

The Hard Man at The King's 31 March to 9 April

☒ Celebrated Scots stage and screen star Alex Ferns, who chillingly portrayed one of television's most hated villains, Trevor Morgan in Eastenders, is set to play the part of Johnnie Byrne in a major revival of Tom McGrath's and Jimmy Boyle's *The Hard Man* for the Scottish Theatres Consortium this spring.

The Hard Man is based on the early years and subsequent imprisonment of Jimmy Boyle, once reputed to be the most violent man in Scotland. In 1967 he was sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of another gangland figure, a crime that Boyle has always denied committing. During his incarceration in the Special Unit of Barlinnie Prison, he turned to art and wrote *A Sense of Freedom*, his autobiography.

In 1977 he co-wrote *The Hard Man* with Tom McGrath. It premiered at the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh to great acclaim from audiences and critics alike. It was described by *The Scotsman* as 'the most stunning play seen in Scotland' that year. Tom McGrath was a radical Scottish poet and playwright until his untimely death in 2009, known best for his plays *The Hard Man*, *Animals* and *Laurel and Hardy*.

The Hard Man is a fast moving story set in a variety of locations on Clydeside and in Scottish prisons. The characters are a heady mixture of accurate observation and comic strip cartoon – and the style, an unnerving blend of vaudeville and violence.

Brutal, visceral and as powerfully relevant as ever 2011's production will be directed by Phillip Breen. He leads a creative team that includes Designer Max Jones and Sound Designer Graeme Sutherland, reuniting a creative team that

last worked together on Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker* at Glasgow's Citizens Theatre.

Alex Ferns said:

"The name Jimmy Boyle was very much part of my upbringing and to play this part is exciting and daunting at the same time. I hope I will do justice to Tom McGrath's name and his work."

Producer John Stalker said:

"The Hard Man is still very much a play for today and covers much the same territory on stage as the film *NEDS* does on screen. The Hard Man is, of course, seen live and appears in horrifying 3D. We are thrilled that Alex Ferns will be part of bringing it to new generations of theatregoers. Both his performance and the play is a 'must see' for fans of classic Scottish theatre this year."

The Hard Man plays at the King's Theatre, Edinburgh: 31 March to 9 April

For further background information please visit <http://www.thehardman.co.uk>

Listings:

The Hard Man
King's Theatre, Edinburgh

Thu 31 March – Sat 9 April

7.30pm /Wed & Sat 2.30pm

Thu 31 March & Fri 1 April Previews

Tickets: Previews & Sat 2 April £15.50 & £18.00 / Matinees
£14.50 – £23.00

Eves £16.50/ £27.50

Post-Show Talk Thu 5 April

Booking: visit <http://www.kingstheatre.org.uk> or call Box Office on 0131 529 6000