

## **Spotlight Publications**

# **Confessional**

**A drama in one act**  
**Written by David Weir**

## Confessional

### CAST

#### Kevin

**Ignatius**, a humourless Catholic priest, Kevin's uncle

#### Kevin's Grandad

#### Kevin's Dad

**Mr Marcantonio**, a schoolteacher

**Archbishop**, spiritual director of a seminary

#### Kevin's Mum

#### Kevin's Granny

**Catherine Quinnan**, the object of Kevin's desire

Three actors play all the parts. The actor playing Kevin is always Kevin, at varying ages; the other two, one male, one female, switch roles (and ages) as scenes demand.

Kevin is the grown-up narrator, required to revert to various of his teenage years.

The male actor plays five parts: Ignatius, Grandad; Dad; Mr Marcantonio; and the Archbishop. The female actor plays three roles: Mum; Granny; and Catherine.

There are references to specific places in Edinburgh, where this was originally set, which can be adapted as required. Princes Street is the main shopping street. Cockburn Street is very trendy. Clermiston is posh.

And the Scottish references can be adapted, too. Being rubbish at football apparently works just as well south of the Border!

Sets: various

Time: 1980s

*Darkness. Music – Ave Maria, say, but something suitably reverent*

*A stage, empty but for two chairs side by side. On them, are Kevin and Fr Ignaius*

**Kevin** Bless me, Uncle, for I have sinned. It has been three weeks since my last confession.

**Ignatius** I'm not your uncle.

**Kevin** Yes, you are.

**Ignatius** Yes, I am. But I'm also your priest, and that's the particular hat I'm wearing right now.

**Kevin** You're not/ wearing

**Ignatius** And/ don't say I'm not wearing a hat. You know perfectly well I'm speaking metaphorically, don't you? *(Pause)* Don't you?

**Kevin:** Sorry. I thought you were questioning rhetorically.

**Ignatius** Very clever. Not very funny. Now, shall we get on?

**Kevin** Could I not make my confession to somebody else?

**Ignatius** Why?

**Kevin** You're my uncle.

**Ignatius** Kevin, when I sit here to dispense the sacrament, I am not your uncle, but God's anointed.

**Kevin** Has he not anointed anybody else?

**Ignatius** Shall we proceed?

**Kevin** I usually go to Father McCluskey. He never gives me more than three Hail Marys, by the way.

**Ignatius** Young Father McCluskey is away. On retreat. And I will give you penance appropriate to your confession.

**Kevin** He's been away a wee while now, hasn't he?

**Ignatius** Three weeks, as well you know, since that was your last confession.

**Kevin** Is it true he's not a priest any more?

**Ignatius** Pay no heed to the babble of schoolyard tongues, Kevin. Young Father McCluskey is grappling with his conscience. Such as it is.

*Kevin stands and addresses the audience directly*

**Kevin** We didn't approve of 'young' Father McCluskey, and rightly so, as it turned out, because it was less his conscience he was grappling with than a surprisingly receptive Miss Parmenter, the new RE teacher just up from England at St Joseph of Arimathea's Secondary Modern School, with whom, eventually, he ran away to the Isle of Skye where they bought a smallholding and raised three strapping sons, to whom they bequeathed a substantial debt and the names Lachlan, Torquil and Donalbain. Poor wee souls.

*Kevin returns to his chair*

**Ignatius** If you absolutely insist on seeing someone else, I could fetch Father Latto.

**Kevin** Father Latto?

**Ignatius** Father Latto will be free.

**Kevin** I'm not surprised. He's raving mad.

**Ignatius** He is a highly distinguished theologian of extremely independent mind.

**Kevin** That's what I said.

**Ignatius** It's Father Latto or it's me.

**Kevin** I guess it'll have to be you, then. *(Pause: straight to audience)* I was not going to be alone in a confined space the size of a confessional box with Father Latto, and neither, let me tell you, was any other altar boy. But neither, to be fair, was any sentient human being, because the man was away with the fairies and smelled like a city centre bus shelter on a Sunday morning. *(Pause)* Oh, by the way, look, just, while we're at it, let me clear something up. In these troubled modern times of ours, after two or three minutes of all this, you're probably out there thinking "1980s? Catholic Priests? Altar boys? Here we go again." Only we're not. Here we don't go. Not this time. There was plenty of that about, no doubt about it, no doubt about it at all. But nothing like that ever happened to me, so this one's not going there and you can sit back and relax and not have to worry about having to listen to any of that kind of thing.

**Ignatius** It's Father Latto or it's me.

**Kevin** I guess it'll have to be you, then.

**Ignatius** Shall we proceed?

**Kevin** Fine, fine. *(Bows his head, as Ignatius composes himself to listen. Then doesn't.)* Only it kind of bothers me, that you're sort of two things in one, though, really, aren't you? My uncle and my priest.

**Ignatius** That is the scenario, yes.

**Kevin** That makes you one less than God, I suppose.

**Ignatius** We're all less than God, Kevin.

**Kevin** No, that's not what I meant. I meant, you're two in one, but God, well, God's three isn't he, three-in-one like the Shamrock? Or a Neopolitan?

**Ignatius** What are you talking about?

**Kevin** Strawberry, vanilla and chocolate, all in the one block. Magic.

**Ignatius** Is this one of your attempts to be funny?

**Kevin** Just exploring the tenets of our theology, Father.

**Ignatius** Try remembering that blasphemy is a sin, just for a moment, and shall we get on?

**Kevin** Aye, right enough. Mind you, it's as good a time as any to commit one.

**Ignatius** There is no good time to commit a sin, Kevin.

**Kevin** Even if someone's murdering Mum?

**Ignatius** Self-defence is not a sin. As well you know.

**Kevin** Fair enough.

**Ignatius** Tempting a priest to strangle you with his stole, however, very probably is a sin.

**Kevin** I hear what you say. Still, if you're going to do a sin, then right before your confession's a pretty good time, eh? Cos you're going to get forgiven pretty quick and it doesn't stick on your soul for long.

**Ignatius** It doesn't work that way.

**Kevin** (*light-bulb moment*) That's why confession's always on a Saturday morning, straight after you go out on a Friday night!

**Ignatius** Do you confine your sins to Friday nights, Kevin?

**Kevin** No, no. I'm pretty much a seven-day sinner.

**Ignatius** The holy sacrament of confession doesn't work that way, as well you know. Forgiveness comes only with genuine repentance.

**Kevin** Even so—

**Ignatius** God knows when we are insincere in our atonement. He also realises when we're taking the mickey. Now, do you want to make your confession, or don't you?

**Kevin** Frankly, I don't.

*Kevin rises and addresses the audience directly*

Frankly, I didn't. I hadn't wanted to right from the start but he kept on asking until I felt I couldn't say no. I mean, who wants to confess to their uncle? That's my mum's brother we're talking about. But he wouldn't let it go. And all that rubbish about him being two people in one and the sanctity of the confessional seal? Like he wasn't going to pass on the juicy stuff? Yeah, right! Of course he was. This was the man who found me reading the Guardian one morning and told my mum, bless her, that I was a wee communist.

*Kevin steps aside as Ignatius, and MUM, fortyish, take over. Ignatius no longer has his stole on*

**Ignatius** He's a wee communist, you know.

**Mum** Is he? Ach, well, I expect it's just a phase he's going through.

**Ignatius** It's no joking matter, Theresa. Give me the boy until he is seven and I'll give you the man.

**Mum** He's sixteen.

**Ignatius** The principle is the same.

**Mum** Aye, well, principles are all very well in theory.

**Ignatius** Principles are what we must live by, Theresa.

**Mum** Aye, but you can't eat them, can you? What is a wee communist, anyway?

**Ignatius** They believe in no God and no authority, and no rules.

**Mum** Is that a fact?

**Ignatius** They want everyone to be the same, no property, no wealth.

**Mum** No bosses? No posh folk?

**Ignatius** They'd reduce us all to the same level. Have us all dress the same, in a uniform that bleaches all character.

**Mum** Like black suits and cassocks?

**Ignatius** No, not like black suits and cassocks. Boiler suits and androgyny.

**Mum** Easy to clean.

**Ignatius** What?

**Mum** Boiler suits. Easy to clean. Stick them all in on a high temperature and away you go. (*Pause*) You know, I might be a bit of a wee communist myself.

*Ignatius and Mum depart and Kevin addresses the audience. As he does, Mum returns with Grandad, who has a sheaf of old newspaper cuttings in his pockets*

**Kevin** Break that confessional seal and it's going to get back. It is, really it is. Your sin will find you out, Ignatius. You know the old joke: if you want some news spreading, telephone, telegraph or tell my mum. Cos the first thing she's going to do is tell my grandad.

**Grandad** Communist? Good for him. I knew that laddie had his head screwed on right.

**Mum** Ignatius is awful worried about him, Dad. Are you not awful worried about him?

**Grandad** I am not. A boy should believe any old rubbish he wants when he's Kevin's age. UFOs. The *Mary Celeste*. The Prophecies of Nostradamus. All grist to the mill of the confused adolescent mind. Ignatius's entire bother is he never got past believing a torrid brew of nonsense and superstition and look at the state of him.

**Kevin** My grandfather! Who art a heathen. The family atheist. Well, lapsed atheist, actually.

**Mum** You're a lapsed atheist?

**Grandad** You see, I figure, you only argue there's no God if you accept the possibility there might be one. And I don't accept that possibility, so I've lapsed.

**Kevin** Unfortunately, the atheism went with a certain obsessionism. As they say, not believing in God doesn't necessarily mean believing in nothing. In Grandad's case, it pretty much means believing in anything.

**Mum** But look at all the rubbish you do believe, Dad: Astronauts from other planets built the pyramids; there's a lost city of Atlantis.

**Grandad** That's just common sense.

**Kevin** You believe Scotland'll win the World Cup.

**Grandad** Aye, well. Nobody's perfect. *(Pause)* Now, if we've stopped worrying about Kevin's communistic leanings, can I show you some newspaper cuttings I've found that prove Elvis Presley's alive and well and living in Dalgety Bay?

**Mum** Is it that time already, Dad? I'd best be off.

*Mum runs. Grandad shrugs and potters*

**Kevin** Grandad passed it on to my Gran, of course, but she's never been much of a one for grasping the right end of a stick.

*Enter Granny, wearing a cardigan/hairnet, possibly with an upside-down walking stick*

**Granny** He's a whit?

**Grandad** A wee communist. Ignatius says he's a wee communist.

**Granny** Kevin? Our Kevin?

**Grandad** And what do you make of that, then?

**Granny** Kevin's not wee. He's five foot ten if he's an inch.

*Exit Grandad, shaking his head. Granny takes out a tape measure and measures Kevin*

**Kevin** What you doing, Gran?

**Granny** Our Ignatius says you're not tall enough.

*Granny exits. Kevin rejoins Ignatius, who has returned in an alb and hands Kevin a surplice, which he puts on as he speaks*

**Kevin** My grandad never had much time for my Uncle Ignatius -- yeah, Ignatius, really; it's not his proper name, that's Allan, but in the order he was in you had to have another name that wasn't your own to prove you'd given yourself up to God, or something like that. Trouble with poor old Uncle Ignatius is that the poor man's never, ever had a sense of humour, never seen a joke, never figured out why everyone just takes the piss out of him all the livelong day. Life is hard and life is serious in Uncle Ignatius's particular heaven, and he never could understand why the rest of us couldn't appreciate that jokes were the work of the devil. His other trouble is he thinks being a priest is the finest, greatest, noblest calling that man ever had. And he wants me to be one, too. And Uncle Ignatius, whatever else you say about him, never, never, never gives up trying. If at first he don't succeed, Robert the Bruce has nothing on him.

*Kevin, now in his surplice, stands by Ignatius as Ignatius dispenses communion wafers to a line of communicants. These are, of course, imaginary, except that, about five down the line, Catherine Quinnan, 16, is waiting like a detonator. Catherine has a lot of hair*

**Ignatius** Body of Christ. *(Pause)* Body of Christ. *(Pause)* Body of Christ.

**Kevin** So, this is me when I was sixteen—oldest altar boy in christendom. And believe you me, the day you fall in love you don't want to be standing on the steps of a church wearing a cassock and surplice that were a bit on the snug side even when you were twelve.

**Ignatius** Body of Christ. *(Pause)* Body of Christ.

*And into the light and into Kevin's bored vision steps Catherine Quinnan. His eyes widen, his jaw drops*

**Kevin** *(very loud)* Body of Christ!

*Catherine smiles sweetly. Ignatius's eyes might explode from their sockets. Catherine steps away, and, glancing back over her shoulder, licks her lips and tosses her hair. Kevin lowers the communion plate to cover his lap. Ignatius recovers himself*

**Ignatius** *(maintaining that steady, holy tone)* Body of Christ. *(Pause)* Body of Christ *(pause)* A word with you in the sacristy after mass, Kevin. *(Pause)* Body of Christ.

*Kevin removes the surplice as Ignatius also disrobes*

**Kevin** Sixteen years old and still an altar boy. Still doing penance for the sins of ten year-old me.

*He becomes ten, and Ignatius treats him as such*

**Ignatius** Would you like to be an altar boy, Kevin?

**Kevin** Can I think about it, Father?

**Ignatius** What is there to think about, young man?

**Kevin** It looks pure dead boring, Uncle Allan.

*Horror and eye-popping from the priest. Alarm from Kevin, as the priest backs off to be replaced by Mum*

**Mum** You said, what??

**Kevin** My mum was black-affronted, her personal list of commandments being topped by // Thou shalt not //

*As Mum takes over this speech mid-way, Kevin mouths the words along with her; he's heard it a lot of times*

**Mum** Thou shalt not // be cheeky to your Uncle Ignatius even if he is called Allan really and it's easy to take the piss out of him and I can do it whenever I want cos I'm his sister and I've known him since he wouldn't go to sleep with the light off, but thou can't, sonny Jim, because thou're only ten years old and a cheeky wee snipe and no mistake.

## **Confessional By David Weir**

Performed at Oran Mor's Play, Pie and Pint, starring Jonathan Watson, and winner of the Scottish Community Drama Association's Glen McKemmie award for best depiction of Scottish Life and Character.

Three actors: nine roles in a fast-paced coming-of-age comedy

Kevin's a teenager who wants nothing more than a drift through life and the undying love of The One And Only Girl In All The World. But while Kevin sleeps and dreams, his Uncle Ignatius, the Man in Black, has other plans for his future.

A world of priests and teachers, mums and dads, school discos and hormones, and that first swig of beer, and how hard it is to be good when there's girls, oh yes, when there's girls.

Running time: 40 minutes.