

## **The Ballad Sellers** (Period Drama Short Film c.15 mins). By Séamus Brady

### **Premise**

Illiterate Seán senses a more fulfilling life lying just beyond his reach as he and farmhand Rosa sell printed ballads to survive in 1840s St Giles.

The pair grow closer as she teaches him to read, but their rents are doubled and they must raise money or be forced into the workhouse.

### **Tonal comps:**

Ripper St (period feel, poverty)

Johnathan Strange and Mr Norrello (odd feel, but not the magic)

Silo (population density but without scifi World order).

### **Seán**

As second generation Irish, easy-going Seán was born into the deprived streets of 'Little Dublin' in London's St Giles, where he draws energy from the bustling crowd and sees an occasional opportunity to improve his lot.

### **Rosa**

Rosa comes from the countryside, and like so many, is forced into the city during the first Industrial Revolution.

While her introspective and introvert nature were well-suited to her previous rural lifestyle, she is overwhelmed by the noise and sensory overload that she experiences in St Giles.

### **Summary**

Set in 1842 London, The Ballad Sellers follows Seán, an illiterate but ambitious song hawker working outside St Giles-in-the-Fields, and Rosa, a rural woman selling ballads nearby.

Rosa begins to teach Seán to read using the ballads, to help him achieve a better life while they face poverty and high rent from an angry landlord.

As their bond grows, Seán secures credit for new stock to improve their sales.

Rosa, fearing she will end up in a workhouse, shows him her most treasured possession: A handkerchief that her mother gave her.

Their precarious life takes a turn when a child steals the handkerchief and when Rosa follows a woman she sees wearing it, she disappears, leaving Seán to face the landlord alone.

Seán vows to search for Rosa every night while continuing their trade. However, in the final act, he sees Rosa's name on a transportation ballad, revealing she was transported to Tasmania for stealing back her precious handkerchief.

An older Seán, now more educated, looks back on the loss from his own office.

This story highlights the harsh life of 19th-century street hawkers, the rise of Seven Dials printing, and the many dangers of living in that time and place.