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In 2024 Season, Word for Word Savors the Friction in Fiction



In a year where *American Fiction* showed itself to be a contender at the box office with two of its lead actors nominated for Academy Awards in addition to best original screenplay, *Word for Word* in San Francisco has once again put together a season featuring the work of two of the finest practitioners of the art of short fiction to be found anywhere: Irish author and short story master **Kevin Barry**, he of the earthy and sometimes jarringly poetic vocabulary for which Ireland is particularly well known; and currently with the rights being finalized, **Haruki Murakami**, the best-selling Japanese writer whose humor and often detached and cryptic voice has manifested in works such as *Norwegian Wood* and the *Wind-Up Bird Chronicles*. In addition to these full scale theatrical productions, *Word for Word* will continue its *Off the Page* staged reading series throughout the year.

Who's-Dead McCarthy: Stories by Kevin Barry runs from June 26 through July 21 (previews June 26, 27, 28; press opening Saturday, June 29)

Murakami! runs from November 13 through December 8 (previews November 13, 14, 15; press opening Saturday, November 16)

Off the Page readings are scheduled for April 15; April 23; September 9; October 21; December 16. Details Below.

San Francisco, April 3, 2024 – San Francisco’s *Word for Word*—known for bringing short fiction to life on the stage—announce that the work of renowned Irish author and short story master Kevin Barry will be the subject of their first full production this year, which runs from June 26 through July 21 (previews June 26, 27, 28; press opening Saturday, June 29). As is always the case with *Word for Word*, their goal is to honor the author’s intent by using every word of a text, bringing the story to life for the audience through atmospheric visuals, imaginative staging, and honed performances.

The three works include *Who's-Dead McCarthy*, a tale featuring a self-appointed messenger of death in a small Irish city who cannot stop himself from gleefully chronicling and gossiping about the details of the deaths of others to everyone he meets. A tale perfect for those who like their humor a wee bit dark.

In *The Wintersongs* two strangers meet on a train in Ireland. One, a world-weary old busybody, cautions a younger woman whose life journey has just begun as they both hurtle through the countryside under “the arc of a weak sun” heading toward Dublin. If this story were wine, its descriptor might read, “includes notes of humor, regret, anticipation and Flannery O’Connor.”

The Coast of Leitrim tells the story of a solitary Irish man who falls in love with a Polish woman after meeting her in a café. Finding himself smitten upon leaving the café, he falls down a Google-fueled rabbit hole while trying to translate her social media posts. The result is a European union of sorts between the two that grows more intense and complicated as it deepens, because well, we are our histories, both real and imagined.

“Barry’s stories are at once playful, serious, and beautifully crafted, and provide a needed balm for us in these turbulent times.”
—JoAnne Winter, *Word for Word* Artistic Director

The stories of **Haruki Murakami** to be fully performed with visuals, staging and actors in November of 2024 are currently in the last stages of negotiations for the rights and will be announced soon.

What: Word for Word Presents *Who's-Dead McCarthy: Stories by Kevin Barry*
When: June 26 through July 21 (previews June 26, 27, 28; press opening Saturday, June 29), 20 performances total
Where: Z Below, 470 Florida Street, San Francisco
Tickets: \$40 - \$65 (previews are sliding scale); Tickets at zspace.org/barry
Note: The Sunday June 30 and Thursday July 18 shows will be masked performances

High Res Images [HERE](#)

Word for Word's Off the Page staged reading series is the public's first look at pieces currently under consideration for upcoming productions. In this public staged reading format, audiences get to observe in real time the steps involved in the process of bringing a work from the page to the stage as the director works with the text and the readers. After, the audience is encouraged to engage in a conversation with us, which gives valuable feedback as we decide on the next steps of a work's development.

The *Off the Page* schedule is still being curated but the confirmed dates are:

- **April 15** - Three stories by Ron Rash; “Hard Times”; “The Night the New Jesus Fell to Earth”; “Sad Man in the Sky”; Directed by *Word for Word* Core Company Member Amy Kossow
- **April 23** - Offsite OTP at Town Hall Theatre Company in Lafayette; “The Coast of Leitrim”; Director [Paul Finocchiaro](#)
- **Sept 9** - TBA
- **October 21** - An Off the Page reading at Litquake!
- **December 16** - TBA

Among the authors under consideration for the above slots are: Mary Austin; Lauren Groff; Sally Rooney; Claire Keegan; Lysley Tenorio; Yxta Maya Murray; Maggie Shipstead

About Word for Word Performing Arts Company

Word for Word, a program of Z Space, is an ensemble whose mission is to tell great stories with elegant theatricality, staging performances of classic and contemporary fiction. We believe in the power of the short story to provide solace, compassion, and insight into our daily lives. We bring stories from diverse cultures to our diverse communities, and develop future audiences’ love for the printed and spoken word.

Co-Artistic Directors **JoAnne Winter** and **Susan Harloe** founded *Word for Word* Performing Arts Company in 1993 as part of the Artists in Residence program at The Z Space Studio (Z Space's original name). Harloe and Winter became *Word for Word's* Co-Artistic Directors and led the company together until Harloe's departure in September 2021. Winter currently still serves as Artistic Director alongside Associate Artistic Director **Vanessa Flores Chacko**.

In its vibrant history, *Word for Word* has performed over 100 stories by some of the world’s best writers. Many of these stories have been performed in front of the authors themselves. They perform regularly at Z Space and have toured extensively throughout California and France. <http://www.zspace.org/aboutwordforword>

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