

Jim Nolan

JOHNNY
I HARDLY
KNEW YE



Gallery Books

Johnny I Hardly Knew Ye
was first published
simultaneously in paperback
and in a clothbound edition
on 20 March 2017.

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Johnny I Hardly Knew Ye receives financial
assistance from the Arts Council.

Characters

STEPHEN COYNE, 59
IAN DOHERTY, 40
KATE FLYNN, 45
LENNY HARRIS, 35
LISA REILLY, 22

Johnny I Hardly Knew Ye was first produced by Garter Lane Theatre, Waterford, on Friday 4 March, 2016 with the following cast (in order of appearance):

LENNY HARRIS	<i>Michael Hayes</i>
STEPHEN COYNE	<i>Garrett Keogh</i>
LISA REILLY	<i>Ema Lemon</i>
KATE FLYNN	<i>Jenni Ledwell</i>
IAN DOHERTY	<i>Ciaran McMahon</i>

<i>Direction</i>	Jim Nolan
<i>Design</i>	Dermot Quinn
<i>Producer</i>	Caroline Senior
<i>Lighting Design</i>	Richard Collins
<i>Costume Design</i>	Jeannine Storan
<i>Sound Design</i>	Rachel Corcoran
<i>Production Manager</i>	Amy Power
<i>Stage Manager</i>	Martina Collender

Produced with the support of Waterford City and County Council.

Funded by the Arts Council (An Chomhairle Ealaíon), the production was revived for an Irish tour in the Spring of 2017 when the part of KATE was played by Deirdre Monaghan.

ACT ONE

Scene One

for Caroline Senior

The reporters' room of the Derryshannon Chronicle. As lights come up we find LENNY HARRIS working at his desk. From off, we hear STEPHEN COYNE singing a hymn to the tune of Beethoven's Ode to Joy: he enters in full flight and, continuing to sing, lands a hat and coat on a coat hook, sits at his desk and switches on his computer.

COYNE 'All around the clouds are breaking, soon the storms of
time shall cease;
In God's likeness, man awaking, knows the everlasting
peace!'

LENNY What's up?

COYNE What d'y'mean, what's up?

LENNY It's Monday morning, you're a grumpy oul' bollox —
and you're singing. There's something up.

COYNE I'm singing, Lenny — through gritted teeth! Choir
Practice — Sunday morning after last Mass. Three
weeks to Paddy's Day and we're laying into the old
reliables like there's no tomorrow. Miss Lynch — aka
Attila the Hun — is hammering away on the organ as
we do irretrievable damage to the chorus line of 'Hail
Glorious Saint Patrick'.

LENNY (*As he continues to type*) The mother loves that one,
Stephen.

COYNE Your mother loves Daniel O'Donnell! Miss Lynch
brings our little offering to a close and I'm about to
head across the road for the hare of the dog when out
it comes from the back of the loft, this tiny voice from
heaven.

In motion since he came in, COYNE stops everything and

very gently begins to hum the tune of Ode to Joy.

Agnes. Our poor troubled Lamb of God.

LENNY Never the same since little Frankie went the way of all flesh.

COYNE 'It's *Ode to Joy*,' she said. 'I heard it on YouTube and I was wondering if we might learn it for Easter.' 'YouTube!' said Miss Lynch. 'A poor lookout if we're to rely on YouTube for our hymn selection. You have the list for Easter, Agnes. *It's the same as last year!*'

LENNY (*His patience straining*) I'd have fecked the oul' bitch through the stained-glass window.

COYNE Agnes?

LENNY *Miss Lynch!*

COYNE I was tempted. But like the rest of our lily-livered crew I sang dumb. Only now I can't get the shaggin' tune out of my head.

LENNY Guilt, I suppose.

COYNE My conscience speaks!

LENNY You should have stood up to the old crone and you know it.

COYNE Enough of yesterday — a bright new Monday beckons in the draughty halls of the *Derryshannon Chronicle*. Everything swimming along in the Sports Department?

LENNY We're gettin' there. (*Gesturing to the empty desks*) Me and the rest of me staff. Two shaggin' soccer matches yesterday, the 10K run for the Meals on Wheels and the Long Puck beyond at Loughane all filed by teatime last night. But the evenin' races in Kilbeggan put the scuppers on us.

COYNE No luck?

LENNY The mother had a twenty-to-one shot in the last race.

COYNE Good for her.

LENNY It'll pay for the petrol, I suppose. Home now, Ma, says I, and don't spare the horses. I'll file me report, we'll put our feet be the fire and maybe watch an oul' horror film. Until *herself* reminds me I'd promised to go to Roosky with her for the Big Tom concert. Roosky, if you don't mind — fifty shaggin' miles away. I swear I'll

have to sedate that woman if she doesn't slow down.

COYNE You're a lucky man, Lenny. It's not every journalist has his mammy as a personal chauffeur.

LENNY I know, I know — but I don't mind tellin' ye, there's days I'm sorry to hell I never learnt to drive. (*Beat*) Is there any word?

COYNE Words are our currency, Leonard!

LENNY From Dublin, I mean. On the takeover.

COYNE Our goose is all but cooked, Lenny. The family doing a courtesy meeting with Citizen Kane as we speak. They've promised an email as soon as — (*He is reading from his computer*) *What the fuck is this!*

LENNY That's another euro in the swear box.

COYNE (*Reads from screen*) *Jesus's Brother Reveals Second Coming for Lough Ree!* World Exclusive by Leonard Harris.

LENNY I thought you'd never get to it. Read on, Maestro!

COYNE 'A man claiming to be the brother of Jesus has announced that the Second Coming will take place at Lough Ree on Easter Sunday next. Latvian immigrant, Edgars Jansons, with an address at Greenfields on the Mullingar Road, claims Our Lord will descend from the skies over Lough Ree at dawn on Easter Sunday.'

LENNY You couldn't make it up, Stephen.

COYNE Indeed you could not.

LENNY Twenty-past-five on Friday, Rita below at Reception gives a shout to say there's some feekin' weirdo with a foreign accent lookin' to talk to a senior journalist.

COYNE Instead he got you.

LENNY So down I goes and out it came like tomorrow's milk. Read it on there, Stephen, and you'll get the best of it.

COYNE I think I've read enough.

LENNY It's the *Second Coming*, Stephen! The end of the shaggin' world right here on our doorstep and you're going to pass on it!

COYNE Your friend Edgars has previous, Lenny.

LENNY I'm not with ye.

COYNE The chicken liberator? Fifteen thousand chook-chooks released onto the floor of Derryshannon Poultry a few months back.

LENNY Oh, *shit!* Was that him?
 COYNE What was the quote again? ‘Chickens have the feelings, too!’
 LENNY Alright! So he’s not the full shilling. But supposin’ he’s right? The Second Coming, Stephen! Are you going to take a chance on that?
 COYNE That’s the plan. Court and Sport, Lenny — stick to what you know.
 LENNY Don’t mention the shaggin’ Court. I’ll come to that in a minute. Spike it so, Stephen. But before you do . . . Joyce was on the blower before you came in. That half-page ad for Harney’s Auctioneers is gone west. Tom has decided to wait for a bounce after the elections next month.
 COYNE He’ll be waiting.
 LENNY Maybe so. But that’s a big hole on page five. You might be lookin’ to fill it be the end of the day.
 COYNE Why don’t you let me worry about that?
 LENNY (*Defeated*) I will, so.
 COYNE What I *am* looking for are the Glenowen Notes. What’s the story?
 LENNY The story is Jack Flynn is on the lash again.
 COYNE What is it this time?
 LENNY Apparently Eily fecked off with the coal money.
 COYNE That’s not so bad.
 LENNY The coal man went with her.
 COYNE Ah . . .
 LENNY She’ll be back. It’s Mickey Money Day tomorrow.
 COYNE Life’s unending carnival!
 LENNY Fortunately Dolly Kelly popped her clogs over the weekend. She was the far side of the lake but beggars can’t be choosers and she’s gettin’ a fine obituary for her troubles.
 COYNE This ship wouldn’t sail without ye.
 LENNY Don’t I know it.

LISA enters, laden with suitcase, holdall, laptop, bag of books etc.

LISA (*Thick Connemara accent*) Oh my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you — and with your help I will not sin again!
 COYNE That’s quite an entrance.
 LISA (*Putting down her belongings*) Not the one I feekin’ planned anyways! Mea culpa, Mr Coyne. Me first day and I’m late!
 COYNE So we notice.
 LISA That shitehole toerag excuse for a boyfriend — *ex-boyfriend* now, I don’t mind tellin’ ye! Half-seven last night, Daddy lands me in from Roundstone to meet Willie in Eyre Square for the lift over. Only no sign of Willie. Twenty-to-eight, I give him a call on the mobile. No reply. Quarter-to-eight I send him a text. ‘Where are ye, Willie?!’ Eight o’clock, text back. ‘Below in Ennis at the afters of a wedding. *Smiley!*’ I won’t trouble you with the answer to that one!
 COYNE (*With a glance to an enthralled LENNY*) Might be for the best.
 LISA So I ring Daddy and give him the story. Back he comes and off we go, himself passin’ the time with a lecture on how you could never trust a gobshite with a ring in his nose. ‘All right, Daddy, I get the message, now will you put the boot down.’ Well . . . if givin’ a wide berth to buckos with rings in their nose was *one* lesson I learnt last night, the *second* was not to put the boot down in a 1992 Datsun Cherry. Gave the night in a B&B in Ballinasloe — I don’t know will Daddy or the feekin’ Datsun ever see Roundstone again.
 COYNE (*His patience beginning to strain*) Never mind, at least you’re *here*.
 LISA More than can be said for Tom Harney, the auctioneer. Fecker didn’t show until quarter past nine.
 COYNE Apparently he’s waiting for a post election bounce.
 LISA Apparently *I’ll* be waiting for the keys of my apartment. It seems the previous tenant chained himself to a radiator over the weekend and won’t budge for love nor money. Harney says he’s not the full shilling. Says the poor man got the bullet for keeping chickens