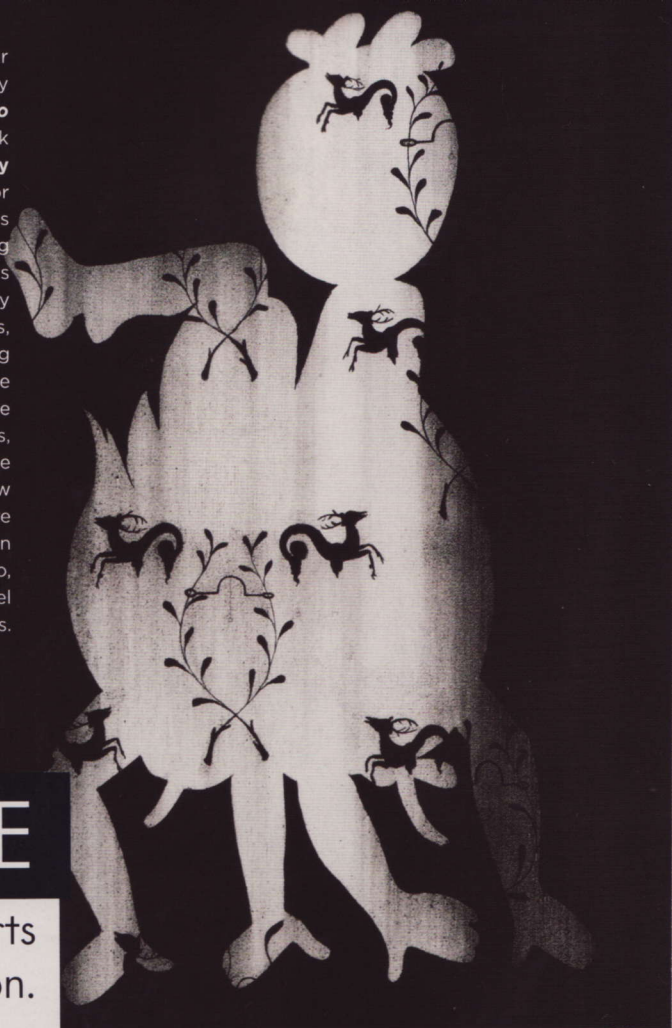


CAN'T AFFORD A MARTIN FINNIN OR CHARLES TYRRELL PAINTING THIS CHRISTMAS? CHECK OUT THEIR ORIGINAL PRINTS, €349 EACH, IN A NEW INITIATIVE BY CILL RIALAIG ARTISTS' RETREAT, FRESH FROM BALLINSKELLIGS, CO KERRY, VIA THE URBAN RETREAT GALLERY, HANOVER QUAY, DUBLIN 2.

**DRAWING ROOM** Savour the best of contemporary drawing in Ireland with **Into Irish Drawing** at Limerick City Gallery of Art, **January 15 - February 27**. Curator Arno Kramer's lineup is impressive, including drawings by Irish greats David Godbold, Kathy Prendergast, Mark Francis, and Gary Coyle, among many others. Expect the unexpected, such as Alice Maher's alluring images, right, and even some plaster-drilling. Say you saw it first in Limerick - before it sets off to represent us in Kunstcentrum Hengelo, Holland and Centre Culturel Irlandais, Paris.



## CULTURE

DEIRDRE MULROONEY has your arts lineup for the festive season.

**FANCY DOING SOMETHING A LITTLE DIFFERENT THIS NEW YEAR'S EVE?** Bag yourself a flight to Edinburgh and bid farewell to 2008 amid the hedonistic haze of the city's annual Hogmanay - a four-day festival for music lovers and, well, really anyone who loves a good ol' knees-up. The lineup caters for all tastes: a céilidh and torchlight procession for the traditionalist and a street party with Groove Armada for the more modern partygoer. For more, visit [www.edinburghshogmanay.org](http://www.edinburghshogmanay.org)



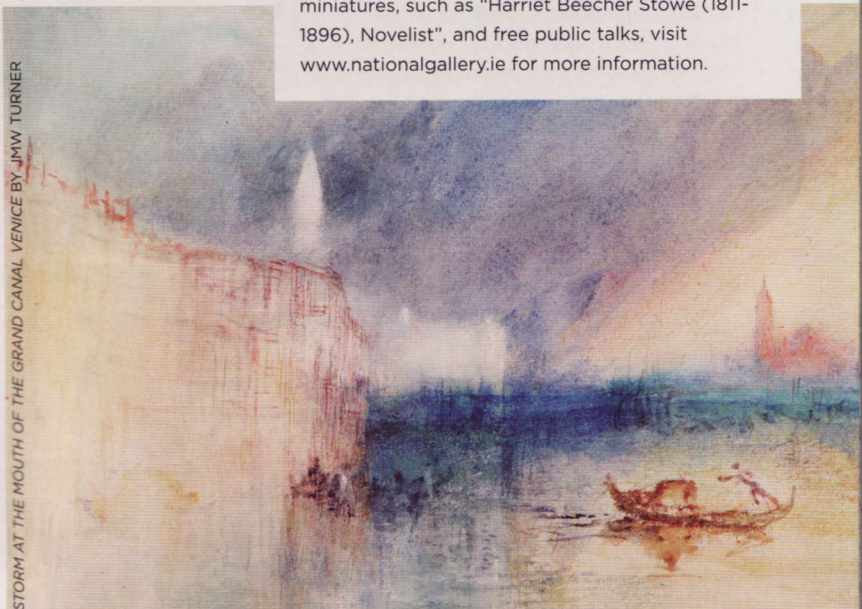
**FABULOUS FARCE** Druid Theatre Company are giving us another chance to catch up on prolific playwright Enda Walsh's award-winning, **The Walworth Farce**, on its home run from London's National Theatre. A manically-paced, bleak, funny and desperate masterpiece featuring the wonderful Denis Conway and a cross-dressing Garrett Lombard, it's brilliantly directed by Mikel Murfi. Catch this Christmas blockbuster on its cross-country run from Town Hall Galway, **December 3-6**, to Project Dublin, **December 8-20**.

### OH YES IT IS!

Panto season, that is. Catch *Peter Pan* at the Tivoli from December 11; *Cinderella* at the Gaiety, from November 30; and, if you're feeling more literary, Charles Dickens favourite *The Old Curiosity Shop* opens at Dublin's Gate Theatre on December 3.

**LIGHT FANTASTIC** Tread lightly into the New Year with the National Gallery of Ireland's 108th annual exhibition of 31 dreamy Turner watercolours and drawings, *A Light in the Darkness*, **January 1-31**. Magically capturing the effect of light on locations like Venice's Grand Canal, The Doge's Palace, and Switzerland's Lake Lucerne, these delicate watercolours are only shown when natural light is at its weakest, so they retain their 19th-century luminosity. This year, there's a dainty sideshow of 17th to 19th century silhouettes and miniatures, such as "Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896), Novelist", and free public talks, visit [www.nationalgallery.ie](http://www.nationalgallery.ie) for more information.

STORM AT THE MOUTH OF THE GRAND CANAL VENICE BY JMW TURNER







**CLASS ACT** Best known as Ross in the zeitgeist-encapsulating *The Last Days of the Celtic Tiger*, above, actor Rory Nolan (from Killiney, *roysh*), is in his element when I meet him for a chat in the Project auditorium. Why wouldn't he be? The Irish acting profession's answer to Brian O'Driscoll is one of the busiest, young actors in town.

Of embodying the moody Paul Newman protagonist, Brick, in Corn Exchange's 2008 production of *Cat On A Hot Tin Roof*, he confides, "I love the excitement and the buzz of live performance. I love the fact that we are going to have 200 people here tonight, feeding off what we are doing, and we're going to be feeding off them. I love that interaction."

Over Christmas and New Year, the tall, well-built redhead is appearing in Roddy Doyle and Bisi Adigun's radical multi-cultural re-interpretation of Synge's classic, *The Playboy of the Western World*, on the site of its controversial 1907 conception - the Abbey Theatre, **December 15 - January 31**. "It is probably the great Irish play. I'll be playing Shawneen Keogh, Pegeen's suitor. He's a bit gormless."

"The diversity of roles is a gift and a challenge," he says of his eclectic repertoire, which has spanned the works of Shakespeare, Tennessee Williams, Paul Howard, Friedrich Schiller and Arthur Riordan's hit musical, *Improbable Frequency*, in which he also got to display his singing talent as wartime poet John Betjeman.

"It's a privilege to be constantly acting, and to be constantly on the job. To have such a diverse range of work is brilliant," he says of his career since cutting his teeth in UCD's Dramsoc, where he was auditor, and subsequent graduation from the Gaiety School of Acting in 2003. "I've been really lucky."

From where Rory is standing, "the state of Irish theatre is great - regardless of cuts." He waxes lyrical about theatre directors Lynne Parker of *Rough Magic*, Annie Ryan of *Corn Exchange*, Garry Hynes of *Druid*, Jimmy Fay, and Conall Morrison.

"It's the work that interests me for the moment, and wherever that takes me, that's where I'll be. I'd like to do more film and TV, but my great love is theatre. If I'm half as lucky as I've been over the past five years, I'll be happy."

**TALES FROM THE SCRIPT** Who hasn't hummed along to "We Cry" (inspired by a stroll through Dublin's Liberties), or "The Man Who Can't Be Moved"? Talented and sexy inner-city Dublin trio, The Script, possibly the hottest band to come out of Ireland since U2, took the UK and Ireland by storm with the release of their eponymous debut album earlier this year. Check out how they defy genres as they mix it up live - from r 'n' b, to rock, folk, soul and hip-hop - at Dublin's Olympia Theatre on **December 16**. If you can still get a ticket, that is.



**WRITE QUIDDAM IN YOUR LITTLE BLACK BOOK.** CIRQUE DU SOLEIL MAKES ITS IRISH PREMIERE IN THE MAGNIFICENT SURROUNDS OF THE O2 FROM **MARCH 31 - APRIL 5**. THIS CLASSIC IS PERHAPS THEIR CUTEST SHOW CREATED BY LEGENDARY DIRECTOR FRANCO DRAGONE. BOOK NOW OR REGRET AT YOUR LEISURE.

**MISSING THE POINT?** Rock chicks rejoice! Thanks to Dublin Docklands' wondrous new performance venue - the O2 - squinting at rockstars diminished into tiny specks in the far-off distance will soon be a thing of the past. Pillar-free, the venue's special amphitheatre design, with tiered seating, promises every one of the potential 13,000 audience members an intimate experience with their chosen hero or heart-throb. Put the O2's up close and personal aesthetic to the test for yourself on **December 16** at the 2008 Cheerios Childline concert, hosted by Nicky Byrne from Westlife, headlined by Boyzone, with Shayne Ward, Alphabeat, The Saturdays, Scouting for Girls, The Script and Enrique Iglesias. No expense or detail - such as special acoustic tiling - has been spared to ensure optimum sound quality in this, Europe's first custom-designed venue for live music. Coldplay, Kings of Leon, Counting Crows and New Kids on the Block are among the first acts to christen the arena in its opening season. Complete with a translucent roof, set to light up like a futuristic blue beacon on the Liffey, the sky is the limit for the capital's newest pleasure dome.



#### LONDON BOUND

Taking a seasonal jaunt to London? Don't miss the Royal Shakespeare Company's premiere run of Marina Carr's *The Cordelia Dream*, in the magnificent, 19th-century Wilton's Music Hall, **December 11 - January 10**, [www.rsc.org.uk/london](http://www.rsc.org.uk/london).

GET YOUR €30 TICKET FOR THE GALLERY OF PHOTOGRAPHY 30 EXHIBITION PRINT RAFFLE AND BE IN WITH A CHANCE TO WIN ONE OF 50 SPECIAL EDITION PRINTS ON **DECEMBER 22**, [WWW.GALLERYOFPHOTOGRAPHY.IE](http://WWW.GALLERYOFPHOTOGRAPHY.IE).