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## THE Arts

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# On His Feet And Inside His Head For 5 Miles

BY ALEXIS SOLOSKI

If Mikel Murfi ever fails as an actor (and this seems highly unlikely), he could make a killing at children's birthday parties. The man has a rare talent for animal sounds. In the brief span of "The Man in the Woman's Shoes," at the Irish Arts Center, he voices chickens, bees, sea gulls, songbirds, sheep, a pig, a dog and a dying turkey, that last with enough realism to put you off drumsticks for life.

Mr. Murfi's solo show, which he also scripted, follows a few hours in the life of the full-time cobbler, occasional farmer and all-around stand-up guy Pat Farnon. In the opening monologue, Pat describes his animals, his house, his plans for the day. Then he lets us in on a little secret: He is mute. "I can't talk," he says. "I know you can hear me and all, but that talk is all going on inside me head."

As Pat sets about his errands, we hear his internal monologue and the chattering of the characters he meets. The most significant of these is Kitsy Rainey, a "screeching tyrant of a woman," whom Pat adores. To break in the low-heeled shoes he's made for her, he wears them on his five-mile walk into town.

Mr. Murfi's writerly gifts are not extravagant. The characters seem a little too colorful, the blarney too cartoonish, as when Pat's pal Hubby swears, "Oh suffering mother of the good Christ on a bicycle." The play is sentimental and as Irish as a Guinness garnished with a shamrock.



Mikel Murfi in "The Man in the Woman's Shoes."

But the words provide a welcome excuse for Mr. Murfi's astonishing acting. In a scene in which three characters spoke at once, I could see all of them differently and distinctly, though Mr. Murfi never varied his costume — shoes excepted — and barely seemed to move. Though he spends much of the play in Kitsy's flats, make no mistake: This is a high-top performance.

**"The Man in the Woman's Shoes"** continues through March 14 at the Irish Arts Center, 553 West 51st Street, Manhattan; 866-811-4111, [irishartscenter.org](http://irishartscenter.org).