# **Connolly: The Musical Copyright Denis Foley 2021 – (1.14.22 UG)**

# **High Concept:** This musical portrays a young Irish immigrant trying to organize American and ethnic Irish workers against greedy monopolies. James Connolly confronts powerful enemies both socialist and capitalist. He returns to Ireland determined to unite Protestant and Catholic workers in Ulster as he had with Irish, Italian ,and Black dock workers in NYC and replace 700 years of British rule with a workers’ republic.

Play Characters eight actors in interchangeable character roles. They also are dancers, musicians and singers.)

James Connolly, Thomas Connolly (brother) Lillie Connolly (wife), Mona Connolly (ghost, daughter), Nora Connolly (daughter), Thomas Connolly (older brother) ,William Martin Murphy, Daniel De Leon, Michael Collins, Winifred Carney, Maude Gonne, Sister Maire, two schoolboys, Queen Victoria

Mediums:

Irish step and American dance, dramatic and comedy dialogue. Lyrics and tune are Irish traditional ballad, Sean nós ,American ragtime, Early 20th Century Union and Fenian tunes , Celtic Rock , Blue Grass and tunes suitable for Irish dancing.

Projection with a background screen with historic photographs from films the “The Exiles Journey” and” A Storm of Strangers” as well holdings from National Library of Ireland and U. S. Library of Congress achieves . The screen has historic quotes from Connolly himself, his daughter Nora, William Martin Murphy, Cardinal Logue and General Sir John Maxwell as well as headlines from the New York Times, New York Call, and London newspapers. Twelve exhibit panels from the Mohawk- Hudson Industrial Gateway Museum’s “*Turas Na Deoraithe* -The Exiles Journey” are projected .

**Scene 1: Heaven**

*Stage in darkness. Sounds of marching, then gunshots. Loud, unsettling noise.* *Spotlight on apron discovering Mona in heaven, doing a wash.*

**Mona***:*

*Conas ata sibh go leir. Seo an sceal Seamus OConghaile. Me name* is Mona Connolly. I’m the oldest of seven children. My mother was Lillie. We called her “beautiful little mother”.She was tiny and fair. The neighbor woman was always jealous and it gave me a giggle.

But this is the story of me *Dadie,* James Connolly. Yuv probably seen that name on Dublin’s main rail station. Da led the Easter Dublin Uprising of April 1916, captured the GPO with his union’s Citizen Army, and signed the Proclamation declaring Ireland a Republic, ending 700 years of English rule

Our life was always hard and food dear. Da was born in an Edinburgh Irish slum, in Cowgate. The Scots called the ghetto ”Little Ireland”. We moved to Dublin but the family emigrated to the U.S. because Da lost his job as Secretary of the Irish Socialist Party. I remember his big laugh when he said, “I was the only Socialist thrown out of Ireland by other socialists”. His heart broke when none of his comrades saw him off at the dock. Even in America his former Socialist Labor Party mentor Daniel De Leon attacked for not denouncing the Pope and religion as Karl Marx and De Leon. Dan informed the Wobblies “Connolly is a Jesuit spy and police informer , but the Wobblies stood by Da and he kept his union job.

Ya see me washin’… Well, I’m in heaven now and that’s what I do, and I’m sure as proud to be doin’ it!

*Spot out. Lights up.*

**Scene 2** Cowgate, Edinburg, Scotland

A man appears singing Sean nós

*“Well, looky-doo, welcome to Cowgate!*

*We’re sittin’ here waitin’ for you,*

*But what are we doin’ in Scotland,*

*When we’re Irish folk through and through?*

*The absentee English landlords*

*Evicted us to make way for sheep*

*Where will me kiddies sleep*

*Where l will thee*

*kiddies sleep*

A woman joins

*What yer seein’ before ya’s a filthy den.*

*We all came to this”Little Ireland” for a job.*

*Instead Scots and Orange men*

*Parade through the street a mob*

Two more join and four sing in unison

*The absentee English landlords*

*Evicted us to make way for sheep*

*Where will me kiddies sleep*

*Where will thee kiddies sleep*

*Away with ye Into the bog*

*Behind the hedgerow is*

*Where your kiddies may sleep*

Words R. Jones and D. Foley 2021

Music is replaced by strange commotion sounds.

The full company enters and is moving about in a daze. Some speak out.

**Yong Jim:** Me *daddie* has the cough and me *mamie* the fever

Voice #1: I’m in a tenement over to Henrietta St. There’s over 50 poor souls crowded into three floors!

Voice #2: I’ve got me three babes and two cough from TB.

Voice #3: Me and me bro underbid each other for the same job. I got it. I also got me a black eye….I deserved it!

Jig Music; a solo soft flute going louder with fiddle and then Hard Shoe dance-slow then faster to Celtic Rock. Air –“Boys of Wexford”

Celtic band sings “Freedoms Pioneers”

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**Our feet upon the upward path**

**Are set where none may tread**

**Save those who to the rich man's wrath**

**Dare turn rebellious head**

**And heart as brave no cringing slave**

**In all our ranks appears**

**Our proudest boast, in Labour's host**

**Were Freedom's Pioneers.**

**CHO: O, slaves may beg and cowards whine.**

**We scorn their foolish fears.**

**Be this our plan, to lead the van,**

**With Freedom's Pioneers,**

**For Liberty is no sin**

**Too long upon our toil were built**

**The palaces of power**

**When at our touch those forts of guilt**

**Would crumble in an hour,**

**Now each day brings on swiftest wings**

**To their unwilling ears,**

**The shouts that greet our marching feet**

**'Tis Freedom's Pioneers!**

**The rich man's hate, the rich man's pride**

**Have held us long in awe**

**Our right to life is denied,**

**And wealth rules the law**

**But man shall bow no longer now,**

**But welcome with our cheers**

**The ringing stroke, to break his yoke**

**With Freedom's Pioneers.**

**CHO: O, slaves may beg and cowards whine.**

**We scorn their foolish fears.**

**Be this our plan, to lead the van,**

**With Freedom's Pioneers,**

**For Liberty is no sin**

Words J. Connolly 1908 adopted D. Foley 2021

and plays traditional music for hard shoe as cast dances ; dancers march off in line (1:30)

**Scene 3: Classroom, Heaven and Hell**

“Young Jim” (Cowgate photo projection morphs to classroom. JC, 2 boys, nun.)

**Young Jim**: Whatcha doin’?

**Liam:** I need the answer to number 3….

**Sean:** Yup, and I need ‘em for 3 and 4!

Alright, it’s time for recess. (With a smile) Not that any of yuz was workin’!

(Boys start to exit, see JC pressing a newspaper to his nose. Boy 2 grabs the newspaper and reads.)

**Sean:** “There are monster meetings of tenant farmers in County Mayo protesting…elections?...”

*Young Jim:* ‘Evictions’ not elections. They’re throwin’ us off our land…starvin

’ us in the bog and hedgerows!

**Liam:** Why do you care?! We live in Scotland! Yer always readin’ newspapers and thinkin’ and plannin’…James Connolly, the boy who changed the world!

**Sean:** Come on, Jim! It’s recess time! Besides, you can barely see what yer readin’ as yer blind as a bat! (JC grabs back the paper and paces. Boys exit laughing.

Sister hands young Jim his glasses and does the sign of the cross

(Jim exits)

Sister Maura enters center stage)

**Maura**:

*What is this fire that burns in him?*

*The want, the need he must set free*

*To help, to change, to save, to lead*

*With head and heart he will succeed!*

*He is so young to have such zeal,*

*But the child will grow, learn and feel,.*

*He’ll sow freedom’s seed and lead the way,*

*And they will know his name someday…..*

*You’ll find the guiding light within*

*The fire to fight and make wrongs right*

*To want to live free is no sin!*

*Jim, my laddie tis destiny*

*To want to live free is no sin!*

Sister Maura exits.

Lights down, lights up on Mona stage right

**Mona:**

Damm those angels! They are everywhere.

She squats the angels as on would flies.

Sorry St Peter. (She looks behind her back)

Look at me. (She continues washing) There is so few good workers in heaven nowadays. So, St. Peter is always asking me to clean up after those damm angels. Flying around crashing into Michelangelo’s statues up in heaven. The dirtiest creature God ever created. And they’re not too bright either. The Father sends them to earth just to get a minute’s peace. Always basking in Divine light and creating havoc.

Washing got me here so let me to my Maker’s work.

Screen: Pictures of William Martin Murphy, his home, his family and his grave stone. Photos of De Valera and Michael Collins, Collin’s funeral and headlines of his Assassination ,Pictures of Dublin 1913 Strike and editorial of William Martin Murphy in Irish Independent

If you hear a groan or two it’s poor William Martin Murphy or Eamon DeValera. They did not fare well with St. Peter. But I bring them water every day. For sure Da never saw eye to eye on earth with William Martin Murphy, but he is still an Irishman.

As for Dev, well he got Michael Collins shot. The same Mic Collins who in the GPO proclaimed “I’d follow James Connolly through the fires of Hell. And helped Winifred Carney put a wounded Da on a stretcher to evacuate the GPO and flee to Moore Street as burning rafters of the General Post Office collapsed upon the rebels. Mic is here in Heaven, and Dev below, but that’s another story.

You hear loud moan.

**Mona**: If you hear a groan or two it’s poor William Martin Murphy. He did not fare well with St. Peter. As Jaysus preached “It is easier for a rich man to pass through the eye of a camel then reach my Father’s house.”

**WMM:** (from offstage, overhearing Mona and entering to center stage) Well I had to try!

**Mona:** You did.

**WMM:** It had been two-thousand years! Surely they’d have had updated the policies on camels and needles and whatnot!

**Mona:** I’d have thought.

**WMM**: Two-thousand years! And what do we know? Maybe needles were twenty feet tall back then? Or maybe the camels were so wee a dozen could dance on your finger. Who knows?

**Mona:** Possible.

**WMM:** Well I’ll tell you, I wasn’t just going to sit there, take what I was handed -

**Mona:** Handed in terms of Our Maker’s gospel?

**WMM: ...**yes, yes, I wasn’t just going to accept it, sit around, do nothing -bea surin- not give it to me. I’m no socialist.

[On screen, we see pictures other pictures of William Martin Murphy, his limousine his home, his family, his grave.

[WMM enters on the far-right of the stage. He’s wearing a tuxedo and a top hat on top of a Trump-like wig]

**WMM:** facing Mona.

I thank you Miss Connolly. They buried you, Mona, in an unmarked pauper’s grave. I got a fine marbled stone. But I have to wear this scratchy trap until the trumpet’s call.

**Mona:** They buried you in the hat? How long was that coffin?

**WMM:** to audience

I heard of Jim Connolly Mona’s *dadie* after he came to Dublin. He was an agitator and published a rag “the Irish Worker”.

**Mona: “**The Worker” documented your cruelty-twas a mortal sin forcing the working man into poverty. that Da wrote Dublin had more cholera then Calcutta.

**WMM:**

Our clash came to a head in the Dublin Lockout of 1913 when he and Big Jim Larkin led the strikers and I the employers. When Jim and the rabble Citizens’ Army seized the Post Office on the 1916 Easter Monday I was no loafer. “Shoot the looters and rebels. Execute Commandant General Connolly and the so-called President of the Provisional Republic, the schoolmaster Padraig Pearce. And God Save the King and all the Irish Soldiers on the front in France!” I couldn’t have been clearer. For surin it was treason. I had a bank to protect and to have the Irish Independent, the world’s largest circulated daily to publish The Proclamation of the Republic was madness . Imagine giving women the right to their own property and the right to vote. Heresy! Jaesus! Cardinal Logue himself agreed . Next they’d let nuns throw away their habits, girls serve on the altar and a woman give out Communion.

**WMM:**

At the judgement there were lady angels. My heart sank. Deep down I’d always suspected the Lord himself was a little to the left. But to actually see him and St. Peter, sitting cross-legged on the grass talking about love all day. T’was enough to make me heave up.

The love ins are worser then those little devil flies that have been at me for the last 99 years and the damm heat. Then there is the Divil himself to deal with.

**WMM:-** in a long pantomime as swats flies

Those damm little divils.

**WMM:** sings in Sean Nós so- a comic ditty of sorts

*We, we, we.*

*Them, them.*

*we are so tall*

*When you all are on bended knee*

*We are rich up above*

*They below, a fear upon them .*

*In the wet bog below*

*No jobs, wages cut*

*To hell with the union*

*Jail the Socialist*

*Them, them, them*

*You, you, you!*

*Nigger, Mic, Jew*

*Nuttin -for you*

*All for me.*

*Me, me, me!*

*Me the master, you the unfree*

*Stay on your bended knee*

*That’s the way it has been*

*And has to be*

*All for me.*

*Me, me, me!*

words:D. Foley 2021 Tune: Celtic Rock tune adopted from J. J. Hughes Watchword of Labour 1908

A loud train whistle blows

**Mona:**

*No brakeman, a new engineer*

*A new dawn is here*

*T’s no sin to be free,*

*Mr. William Martin Murphy*

*For now and to eternity*

*Hear the whistle,*

*Feel the fear*

*The ground is shaking for the mighty*

*The freedom train speeds past the station.*

*No brakeman, a new engineer*

*A new dawn is here*

*T’s no sin to be free,*

*Mr. William Martin Murphy*

*For now and to eternity*

words: D. Foley Celtic Rock tune adopted from J. J. Hughes “Watchword of Labour” 1908

Cast joins Mona center stage they do a reel around WMM

Then a slip jig in pairs

The Band sings

*Some men, faint-hearted, ever seek  
Our program to retouch  
And will insist, whene’er they speak  
That we demand too much  
’Tis passing strange, yet I declare  
Such statements give me mirth  
For our demands most moderate are:  
"We only want the Earth."  
  
“Be moderate,” the*[*trimmers*](https://genius.com/22102970/Lorcan-mac-mathuna-we-only-want-the-earth/Trimmers)*cry  
Who dread the tyrants’ thunder  
“You ask too much and people fly  
From you aghast in wonder.”  
’Tis passing strange, for I declare  
Such statements give me mirth  
For our demands most moderate are:  
"We only want the Earth."  
  
The Earth, the Earth  
We only want the Earth  
The Earth, the Earth  
We only want the Earth  
  
Our masters all a godly crew  
Whose hearts throb for the poor  
Their sympathies assure us, too  
If our demands were fewer  
Most generous souls! But please observe  
What they enjoy from birth  
Is all we ever had the nerve  
To ask, that is, the Earth*

Words J. Connolly 1908 Tune: Celtic Rock: “Be Moderate”