Myra's Story

- Written by Brian Foster (copyright 2002); original version called *Maire: A Woman of Derry*
- First produced at Playhouse Theatre, Derry, Northern Ireland, 2001, with actress Carmel Mc Cafferty
- Broke box office records at Derry's 1,000-seat Millennium Forum Theatre
- Rewritten by Foster in 2009 as “Myra’s Story,” set in Dublin
- Exclusive Canadian production rights granted to Jennifer Cornish in 2013
- **Canadian Premiere** June 2013, London Fringe Festival
- **Outstanding Production** (2013 London Fringe Festival juried panel)
- **Critic’s Choice** (2013 Hamilton Fringe media award)
- Endorsed as a **Community Partner** in 2016 by:
  - YWCA
  - House of Friendship
  - FoodBank of Waterloo Region
  - Women’s Crisis Services of Waterloo Region

www.myrasstory.com
info@myrasstory.com
Hilarious and heartbreaking, Myra’s Story portrays a day in the life of a feisty homeless “wine connoisseur” as she goes about her daily routine on the streets of Dublin, Ireland. Jumping from character to colourful character, Myra tells her life story with street-smart style, wry wit and unflinching honesty.

Myra begins her narrative as she recovers from the celebration of her 48th birthday, reflecting on her attempt to escape what her father calls “The Beast” of alcoholism by marrying at sixteen and beginning a new life with her beloved Tommy McLaughlin.

As another “morning after” turns to yet another cold, bleak December night, Myra reflects without bitterness or self-pity on what she has become — and with the knowledge that she is but one of many souls who have landed here, each with her or his own story to tell.

“Stunning . . . Myra’s Story is a powerful way for us to broaden awareness about the impact of addictions on people’s lives.” — John Neufeld, CEO, House of Friendship
Irish playwright Brian Foster “fell into” writing at age 39, despite coming from a tough background where visits to the theatre were unheard of and writing was a skill reserved for bookies and docket. He left school at 16 with no qualifications except street smarts. Woven of truth and fiction, the hugely likeable, hugely vulnerable character Myra is an amalgam of several street drinkers Foster was familiar with in his home town of Derry (Londonderry), Northern Ireland.

Myra, says Foster, “is not an educated woman — but she has a street-nurtured intelligence about her.” And Myra’s Story is merely a small window into the life of someone whom almost anyone could become.

“Street alcoholics are those who have stumbled over that line and (generally) can find no way back,” says Foster. “When I was researching the play a doctor pointed out to me that heavy street drinkers are terminally ill people. Their affliction will kill them in the end, yet we tend not to view them with the same compassion we would cancer sufferers, for instance.”

Foster is confident that Canadian audiences will embrace his character’s candid sense of humour and gritty authenticity.

“I was looking for a very special someone with the ability not just to act Myra, but to physically and mentally become her for each performance,” says Foster. “I was delighted to find such a special person in Jennifer Cornish. A rare find indeed.”


“I have yet to meet anyone who encountered Myra on stage and didn’t like her.”

— Brian Foster, Playwright
# Myra’s Story

## Production Team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Myra</td>
<td>Jennifer Cornish</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Darlene Spencer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stage Manager</td>
<td>Selin Erkaya</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lighting Design</td>
<td>Allan Hoch</td>
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<td>Sound Design</td>
<td>Zack Russell</td>
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<td>Costume Design</td>
<td>Katharine Mills</td>
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<td>Executive Producer</td>
<td>Sheryl Cronk</td>
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<td>Media</td>
<td>Tracy Morency</td>
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<td>Marketing</td>
<td>Trevor Smith Diggins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Web Design</td>
<td>Javajoy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>Brian Z. Kelly</td>
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## Analysis

The image is a page from a document that lists the production team for a project titled “Myra’s Story.” The team includes roles such as Myra, Director, Stage Manager, Lighting Design, Sound Design, Costume Design, Executive Producer, Media, Marketing, Web Design, and Photography, each with a corresponding name. The document also provides contact information, including a website, an email address, and social media links. The website URL is www.myrasstory.com, the email is info@myrasstory.com, and the Facebook and Twitter handles are @Myras_Story and Myra’s Story Trailer, respectively. The image includes a photograph of a person seated on a bench, which is likely related to the story theme.
The London Free Press
June 9, 2013
By Joe Belanger

Five Stars. Cornish’s performance is riveting, holding the audience spellbound for nearly 90 minutes . . . telling her life story as she desperately begs for coins to buy the “medicine” that allows her to forget the past and find warmth to sleep on her park bench on a cold winter’s night. Best performance by a woman I saw last year.

This show should be on everyone’s must-see list.

The Beat Magazine
June 2013
By Trish West

Jennifer Cornish gives us beautiful portrayal for each of the individuals within her story . . . her alcoholic father, husband Tommy, close friends and even Norris the gnome.

It is one of those performances that will stay with you long after it’s over.

The View Magazine
July 25, 2013
By Patricia Bradbury

A virtuoso performance by Jennifer Cornish makes this play a must–not–miss.

Finely directed by Darlene Spencer on a bare stage with nothing but a bench and a chair, this glorious and gripping one woman play gives a portrait of Dublin that is vivid and taut. Cornish . . . inhabits the character so truthfully we relive all the jokes, all the losses, all the sweetness . . .

Myra’s story stays with you long past the closing line.

The Record
September 26, 2013
By Robert Reid

Equal parts James Joyce and Carol Burnett, Myra’s Story . . . is an acting tour-de-force . . . Cornish . . . weaves a spell that holds us transfixed. She compels us to look at Myra, to acknowledge her as she is “in body and soul.”

Monkeybiz.ca
July 23, 2013
By Rebecca Costie

Jennifer Cornish is a theatrical force who uses her voice, facial expressions, and body to bring to life a collection of believable and memorable characters, including the witty, sometimes vulgar, and ever-reflective Myra.

Brian Foster’s writing, sharp, unrelenting, and stuffed with figurative language and Irish colloquialisms, and Cornish’s skill, confidence, and abundant energy are an excellent match.

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### Myra's Story

**www.facebook.com/MyrasStory**

### Tour History

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<td>Waterloo</td>
<td>Wilfred Laurier University</td>
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<td>One More Night Festival</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cambridge</td>
<td>Idea Exchange</td>
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*Ontario Street Theatre, Port Hope, August 2015*
*Photo: Sean Carthew*

*The Gaol Yard, Kitchener, September 2013 (IMPACT 13)*
*Photo: David Bebee, The Record*

*The Gaol Yard, Kitchener, September 2013 (Impact 2013)*
*Photo: David Bebee, The Record*

*The Food Bank of Waterloo Region, 2014*
*Photo: Tracy Morency*
Artistic director of the Randolph Academy for the Performing Arts in Toronto from 2009 - 2016, Darlene Spencer has been an active and passionate director of theatrical productions, documentaries, educational and industrial films for the past 30 years. Selected directorial credits include:

- The Skriker by Caryl Churchill
- Our Country's Good by Timberlake Wertenbaker
- If We Were Birds by Erin Shields
- Our Town by Thornton Wilder
- Falling; A Wake by Gary Kirkham
- Pride and Prejudice adapted by Christina Calvit
- String of Pearls by Michele Lowe
- Three Cities in the Life of Norman Bethune by Tim Brady
- The Children's Hour by Lillian Hellman
- Spring Awakening by Frank Wedekind
- Les Belles Soeurs by Michel Tremblay
- The Crucible by Arthur Miller
- Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare

and Fringe favorites: Water and Timmy’s Sexual Adventure

by Brad Curtain.

She is the past president of the Board for Kitchener’s Inter Arts Matrix, the birthplace of Hybrid Art, an organization that fosters development of integrated art.

Darlene is also an actor who has performed in theatres across Canada, and for television and film. Favourite roles include:

Bernarda in The House of Bernarda Alba by Lorca (Toronto Fringe Festival), Titania/Hippolyta in A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Resurgence Theatre Company), Paulina in A Winter’s Tale (Burton Theatre), Helga Ten Dorp in Deathtrap (Waterloo Stage Theatre), and Sarah in the film 976, for which she won the Planet Indie Film Festival Best Supporting Actor award.

Jennifer Cornish is a wonder — a performer capable of transforming herself into the complex, colorful, and gritty characters in Myra’s Story with integrity, specificity and credibility.

“Myra’s Story’ grabs a hold of your heart, tickles it to near death and then gently rips it out; and in this you find yourself delighted and complicit.”
Trainied by industry pros from Stratford, Shaw, Second City and Kids in the Hall, Jennifer Cornish has worked in film and television, but says she has spent the best parts of her life onstage, a place she has been since the age of 8. She founded Waterloo-based PrACTical TheACTrics in 2010. Jennifer was the recipient in 2011 of the Region of Waterloo Arts Award for Performing Arts.

“Theatre, to me, is the art of witnessing humanity — in myself and in the world. It asks the actor, and the audience, to walk a mile in someone else’s shoes, to experience someone else’s story. Stories have the power to change the way we think, which is big magic because changing the way we think is the only way to change pretty much anything.”

Recent Roles

- Shirley Valentine
- Debra in Kimberly Akimbo
- Liz in Dine Her
- Mrs. Lintott in History Boys
- Jeri Neal in Dixie Swim Club
- Martha in Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?
- Edith in Pearl Gidley
- Edna in Nowhere Ontario
- Louise in Hollywood Arms
- Alexa in As Bees in Honey Drown
- Mona in Queen Milli of Galt
- Sally in Alien Guest
- Ensemble member with Flush Ink Productions. Annual shows include Asphalt Jungle Shorts, She Speaks
- Television & Film Credits include: Suddenly Super, American Shot (GHIST Productions), Almost Grown (Atlantis Films), A Family Matter (CBC – Gemini Award for Best Short Drama), After Midnight (ABC)

Testimonials

“Cornish makes us listen, truly listen, to Myra’s story, which we are not soon to forget.”
— Robert Reid, The Record

“Five stars. The best performance by a woman I saw last year. [Cornish] burrowed so deep beneath the skin of an alcoholic street person I wasn’t sure if she’d been recruited from the street.”
— Joe Belanger, The London Free Press

“Jennifer Cornish turns in a remarkable performance. Myra’s Story leaves us thoughtful but not disheartened, and primed to be more cognizant of the humanity of everyone we encounter.”
— Kathleen Sheehy, Artistic Director, Lost & Found Theatre

Her performance was second to none and the play itself is brilliant. The audience was in awe.
— Sean Carthew, Artistic Director, Ontario Street Theatre

I always come away from her performances with a deeper understanding of the world.
— Dwight Storring, Digital Media Producer

Jennifer Cornish is an actor like no other. As Brando is synonymous for Stanley Kowalski so will Cornish be known for her Myra.

Love love love this show.
— Gary Kirkham, Playwright