rash but I understand that their honour left them no choice. They did not believe in your Empire – how could they be traitors to it? I will never accept your court's decision. To do so would be to dishonour them. The ghosts of my sons would haunt me.

MAXWELL: What did they expect when they rose in rebellion to the crown, forging links with Germany, coaxing prisoners of war to fight against their King? What did they expect? – That we would slap them on the back or give into their demands and watch the Empire crumble as others followed in their wake. Should we have allowed the Kaiser to create a German potentate on British soil? Ridiculous! And all for nothing. A city in ruins and so many lives lost. For nothing!

Mgt PEARSE: Nothing! How dare you? You took their lives and now you would deny them their place in Irish history. Both of them? I could never have chosen between them but Willie, why Willie, my boy, enamoured with his brother and the causes they dreamed up together. You would not shoot a woman; you would not shoot an American. Oh but you took Willie too – a dangerous thing to leave one brother alive. '*Bloody*' Maxwell – you wanted to make us pay and so you did. You took a poor woman's two sons. And even in death you denied me their bodies for a Christian burial.

PEARSE: Thank you Mrs Pearse. (*she steps down*) I now call on Hanna Sheehy Skeffington.

MAXWELL: Oh another widow... and what of the widows your Volunteers made for Dublin? Would that I had a clutch of hens to choose from as you do. This is a farce.

PEARSE: A farce Sir! If I were to parade Kathleen Clarke, Grace Gifford–Plunkett and all the widows and mothers of Ireland, would you not face them? Have you no sense of guilt or responsibility? Did you not see how your actions would be perceived? Were you not warned by your own Prime Minister, The House of Commons, and the Press; still you continued, determined to make a dreadful example of the rebels. Instead of putting the fear of God into Ireland you renewed their hatred of England.

John Dillon, Member of the Irish Parliamentary Party said all their work for the cause of Home Rule would be undone, that you were, quote, “washing out their life’s work in a sea of blood”. But you continued. Your botched series of executions did more harm than any Englishman in the House could possibly fathom

MAXWELL: I did my duty and ended the Rebellion within days of my arrival.

PEARSE: Even the unionist journalist, Warren B Wells warned you. He was not worried about the dragged out executions, the sentences of penal servitude or the deportations from the point of view of their justice, or even of their expediency, he tried to make the British public understand their effect on the Irish public which read of them and I quote, ‘with something of the feeling of helplessness

rage with which one would watch a stream of blood dripping from under a closed door.”

JUDGE: Enough of this Mr. Pearse! If we could at least call witnesses to give testimony, rather than confining ourselves to making speeches.

Hanna Sheehy Skeffington has taken the stand

PEARSE: You are Hanna Sheehy Skeffington are you not?

HANNA SHEEHY SKEFFINGTON: I am.

PEARSE: And can you describe your family’s involvement in the events of 1916 and in particular the involvement of your murdered husband?

MAXWELL: Objection!

PEARSE: Withdrawn. Your *late* husband.

MAXWELL: Outrageous!

HANNA SHEEHY SKEFFINGTON: My brother, Eugene, and my sister’s husband, Professor Tom Kettle are both in service with the Dublin Fusiliers. My father, as a Member of Parliament for South Meath, supported England in the war. My husband was a pacifist, a man who always ranged himself on the side of the weak against the strong whether the struggle was one of class, sex or race domination

He was sympathetic to the idea of an Irish Republic, but he was distinctly opposed to the use of military methods. He was arrested by men under Sir John Maxwell's command while he was trying to prevent looting.

PEARSE: He was arrested by Captain Bowen-Colthurst, sadly a man of Irish birth, with sixteen years' service in the British army, and stationed in Portobello Barracks was he not? And can you tell us what happened following his arrest?

HANNA SHEEHY SKEFFINGTON: He forced my husband out with a raiding party. J. J. Coady, a boy of 17, was shot dead. Alderman James Kelly's shop was sacked and the shopman and two journalists arrested. The next morning Colthurst had my husband, and the two, journalists executed in the Barracks yard.

All sorts of rumours reached me until eventually the father of the murdered boy Coady told me he had seen my husband's body in the barracks' mortuary. The British authorities prevented my ever seeing my husband's body, and when I attempted to have an inquest held, refused permission

MAXWELL: This is a case under review by the military authorities and as such has nothing to do with civil courts...

JUDGE: Quiet.....you shall have your turn.

PEARSE: As you frantically searched for news of your murder.... dead husband, did anything happen to you personally?

HANNA SHEEHY SKEFFINGTON: I was putting my little boy to bed when soldiers lined up around the house. A volley was fired through the front door and window without warning, or any demand having been made on us to open the door.

They broke in the windows with their rifle butts and swarmed all over the house. Colthurst was in command of a squad of about 40 men with fixed bayonets.

He ordered us to the front room; to be shot if we stirred. For three hours they searched the house while we stood motionless, closely guarded by men with drawn bayonets. The house was sacked, everything of value being removed. A second raid was made 1 May.

PEARSE: And are you aware of any attempt made by the British Authorities to address these terrible wrongs?

HANNAH SHEEHY SKEFFINGTON: Major Sir Francis Vane, a British Officer from Dublin made persistent efforts to have Colthurst put under arrest; but he was relieved of his command and his position given to Colthurst. Do you believe it – the murderer promoted!

Sir Francis Vane went to Dublin Castle but they refused to act. He crossed to London and met with Lord Kitchener who ordered Colthurst's arrest. But the order was disregarded by General Maxwell.

MAXWELL: We were at war with these rebels and I do not have to answer....

HANNA SHEEHY SKEFFINGTON: Sir Francis Vane was dismissed from the service by General Maxwell deprived of his rank and refused a hearing at the court martial. Without my knowledge my husband's body was exhumed and reburied in Glasnevin. Originally it had been put in a sack and buried in the barracks' yard.

PEARSE: In a sack in the barrack's yard? And did you yourself take any action?

HANNA SHEEHY SKEFFINGTON: I managed to get to John Dillon. He read my statement in the House of Commons while describing the horror he had seen in Dublin. That speech compelled Prime Minister Asquith to cross at once to Ireland. He found every word of my statement true; other horrors, the North Kings Street atrocity, for instance, surpassing mine. Yet the military shielded the murderers and hushed all enquiries. No enquiry was permitted as to the atrocities committed by British troops in Dublin.

MAXWELL: Does anyone suppose that I had any object in shielding officers and soldiers, if there be such, who had been guilty of such un-gentlemanlike, such inhuman, conduct ?

HANNA SHEEHY SKEFFINGTON: Pray tell then how the army forced local bricklayers at bayonet point to remove the broken bricks and bullets and repair the wall where my husband and the others were shot. Why go to these lengths if it was not murder?

MAXWELL: I assure you Madame, I have no knowledge of that whatsoever!

HANNA SHEEHY SKEFFINGTON: But you found Colthurst insane. All the witnesses were military. I was not allowed to present evidence. My counsel, Mr. Healy, declared that, 'Never since the trial of Christ was there a greater travesty of justice.' Let no one imagine that my husband's case was isolated. It was part of an organised programme. There is evidence, of almost fifty other murders of unarmed civilians and disarmed prisoners some of them boys and some women committed by British soldiers during Easter Week. The South Staffords murdered 15 men in North King Street, and buried them in the cellars of their houses. In the British official reports two such murders are admitted.

MAXWELL: (*delivered a little off-centre to the audience rather than to the court*) Possibly unfortunate incidents may have occurred. It did not always follow that where shots were fired from a particular house the inmates were always necessarily guilty, but how were the soldiers to discriminate? They saw their comrades killed beside them and it is even possible that under the horrors of this peculiar attack some of them saw red. That is the inevitable consequence of a rebellion of this kind. It could not be suppressed by velvet-glove methods.

HANNA SHEEHY SKEFFINGTON: My Husband was a pacifist – his sole concern to save the lives of innocents caught up in this conflict and your men executed him. It is a delusion to suppose that martial law confers upon an officer the right to take human life. They murdered him in cold blood and denied him the comfort of family or Christian burial.

MAXWELL: (*to the Judge*) Again Sir, I must protest. This is a case under review by the military authorities and as such has nothing to do with civil courts or indeed whatever type of trumped-up tribunal you imagine this to be. There can be no more on this matter. The actions of the Officer in question are to be further investigated. He had served in Africa when quite young and then in Tibet and India but is clearly suffering the effects of the war and had been invalided home after the Battle of Mons. Indeed he had lost a younger brother in March 1915. He was quite unwell!

PEARSE: He sir is no more madder than I (*pause*), yet your court 'found' him insane! But of course by declaring him 'insane' he cannot stand trial for murder. It is a sham and you, GENERAL are as much responsible as if you pulled the trigger yourself. Call Tommy Atkins.

JUDGE: Thank you Mrs Skeffington. You are excused. My sympathy for your loss and for the trials you have laboured under these last few weeks. Mr. Pearse let's move this along.

'Tommy' the quintessential British soldier: Tommy Atkins, South Staffordshires, North King Street 27–29 April 1916 – in uniform with his rifle – takes the Stand

PEARSE: Tommy. In your own words describe your part in the massacre of civilians in North King Street

MAXWELL: Your Honour, we have not even arrived at his testimony and yet it has been decided upon that there was a 'massacre'. This matter too has been investigated and will be further investigated by the proper military authorities.

PEARSE: In your own words Private Atkins – tell us of the action in North King Street.

Shift to a cellar in North King Street – an English Private and an Irish civilian

TOMMY ATKINS: (*Head in his hands; re-living it*)
Keep down me boys. Keep low. Keep out of the street. The crowbar, break the door in.

CIVILIAN: Friends!

TOMMY ATKINS: No – No friends here Paddy. Just us and you!

Sounds of Gunfire

TOMMY ATKINS: They were all the same. No uniform. As soon as we broke in the doors they hid behind their women. They threw their rifles in the backyards or over walls. We knew it was them.

God Almighty, we had lost 11 dead and twenty eight wounded and almost two days had only come 150 yards. That idiot who had commanded the bayonet charge against the Sinn Féiner barricade, he copped one and I'm glad of it.

The boys themselves worked it out. We were ordered to root them out of the houses, but by now we realised they were tunnelling through the houses to stay out of the streets and we had to do the same. And so we broke in the doors and broke down the walls, but our blood was up and we had a lust for it.

The Foresters had suffered badly on the way in from the ship. We too had now been bloodied badly and they would hide no more behind the skirts of their women. And well, if a few of them were not with the rebels, what was the harm of it? They should have left. It would serve as a warning and teach the bloody Paddies what it meant to take on the South Staffs. If we had been left to it we would have done it from the beginning. Bloody Officers! Then again it was General Lowe who had ordered us to treat them all as the enemy; not to take prisoners. We were glad to oblige.

Bit of a rough job now though. This fella. Just don't feel right. I pity him. Now, now Paddy. Don't you be worrying. What say you make you and me a cuppa tea?

CIVILIAN: Tea! An you going to kill me? What's the point in that Tommy? Oh sweet mother of Jesus have mercy. I'm no rebel. I work here in this pub for Mrs O'Rourke and she and I have been hiding out in this cellar through it all. Look take it. It's nothing much but it's all I have

Hands over penknife and some cash, takes off ring

CIVILIAN (cont'd): Take it – just leave me be. I'll stay down here; they'll be none the wiser.

Tommy takes knife, cash and ring without hesitation and pockets them

TOMMY ATKINS: Aye Paddy, maybe I'll do that but there's Orders Paddy and you got to follow orders. What say we have a brew up first? I'm parched.

Civilian hands over tea; has been constantly on the fire

TOMMY ATKINS: Ah Paddy you're a gent. You know just a couple of days ago we thought we were on our way to beat your friends the Germans in France. Imagine our surprise when we find everyone speaking English and we're in bloody Dublin and some of the Paddies have gone and started a rebellion while more of them are fighting with us in France. You could've knocked me down with a feather.

Civilian is silent. Afraid; noises off--set to simulate soldiers coming

TOMMY ATKINS: (*points rifle at him*) Look Paddy. Nothing personal, I feel sorry for you really but there's little to be done about it now. You and the rest of your lot done it in for us and now we gotta have a bang at you and all.

CIVILIAN: But I'm no rebel Tommy. I haven't been out there. Leave me down here and no one will know.

TOMMY: But I will. You see I have my orders from the Top, Paddy and beyond that there are the boys – those up there and them out there who lay dead in the streets. It's not just the orders Paddy; certainly not the Officers or the Regiment or the King, but the boys who you're with Paddy. And you see you're not with us. Paddies, Bosches, Abduls, all the one to me, bucko. You kill us. We kill you. Damned if I care that much anymore. All them boys up above us? They're as innocent as lambs. Maybe that's why they're losing it with the civilians, they don't know any better. Had a go at quite a few of you lot today. I reckon there were ten

or twelve of you shot or cut up with the old tin openers. Me I was over there already. France, back at the start with the Expeditionary Force. Seen quite a few sights, I don't mind telling ya. You look after the boys with you an' they look after you. Saved my bacon one or twice I tell ya.

CIVILIAN: Damn you all. Bloody Volunteers AND Tommies! I wanted none of this. Just a job and a wage. Damn you all.

Seems to be moving towards Atkins

TOMMY ATKINS: (*bringing rifle to bear*) Whoa now Paddy. Let's keep our heads here now. Why don't you run up stairs and see if you can make it out of here. Quick before I change my mind.

Civilian darts off set. Atkins raises the rifle and fires – killing him – shouts to his friends above

Bagged another one here me boys. A right rebel this one (**laughing**) Coming up.

He looks down at the body of Paddy

You were alright Paddy but it was never going to work out any other way. Orders is Orders – any man we found is a rebel and a traitor – no prisoners – no exceptions!

Lights fade – back in the court room

PEARSE: You said 'Orders from the top,' my good man. I take it that means Colonel Taylor, your commander?

TOMMY ATKINS: Yes, Sir, I suppose so Sir though he and I were not exactly on speaking terms Sir. The Colonel says General Lowe says that the rebels were outside the law and were traitors and were to be treated as such. That's what our CO said and the sergeant, he says the same, and the corporal said the hell with them all!

MAXWELL: I protest. Neither I nor any other senior British Officer would order the execution or murder of civilians. All persons within the area then surrounded by HM troops were ordered to leave that area. Those who remained, the men at least, had to be assumed to be rebels or in league with them.

But Let us even up the score in this charade. Call Catherine Foster – see how proud your prosecutor is. Let him stare into the eyes of a grieving mother and justify his 'Rebellion'. You Sinn Féiners tell the story of a Lancer shooting dead a child when it was a rebel bullet that did the damage. It appears you also can twist the truth to suit your own ends!

PEARSE: I have no reason to call Mrs Foster at this time your honour.

JUDGE: (*To Pearse*) Oh but you do, you do. In my courtroom we give liberties and should this 'bloody' General have to answer for his actions then you Mr. Pearse, Mr. President of the Provisional Government, will answer for yours. (*To Maxwell*) I will allow it Sir – this is getting interesting.

Catherine Foster *takes the stand.*

MAXWELL: For the sake of the court and the Jury Madam can you state your name and what brings you here today.

KATE FOSTER: I am Kate Foster of Olaf Road, Arbour Hill. My darling son Seán was just two years and eight months old when he was shot in his pram and I have come to face the men responsible. On the day my boy was killed my brother Joe was playing soldiers with the Volunteers – out building barricades on the streets.

My husband John had been a solidier – off with his pals to go and kill the Germans – drink fuelled ideas and pub politics. It's not like we'd ever even met a German, but suddenly they knew all about them. Well he knows all about them now – killed not a year ago in France. He should have been at home.

The talk was that it was a bullet gone wild from a Lancer that pierced my baby's skull, but it was one of them rebels what started it all. Two of them were in the door of the Fr. Matthew Hall firing at the Lancers, just as we ran in for cover. One of them, a young fella barely outta short trousers, shot my baby Seán and it was but for the Grace of God that they didn't shoot his brother Ted as well.

Sweet little Ted, I can hardly look at him as if he was somehow to blame as if it were wrong for him to live and Seán to die. Every time I look in his sweet little face my heart breaks with the sight of my husband John and of his darling brother Seán. It's like a mirror.

And to think on another day it could have been a bullet from my brother's gun that took the life of his own nephew. How

can I look him in the eyes and understand the misery that he represents for me?

(Loudly, accusingly to Pearse) What right did you have in bringing an army onto the streets of Dublin? You knew that the British army would react and that the ordinary people would suffer the consequences!

PEARSE: I apologise deeply for your loss, ma'am. It was why I decided to surrender; the hardship and loss of civilian life was my sole reason to surrender. As for bringing an army onto the streets of Dublin, the British have had an army of occupation on our streets for centuries.

KATE FOSTER: An' you and yours were to do what. Bring us freedom. Were our men not doing just that in France? Give us peace – you have killed our babies, burned our city and stabbed our men at the front in the backs. Damn you and your secret ways. Damn you and your politics and lies. Damn you all to Hell.

MAXWELL: I sympathise too ma'am, for your sad loss. And for your dear husband, too, who died fighting gallantly in the service of his King.

KATE FOSTER: **(Stressed)** My husband died fighting for me and the children, not for your King. The only reason he was in the army was he was called up from the reserve. He had a decent job in Guinness's but the extra money in the Reserve kept us going with a little of life's luxuries. Before he was killed I had the separation allowance and the allowance from Guinnesses – the first time I had ever had money in my hand in my life that was my own and not to be given up to some man. I've none o' that now, with my

husband in a cold grave in France, Oh John I married you to have a better life than I was reared to and to bring up our children in a happy home and we were doing it too. A good job and two beautiful boys all blown to hell now by the army and the damn rebels. Damn you all, you men and your wars and your guns with my husband in a cold grave in France. And my baby in another in Glasnevin and me imprisoned in my own house, kept from my baby's funeral – in case I caused a scene. Let me tell you – no mother's tears ever killed a mother's baby in her pram.

What did I want to do that was so terrible – carry him out of this world, say a prayer by his graveside that you had my own father lock me into the house. He carried the coffin to Glasnevin – is that all my boy was worth – my father, a priest and the gravedigger?

Fade to funeral – dim lighting

6.30 a.m. Glasnevin – the funeral of Seán Francis Foster – Man enters with shovels and lays down a purpose built grave about four feet high – should be in two or three parts for easy assembly – gravedigger

GRAVEDIGGER: (talks to himself – as usual – cold – tired) Madness, getting up to bury some child at 7 in the morning. Did ye ever hear the likes of it? I could have had another hour in the bed. A rebellion they say – suppose I'll be busy? Dreadful business when small children are being shot in the streets. I heard it was the rebels who shot him – in his pram! Bloody rebels – who the hell do they think they are anyways. Shure weren't we alright the way we

were and the Home Rule coming as soon as we bate the Germans?

Bloody Germans... Bloody English, ... bloody rebels and now bloody streets and bloodied children. Wrong I tell ye. All wrong. And me up in the middle of the night to secretly bury somebody's baby! And the only one allowed is his grandfather. Not even the child's mother. An shure what harm could this young fella ever have done anyone. I suppose they're afraid the rebels would have a march and a big speech like they did with the auld Fenian, O'Donovan Rossa though I don't suppose the rebels would care much for a chisler not out of his pram.

Enter grandfather – forlorn – retrieves rosary from coat pocket – removes hat

GRANDFATHER: We'll be back as soon as we can – your Mam wanted to be here but they wouldn't let her Seán – she is beside herself but don't worry, we'll be back here soon. Remember – we love you boy – and always will. You brought joy to an old man – to us all and no doubt you'll bring joy to them up there. God I envy them your company.

Breaking down he hurries off with a hurried sign of the cross on himself

Love you

PRIEST (off): We are gathered here...to say farewell to baby John Francis Foster and to commit his soul into the hands of God.... In the Spirit of faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, let us raise our voices in song

Lights come down – SONG – DANNY BOY

The names of all 40 children or 250 civilians roll down the set – white writing on a black background. As they are displayed the priest continues inaudibly. Priest and grandfather clearly recite decade of the rosary – soft light on the grave

As the song finishes the gravedigger enters to get on with his job but unwilling to move the man and allows him his moment of grief

Grandfather turns to go and stops as if remembering something – he reaches inside his overcoat and produces a small torn Teddy Bear and a crumpled Lily he had forgotten to lay down. He places the Teddy at the head of the grave and sobbing, speaks

GRANDFATHER: Your Teddy Seán – to watch over you and keep you safe.

Blackout

Lights up – to courtroom. An unintelligible argument erupts between Pearse and Maxwell

MAXWELL: Now do you understand the error of your ways

PEARSE: Error? We wanted the freedom of Belgium, the freedom of Serbia – would you deny us that?

MAXWELL: Just as you denied your countrymen the right to choose their own destiny; not one imposed on them by a small band of militant fanatics.

KATE FOSTER: I put the blame on the pair of yez – You Commandant General Pearse and Yourself, Bloody John Maxwell!’ You should both be tied to a post and shot.

Who gave either of you the right? Will you give Seán Francis back to me? Will you give me back my darling boy? Or give back the father and mother you took from the Naylor girls? Mrs. Naylor mown down on Ringsend Bridge the same day her husband was gassed in France – what can you say to their three orphan girls? You should be ashamed of yourselves. Damn you both to hell.

Blackout

Scene Three

A scene in Northern France – No Man's Land – night time – three members of a Royal Dublin Fusiliers raiding party, who have heard of the Rising in Dublin

NARRATOR: And Kate Foster's husband wasn't alone in France – At the same time that Irishmen and women rose in rebellion against the crown in Dublin, Irishmen were fighting in the service of the crown on the Western Front; some 500 Irish soldiers lost their lives in gas attacks at Hulluch in France during Easter Week. As news from Ireland reached the Front, German soldiers taunted Irishmen in British regiments.

German Placard

*Irishmen!
Heavy uproar in Ireland.
English guns are firing
at your wives and children.*

Shots fired, grenades thrown, men cry out – flashes – Kamerad – Nein Nein – dies – silence – the men are in a shell hole, centre stage; full uniform, gas masks, rifles, helmets; one clearly older than the others

Constant boom at low volume; artillery barrage in the distance. Four men laughing – the youngest coughing a little

POWER: Naylor, Byrne...you all OK

NAYLOR, BYRNE: Yeah Power, OK

BYRNE: Ha – Did you see their faces – they never saw it coming.....pity the corporal didn't make it.

POWER: Pity indeed. He was a right cruel bastard. To hell with him.

BYRNE: (*coughing*) We did it though – didn't we Christy – we got it

The placard proudly displayed for all to see

POWER: Aye we did Patsy boy – that cough seems to be getting worse. Bloody gas. When we get back, you get to the medical officer and see about a trip to the aid station at the rear.

NAYLOR: And shure why did we do it anyways – what's the bloody point? Stuck in this hole in No Man's Land – for a bloody placard!

POWER: Honour, Naylor – that placard was an insult. We had to get it – For the Regiment – for The Dubs! This hole or that hole – it's all the bloody same – you stand up for the fellas around you – not King or country – us and the Regiment.

NAYLOR: But what of the boys at home an' guns being fired at our own people by other poor sods like us – the same army with which we're serving.

POWER: None of that now or you'll be facing a firing squad. Look. Those bastards at home are not you're

friends. We're here fighting for Ireland an' Home Rule and some crowd of cowardly back-stabbing traitors are trying to scuttle that and make fools of us.

NAYLOR: Just sayin' that's all. Seems a little wrong to me that we have Irishmen fighting at home for Ireland and here we are....

POWER: That's traitor's talk. They shoot deserters – make no bones about it. And remember this Johnnie boy if you were at home now visiting your wife and children they'd shoot you dead in the street. Enough I tell you or I will shoot you myself.

Silence, except for the sound of far off artillery. No Man's Land – night time. Power is on watch. Puts his helmet on top of his rifle and pushes it slightly up in the air as if to present a target for German snipers – nothing. He settles back and makes himself a little more comfortable. Just starting to drift off to sleep; Byrne wakes up screaming

BYRNE: Gas...gas – (*coughing*) dear God, it's coming – help me – someone help me with this thing – (*coughing* – **he is imagining trying to put on his gas mask**)

Power instantly jumps on him and puts his hand across his mouth

POWER: SSHH boy – sshh – it's only a dream – there's no gas – it was two days ago – you're OK – you got some – but you're OK – and sure when we get back you will be resting up with nurses all around and the best of food n' drink in one o' them hospitals in Paris or somewhere.

Byrne is still struggling and coughing behind Power's hand

POWER: SSSHH boy – keep it quiet now and calm down – we don't want old Fritzzy to know where we are.

Byrne starts to calm down and slowly Power lifts his hand to find blood there from Byrne's mouth – he quickly reaches inside Byrne's overcoat and tunic to find he has been shot – pulls back hand covered in blood

POWER: Ah Jesus. Why didn't you tell us Patsy boy – looks like they got one into you.

BYRNE: 'S nothin' Christy – just a scratch – it's the bloody throat and lungs that are killing me. (*Coughing violently – blood coming out of his mouth*) When we were training with the masks a few of us was dying for a smoke so we made a couple of small holes to push a fag through (*cough*) seems silly now.

POWER: Alright Patsy boy – settle down there now 'till I can get a look at ye.

He peels back the greatcoat and opens the tunic – undershirt is crimson. Power is worried but tries to play it down. He reaches for a medical kit and pulls out a field dressing and rips it open, pushing it inside the boys tunic

POWER: There now, good as new. Don't forget to tell them doctors I did that. Might get me a cushy job in the Aid Station with one of them nurses we were talking about.

BYRNE: That's a terrible (*coughing*) way to be talking Christy (*coughing*) and you married and all (*coughing*).

POWER: (*laughing*) Ha-ha. Lad when you've been married as long as I have you will start thinking about them nurses too. Nothing wrong with thinking – it's the doing that gets you into trouble. Although if my wan heard me talking that way she'd have it in for me – separation allowance or not.

Jaysus, in truth that's half the reason I came out here in the first place. I had enough of listening to her go on and on about working n' money – at least now she has something for her and the kids and I don't have to listen to her harping on. Nor does she and the kids have to keep outta my way when I have the drink on me. Now here take a sip of this and try and get a rest.

Hands him a small flask – poteen – Byrne's coughs even louder – Turns on his side and puts his helmet over his face and forehead. Muffled cough and silence

POWER: Ah Patsy boy (*he has seen death too many times*) – afraid you may not make it back to Naas me bucko. We should have been on leave, damn it. If it wasn't for those bloody Sinn Féiners All the leave cancelled so there would be no trouble among the men. Damn 'em all to hell we should have been out of it.

A scene in Northern France – Byrne still asleep. Constant boom at low volume – artillery barrage in the distance – getting close to dawn – little more light

POWER: For Christ's sake, do they ever stop?

NAYLOR: No, that's the bloody point of it, really isn't it.

POWER: And what the hell does that mean Naylor – that they can't let up for a minute or two – I mean don't they have to take a shit or something.

NAYLOR: Ha, suppose they do but they would have another one to take his place – all HANS on deck, don't you know.

Breaks the ice a little and they chuckle at this – Naylor starts humming a tune – Long Way to Tipperary

POWER: No not that damn Connaught Rangers song. I'm sick of it. Give us the old kit bag, Naylor?

NAYLOR: *(spoken; acted out with dramatic effect)*

Pack up your troubles in your old kit–bag,
And smile, smile, smile,
While you've a lucifer to light your fag,
Smile, boys, that's the style.

(they both sing very low)

What's the use of worrying?
It never was worth while, so
Pack up your troubles in your old kit–bag,
And smile, smile, smile.

POWER: OK OK keep it down – nothing like a good tune but let's not let the Bosche know where we are then.

You know I was with them once

NAYLOR: Who? The Germans?

POWER: No you idiot. The rebels.

NAYLOR: No. Tell. When, How?

POWER: Nothing recent, like – I worked the canals in the good times and turned out with the workers in Dublin in 1913 during the Lock-Out. Some right battles we had there as part of the Citizen's Army. I got a couple of bad beatings. But there were people starving while the big boys were eating their dinner in fancy hotels and houses. I gave up on all of it and promised myself I would never let my kids go through that.

No Man's Land – night time

NAYLOR: Can't believe that Christy – you always been up for the Regiment an' all – aren't those the boys that are out in Dublin.

POWER: Aye – some of them. I reckon the regular fellas were alright when I was with them but I didn't trust the ones leading it – Not Connolly Mind! He is a great man. The rest of them intellectuals, they were never gonna starve. It's easy writing out manifestos and speeches when you're going home to a full stomach. No. I had enough and worked me way back to Athy.

But then the boats went belly up. I joined the Volunteers in 1914 hoping some of the shop owners or farmers might give me a bit of work. Then I found there were loads of lads heading to the war from around Athy and as I had been 'in' before and knew the drill it was an easy decision. Even at my age, being fit an' all from the boats and having experience I had no troubles signing on. I wanted to get out of Athy and we needed the money that she and the kids would get because I was over here. Sure they said I would be home for Christmas – some joke!

NAYLOR: *(has the placard and is scratching at it)*
God Christy I never knew. Sorry to hear about the Rising then – must be hard.

POWER: You know – if I had still been there in the middle of it all, I expect I woulda been firing at the likes of you – the likes of us – and I can honestly say I have no more idea why, than I do why I am firing at them Germans over there. Maybe I envy that about the Dublin lads – maybe at least they were doing something for themselves.

Silence

Then again if I saw one of those little rebel bastards I would beat him senseless and toss him onto Fritzzy's barbed wire for a night or two.

How dare they? How could they do that to us? Christ we're here fighting for them – just doing our duty to come home – doing what we were told – to give us our own government. Are we not Irish too? Here – in the dirt and the squalor; with the rats and the lice; the smell of death; bodies mutilated

beyond belief; the screams and the dying; the gas and the artillery barrages and the fear.

An' through it allthe fellas next to you. You give your life for them and them for you and yet you get so bloody used to seeing them blown to bits that you try not to become attached....to the likes of Byrne over there. Poor sod.

Silence – sounds of scurrying and some squeaking

POWER AND NAYLOR: (*Naylor drops placard*)
RATS!

NAYLOR: From the way we came – the Hun trenches. Jaysus you know what that means?

POWER AND NAYLOR: GAS!

Sounds of the big guns seems to be getting closer now

NAYLOR: Wake Byrne – better get his mask on proper this time

POWER: No need Naylor. Too much gas already and he caught a bullet under the arm when we took the placard. He's gone

Silence

NAYLOR: Ah Jays... us! He's only seventeen...no not Patsy Boy – damn placard – damn Germans – Damn Rebels and their Rising!

Huge explosion and flash and the men are thrown to the ground

NAYLOR: (*unhinged*) Ah No...no ...no

POWER: Naylor! If the rats and shells are coming then the gas is already released and Fritz will be after. Get your mask on man!!

But Naylor is petrified and rocking back and forth, looking at Byrne's body; he is wrestled to the ground by Power who forces the gas mask on him – smoke creeping onto the stage – Power tries to get his own gas mask on but too late – coughing wheezing, clawing at his throat – blood from his eyes and mouth and ears and nose – he dies in agony

NAYLOR: (*through the gas mask– laboured breathing*) Ah Patsy Boy – The Pipes the Pipes are calling. I'm coming to you Patsy Boy.

He slowly starts taking off his mask – purposely sucking in a huge deep lung full of the dreaded, fatal gas – he has had enough. Picks up placard

NAYLOR: Bringing you home to my Maggie – home to Ringsend – I'm coming home to you Maggie – to you and the girls

Fade to black

A woman – Margaret Naylor seen rushing across the stage

NARRATOR: On that same day that her husband John was involved in the gas attack in Hulluch in France, Margaret Naylor was shot on Ringsend Bridge, as she hurried in search of bread for her three girls. Some accounts say the children were with her and they clawed at her lifeless body to no avail. No help could get near her for fear of snipers.

As she dies in Dublin we see John in France – her speech is addressed to him

MARGARET NAYLOR: Oh dear God, what have I done. John I'm so sorry. There wasn't a bit of food in the house. Oh God I can hear them crying. Stay back girls, I know you're scared but you just stay back. Maggie you're a big girl, you hold on to your sisters now and mind them. All we wanted was some bread. I thought the worst was over. I swear I thought the worst of it was over. I had to feed them. I should have left them behind but they're so young John, and the house might have been burned down by the time I got back.

You'll be alright John, Maggie is a good girl and she'll help you. Three girls to be raised, God knows you love them, but how will you manage. Shush now girls your daddy will be home to you and he'll keep you safe. They'll let you home now to look after them wont they John?

(To the girls) I know you're scared but keep back. I want to come to you and hold you, and make it all alright. But I can't move and when I try to tell you nothing comes out. Remember John I...

Fade to black

NAYLOR: *(has the placard and is scratching at it)*
The Pipes Maggie. The Pipes.... and down the auld
Ringsend....no gas there Maggie – safest place on earth –
Ah, home to yourself and my three beautiful girls – Maggie,
Kitty and Tessie. Home – can you hear me?

Home – a pot of tae on the table. Oh .. Maggie ... Love *(to
the air of Danny Boy)* – places placard against Byrne’s
body like a cross/grave marker

*He too dies in agony – Light once more on the Placard –
parts crossed out by Naylor – smoke/gas*

*“Irishmen!
~~Heavy uproar~~ in Ireland.
~~English guns~~
are firing
at your wives and children.”*

Fade and Blackout

Scene Four

Courtroom – summing up and closing arguments.

NARRATOR: Remember, all may change utterly, but not as quick as you might think. Men and women are arrested; leaders executed; suspects deported but still the war drags on and Irishmen continue to fight. Official British estimates record over 200,000 Irishmen fought in World War I with approximately 40,000 losing their lives. In the Rising, 138 members of the crown forces were killed. About 79 rebels and over 288 civilians died including 40 children. About 2,217 people were injured.

If you had to choose, who was right or who was wrong, how fair could you be? Do you think General Maxwell, Military Governor of Ireland with responsibility to end the rebellion and restore order was justified in his actions. Remember it was 1916 and the death penalty and deportation were tried and tested punishments available to the regular criminal authorities never mind military court martial?

And what of our friends the rebels? What of President Pádraig H. Pearse? What gave him and his colleagues the right to bring men and women onto the streets of Dublin and turn the heavily populated city into a battlefield? It is easy to have an opinion but if you were the jury in that court? If you had to choose who was wrong or right, based solely on the evidence presented? How would you choose?

A small crowd of two ‘Shawlie’ women have gathered outside the courtroom, noisy, all together

SHAWLIE 1: Open up them doors and let me in. Traitors. Back–stabbers. You and your German friends. How dare you!

SHAWLIE 2: Where’s my money? What am I supposed to do to feed my children? Bloody Rebels. Half the city is starving because of ye!

SHAWLIE 1: I’d show you a bloody rebellion soon enough. Murderers. Turncoats. Making war on your own people. Blasting them out of their homes

The court room – summing up

VOICE (off): All rise – This Court is now in session.

JUDGE: Let me make this easy for you both and for the jury. You shall both be allowed time to sum up and then the Jury will vote on your guilt or innocence in this tragic affair. Who shall be held accountable? Who is ultimately responsible in this dastardly business for the wanton death and destruction recently visited upon the streets of the capital city?

Defendants take your places – closing arguments. Mr. Pearse.

PEARSE: Let me make it clear. We rose but we did not rebel – we walked out onto *our* streets to assert the freedom that we were born with, but have been denied by our nearest neighbour for nigh on 750 years. You cannot conquer us. You cannot extinguish our passion for freedom. If what we have done has not been enough to win that freedom, then our legacy will be to awaken that passion in every man and

woman in Ireland and they Sir will rise and assert their rights and win the freedom that we hold dear. Not free merely, but Gaelic as well; not Gaelic merely, but free as well

JUDGE: Yes, yes, all very good Mr. Pearse and I can see how it might have a remarkable affect on a crowd of half–drunken Irishmen in Glasnevin or Bodenstown, but let us be a little more honest.

Let’s open this up. Maybe members of the Press might have a question or two

PEARSE: But, eh...

THE IRISH TIMES: Thank you your honour. The Irish Times. Can we play Devil's advocate for a moment? There are some things that don’t make sense to us. Please answer yes or no to the best of your ability – the time for speeches has passed, the time for answers has come. You claimed the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman and resolved to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation.

PEARSE: This is highly irregular, but yes.

THE IRISH TIMES: You say you wanted to assert the freedom of Irishmen?

PEARSE: Yes.

THE IRISH TIMES: You pledged your life and the lives of our comrades–in–arms to the cause of its freedom?

PEARSE: Yes. We did. The men who have led Ireland for twenty–five years have done evil, and they are bankrupt. They have nothing to propose to Ireland. Their utterances are no longer the utterances of men but the mumblings and the gibbering of lost souls.

THE IRISH TIMES: Did you or did you not expect a violent conflict?

PEARSE: Yes. Any man who in the name of Ireland accepts as a ‘final settlement’ anything less by one iota than separation from England is guilty of so immense an infidelity, so immense a crime against the Irish nation, that it were better for that man and indeed his country that he had not been born. We knew that separation could only come by force.

JUDGE: In the interest of clarity, we will dispense with the references to *We* as if you are the sole authority to speak for the Irish nation when it appears from your amazing lack of support outside of the city centre that you completely lacked that authority which you claimed for yourself as officer commanding and President of the Provisional Government. Continue.

THE IRISH TIMES: If you did expect violence and it appears you did, how did you intend to preserve the lives of ordinary citizens; the very people on whose behalf you proposed to give freedom, equality etc. etc.?

PEARSE: We ...

JUDGE: WE...??

PEARSE: We...I... I accepted we might make mistakes in the beginning and shoot the wrong people, but bloodshed is a cleansing and a sanctifying thing, and a nation which regards it as the final horror has lost its manhood. There are many things more horrible than bloodshed; and slavery is one of them. I discussed this matter with the other signatories of the Proclamation and while we prayed that innocent lives might not be affected we accepted there might be some casualties.

THE JUDGE: We accepted....we prayed! I'll bet that will be a comfort to the families who have lost loved ones – tell that to Kate Foster, the mother of the infant shot in the pram or to Maggie, Kitty and Tessie Naylor who lost a father in France and a mother in Ringsend on the same day. Might be some comfort to them!

THE DAILY SKETCH: Eh, Mr. Pearse, The Daily Sketch. There were over 2,000 civilians wounded and some 250 civilian fatalities including some 40 children dead – 40 children Mr. Pearse like those at your school in Rathfarnham – if the Unionists of Ulster were to announce a new government and went to your school and shot 40 of your students how would you feel – would you feel free? What was it you said in your own bloodied Proclamation about cherishing all the children of the nation equally? Would you feel equal – would it matter if they did it in the name of the dead generations?

And to top it all, if they were to do this Mr. Pearse and you were to find out that they had failed and that the school was in ruins and the boys still dead – how would you feel?

PEARSE: There were to be a limited amount, we ... I mean I ... I called a halt to stop the effusion of blood and the rise in civilian deaths.

THE DAILY SKETCH: You asked God's blessing and prayed that no one who served that cause would dishonour it by cowardice, inhumanity, or rapine. But, not only have you succeeded in destroying the centre of the city I put it to you that you are responsible for these civilian dead – you Sir – not the Empire and the army – you who called on the people of this land to sacrifice themselves for the common good – was this therefore not discussed, dare you claim it to be unpremeditated?

PEARSE: I accepted my role and offered my life.

JUDGE: How magnanimous of you –

THE IRISH TIMES: But surely you realised you would not win? Did your own men not believe that you would not win and yet you chose to go ahead anyway? You chose a Rising, knowing the cost would be counted in the lives of children and civilians. You risked your life, to become a martyr for Ireland but what of those innocent lives?

THE DAILY SKETCH: Mr. Pearse do you think the mothers and fathers of those children gave a damn for your life – or the parents of those young English men who were shipped here instead of France where they would have been fighting the real enemy – The Germans.

PEARSE: This European war brought about a crisis which contained hidden within it, the moment for which the

generations had been waiting. The last sixteen months have been the most glorious in the history of Europe. Heroism has come back to the earth. The old heart of the earth needs to be warmed with the red wine of the battlefields.

Such august homage was never before offered to God as this, the homage of millions of lives gladly given for love of country. Life springs from death; and from the graves of patriot men and women spring living nations. Irishmen and women owe their allegiance to Ireland, not Britain. The lives we pledged were for our own country, nor Belgium or Serbia but Ireland. I have no quarrel with Germany or any nation, or Britain for that matter – I merely wanted to assert my rights as an Irishman.

THE IRISH TIMES: Is it not true that those rights had been promised as soon as this war is over and that hundreds of thousands of other Irishmen – men like you – born of the same stock with the same blood but maybe with less options available to themselves – men who had believed what they had been told and promised – men who wanted a better life for their families enlisted for that very reason; to secure those rights.

THE DAILY SKETCH: And you just brushed them aside – because you wanted your own personal revolution, your blood sacrifice – you wanted to be President of your fictitious Republic – who were you to play this game of nations and soldiers – what have you achieved?

PEARSE: I tried to do what Wolfe Tone sought to do, what it remains for future generations to do. Tone stated it for us all: "To break the connection with England, the never–

failing source of all our political evils, and to assert the independence of our country.'

Ireland one and Ireland free—is not this the definition of Ireland a Nation? never lowering our ideal, never bartering one jot of our birthright, holding faith to the memory and the inspiration of Tone...

Our blood, our sacrifice will have sown the seeds of a new...

THE DAILY SKETCH: We...us...our...always back to that – back to the ideals of nationhood and dreams – dead generations indeed – your Fenian dead and Wolfe Tone – Ireland's greatest patriot – a failed lawyer like yourself, with dreams of power and self-importance who engineered a rebellion that cost 30,000 innocent Irish lives and cemented religious division for the next century – ended the parliament and enacted the Act of Union. He was a bloody failure and you idolized him and his kind.

PEARSE: One man can free a people as one Man redeemed the world...I stood up before the Gall – Empire – as Christ hung naked before men on the tree.

There are in every generation those who shrink from the ultimate sacrifice, but there are in every generation those who make it with joy and laughter, and these ...these are the heroes who stand midway between God and men

I may be taken as speaking on behalf of a new generation that has been re-baptised in the Fenian faith but If we accomplish no more than we have accomplished, I am satisfied that we have saved Ireland's honour... it was enough that we tried, that we fought!

THE IRISH TIMES: The arrogance of you and your deluded group of followers – did you think that if you had won – that the might of the Empire would not have swept over you and these people you hold so dear – would you have had Ireland blasted into the mud like Flanders and France.

PEARSE: Our deeds of last week are the most splendid in Ireland's history. People will say hard things of us now, but we shall be remembered by posterity and blessed by unborn generations.

Beware of the thing that is coming, beware of the risen people, who shall take what ye would not give. Did ye think to conquer the people? Mark my words, by striking us down now, you have awoken a giant and this giant will rise again and renew the fight. We have not failed. If our deed has not been sufficient to win freedom, then our children will win it by a better deed.

You cannot conquer Ireland.

THE DAILY SKETCH: Do you think the Germans might not have wanted their say in return for THEIR help? Would you have the people speaking German with pictures of the Kaiser above the mantle?

THE JUDGE: The only redemption for you sir was that offered by an incompetent policy of reaction by the senior staff of the British Army and the perpetration of atrocities by soldiers under their command. Am I not right Maxwell?

MAXWELL: (Indignant) I say. Am I to be held responsible for this rebellion and every unsavoury incident? Such incidents are absolutely unavoidable in such a business as this and the ultimate responsibility for them rests with those resisting His Majesty's troops in the execution of their duty.

THE DAILY SKETCH: So the rebels shot the civilians then?

MAXWELL: The rebellion began by Sinn Féiners shooting in cold blood soldiers and policemen. Most of the rebels were not in any uniform, and by mixing with peaceful citizens made it almost impossible for the troops to distinguish between friend and foe until fire was opened.

THE DAILY SKETCH: Then it was the troops who shot the civilians?

MAXWELL: It is reported that in the districts where fighting was fiercest, parties of soldiers seeing their comrades fall from the fire of snipers, burst into suspected houses and killed such male members as were found. It is perfectly possible that some were innocent but they could have left their houses if they so wished ...

THE IRISH TIMES: Oh come now? Could have left their houses if they wished to – to go where Sir? What funds or means did they have at their disposal to go anywhere? The city in ruins, indeed the workhouse of the South Dublin Union was occupied – where were they to go – these were their homes.

THE DAILY SKETCH: They were targeted because they were Irish and they were there – isn't that it? And just how many is a few – tell that to the families – just as Mr. Pearse might tell it to the families of his victims.

MAXWELL: Under the circumstance the troops as a whole behaved with the greatest restraint. I personally thanked the troops for their splendid behaviour under the trying conditions of street fighting. I especially expressed my gratitude to those Irish regiments which had so largely helped to crush the rising....

THE DAILY SKETCH: Oh, now you are thanking Irishmen for shooting other Irishmen? If they had refused you would have had them shot.

MAXWELL: (**blood is up**) And what would you have had me do – give them tea and cakes? A slap on the wrist and make them promise to be good boys and turn them loose on the streets. You must preserve order, Sir.

THE DAILY SKETCH: If those Irish soldiers had resisted or deserted you would have had them tied to a post and shot like you did the Rebel leaders.

MAXWELL: Indeed, you make my point. These rebels were traitors to the Empire and the penalty for traitors is death. I would shoot them in the streets of Dublin or in the muddied fields of France. I had my orders, Sir and I carried them out. It was my duty to ensure this traitorous rebellion was put down and to ensure it did not raise its ugly head again. The way you do that Sir, in tried and tested tradition is to make a dreadful example of the place and of the ringleaders! This I did within days of my arrival and the

Irish regiments here and at the front have remained loyal throughout – even when the rebel organisation tried to bribe the prisoners of war in German camps they failed. This rising was not welcomed by the Irish and I stamped it out before the contagion could spread.

THE IRISH TIMES: So your way of stopping the spread of disease was to execute men, day by day for nearly two weeks and to turn the dogs loose on any Irishman where fighting took place – if in doubt – shoot – is that the policy of the King's Armed Forces – is that the example of the British Empire?

MAXWELL: I did what needed to be done for the ultimate preservation of the city and the people in it and indeed the Empire.

THE DAILY SKETCH: Hardly, Sir and it is even more insidious to refuse to root out the perpetrators of English atrocities and punish them. Justice Sir is not found where and when you would like to find it but it is ever present in the very fabric of the laws and constitution we hold dear.

JUDGE: You do not make unarmed civilians kneel to be bayoneted or shot or tie wounded men to a chair for execution. What say you Maxwell – are you completely innocent of the charges brought against you?

MAXWELL: I did my duty as a British Officer and quashed the rebellion. And for the record, Sir, Mr. Pearse asked to be held accountable. Indeed I would say he wished for it. He obviously knew the Irish better than I did myself and realised they might ultimately forgive a martyr where they could never forgive a traitor.

THE IRISH TIMES: And yet you sir, gave him everything he wished for on a plate and not only did you create one martyr but fifteen of them and may I say probably destroyed the Irish Parliamentary Party and all hopes for Home Rule in the process.

MAXWELL: My sole purpose was to quash the rebellion and restore order. Once the rebellion started the Dublin Metropolitan Police had to be withdrawn. There were incidents of deliberate shooting on ambulances, the City Fire Brigade and those courageous people who voluntarily came out to tend to the wounded. The only order on the streets was that provided by the military.

THE DAILY SKETCH: Did not the military shoot Mr. Sheehy–Skeffington whom it appears was one of those courageous people on the streets trying to prevent looting?

MAXWELL: I have answered that Sir. The matter is under investigation. I consider the troops as a whole behaved with the greatest restraint. Allegations on the behaviour of the troops brought to my notice are being most carefully enquired into. I am glad to say they are few in number. Numerous cases of unarmed persons killed by rebels have been reported to me.

The troops suffered severe losses: 17 Officers and 89 other ranks killed and over 300 wounded.

THE IRISH TIMES: Just less than half of the total of civilian lives lost.

MAXWELL: When it became known that the leaders of the rebellion wished to surrender, the officers used every endeavour to prevent further bloodshed.

I wish to emphasize that the responsibility for the loss of life, however it occurred, the destruction of property and other losses, rests entirely with those who engineered this revolt, and who, at a time when the Empire is engaged in a gigantic struggle, invited the assistance and co-operation of the Germans. John Redmond himself recognised it as a German intrigue.

PEARSE: England's difficulty was Ireland's opportunity.

JUDGE: What say you Pearse? Are you blameless in the death and destruction that followed in the wake of your rebellion?

PEARSE: We rose, we did not rebel. We risked our lives and indeed some of us gave our lives to assert the freedom of Irishmen and women, the natural freedom to which they were born but denied.

Such is the high and sorrowful destiny of heroes.....

JUDGE: ENOUGH!

Darkness – single spots on Pearse and Maxwell – Judge is centre stage – lit

ENOUGH!

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury. You each have two coloured ballots – blue for Maxwell; Green for Pearse.

Regardless of the trivialities of the case, the supposed merits of one side or the other – nationalism or loyalty, rebellion or betrayal, you the jury must vote on what has been presented here.

THE IRISH TIMES: The issues here are tremendously complex – the threat of a German attack through Ireland, the huge social changes which would come at the end of this war and the thoughts and feelings of the ordinary citizen at the time.

THE DAILY SKETCH: There are parallels to be drawn to issues in the world today – fundamentalism, religious ideology, fanaticism and the willingness to sacrifice your life and others around you to achieve your own goals. Military responses that seem completely disproportionate with the events that provoke them. History repeating itself...And yet can we judge history by the standards of today?

JUDGE: Jury – I thank you for your patience and your attentiveness. And I ask you now to vote.

Blue for Maxwell

Green for Pearse

Judge disappears from set – clerk appears with score sheet and begins the tally.

Voting – Counting – Verdict – lights down and darkness

Blackout.

Director might come to the stage to discuss with audience/jury their decision.

Discussion between the audience and selected members of the cast – quick – fire around the room for 5–10 minutes with writer and researcher.

THE PLAY IS OVER and the director and cast depart – full lights come up in theatre.

As the lights come up and the audience begins to leave The Foggy Dew is played performed by Philip Scott.

The County Kildare Decade of Commemorations Committee, 2013–2023.

The Committee was established to oversee the preparations for the commemorative period with a particular emphasis on the 1916 Easter Rising, and to devise a commemorative programme.

Mission Statement [2015]

The aim of the programme is to establish the most appropriate way in which to mark the centenaries within the county. The nature of the programme is to be expansive, delivering a series of commemorative events, school programmes, publications, etc., but with the unique intention of creating a legacy of research and cultural and artistic material for future generations. The delivery of the programme will be inclusive, appropriate and sensitive, to take account of all aspects of life in Co. Kildare in the period 1913-1923.

The decade from 1913 to 1923 was the defining period in modern Irish history which culminated in the achievement of Irish independence, the foundation of the Irish Free State and, ultimately, an Irish Republic. It was a time of great change, the effects of which impacted on the lives of people throughout the country from all walks of life; a period of war, rebellion and political upheaval which also witnessed monumental changes in social and economic circumstances, basic human rights, franchise and constitutional government.

We owe it to that generation of Irish men, women and children, that we commemorate this history with pride and enthusiasm and that we do justice not only to their ideals and aspirations, but to their memory and sacrifice. In future years County Kildare will be remembered for how we

commemorate the centenaries of 1916, the Great War, the War of Independence and the Civil War. It was not just a time of great political change and upheaval, but of social change and radical progress, as women took their rightful place at the polling station, the dreaded workhouses were abolished, tractors appeared in the countryside and Irish people took control of their own destiny, economy and everyday lives.

Any strategy for commemoration will have to engage with the people of the county to deliver the best possible programme and to ensure it is inclusive, appropriate and sensitive. Central to this strategy is a commitment not merely to remember and commemorate, but encourage research and debate; to engage with schools and other local organisations. Part of this process is the delivery of *A Terrible Beauty Exposed!* and a resource pack which discusses and analyses the Rising in a unique and accessible way.

The Pack includes,

- ***A Terrible Beauty!* Script and notes by the writer and director; Programme, bookmarks, etc**
- **Images from the period of the 1916 Rising**
- **Worksheets on the Rising**
- **A Timeline of events**
- **1916 Rising in Kildare by James Durney, Co. Historian in Residence**
- ***The Road to Rebellion* - CD by Kildare Tenor, Philip Scott (including *Danny Boy*, *The Soldier's Song* and *The Foggy Dew* which feature in the play).**