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Joyce grandson in battle to ban Ulysses musical

Lucy Adams

THE grandson of James Joyce is trying to ban a musical adaptation of the celebrated Irish writer's most famous novel from the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

Molly Bloom, *A Musical Dream*, focuses on the candid monologue in the last chapter of *Ulysses*, in which Molly ponders her past sexual exploits. The epic novel was banned for 14 years in Britain because of this section.

Stephen Joyce, trustee and overseer of the Joyce estate, claims the masterpiece was meant to be a novel, not a musical, and should not be adapted. The Joyce estate claims that the musical turns Bloom into a circus act.

Joyce has written and telephoned Paul Gudgin, the Fringe director, in his attempts to close the show, which opens on Wednesday.

His letter says: "The estate . . . categorically refuses to grant permission for this type of adaptation. If such performances are to go ahead during the Edinburgh Fringe the estate of James Joyce will consider that such action constitutes flagrant breach of my grandfather's copyright and . . . take all necessary steps to defend these rights."

Gudgin refused to bow to the ultimatum and is determined that the show will remain in the programme.

Ulysses is Joyce's best known work. Published in 1922, it records a day in the life of three Dubliners. The following year 498 copies were seized by customs at Folkestone and destroyed

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because Molly's revelations were considered so obscene.

The musical version of Molly's lewd monologue was written by Anna Zapparoli, an Italian actress and singer, and her husband Mario Borciani. Zapparoli claims she took only eight sentences from the novel and tried to respect the content and spirit of the text.

"We tried to be as faithful to the text as we possibly could," she said. "Then we contacted the Joyce estate in October last year to notify it of our plans and offer a reasonable royalty, but it refused. It is absurd. The grandson has no legal grounds and wants to keep it all to himself, when this novel should be everybody's."

In February in a written response to Zapparoli, Sean Sweeney, an estate trustee, condemned the attempt "to treat Molly Bloom's monologue as if it were a circus act or jazz element".

According to previous copyright law, the rights to the use of a text remain within the family for 50 years after an author or artist has died. Joyce came out of copyright in 1991. In 1995 the law changed to extend copyright to 70 years.

According to the Authors' Society, the author is now in revived copyright. This means that those wishing to use parts of his work have to give advance notice and offer "reasonable" royalties.

The Joyce estate has successfully restricted the use of material in the past. Last May, Joyce stopped 23-year-old composer David Fennessy from using 18 words out of Finnegan's Wake.

Nora, the recently released film starring Ewan McGregor, could not use any part of Joyce's texts. Barry McGovern, the actor, cancelled a reading of Ulysses when Joyce wanted £27,000 rather than the nominal £20.

In 1997, when Ulysses was to be launched on the internet, Joyce wrote: "One can only wonder where all this will lead; who the likely next candidates for this type of mutilation will be.

Dramatists, poets, novelists and short story writers beware."

Next page: Newcomers must be able to speak Irish, insist locals

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10 October 2000

news

Joyce grandson fury over Fringe musical filth

By Iain S Bruce

Publication Date: Jul 30 2000

In the first controversy to hit the Edinburgh Fringe Festival this year, James Joyce's grandson and one of Italy's foremost classical actresses have clashed over a sexually explicit musical interpretation of the great Irish novelist's work.

Stephen James Joyce has demanded that Fringe Festival director Paul Gudgeon pull the plug on the play Molly Bloom - A Musical Dream. Inspired by the heroine from his grand father's seminal work Ulysses, the production, billed as an "adults only" affair, contains songs with titles such as Rap Of Spunk and Song Of Sucking.

As the beneficiary of his grandfather's estate, Joyce is entitled to royalty payments for projects based on the author's works. However, he is legally powerless to stop the show, which he describes as "a circus act or a jazz element in a jam session". Joyce has nonetheless been attempting to scupper the production, which has received rave reviews, since the musical's Milan debut early this year.

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Anna Zapparoli, the show's writer and star, has taken legal advice and steadfastly refused to accede to Joyce's demands. "The law is on my side, the Society of Authors is on my side and the festival is backing me also," she said. "He has the right to disagree with my interpretation, but I also have every right to express how his grandfather's works have inspired me. I will perform the show in Edinburgh and I would like to see Mr Joyce try and stop me."

The director confirmed that Joyce had made a "determined" effort to persuade him to cancel the production, but says it is not the Fringe Society's place sit in judgement over a particular show's merits.

Gudgin said: "Mr Joyce contacted me and was upset to say the least. He felt we should cancel the show, but I explained that as an umbrella organisation for the festival, we are unable to do that.

"I can appreciate that it is his grandfather's work and Mr Joyce is closely attached to it, but while protecting the name from exploitation is understandable, I don't believe he should be allowed to artistically influence individual performances."

The hullabaloo will not seem unfamiliar to regular festival observers. Every year, a handful of shows create a storm - such as 1999's "sacrilegious" Corpus Christi and 1987's Shopping & F***ing - and do well out of the resultant publicity.

While the Molly Bloom issue has raised the literary tone of such rows, there has

as yet been no local objection to the production. In previous years this would have been the role of Edinburgh moral crusader Moira Knox, but she has since retired from public life.

Gudgin added: "This is the first controversy of the year and I suppose that on previous experience we should expect more. It does seem like a situation tailored for Mrs Knox, but since she quit there has been nobody to take her place."

Certainly, the show's star appears to be thoroughly enjoying the spat and is determined to make it a central plank of her show's advertising. "I think I should probably send Mr Joyce a large bunch of roses as a thank you," said Zapparoli. "I have been talking to news papermen all day and cannot think any of this is going to harm my show."

When contacted by the Sunday Herald, Joyce declared he had "never heard of the woman," before putting down the phone. Further calls went unanswered, but a history of tireless devotion to his grandfather's memory has been revealed.

In 1992, the unveiling of a plaque at the London house where the novelist married and lived for six months was sabotaged in a dramatic fashion by Joyce when the retired civil servant grabbed the microphone and made an angry speech.

He told the crowd: "I am James Joyce's grandson. Nobody saw fit to invite me and my wife here today. Yesterday, in Zurich, I stood beside my grandfather's grave and told him I was coming here. 'Good,' he said, 'you do that.' I take

exception with what has been said that Joyce wrote four major works. I can count seven or eight, but maybe I can't count."

Joyce then produced a bottle of Neuchatel and declared that it was his grandfather's favourite wine, not Fendant, as is often written.

Molly Bloom - A Musical Dream: Venue 34, Chambers Street, August 2-27

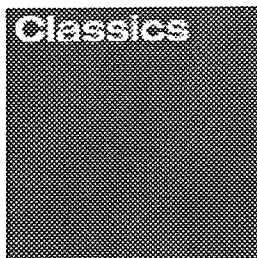


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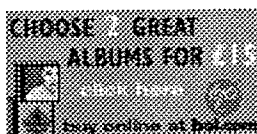
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Joyce bans Molly's musical climax

by Vanessa Thorpe, Arts Correspondent
Sunday July 30, 2000



Molly Bloom, the promiscuous literary heroine who has caused more scandal than any other character in fiction, is in trouble again. A musical version of her sexually explicit monologue at the close of James Joyce's 1922 novel, *Ulysses*, has been banned by Joyce's grandson.

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Molly Bloom: A Musical Dream is due to open next week on the Edinburgh Fringe but a letter from Stephen James Joyce to festival director Paul Guddin has demanded that the cabaret show be pulled. The reclusive grandson, who lives in Paris and jealously guards the family literary estate, claims the show turns the 'masterful' words of the book into a 'circus act'.

Writing initially to Anna Zapparoli, the Italian actress and singer who is to play Molly, he argued that 'The listener/viewer should not have their attention distracted by music, Molly lying on a piano...'

The first edition of *Ulysses* was published in Paris and denounced by the church for its sexual content. It was banned in Britain and the US. Zapparoli and her husband, composer Mario Borciani, have developed the show in Milan and plan to portray Bloom reclining on a grand piano rather than on the bed in which she conventionally delivers the bawdy monologue.

many critics to describe it as the greatest novel ever written.



Joyces' novel focused on Dublin life

The musical centres around the last chapter of the work in which Molly recalls her past bawdy exploits.

Its sexually provocative contents led to a 14-year ban on the book in Britain.

Now Mr Joyce, who oversees the writer's estate, has called for a ban on the show, which opens at C Venue, in Chambers Street, on 2 August.

In a letter to the fringe director, Paul Gudgin, Mr Joyce said the work was contrary to the wishes of the author and demanded that the show be cancelled.

Mr Joyce said: "The estate . . . categorically refuses to grant permission for this type of adaptation.

"If such performances are to go ahead during the Edinburgh Fringe the estate of James Joyce will consider that such action constitutes flagrant breach of my grandfather's copyright and . . . take all necessary steps to defend these rights."

“It's so ironic, isn't it? Mr Joyce is trying to ban us and yet his own grandfather was banned”

Anna Zapparoli

However, the show's promoters said Mr Joyce has no legal case and the show would go on.

The show has been created by the Italian actress and singer Anna

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Zapparoli and her husband Mario Borciani and because of copyright laws in Italy, was restricted to a workshop production in Milan.

Ms Zapparoli said Mr Joyce was seeking to take unjustifiable action against a production which was remaining faithful to the artist's original work.

She told BBC News Online: "It's so ironic, isn't it? Mr Joyce is trying to ban us and yet his own grandfather was banned."

Ms Zapparoli and her husband wrote to Mr Joyce to inform him that they were planning a production and to offer "a reasonable royalty".

She has insisted that the copyright has expired.

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