

## NOTES FROM DIRECTOR – Greg Banks



David Craig, Artistic Director of Roseneath Theatre, first saw *Tir Na N'Og* at a theatre festival in Philadelphia. It eventually played on Broadway. He loved the style and energy of the piece and was excited at the possibility of the story being adapted to reflect a Native Canadian context. I love the opportunity David has created to breathe new life into my play. In its new incarnation, the play has retained its energy and style of performance, but the legend at the heart of the story has changed. However, both the original Irish legend and the Native Canadian tale revolve around a horse which appears from under water and proceeds to help our protagonists, two young children and their father, come to terms with the death of the children's mother. The horse also reconnects the father with his past life and helps to remind him of his old ties to his community that he has allowed to drift since his wife's death. The story combines an ancient legend with the harsh realities of an oppressed group, Irish travelers (gypsies) / Native Canadians, to create a story that is both an adventure and a journey of emotional discovery for all of the characters.

The story telling is fast moving and very physical. The actors change characters in front of our eyes, sometimes narrating directly to the audience, but always emotionally engaged. There are only three actors, but they play some 60 characters and inanimate objects – from a dog to a helicopter – with almost no costume changes and no changes in the set. Everyone plays the horse at some time in the play. The story is an epic; a chase across a vast landscape where the emotional mood of the characters and the nature of the countryside is expressed through music played live on stage. Music is very important in setting the mood of the play. The actors need to be fit and very creative; it is not easy to play a horse one minute, to be a dad who is devastated at losing his children seconds later, and then become a police dog! Most importantly, we have to believe in all these characters. In the past we have received many drawings from young people who have seen my version of the play. They often draw pictures of a big white horse. We never actually see a real horse on stage, but the actors have managed to make the audience feel that they have seen and heard one! This is the magic of theatre! Enjoy!

Visit <http://www.travellinglighttheatre.org.uk> to learn about the theatre that produced the Irish play *Tir Na N'og* in 1995.