

Shelter (me) from the rain
A field guide to love in an Irish town

A chorus opera for singers
of all ages and abilities

LIBRETTO

Music by Brian Irvine
Words by John McIluff

Commissioned by Carlow County Council

1

Shelter me from the rain

2

There's a Cold Front Moving in

3

Good melon

4

River Barrow

5

Text Speak

6

Cold and Windy

7

Breaking up is hard to do

8

Rock the boat

9

Wedding Vows

10

Hail Rain Snow

11

Secret Clouds of Love

12

More like October

13

Cloud Appreciation Society

*Choir on stage filling a raised structure facing the audience.
There is a small playing area in front of the amphitheatre where the different scenes will appear.
A large screen hangs above the heads of the choir. Video will be projected at various moments.*

1
Shelter me from the Rain

A single voice sings out in the darkness.

Lights up slowly on the individual singers in the choir area.

A flow of passersby running from the rain cross the small playing area.

SOPRANO 1

Protect me from the Cyclones

Hold my hand when it snows

Runs circles around the hailstorms

Shelter me from the rain

SOPRANO 1 + SHELTER CHORUS

I'll lead you through the fog

Blow away the morning mists

Raise high the low clouds and sing

Shelter you from the rain

Sweep the frost from your brow

Be your faithful windbreaker

Take ice storms on the chin

Shelter you from the rain

Be my blanket for the storm

Catch snowflakes in a cup

Master lightning with a fork

Shelter me from the rain

Shelter me from the rain

Shelter me from the rain

Shelter me from the rain

Shelter me from the rain

There's a Cold Front Moving in

Lights up central area.

*Six neatly dressed weather forecasters fiddle
with their microphone in readiness to go live.
Weather symbols will appear and disappear in the choir area.
The words of the forecast are spread among the six forecasters.
Sometimes individually. Sometimes together.*

WEATHER FORECAST

There's a cold front moving in.

This maybe the rainy day
You've been saving for.

Low clouds and drizzle will spread
across all parts of the country.

Frequent showers will become
heavy downpours by late afternoon.
Light westerly winds will affect the north-west.
Possibly causing unease among the most exposed.

Later in the day, strong gusts of wind
will make simple things difficult
so tie down your soul.

Sharp Scattered showers.
Light westerly winds.
Short sunny spells.

Sharp Scattered showers will develop
over the remainder of the day.
Clouds will mass overnight
so find somebody willing and
tuck yourselves under the covers.

Tomorrow is looking frosty.
Grass will crunch beneath your feet.
Expect Nostalgia.
Melancholy.
But this should pass by mid morning
leading to sunny spells
and outbreaks of song.

Low clouds and drizzle.
Sharp Scattered showers.
Short sunny spells.

Exit Forecasters.

3

A Good Melon

TOMMY and MARY sit together on a sofa. They are in their late fifties. They have the habit of finishing each other's sentences.

TOMMY

We were born
On the same day
On the same day
The third of January
In the very same hospital
Seven hours apart, seven hours apart
Saint Luke's of Freshford Road
She was born at
twelve twenty five
On the third of January
Nineteen forty three
We both lived in the town
Half a mile from each other
She lived in four Pembroke Street
On the corner
In one of those little terrace houses
All of those houses are gone now

My father was a window cleaner
WHEN he got sick I took over his
work

For fifteen years I cleaned
All the windows of the big shops
Sherwood's, the Bridal shop
The Permanent on Tullow Street
She worked in Shaw's
Seven years in Shaw's

For Mister Clarkson
Very nice man

Firm but fair
Every Friday for seven years
I cleaned the windows of Shaw's
A gentleman
She worked on the first floor mostly

The ladies section
We never met

MARY

We were born
Same same day
On the same day
The third of January
The very same hospital
Seven hours apart
Saint Luke's of Freshford
He was born at five thirty two
In the morning
On the third of January
Nineteen forty three
We both lived in the town
Half a mile from each other
Opposite the launderette
In one of those little terrace houses
All of those houses are gone now

Shaw's, O'Dwyer's,
The Permanent on Tullow Street
I worked in Shaw's.
Seven Years in Shaw's
As the floor manager
For Mister Clarkson
Very nice man
A very nice man
Firm but fair
He'd come in every Friday
To get paid by Mrs Clarkson
A gentleman
I worked on the first floor
Mostly on the first floor
The ladies section
We never met
We never met

We never met
We never met

In the Gini Victoria
Majorca
She was there with her sisters

We never met
You know where we met
You wouldn't believe it
In an elevator
Hotel in Palma
Majorca
I was on holiday with my sisters
It was our first holiday abroad

The BROTHERS and SISTERS appear on stage dressed for the beach.

SISTERS

We'd never been away from home

MARY

I'd never been away from home

BROTHERS

It was the first time
We'd ever been on a foreign holiday

TOMMY

I was there with my Brothers
And wee Jack McLaughlin
It was the first time

SISTERS

We were going to the beach
She'd forgotten her sunglasses

BROTHERS

We were going to the beach
He'd forgotten her sunglasses

MARY

We were going to the beach
But I'd forgotten my sunglasses
And had to go back to the hotel

TOMMY

We were going to the beach
But I'd forgotten my sunglasses
And had to go back to the hotel

SISTERS

And had to go back to the hotel

BROTHERS

And had to go back to the hotel

MARY

I was waiting at the lift
It stopped
We both got in
He asked me what floor
As soon as I heard his accent
We started talking

BROTHERS

They started talking

SISTERS

They started talking

TOMMY

We started talking

MARY

He was on the third floor

TOMMY

I was on the third floor
I went up twelve extra floors
Just to keep talking

Sisters

She was on the fifteenth floor

BROTHERS

Twelve extra floors

SISTERS

Twelve extra floors

MARY + TOMMY

That was twenty-eight years ago

MARY

I knew immediately
Like the way you know
About a good melon

Exit All

4
River Barrow

It all turns cold. The stage fills with well wrapped up couples on their evening stroll.

CHORUS

Dry tonight.
Winds will fall light.
It will turn cold.
Minus four degrees
To severe frost.
Some fog patches
Across the river Barrow.
Fields around Tullow will glisten
Hedgerows of Borris will sparkle like prisms.
Robins will return to their habits.
Crows will lark and roar.

5 Textspeak

A horde of teenagers enter the stage. In groups and individually.

Nothing happens...

...and then

A RINGTONE

One of the teenagers pulls out phone and reads the text she has just received.

Suddenly it's RINGTONE MANIA

All the teenagers pull the phones from their pockets and start texting/receiving.

TEENAGER

BMHWP

Be my hot water bottle

(she types back)

TEENAGER

AYJOW

Are you joking or what

TEENAGER

What u doin?

ALL TEENAGERS

What u doin?

WTC.

What's the craic?

TEENAGER

ASLMH

Age, Sex, Location, Music, Hobbies

TEENAGER

How does Sponge Bob drink water under sea?

TEENAGER

Did u just text me?

TEENAGER

Can't stop thinking about u.

TEENAGER

Sorry. Wrong person.

TEENAGER

13, M, Carlow Town

TEENAGER

FOT FLOLBBZ

TEENAGER

FF

Friends Forever

TEENAGER

You're like that annoying little sister I never had.

TEENAGER

At home in bed. Bored.

YOUNG BOY TEENAGER

25, M, Rio De Janero

ALL TEENAGERS

TOY

Thinkin of u.

TEENAGER

My cat just did the craziest thing.

TEENAGER

15, F, Borris

TEENAGER

Favourite Band

TEENAGER

Two Door Cinema Club

TEENAGER

Bros before hoes

TEENAGER

Favourite Gig

TEENAGER

Snow Patrol. Ward Park. Best Gig ever.

TEENAGER

Favourite Film

TEENAGER
Love Actually

TEENAGER
Dumb and Dumber

ALL TEENAGERS
ASLMH
Age, Sex, Location, Music, Hobbies

TEENAGER
Favourite Youtube

TEENAGER
That awkward moment wHEN you get dragged down the stairs by a demon

TEENAGER
If I could change the alphabet, I'd put U and I together

ALL
COLLECTIVE GROAN!!!

TEENAGER
MMFU

TEENAGER
My mate fancies you.

TEENAGER
OMDB
Over my dead body

ALL TEENAGERS
Eight Three One forever
Eight letters
Three little words
One meaning
Eight letters
Three little words
Just One meaning
Eight Three One
Eight Three One

TEENAGER
KOTC
Kiss on the cheek

TEENAGER

Smiley Asterisk
I'd like more than a kiss on the cheek

TEENAGER
Smiley Number 9
Licking lips

TEENAGER
GNBLFY
Got nothing but love for you.

TEENAGER
I'm no Fred Flintstone but I could make your bedrock.

ALL TEENAGERS
He's no Fred Flintstone but could make your bedrock.

TEENAGER
Why don't we meet?

TEENAGER
What like for real?

TEENAGER
Can't be assed

TEENAGER
CUIMD

TEENAGER
See you in my dreams

TEENAGER
MTFBW

TEENAGER
May the force be with you.

TEENAGER
OMG

TEENAGER
LOL

ALL TEENAGER
Eight letters
Three little words
One meaning

TEENAGER
TIIL

TEENAGER
Think I'm in love

TEENAGER
And now a word from our sponsor

TEENAGER
EMRTW
Evil Monkeys rule the world

TEENAGER
Yeah, Sure, Sure, Whatever.

TEENAGER
XOXO

TEENAGER
GTGP

TEENAGER
Got to go pee

All the teenager put the telephones a way and exit.

6
Cold and Windy

Chorus perform Percussive Rain.

*On stage passerby shelter, escape from, get wet in... the rain.
In amongst them we spot George Kinsella and Mrs Scullion.*

CHORUS

Rain.

Cold and windy this morning
with scattered outbreaks of rain
around Bagnelstown.

Persistent and heavy rain in places.

George Kinsella will water his plants as usual.

Still mindful of that hosepipe ban in 93.

Rain.

Around the corner,

Mrs Scullion's cats don't dare outside.

She'll pass the day scolding them
for curling up in Albert's old armchair.

Three months since he passed away.

Becoming mainly dry
with sunny spells developing.

Strong to gale force.

North Easterly winds will slowly ease.

Chorus perform Percussive Rain.

Breaking up is hard to do

Two identical suitcases sit side beside.

SORCHA packs her bags. She takes clothes and objects from the chorus and puts them into her suitcase.

KEVIN watches.

He's not going to give up with out a fight.

KEVIN

That's my suitcase.

SORCHA

Please. Kevin. Don't be difficult.

KEVIN

It's my suitcase.

SORCHA

Please. Kevin. Don't be difficult.

They're matching suitcases.

KEVIN

But mine has a stain.

Wine bottle explosion.

Coming back from Corfu.

SORCHA

If you say so.

Sorcha takes the other suitcase.

KEVIN

But you can have it. If you want.

As a souvenir.

SORCHA

Please. Kevin. This is difficult enough.

KEVIN

Take a souvenir. To remember

SORCHA

I don't want to remember.

Sorcha takes a dress. Kevin snatches it off her.

KEVIN

I love that dress.

SORCHA

Give it back. Give me that back.

KEVIN

You wore it when we were in London.
You remember?

SORCHA

Stop being such a child.

KEVIN

We went up in those bubble cars. You held my knee.
Had a gin too many and lost your shoe.
You remember?

Sorcha manages to get the dress back.

SORCHA

I hate heights.
You know that but you forced me up and made me cry.
I drank to forget. Still do.

KEVIN

We took my brother's kids to the zoo.
You did your chimpanzee impression
and we ate candy floss in the sun.

SORCHA

You never made it easy.
You never let me be me.
Only a chimpanzee.

KEVIN

Climbed Ben Nevis together.
Drank sweet tea.
Ate sandwiches in the bracken.

SORCHA

Slid down on our backsides.
Ended up as sick as dogs.
Spent half the night in A&E

SORCHA

Just let me go.

KEVIN

Your face was sore you laughed that much.
Travelled a lot.

SORCHA

A fortnight in Lanzarote.
Your mum's caravan.
You would never listen.
I wanted adventure. Peru.
Trekking the Andes on a llama.
You could have made me love you.

KEVIN

Sandymount. Hidden among the grass of the dunes.
"Je vais et je viens, entre tes reins"
We should go back.

SORCHA

You would never listen. There is no going back.

KEVIN

I'll put on that duffle coat you bought me in Dublin.

SORCHA

Please. Kevin. Don't make this difficult.

KEVIN

We'll wrap up warm this time.

SORCHA

Please. Kevin.
There's no going back.
This is difficult enough.

KEVIN

You can wear your favourite green coat.

SORCHA

My green coat.

KEVIN

Your Grace Kelly coat.

SORCHA

I do love that coat.

KEVIN

I bought it for you.

SORCHA

It fitted so well.

KEVIN

And we arm wrestled on Grafton Street.

SORCHA

And you let me win.

KEVIN

I think it was summer.

SORCHA

July stretched to a hundred days

KEVIN

Each shorter than the last

SORCHA

It ended so fast.

KEVIN

It could be summer again.

SORCHA

There's no going back.

8
Rock the boat

Bells ring. Laura Nolan puts the finishing touches to her HEN night gear.

CHORUS

Moderate temperatures early in the day
will rise steadily over Nurney
and up towards Carlow town.
Sporadic bursts of snow
will cause disruption toward the evening
as Laura Nola gathers her hens
puts on her L plates in between sips of Jack D and coke
She'll text Johnny Boyle later to declare her love for him
before starting to row her way to happiness
on the dance floor of The Foundry
and will try not to rock the boat
or tip the boat over.

Rock the boat
Don't rock the boat baby

Wedding Vows

*Eight pink cowgirls clatter onto stage wearing matching T shirts.
It's a hen night and everyone is worse for wear.
They carry a blow up man doll.*

HEN CHORUS

Laura Nolan's getting married in the morning.
Laura Nolan's getting married in the morning.

A round of shots.

HEN

One zambuca

HEN

Two zambuca

HEN

Three zambuca

HEN

Four zambuca

HEN

Five zambuca

HEN

Six zambuca

HEN

Seven zambuca

HEN CHORUS

More

Misbehaviour follows.

The hen's shuffle the bride to be and the blow up man side beside and begin a mock marriage.

HEN

Welcome beerly deloved... sorry

Welcome dearly beloved. We are here at 3am on a Saturday morning to celebrate the holy sacrament of

HEN CHORUS

Zambuca
All the hen's drink

HEN
Will you Laurie,

HEN
champion pie eater

HEN
and kitten fiddler,

HEN
Take this man to be your lawfully wedded husband
To have snoring in your bed
Every Saturday night

HEN
To hold your hand in the birthing pool

HEN
And teach your children to fist fight

HEN
From this day forward
In sickness and in health
Until he dies in his sleep

HEN
Or in a heap in front of the telly
Leaving a stain as big as a cod

HEN
For richer

HEN
For richer

HEN
To love and to pleasure

HEN
Til boredom and irritation us do part.

LAURA
I do

HEN CHORUS

Laura Nolan's getting married in the morning.
Laura Nolan's getting married in the morning.

HEN

Do you Simon, Donkey boy Mackenzie, take this woman
To be your lawfully wedded wife

HEN

To bring her breakfast in bed for the rest of her natural life

HEN

And always take out the bins

HEN

To hug and kiss on a daily basis

HEN

And when required perform (*bang/crash/wallop*)

HEN

For better, for worse

HEN

Never steal from her purse

HEN

In wickedness and in stealth

HEN

To love

HEN CHORUS

To love

And cherish

To love

And cherish

HEN

To find beauty in her wrinkles

HEN

To find solace in her words

HEN

To be a light in dark times

HEN

To listen to her worries

HEN CHORUS

To love

HEN

Until death do you part

HEN

(as a ventiloquist)

I do

HEN

You may kiss the bride

Hens Exit.

The Bride-to-be and the blow up man have a snog.

10
Hail Rain Snow

*Lights fade to half-light.
Silhouettes pass on stage.*

CHORUS

Hail, Rain, Snow
Hail, Rain, Snow
Don't close the door
Don't close the door
A stormy night but a settled end
Skies will clear over night
Bruised hearts will mend
Gale force winds
Will slowly ease
Bruised hearts will mend
Lightening, thunder
Skies will clear over night
Bruised hearts will mend
Strong unruly winds
Will surely ease
Skies will clear over night
Early mists will lift by sunrise
Tears on cheeks nerve freeze
Bruised hearts will mend

11
Secret Clouds of Love

*The lines of the stories are spread throughout the choir.
On stage the stories are seen as dumb shows.*

Chorus

Mary O'Coughlan sings in the church choir
Turns up for practice each Tuesday night
Tingles all over as John Joe O'Connor
Sings like and bird with his big ears and stubble

They'd chat together at break
What at great girlfriend shed make
Tin the evenings they'd kiss and sing
He'd wear a suit and she'd wear a wedding ring

Dylan Petslofski opens his barbers
Brushes the floor to pass the time
Watches as Noreen who works at the chemists
Ducks in out of the pouring rain

Shakes out her hair and her coat
They'd sail away on his boat
Shed learn the tango , how to make bread
He'd stroke her hair each night before bed

In the houses hopes and wishes
Painting nails and washing dishes
Movie stars begin to cry
Secret clouds of love go drifting by

Deirdre McGinley puts on her red Dress
Bought in the sale at Hadden's last June
Goes to buy something from Joseph O'Fee
Smiles at the way he says fifty three

Tries to say something smart
Trips on her own beating heart
Breathes in his smell of petrol and wheat
Dreams of his curls and his size thirteen feet

In the shops and in the parks
Falling words and little sparks
Cross your heart and make a wish
I'll be the spoon if you be the dish.

In the houses hopes and wishes
Painting nails and washing dishes
Movie stars begin to cry
Secret clouds of love go drifting by

12
More like October

Mrs O'Connor tries to prop up her flowers.

CHORUS

A stormy start but a settled end.
It looks more like October
For the next week or two.
Deep depressions with strong winds
And much rain.
Misses O'Connor's flowers
have been beaten to the ground.
She'll prop them up with Lolly sticks
But they'll never be the same.
Next year she'll have a bumper crop
And share them with her grandchildren

Sean appear on stage.

And Sean who lives across the way.
He'll invite her for an evening stroll.
They'll discover they share thoughts
And a love of clouds.

Cloud Appreciation Society

Sean and Mrs O'Connor continue gardening.

SEAN

I've laid a blanket down
in the field behind our house.

MRS O'CONNOR

Lets lie side by side
and watch the sky

SEAN

Cumulus, Stratospheric, cirrus, blue.
Lets be collectors of clouds me and you.
I've time on my hands
and a propensity
For taking things slow.

SEAN + MRS O'CONNOR

Lets draw up a manifesto
for the rest of our lives
and call it
The Cloud Appreciation Society

CHORUS

Fiborous cirrus, no tufts or hooks
Tropospheric noctilucent, morning glory.

SEAN

There'll just be two members.
To start with at least.

MRS O'CONNOR

Two intrepid explorers.

SEAN + MRS O'CONNOR

Unmoving and in peace.

SEAN

Perhaps later we can recruit
some junior Lieutenants.

MRS O'CONNOR

You can wash clothes
and I'll cook the dinner.

SEAN

I'll buy a bigger blanket from Solomon's shop.

SEAN + MRS O'CONNOR

Us and our army.

The ever growing

Cloud Appreciation society

Chorus

Fiborous cirrus, no tufts or hooks

Tropospheric noctilucent, morning glory.

SEAN + MRS O'CONNOR

We don't need any books

The whole worlds just above

Just need to spot it and identify

There's a dog with two heads

A tulip, a frog.

Your cousin Jermaine.

Although he's missing a leg.

Most of West Africa and the Arabian sea.

A glove with seven fingers.

A gigantic pot of tea.

So come lie on the blanket.

And fill in the form.

A fully-fledged member of

The cloud appreciation society.

Chorus

Protect me from the Cyclones

Hold my hand when it snows

Runs circles around the hailstorms

Shelter me from the rain

I'll lead you through the fog

Blow away the morning mists

Raise high the low clouds and sing

Shelter you from the rain

Sweep the frost from your brow

Be your faithful windbreaker

Take ice storms on the chin

Shelter you from the rain

Be my blanket for the storm

Catch snowflakes in a cup

Master lightning with a fork
Shelter me from the rain.

THE END

