



**Smithsonian Institution**

*National Museum of African American History and Culture*

## **Playbill for A Flea in Her Ear**

Extracted on Apr-24-2024 01:09:02

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## A THEATREGOER'S NOTEBOOK by Harry Haun

[[image - color photograph of a man and woman]]  
[[photograph by CAROL ROSEGG]]

### THE DOCTOR'S INTENDED

Maintaining an air of attractive civility and innocence amid Jekyll & Hyde's musical mayhem is almost exclusively the job of Christiane Noll (left, with Robert Cuccioli), who plays the good doctor's fiancée with an edge that keeps the goo at bay and gives the character a spine. "It's not within me to be a vapid, stereotypical ingenue," Noll admits. Her favorite moment is "In His Eyes," a duet with Linda Eder, the doxy enamored with the Hyde half of Robert Cuccioli. "My character is rather restrained through most of the show, so I like this moment because I can let loose."

Recently, after a Saturday matinee, she let a little offstage sweetness show through when she visited with Doris Butz, a schoolteacher up from North Carolina who once cast her as "Mother Squirrel" in a second-grade extravaganza. Notably, it was not Noll's stage bow. "My parents were in the business, so I toured with them. The first thing I ever did was The Mikado at age four." Her father, Ronald Noll, is the long-time conductor of the Village Light Opera Group, and her mother is an opera singer. "When people say I have a beautiful soprano, I tell them, 'I'm not a soprano. Mom is the soprano in the family. I just scream high.'"

She just finished "screaming high" some glorious Rodgers & Hammerstein, providing the singing voice for Anna in an animated version of The King and I, due next year. "It's probably my most fulfilling professional experience. You have to close your eyes and focus and see everything by how you're painting [with] your voice."

**THE QUEEN'S SWAIN** The beauty queen of Leenane has a gentleman caller who dubs her that in a burst of blarney, sweeps her off to bed and (the morning after) suggests they elope. As played with easy Irish charm by Brian F. O'Byrne (right, with Marie Mullen), Pato Dooley contrasts sunnily with the violent emotions at the core of the drama.

Dooley, now hanging his head down at the Walter Kerr in Martin McDonagh's The Beauty Queen of Leenane, is one of three Leenane denizens O'Byrne has been inhabiting for two years in The Leenane Trilogy. There are passing references in Beauty Queen to his other two—a dim-witted policeman in A Skull in Connemara and a donnybrook-prone cheapskate in The Lonesome West—but when the three are taken together (as they were in Dublin, Sydney and London), they demonstrate why he won the Irish Times Award for Best Actor. "If these plays have a common theme," he ventures, "it's that people who lived in isolated areas without a chance of expressing love lead to violent situations."

[[image - color photograph of a man and woman]]  
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O'Byrne, 30, wouldn't know about that personally, now that he's engaged to Amy Ryan. They met on Broadway, playing lovers in The Sisters Rosensweig and will wed in Ireland next summer.

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CLIFF: BY-PHOTOGRAPH BY CAROL ROSEGG. NOLL: BY-PHOTOGRAPH BY CAROL ROSEGG. O'BRYNE: BY-PHOTOGRAPH BY CAROL ROSEGG. DOOLEY: BY-PHOTOGRAPH BY CAROL ROSEGG.

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As to which of the trilogy parts is the most fun to act, "It's nice to stand onstage every night and fall in love with someone"--a mischievous afterthought occurs to him--"and it's nice to beat the [bleep] out of someone, too."

[[boxed]]  
CLUE #1--FOR PHOTO #1 ON PAGE 6: British actors Janet McTeer and Owen Teale both won Best Actor Tonys for their work in the revival of this Henrik Ibsen play.  
[[/boxed]]

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