# Imelda May brings The Mother of All The Behans to Belfast for first time this August



Imelda May, the renowned Dublin-born musician and multi-talented artist, is set to bring her acclaimed one-woman show, *The Mother of All The Behans*, to Belfast for the first time this August. The show, which has enjoyed two sell-out seasons in Dublin, casts May in the role of Kathleen Behan—the fiery, resilient matriarch and mother of famous Irish writers Brendan, Brian, and Dominic Behan. The production, adapted and directed by Peter Sheridan from Brian Behan’s memoir, presents an intimate and vibrant portrait of Kathleen’s extraordinary life marked by activism, motherhood, love, and enduring hardship.

May’s portrayal of Kathleen Behan captures the essence of a woman who was not only a force of nature in her own right but also an unsung hero in Irish social and political history. Kathleen’s life journey included dramatic episodes such as being placed in an orphanage at a young age, widowhood during the great influenza epidemic while pregnant, and homelessness with seven children. Despite these challenges, Kathleen’s indomitable spirit and wit shone through—a quality May feels personally connected to, reflecting on her own mother and grandmother’s resilience. The performance beautifully intertwines song and story, highlighting Kathleen’s vast repertoire of traditional Irish songs she preserved and performed into her old age, a facet often overshadowed in her legacy.

Following critical acclaim for its engaging storytelling and musical depth, the show promises Belfast audiences an evening rich with laughter, tears, and music. May, who recently supported Sting on his Forest Live UK tour, emphasises her affection for Belfast, expressing anticipation for the performances and the lively local post-show scene. The Mother of All The Behans will run at the Grand Opera House from August 18 to 23, with prior showings in other Irish venues including the Everyman Theatre Cork, where it has similarly been met with praise for its heartfelt depiction of Irish cultural and family history.

Imelda May’s artistic journey spans much beyond the stage. Known initially for her rockabilly and jazz-infused music career, she has collaborated with eminent artists such as Bono, Rod Stewart, and Van Morrison, and expanded her creative horizons into television and film. Recent ventures include her roles in films like the sea shanty sequel *Fisherman's Friends: One and All* and forthcoming releases with Pierce Brosnan and others slated for 2025. Parallel to her theatrical ventures, May dedicates significant energy to spotlighting overlooked Irish women and cultural figures, exemplified by her documentary *Lily and Lolly Yeats: The Forgotten Yeats Sisters*. She is also preparing a new documentary exploring Irish language and song, scheduled for autumn release, and plans to return to the recording studio next year.

Balancing these diverse projects, May credits art and storytelling as essential sources of healing and connection, reflecting a lifelong passion that began in her early teens in Dublin’s Liberties. Always creatively restless, she embraces each new venture as part of her continuous journey in celebrating and preserving Irish heritage through music, story, and performance.

*The Mother of All The Behans* returns to the stage this summer, providing audiences with a poignant and powerful look at a remarkable woman whose stories might otherwise have been lost to history.

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* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/imelda-may-on-belfast-debut-for-stage-hit-the-mother-of-all-the-behans-Q5V7EQ65NZDGVGU7ERNXYPU5AA/), [[3]](https://www.goh.co.uk/whats-on/the-mother-of-all-the-behans), [[4]](https://everymancork.com/events/mother-of-all-the-behans/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/imelda-may-on-belfast-debut-for-stage-hit-the-mother-of-all-the-behans-Q5V7EQ65NZDGVGU7ERNXYPU5AA/), [[7]](https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/stage/review/2023/08/17/mother-of-all-the-behans-imelda-may-sings-gloriously-and-shows-an-eye-for-bringing-characters-to-life/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/imelda-may-on-belfast-debut-for-stage-hit-the-mother-of-all-the-behans-Q5V7EQ65NZDGVGU7ERNXYPU5AA/), [[2]](https://www.forestlive.com/sting), [[5]](https://theswindonian.co.uk/culture/imelda-may-sophie-grey-and-the-florentinas-join-forest-live-2025-line-up/), [[6]](https://swindonlink.com/lifestyle/support-acts/confirmed/forest/), [[3]](https://www.goh.co.uk/whats-on/the-mother-of-all-the-behans)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/imelda-may-on-belfast-debut-for-stage-hit-the-mother-of-all-the-behans-Q5V7EQ65NZDGVGU7ERNXYPU5AA/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/imelda-may-on-belfast-debut-for-stage-hit-the-mother-of-all-the-behans-Q5V7EQ65NZDGVGU7ERNXYPU5AA/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.forestlive.com/sting> - Sting's Forest Live 2025 concerts featured Imelda May as a supporting act. On 18 June 2025, she performed at Westonbirt Arboretum, and on 27 June 2025, at Cannock Chase Forest. These performances were part of Forestry England's summer concert series, which also included artists like Sophie Grey. The events aimed to celebrate music, nature, and community, with all ticket sales supporting the conservation work of Forestry England. The line-ups for both dates included Sting, Imelda May, and Sophie Grey, with specific stage timings provided for attendees.
3. <https://www.goh.co.uk/whats-on/the-mother-of-all-the-behans> - The Grand Opera House in Belfast is set to host 'Mother of All the Behans' from 18 to 23 August 2025. This one-woman show stars Imelda May as Kathleen Behan, the mother of renowned Irish writer Brendan Behan. The production, adapted and directed by Peter Sheridan from Brian Behan's book, delves into Kathleen's life marked by love, loss, and motherhood. The show has been praised for its engaging storytelling and musical performances, offering audiences a deep dive into Irish cultural history.
4. <https://everymancork.com/events/mother-of-all-the-behans/> - The Everyman Theatre in Cork is scheduled to host 'Mother of All the Behans' from 12 to 16 August 2025. Imelda May reprises her role as Kathleen Behan in this acclaimed one-woman show. The performance is a humorous and heartrending portrayal of Kathleen's life, steeped in Irish culture. Following sold-out performances in Dublin, the show returns to Ireland, promising an entertaining evening that combines storytelling with live music, reflecting on the social history of Dublin and the Behan family.
5. <https://theswindonian.co.uk/culture/imelda-may-sophie-grey-and-the-florentinas-join-forest-live-2025-line-up/> - Imelda May, Sophie Grey, and The Florentinas were announced as part of the Forest Live 2025 line-up. Imelda May performed as a special guest supporting Sting at Westonbirt Arboretum on 18 June 2025 and at Cannock Chase Forest on 27 June 2025. Sophie Grey, a classically trained pianist blending modern soul and pop, and The Florentinas, an indie rock band from Bangor, also joined the line-up. Forest Live is a concert series presented by Forestry England, aiming to celebrate music, nature, and community.
6. <https://swindonlink.com/lifestyle/support-acts/confirmed/forest/> - The Swindon Link reported on the confirmed support acts for Forest Live 2025, including Imelda May, Sophie Grey, and The Florentinas. Imelda May, known for her unique blend of blues, jazz, soul, and rock, performed as a special guest supporting Sting at Westonbirt Arboretum on 18 June 2025 and at Cannock Chase Forest on 27 June 2025. Sophie Grey, a classically trained pianist, and The Florentinas, an indie rock band from Bangor, also joined the line-up, contributing to the celebration of music, nature, and community.
7. <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/stage/review/2023/08/17/mother-of-all-the-behans-imelda-may-sings-gloriously-and-shows-an-eye-for-bringing-characters-to-life/> - The Irish Times reviewed 'Mother of All the Behans,' highlighting Imelda May's performance as Kathleen Behan. The review praised May's clear and pure voice, noting her ability to bring characters to life with humour and depth. The production, adapted and directed by Peter Sheridan from Brian Behan's book, was described as highly entertaining, with May delivering a captivating portrayal of Kathleen Behan's life. The review emphasized the show's engaging storytelling and musical performances, offering a deep dive into Irish cultural history.