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# Review: Eva the Chaste

*Aedn Moloney holds the stage as a loose Irishwoman in a tight situation.*

By Adam Feldman    Fri Jul 15 2011

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Photograph: Ira Peppercorn

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Eva the Chaste

**LOOSE TALK** Moloney limns a life of sex untethered to religion or maternity.

*Time Out Ratings :*



The remarkable Aedn Moloney is not the poster girl for sensualism that you might find, say, on the poster for *Eva the Chaste*. The Irish-born actor—her father is Paddy Moloney, of the Chieftains—has a distinctively lean, angular face and short blond hair that falls lankly; as the title character in Barbara Hammond's solo play, she extols sex with a tough-minded, self-deprecating edge. Eva's defiant promiscuity reveals both pleasure in "a woman's deepest simplest and most democratic luxury" and an undertone of depression: "Sure isn't it the one thing makes me believe we've a purpose at all." Hammond's hour-long monologue, produced by Moloney's fledgling Fallen Angel Theatre Company, finds Eva returned to Dublin to care for her elderly mother, against whose impoverished, religious life she has modeled her own in reverse. Myopic, humpbacked and worn from hard work, including ten children, the mother is now tortured by disease as well: "Parkinson's army. Fully occupied." This is bleak stuff, and not always subtle, but Hammond sows it with evocative turns of phrase, and Moloney (directed by John Keating with an eye toward Beckett) delivers it like a prose poem—deliberately, with impressive clarity and nuance, to almost hypnotic effect. *Eva the Chaste* may be brief, but Moloney's Eva is a memorable creation: a self-made Eve who, knowing full well that there is nothing original in sin, is determined not just to bite the apple but to savor whatever of its flesh she can swallow.

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([http://irishecho.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/572\\_Eva\\_the\\_Chaste.jpg](http://irishecho.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/572_Eva_the_Chaste.jpg))

Eva the Chaste By Barbara Hammond • With Aedin Moloney • Directed by John Keating • Fallen Angel Theatre Company, Iurman Theatre, Theatre Row, NYC • Tickets: (212) 239-6200 • Through July 24, 2011

Perhaps it's significant that when actress and playwright Barbara Hammond, who is the youngest of a large family, comes up with a play, it's a solo piece with a woman as its solitary speaker. The 70-minute, intermissionless result, "Eva the Chaste," will be on view at the Clurman Theatre through July 24.

Hammond is fortunate in having the remarkable Aedin Moloney, for whom the play was written, and whose company, Fallen Angel Theatre, is producing it, on deck to bring her Eva to life, and the skilled actor-turned-director, John Keating, to stage it with clarity and impact.

Actress Moloney, the daughter of Paddy Moloney, the durable force behind The Chieftains, who supplied music for the show, is slight and might almost be described as being fragile-seeming, but don't be deceived. She has a rare power at her command, as was evident a year or so ago when she appeared in Paula Meehan's "Cell," playing the most violent of four women sharing a space in a Dublin prison.

Her performance, guided then as now by Keating, was so bizarrely powerful that many of the members of her audiences, friends included, were afraid to speak with her when the show was over.

The printed rehearsal text of "Eva the Chaste" locates the play as taking place "on the steps of a semi-detached house in Rush, a seaside market village at the end of the Dublin bus line."

The text doesn't call for much of a scenic design, but Melissa Shakun has provided a sort of skeletal set, with the suggestion of a window here, a door there and a step or two leading to a little platform which primarily remains unused.

The play's title is a joke: Eva's mother once said she hoped her daughter would be "chaste," and the heroine converted the word to "chased," as in "pursued." The word "chaste" is possibly unfamiliar to some of the play's audience, but the title comes off as a slightly tacky joke, particularly for a work which deserves better.

Eva has left Ireland and her family and gone to live in Paris, from which she returns because of the illness and gradual decline of her aging parents. She comments, in a minor complaint, that she doesn't even bear the name of a Catholic saint. "You'd never say Saint Eve," she says. Meanwhile, her sister, Theresa, has two, since there are, in fact, two saints named Theresa, one of them being the Little Flower.

Eva adds that "I got Adam," and that the pair were "turfed out of Eden under remarkably underhanded means."

Hammond has attached a brief lift from Albert Camus to her play as a sort of statement of dedication. "The only way to deal with an unfree world," she quotes, "is to become so absolutely free that your very existence is an act of rebellion." The irony suggested by Camus' comment is that Eva, at best, seems unlikely ever to become really free, which may be the playwright's point. Hammond's writing is solid, and sometimes considerably more than that, particularly when Aedin Moloney is hitting on all eight cylinders, as she so very often is in "Eva the Chaste."

Fallen Angel's future plans include an evening of one-act plays adapted from the works of novelist Colum McCann, who won last year's National Book Award for "Let the Great World Spin." Fallen Angel, with any luck at all, should have a splendid future.

## All Your Life Is Mother's Day: Review of *Eva the Chaste*

**How It's New York:** There's the partnership with C.A.C.H.E. at [Casabe Houses](#) in East Harlem, and that some of New York's most accomplished artists will appear on panels after the show on the 12th, 17th and 19th, including Dramaturg Susan Jonas and Playwright Tanya Barfield. But more than that: many a New Yorker is from Elsewhere. A long delayed visit home is a very New York story.

**How It's Irish:** Mothers and daughters are a perennial theme in much of Irish literature. As is homecoming and how home never leaves you. This company's mission is to present new work by and about British and Irish women. Aedín herself is a Dubliner (her dad is Paddy Moloney from the Chieftains, fyi).



Got a mother? Ever had one? Then you can't fail to be moved by **Barbara Hammond's** luminous new play, *Eva the Chaste*.

The one-woman show is [Fallen Angel Theatre Company's](#) first world premiere, and its Off-Broadway debut. The woman in question is **Aedín Moloney**, who was on [this week's podcast](#) discussing the piece and giving us a snippet from it. And in [our little preview piece](#) we have details on the company and some of the fascinating panels they have planned.

The show has been a while in development, and had an audience at each stage of the way. I saw an earlier version during the APAP festival in January, at the Irish-American Historical Society (and Aedín told me she had just been appointed a Director there). It has grown in impact and power since — and it was lovely then. It makes you want to rush home and hug your mom. Skype her or phone, if you can't do that.

Hammond gives us an articulate, mischievous, sensitive character in Eve (she calls herself "Eva" because a European lover pronounced her name that way, and she prefers it). She comes home to Rush, Ireland, to look after an invalid mum, after 20 years away. She realizes quickly that her sister's family has summoned her so that they can take a family holiday to Majorca (but as anyone who's ever been a caretaker knows, a week's holiday literally can be just what the doctor ordered). Her homecoming after so long away naturally causes her to reflect on her childhood, and her mother's difficult, almost saintly life. Eva ran wild and left— the "chaste" in her name is a kind lie to her mum, that she wears with pride— but like the singer in "Katie" by Jimmy MacCarthy, despite her great escape, she never got away.

One-person shows are not my favorite thing, honestly. My favorites, like **Daniel Beatty's** *Through the Night* or **Linda Byrd Kilian's** *Aaronville Dawning*, usually make me forget it's just one person thanks to artful storytelling or multiple characters played by one actor. But *Eva the Chaste* truly is a long, stream-of-conscious monologue (the show is 70 minutes long with no intermission). Yet I was riveted.

Eva, vulnerable in a pink cardy, finds Ireland both familiar and strange. Paris is landlocked, but “here you can’t tell the rain from the seaspray,” she notices. The mother who once was disapproving now has Parkinson’s. Her limbs move involuntarily. She can barely speak. And in caring for her, Eva heals her own heart. Mum had a tough life— a humped back and 10 children (Eva only knew of 7), hardworking and pious, whose only real pleasure was ice cream. Eva, in contrast, led a wild but also difficult life in Paris, that included some prostitution, a lesbian affair and an unwanted pregnancy. She miscarried at 18, after a man propositioned her to take care of it: “The baby, no fool, said ‘I’m outta here,’” she says. To keep her mother happy, she would tell her lies, at one point borrowing facts from the girl in the flat next to her, until the girl becomes a drug addict.



But despite a history of misunderstanding and rebellion, the tenderness Eva has for her ailing mother shows that more of the anger was on the surface than she realized. Eva does cuddle her, a woman who wasn’t much for hugging when well, and brushes her hair. And the observation that Mum’s belly is “where I’m from” has a shock of truth in it. Hammond is a dramatic poet in the tradition of Beckett and Joyce. After seeing the piece, it’s easy to see how Aedín’s Molly Bloom readings at [Ulysses Pub](#) inspired Hammond.

John Keating’s direction brings out some humor in Eva’s gentle mockery of herself and others, and best of all, is largely invisible. Melissa Shakun’s set, of hanging metal door and window frames, added to the play’s poetic atmosphere, as did Mark Parenti’s sound design, including seagulls. There was also some music from Kevin Conneff and Paddy Moloney, courtesy of the Chieftains. The play is not perfect— the ending felt both rushed and a little too easy, and there were a few times that I got lost in Eva’s digressions. But *Eva the Chaste* is haunting. And not to be missed. Bring your mom.

*Eva the Chaste* is presented by Fallen Angels Theatre, at the Harold Clurman Theatre, 410 W. 42nd St., NYC, July 8 – 24. Tues, 7; Wed-Sat; 3; Sun. 3. Tickets (212) 239-6200 or [telecharge](#).

## Aedín Moloney in *Eva the Chaste* Begins Tonight!

**How It's New York:** **Aedin Moloney's** company, [Fallen Angels](#), is based in New York, and it is the first American company (founded 2003) whose goal is presenting new Irish and British plays by and about women. Like George C. Heslin's *Origin*, *Fallen Angels* seeks specifically to present this work FOR New York audiences. *Fallen Angels* partners with other not-for-profits, and for *Eva the Chaste* they are partnering with **Yolanda Sanchez**, the Executive Director of Puerto Rican Association for Community Affairs, and C.A.C.H.E. at [Casabe Houses](#) in East Harlem. A portion of proceeds from the play will benefit this cultural org, which offers free classes and workshops. The play is directed by *Fallen Angels'* Associate Director **John Keating**, seen in a lot of New York theatre (much but not all of it Irish!).



I think it's a very New York thing that playwright **Barbara Hammond** was inspired by the way Aedín interprets Molly Bloom for the Bloomsday readings at [Ulysses](#) every year. More on How It's New York below (cuz I want to get to the play!)

**How It's Irish:** Aedín herself is Dublin born (and her dad is the Chieftains' **Paddy Moloney**. I [interviewed him](#) last year for Irish Examiner) The play is about an Irish woman who's been estranged from her mum, reconnecting with her after many years- and the more I read of Irish literature, the more the mother-daughter (and father-son) theme emerges as a perennial fave. **Barbara Hammond**, the playwright, is an American of Irish descent (her great-great-grandfather came during the famine), who left home at as a teenager to live in Ireland for a while. This is a world premiere, the company's first. **It runs July 6-24 at the Clurman Theatre on Theatre Row**, and tickets are already going fast, so [get them here!](#)

I attended a reading of the play at the Irish American Historical Society during APAP back in January, and [wrote about it](#) for Irish Examiner then that:



Aedín Moloney is a sensitive, expressive performer, in Barbara Hammond's play about an Irish emigrant returning home to care for a sick mother.

Though the play has not officially opened anywhere, it has gotten such little "blurbs" thanks to the readings it has enjoyed in New York, Washington, DC; Paris, Tuscany, Berlin and London. Malachy McCourt, for example, said that "Moloney is simply magnificent; Hammond's writing is wildly comedic, brilliantly tragic by turns." Bill Whelan described Moloney's performance as "extraordinary."

It's a one-woman, 70 minute show, and Aedín goes through the wringer. I'm eager to see it and how it's evolved since January. You can hear Aedín on this week's podcast discussing it all!

Here's the official description of the play:



*Eva the Chaste*, written by Barbara Hammond and produced by Fallen Angel Theatre Company, immerses the audience in the pivotal passions and pressing responsibilities of a woman whose twenty-year sprint away from her past comes crashing to a close as dawn breaks over Dublin Bay. Hammond set out to reveal, through the use of spoken thought, a genuine and intimate portrait of a woman at the crossroads, both literally and figuratively, of her life. The script, set in Dublin and Paris, explores the profound and unpredictable bond between a mother and a daughter; the grasp for life at the approach of death; and the road to hell — shining, smooth and paved with good intentions.

Fallen Angel Theatre Company has a number of other projects in development, including an evening of one-act plays based on the writings of Colum McCann.

**More How It's New York:** the company is hosting several panel discussions about the play with many New York literary lights: on the 12th, they are having one on "Writing Women's Lives" with **Colum McCann**, dramaturg **Susan Jonas**, author **Belinda McKeon** and playwright **Honor Molloy**; on the 17th, they are having one on "Mothers and Daughters" with **Annabel Clark**, **Toni Dorfman**, playwright **Barbara Hammond**, and **Yolanda Sanchez**, and on the 17th, one on "Great Roles for Women," with playwright **Tanya Barfield**, **Estelle Lasher**, playwright/performance artist **Deb Margolin**, **Aedín Moloney** and Irish Rep's **Charlotte Moore**.

What could speak more loudly to how Aedín is embedded in New York than that very eclectic list of stars? She's drawing from worlds that don't always overlap— dramaturgs, playwrights, actors, teachers. It's impressive!

## Moloney opens new Dublin-set play Off Broadway

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(<http://irishecho.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/MCCANN.jpg>) (Novelist Colum McCann will lead a talk-back session after Tuesday night's performance of "Eva the Chaste." PHOTOCALL)

It's difficult to imagine that Aedin Moloney could "shift up a gear."

As it is, her hard-driving rendition of "Molly Bloom's Soliloquy" has thrilled audiences and won plaudits.

But that's the phrase she used when referring her aim at this Friday's world premiere of "Eva the Chaste," a new one-woman play, at Theater Row on West 42nd Street.

"It's off-Broadway. It's on a much bigger scale than anything we've done previously," she said, referring to the Fallen Angel Theatre Company, which she founded with the director John Keating.

The play itself is partly inspired by Barbara Hammond's admiration for her performances of the famous extract from "Ulysses."

The playwright approached her two years ago with the proposal for the one-woman play. The first draft was delivered to her on Christmas Eve, 2009.

Moloney has since given several work-in-progress readings in New York and Washington D.C.

"It's been around," she said.

In contrast to the practice of companies taking a work in a different direction than intended by the playwright, she said, Fallen Angel worked closely on the project with Hammond, a Wisconsin native who lived for several years in Dublin.

Moloney and Keating founded the company with the aim of bringing to New York the "most outstanding and daring new plays" by or about Irish and British women.

"I respect writers and writing," she said. "But my interpretation as an actress is important, too, as is the director's and the lighting person's."

Eva is a Paris-based social worker who has herself had a checkered career on the margins of society. She returns to

coastal North County Dublin to help her siblings care for their ailing mother.

The play is a meditation on that bond between a mother and daughter that never seems to break, Moloney said, even in cases where it has been severely tested over time.

"It's an exploration of death, too, and of having to confront one's own mortality when a parent dies," she added.

Eva, having spent two decades abroad, the actress said, is at a crossroads in her life. "She soaked up a whole other culture," the actress said, "but her roots are deeply embedded in her."

She is a complex character and thus a realistic one. "None of us is all black or white. We're shades of gray," Moloney said.

The production will have three talk-back sessions, the first of which will be moderated after next Tuesday's performance by novelist Colum McCann, who has described "Eva the Chaste" as a "magnificent play with one of the best actresses in New York City, or anywhere else for that matter."

Moloney has also organized with Tom Moran a special benefit performance on Monday, July 18, at Mutual of America, on the 35th Floor, 320 Park Ave. (RSVP [ruth@fallenangeltheatre.org](mailto:ruth@fallenangeltheatre.org) by July 5). It will honor 78-year-old Yolanda Sanchez and her work with underserved Latino communities.

"It's important to give back," the Dublin-born actress said.

Moloney praised production manager Ruth Kavanagh and the director: "Ruth has been just terrific. John and has been a tower of strength.

"I can't believe we're nearly there," she said, admitting to some pre-premiere nerves.

The slightly built Dublin actress derives some comfort, though, from an unlikely source. "I've been told that Michael Jordan said that he was always very nervous before every game," Moloney said.

*"Eva the Chaste," which opens Friday, will be performed through July 24 at Theatre Row, 410 West 42nd St. Tickets can be booked via Telecharge at 212-239-6200 or [www.telecharge.com](http://www.telecharge.com). For more information go to [www.fallenangeltheatre.org](http://www.fallenangeltheatre.org) and [www.theaterow.org](http://www.theaterow.org).*



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# Fallen Angel brings *Eva the Chaste* to Clurman Theatre

By Brian Donohue

Fallen Angel Theatre Company presents the world premiere of Barbara Hammond's *Eva the Chaste* at Manhattan's Clurman Theatre from July 6–24. The first collaboration between the collective and the award-winning playwright, the work is directed by Fallen Angel co-founder, John Keating.

Set in Dublin and Paris, *Eva the Chaste* explores the profound bond between an estranged mother and daughter coming to grips with the approach of death, immersing the audience in the passions and pressing responsibilities of a woman whose twenty-year sprint away from her past comes crashing to a close as dawn breaks over Dublin Bay.

Inspired by Fallen Angel co-founder Aedín Moloney's interpretation of Molly Bloom's soliloquy from James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Hammond sets out in *Eva the Chaste* to reveal an intimate portrait of a woman at the crossroads of her life. The play has of late wowed audiences at readings in New York, Washington, DC, Paris, Tuscany, Berlin and London.

"Barbara Hammond's beautifully crafted play comes memorably to life via the sensuality and elemental humanity of Aedín Moloney's extraordinary performance." Grammy winning composer and producer Bill Whelan was recently moved to say.

Set on empowering women through theater, Fallen Angel is a non-profit committed to presenting outstanding new plays written by and about Irish and British women. According to a three-year study released by the New York Council on the Arts, only 20% of professional theatre artists today are women. Though pieces submitted by women make up half of all available to artistic directors, only 16% of produced plays are by women, and just 17% have female directors.

Taking matters into her own hands, New York-based Irish actress Maloney co-founded Fallen Angel with Keating in 2003, creating an environment where female playwrights and actresses can flourish.

"The goal of Fallen Angel is to contribute to New York's next phase of its evolution and cultural growth with fresh and daring new works by and about women, which will not only educate and entertain, but most importantly, inspire." Maloney says.

For more on *Eva the Chaste* and other upcoming shows, see [fallenangeltheatre.org](http://fallenangeltheatre.org)



*Eva the Chaste* playwright Barbara Hammond (left) with actress Aedin Moloney. The pair team up for Fallen Angel's production of Hammond's play at the Clurman Theatre in July.

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