The Shadow of the Glen

Cal Performances Presents

Wednesday, October 8, 2008, 8pm
Thursday, October 9, 2008, 8pm
Friday, October 10, 2008, 8pm
Saturday, October 11, 2008, 2pm & 8pm
Sunday, October 12, 2008, 3pm
Roda Theatre

Druid

in

John Millington Synge’s

The Shadow of the Glen
&

The Playboy of the Western World

Presented in association with David Eden Productions, Ltd.

Druid is grant aided by the Arts Council of Ireland / An Chomhairle Ealaion and gratefully acknowledges the support of Culture Ireland / cultúr éireann.

Druid wishes to express its continuing gratitude to Thomas McDonogh & Company Ltd for their support of the company and gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Galway City Council, Galway County Council and Galway University Foundation.

Made possible, in part, by Patron Sponsors Art Berliner and Marian Lever.

Cal Performances’ 2008–2009 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo Bank.

Cast, in order of appearance

Tom Hickey       Dan Burke
Catherine Walsh  Nora Burke
Peter Gowen      A Tramp
Marcus Lamb      Michael Dara

The actors in The Shadow of the Glen appear with the special permission of Actors’ Equity Association.
The Shadow of the Glen

Synopsis

A one-act play, written in the summer of 1902, *The Shadow of the Glen* was the first of Synge's plays to be staged in 1903. Nora Burke is married to Dan, a sheep farmer many years her elder, and they live in “the last cottage at the head of a long glen in County Wicklow.” Dan shams death, but not before he put Nora under “a black curse” not to touch his body and insist only his sister should lay him out. Nora observes all the rites of a wake with a passing Tramp who begs shelter from the wet night. Nora begs to be excused and leaves the Tramp alone in order to call to a young neighbouring sheep farmer, Michael Dara. Once she is gone, Dan Burke sits up. He shares his suspicions and his schemes with the Tramp and assumes his sham death-pose before Nora and Michael enter. Michael is hatching plans for Dan's legacy and Nora’s thoughts are taking on an unexpected dark complexion, when Dan announces himself with a sneeze. Dan banishes his wife from the house and the Tramp takes up her cause, soothing her with fine words to win her over to a life on the road. They leave together, the pair behind complimenting each other over whiskey. First performed at the Molesworth Hall, Dublin, on October 8, 1903, it was condemned as “a slur on Irish womanhood” by prominent nationalist Arthur Griffith. It was first published with *Riders to the Sea* by Mathew Elkins, London, in 1905.

Scene

The last cottage at the head of a long glen in County Wicklow.

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The Playboy of the Western World

Cast, in order of appearance

Margaret Flaherty (Pegeen Mike) | Sarah-Jane Drummey
Shawn Keogh | Marcus Lamb
Michael James Flaherty | John Olahan
Jimmy Farrell | Peter Gowen
Philly O’Cullen | Fergal McElherron
Christopher Mahon | Simon Boyle
Widow Quin | Catherine Walsh
Sara Tansley | Caolfhionn Dunne
Honor Blake | Kelly Gough
Susan Brady | Hannah McCabe
Old Mahon | Tom Hickey

The actors in *The Playboy of the Western World* appear with the special permission of Actors' Equity Association.
The Playboy of the Western World

Synopsis

Written through the years 1904 to 1907, The Playboy of the Western World is Synge’s great comic masterpiece. In it, we see Christy Mahon take refuge in a shebeen on a peninsula of County Mayo asking porter of “the woman of the house” Pegeen Mike. Pegeen awaits the Pope’s dispensation to marry her cousin, Shawneen Keogh. She is a loy. This news spreads like wildfire among the tightly policed community of the peninsula and, if feelings are developing between Christy and Pegeen, they are not let mature before others try to turn Christy’s head. The Widow Quin is the likeliest, she finds that she and Christy have many points of sympathy with each other but she fails to wrest him from Pegeen. In the end, she keeps loyal to him and works to further his cause. Christy’s confidence and price continue to rise in the community, the brief visitation by his bloodied father notwithstanding, and when he wins the horse race on the strand he is truly “the playboy of western world.” His father reappears, recognizes Christy and exposes him, and Christy is no longer able to hold up the freight of dreams heaped on him. When he “kills” his father a second time, the gap opens irrevocably between the “gallous story” and the “dirty deed,” with the “dirty deed” all that the community see and they turn violent towards him. Pegeen leads them in the effort to bring him to due process of the law. Christy is appalled to see Pegeen turn on him and brand him with a turf ember. He is flabbergasted to see his father return “to be killed a third time” and in the end he drives his father before him, with a new determination to play on the world stage. Pegeen protests in an agony of solitude that she has “lost the only playboy of the western world.” The first performance was given at the National Theatre of Ireland (The Abbey) on January 26, 1907, with Maire O’Neill (stage-name of Molly Allgood) taking the lead role some months before she would become engaged to Synge. The Playboy of the Western World was first published in Dublin in 1907, to coincide with the first performance.

Scene

The action takes place near a village, on a wild coast of Mayo. The first act passes on a dark evening of autumn, the other two acts on the following day.

Simon Boyle (Christopher Mahon) trained at the Samuel Beckett Centre, Trinity College, Dublin, and continued training in New York with Anne Bogart and the SITI Co. Mr. Boyle has also trained in Paris with Nicolai Karpov from GITIS, in Moscow, and on several occasions with Zygmunt Molik from Jerzy Grotowski’s Theatre Laboratory. The Playboy of the Western World marks his Druid debut.

His other theater credits include L’Idiot—Dernière Nuit (Co. de la Yole, Avignon Festival and Paris tour), Qu’est ce qu’il reste? (Co. de la Yole); Les Enchanteurs (Théâtre Alchimique, at Théâtre du Soleil, Paris), Dracula (AFTP, French Tour), Twelfth Night (Classic Stage Ireland), Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and Adrain Mole (ACT, French tour).

His film and television work includes Duplication (Baiaceda), La Femme Tranquille (France 3/Kien Prod.), Female Agents (TF1/Les Chauves-Souris), Fields of Honour (Casus Film) and The English Method (Stellaire Prod.).

Caoilfhionn Dunne (Sara Tansey) is a graduate of the Gaiety School of Acting in Dublin. The Playboy of the Western World marks her debut with Druid.

Her other theater credits include The Sanctuary Lamp (B*spoke Theatre Company); Bou (Sturts & Frets); Macheth; Caligula (Rough Magic Seeds)—nominated for Best Female Performance, Dublin Fringe Festival Awards; Playground (GSA); The Staff of Myth (Crazy Dog Audio Theatre); God’s Grace (Semper Fi); The Comedy of Errors and Twelfth Night (Public Shakespeare Theatre Co.).

Her film and television work includes Little White Lie (Element Pictures/RTE) and Radio Garda (Purple TV).

Sarah-Jane Drummey’s (Pegeen Mike) work for Druid includes Empress of India, The Year of the Hiker, Druid/Synge (Galway, Dublin, Edinburgh, New York, Minneapolis and the Aran Islands) and The Spirit of Annie Ra.

Her other theater work includes Improbable Frequency, The Sugar Wife (Rough Magic); Only the Lonely (Birmingham Rep); The Night Season, The Mandate (National Theatre, London); The Drunkard (B*spoke Theatre Co.); The Sanctuary Lamp, Big Maggie (Abbey & Peacock Theatres); The Starchild, Emma, Hard Times (Storytellers); A Miracle in Ballymore (Red Kettle Theatre Co.); This Property Is Condemned (Bewley’s Café Theatre); April Bright (Fada Theatre Co.); Fado, Fado and other productions for Siamsa Tire.

Her film and television credits include ER (Warner Bros/NBC), Any Time Now (RTÉ/BBC), Bloom (Odyssey Pictures), Dead Bodies (Buena Vista International) and Inside I’m Dancing (Focus Features).

Ms. Drummey lives in Los Angeles. She will next be appearing in Rough Magic Theatre Company’s award-winning production of Improbable Frequency at 59E59 Theater in New York this December.

Kelly Gough (Honor Blake) graduated from the Bachelor of Acting Studies at the Samuel Beckett Centre in Trinity College in May 2007, The Playboy of the Western World marks her Druid debut.

Her other theater work includes Big Love (Abbey Theatre), Falling Out of Love (Yew Tree Theatre), Pilgrims of the Night (Rough Magic Seeds Project), Terrorism, Phaedra and Vinegar Tom (Samuel Beckett Theatre). Her television work includes The Clinic (RTÉ).

Ms. Gough has also appeared in a trilogy of Yeats’s plays as part of the Arcezo Theatre Festival in Italy.

Peter Gowen (A Tramp in The Shadow of the Glen, Jimmy Farrell in The Playboy of the Western World) performed in Druid’s The Beauty Queen of Leenane.

His other theater performances include The Hairy Ape (Corcadorca); Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme, The Crucible (Abbey Theatre, Barbican, UK tour and Europe); A Whistle in the Dark, Child’s Christmas in Wales, Madigan’s Lock, Shadow of a Gunman, Communion (Peacock Theatre); Dancing at Lughnasa (Gate Theatre, Dublin); The Lieutenant of Inishmore (Garrick Theatre, London); Shadow of a Gunman, Death of a Salesman, Philadelphia Here I Come!, Whistle in the Dark, Translations, Fathers and Sons (Gaity Theatre); A Touch of the Poet, The Country Boy, Bedbound (Dublin Theatre Festival), Someone to
Watch Over Me (Drum Theatre); Plough and the Stars (UK Tour and West End); A Doll’s House (UK Tour, West End, Broadway), The Forest, Mutabilitie, Making History (Royal National Theatre); Trad (Galway Arts Festival, Dublin Theatre Festival, Edinburgh Festival—Fringe First Winner, Bush Theatre, London, Perth International Festival, Australia); Woman and Scarecrow (Royal Court Theatre, London); Anna Karenina (Gate Theatre, Dublin); and The Final Shot (Theatre 503, London).

His film and television work includes Singlehanded (Element Films); The Tudors (Season 2, Showtime/BBC); My Boy Jack, The Bill Minder, Coronation Street (ITV); Paradise Club (BBC); On Home Ground (RTE); Eat the Peach, The Butcher Boy, Dancing at Lughnasa, A Love Divided and Breakfast on Pluto.

Marcel Lamb (Michael Dara in The Shadow of the Glen, Shawn Keogh in The Playboy of the Western World) graduated from the Gaiety School of Acting in 2004.

His work for Druid includes DruidSyne (Galway, Dublin, Edinburgh, New York, Minneapolis and the Aran Islands). His other theater credits include Rabbits Have the Right Idea (International), Universal Export (Project), The Marowitz Hamlet (Focus), The Red Hot Runaways (Storytellers), This Is a Play (Placid Productions/Bewleys), The Murdung Hole (Town Hall Theatre, Galway), Deirdre (National Library) and Chance (Tall Tales Theatre Company).

Mr. Lamb’s film and television work includes The Running Mate, Alfric, Roa na Run (TG4); The Tudors (BBC/HBO); Paddywhackery (TG4); Stolen Child and The Clinic (RTÉ). His radio work includes The Silver Tongued Devil (Crazy Dog Audio Theatre) and Dún na Mara a Mhuirnin (Radio Na Life).

Mr. Lamb is the voice of many cartoon characters both in the Irish and English language, including Carman in the cartoon series South Park on TC4.

Hannah McCabe’s (Susan Brandy) work for Druid includes DruidSyne (Galway, Dublin, Edinburgh, New York, Minneapolis and the Aran Islands) and The Playboy of the Western World (Tokyo, Perry, Australia tour 2005). Her film and television credits include Intermission (2003), My Boy Jack (ITV) and Malice Aforethought (Granada 2005).

The Playboy of the Western World marks Fergal McElherron’s (Philly Cullen) debut with Druid.

His other theater credits include A Winter’s Tale (Shakespeare’s Globe), The Recruiting Officer (Abbey Theatre), Days of Wine and Roses (Lyric, Belfast), Don Carlos (Rough Magic), Sleeping Beauty (Landmark Productions), A Whistle in the Dark (Royal Exchange Theatre & Tricyle), How Many Miles to Babylon (Second Age), Dublin by Lamplight (Corn Exchange), Missing It on the Mountain (Calypso), Candid (Irish Times/ESB Best Supporting Actor Award), Mojo Mickybo (Dublin Fringe Best Actor Award) and To Have and to Hold.

His film and television work includes The Anarchic Hand Affair, The Clinic II, Holy Cross, Eurêka Street and The Secret of Roan Inish.

John Olahan’s (Michael James Flaherty) trained at the Abbey School of Acting in 1970. The Playboy of the Western World marks his debut with Druid.

His other theater credits include Translations (Ourboros Theatre); The Taming of the Shrew (Rough Magic); Over and Out (Civic Theatre); Da, Hamlet, Tarry Flynn, Sive, Executions, At Swin Two Birds, Death and Resurrection of Mr. Roche, Silver Dollar Boys, The Hostage, Antigone, Chamber Music: Senna for Sonny, She Stoops to Folly, The House, The Playboy of the Western World, Drama at Inish (Abbey Theatre); Rough for Theatre I (Beckett Festival); Rough for Theatre II (Barbican Centre, Lincoln Center); Mackerel Sky (Red Kettle Theatre); The Salvage Shop, The Field (Gaiety Theatre); Much Ado About Nothing (Bickerstaffe Theatre); The Duty Master, A Little Like Paradise (Peacock Theatre); Dancing at Lughnasa (Abbey/Gaiety/Nat.); Sive (Abbey/Gaiety/Cork); Sharon’s Grave, A Christmas Carol (Gate Theatre, Dublin); What Where (New York); The Salvage Shop (Red Kettle Theatre); The Muesli Bells, Savoy (The Peacock); Philadelphia Here I Come! Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet (Second Age Theatre Co.); Hysteria (Project); The Buddhist of Castleknock, Whereabouts (Fishamble Theatre Company); The Lieutenant of Inishmore (Town Hall Theatre, Galway) and Canaries (Edward Farrell Prod.).

Mr. Olahan’s film and television credits include Single Handed, Making the Cut, Leave it to Mrs. O’Brien, Fair City, Trouble in Paradise, Glenrure (RTE); Ballykissangel (BBC); Father Ted (Channel 4); The Ambassador, Amongst Women (BBC); Showbands II (Townhall Films); The Tudors (Showtime); Rawhead Rex (Paradise Picture); Fatal Inheritance (Falcon Fields); War of the Buttons (Sandove Ltd); The Butcher Boy (Warner Bros.); Sweeney Todd and Bobbie’s Girl (Paramount).

Catherine Walsh’s (Nora Burke in The Shadow of the Glen, Widow Quin in The Playboy of the Western World) work for Druid includes The New Electric Ballroom, DruidSyne (Galway, Dublin, Edinburgh, New York, Minneapolis and the Aran Islands), The Empress of India (Galway and Dublin Theatre Festival 2006), The Year of the Hiker (Galway, Dublin and National Tour), Sharon’s Grave and Werewolves.

Her other theater credits include Fool for Love, Eden, The Gigli Concert, Translations, Kevin’s Bed, Blackwater Angel, At Swin Two Birds, Love in the Title (Abbey & Peacock Theatres); Dancing at Lughnasa, A Christmas Carol, Phaedra (Gate Theatre, Dublin); Buddleia; From Both Flips; Licking the Marmalade Spoon; The Chastitute; and Big Maggie.

Mr. Walsh’s film and television credits include The Family, The Ambassador, Holby City (BBC); On Home Ground (RTÉ); The Last September, and Whatever Happened to Bridget Cleary (R.T.E., Wildfire Films). Her radio work includes All That Fall, Eden, The Monotonous Life of Little Ms. P, Swanscroc and Shiftwork.
John Millington Synge

The Synge's came to Ireland in the 17th century from England, produced a succession of bishops for the Protestant Church of Ireland, and married land. John Millington Synge was born in 1871 in Rathfarnham. His father died in the following year of smallpox. John was a sickly, asthmatic child, and labored under the burden of his mother's vivid belief in hell-fire.

Synge took up the violin, and, while scraping through a second-class degree at Trinity College, which introduced him to the Irish language and to Hebrew, he worked for and won a scholarship from the Royal Irish Academy of Music. In 1893 a distant relative, Mary Synge, a concert pianist, arranged for him to stay with friends of hers, the Von Eiken sisters, in Oberwerth on the Rhine. But whilst in Germany, he came to feel he would never be sufficiently confident to perform in public, and that his compositional talents were of little worth. He moved to Paris, and in 1895 he commenced courses in modern French literature, medieval literature and comparative phonetics at the Sorbonne. In Ireland, he was pursuing an unpromising attachment to a girl called Cherrie Matheson, a distant relative, Mary Synge, a concert pianist.

In 1896, W. B. Yeats and Maud Gonne were in Paris founding L'Association Irlandaise ("the Irish League") as a focus for Irish nationalists in France. Synge met Yeats in December and joined the League, but soon resigned: "I wish to work in my own way for the cause of Ireland and I shall never be able to do so if I get mixed up with a revolutionary and semi-military movement." It was probably at a meeting of the League that Yeats (according to his own account written in 1905) issued his momentous command: "Give up Paris.... Go to the Aran Islands. Live there as if you were one of the people themselves; express a life that has never found expression."

But before Synge could go to Aran, he had an appointment with the disease that was to kill him 12 years later. The lump on his neck for which he went under the knife in December of 1897 was recognized by his doctor and the hospital nurses as a symptom of Hodgkin’s disease, a cancer of the lymphocytes; it seemed they did not reveal this to him, and it was eight years before the growth recurred.

Synge left Paris at the end of April 1898, had a painful interview with Cherrie Matheson in Dublin, and went straight on to Aran. He lived the experience of his third day there in his notebook:

"I look now backwards to the morning a few weeks ago when I looked first unexpectedly over the higher cliffs of Aranmór, and stopped trembling with delight.

That slow-acting shock echoes in diminuendo through the four sections of The Aran Islands; and is re-echoed more distantly in his subsequent works. On Aranmór, Synge got to know an old blind man, Mártnín Ó Conghaile ("Martin Conneely") who was one of those fabulous Aranese he had read of. This living antiquity gave him some lessons in the Irish of Aran and showed him some of the island’s Christian sites, including the medieval chapel of the four beautiful saints whose holy well was to become the source of his play The Well of the Saints.

After a fortnight, Synge left for Inis Meáin, the midisland of the Aran Islands. There he stayed in the MacDonnehoch’s cottage, and their son Mártnín became his guide and tutor. Synge lived for a month on this more primitive island, and also briefly visited Inis Oírr. He spent his time drowsing on the walls of the great cashel that looms over the cottages, wandering with Mártnín or alone, taking photographs of the islands and picking up folktales and anecdotes, including those that were to grow into The Shadow of the Glen and The Playboy of the Western World. Twenty-seven years old and unluckily in love, he was very aware of the beauty of the Aran girls. He wrote in little notebooks that would fit into the palm of the hand and that he could use outdoors.

During this first visit, Synge witnessed and photographed one of the last—if not the last—eviction raids to be made on the island. He also knew about evictions from the other side, for his brother Edward was a professional agent to big landlords and an efficient practitioner of the art.

On his way back to Dublin, Synge stayed for a few days at Coole Park, Lady Gregory’s home in south Galway. Yeats and Lady were then planning the foundation of the Irish Literary Theatre, which later became the Irish National Theatre Society.

Synge visited Inis Meáin for nearly a month in September 1899, finding the island a darker place, and the islanders dejected after a poor season’s fishing. He was there again for a month in September of the following year, when he participated in the islanders’ grief over a drowning and witnessed scenes of despair and resignation out of which he was to make Riders to the Sea. He went on to Inis Oírr again for a few days during this third trip, and got to know two girls there. In his notebook he wrote, “One woman has interested me in a way that binds me more than ever to the islands,” but of whom he wrote this it is not known.

By the summer of 1901, Synge had put together the first three parts of his Aran book. In late September, Synge delivered the manuscript of The Aran Islands to a London publisher Yeats had suggested who soon returned it. His writing career was depressingly unsuccessful; he was still living on an allowance of £40 a year and a new suit when I am too shabby.” These were his seasons of endurance, and they were at last rewarded by a creative outflow; during the next summer, which he spent with his mother in a rented house in Wicklow, he wrote The Shadow of the Glen and Riders to the Sea, and began The Tinker’s Wedding.

In June 1901, Synge heard The Shadow of the Glen read by Lady Gregory to the actors of the Irish National Theatre Society. That autumn he visited Kerry instead of Aran, and found there an English-speaking peasantry whose dialect he could more immediately adopt into his plays.

The first performance in October 1903 of The Shadow of the Glen was hissed by an audience that pronounced its theme an offence to Irish womanhood. His plot had been suggested by a folk tale he had heard on Inis Meáin in 1898. The setting he chose was one of the great sheep-grens of Wicklow he knew so well.

When Riders to the Sea was given a first performance in February 1904, it was well received by a small audience, and even Griffith’s paper had to admit its tragic beauty. In that summer of 1904 the Irish National Theatre Society took over what was to become the Abbey Theatre and rehearsals of The Well of the Saints soon began. The Well of the Saints was performed in February 1905, and evoked the same rage in nationalist quarters as had The Shadow of the Glen.

The Tinker’s Wedding, Synge’s tribute to the born anarchists of the Wicklow roads, was never staged in his lifetime. In his preface to the text, published in 1907, Yeats hopes that the country people, from tinkers to clergy, would not mind being laughed at without malice, but at the time Yeats was not so optimistic. The first performance took place in London in 1909, after Synge’s death, and it was not seen in Ireland until the year of the Synge Centenary Commemoration, 1971.

In 1905, at the prompting of Masefield, the Manchester Guardian commissioned Synge to write a series of articles on the distressed state of the west of Ireland. On his return Synge wrote to MacKenna:

There are sides of all that western life the groggy-patriot-publican-general shop-man who is married to the priest’s half sister is second cousin once removed of the dispensary doctor, that are horrible and awful.... I sometimes wish to God I hadn’t a soul and then I could give myself up to putting those lads on the stage. God, wouldn’t they hop! In a way it is all heartrending, in one place the people are starving but wonderfully attractive and charming and in another place where things are going well one has a rampant double-chinned vulgarity I haven’t seen the like of.

In the autumn of 1905, Synge became one of the three directors of the Irish National Theatre Society, with Yeats and Lady Gregory; as he explained in a letter to MacKenna, Yeats looked after the stars while he saw to everything else. Soon afterwards a number of actors seceded, and among those brought in to replace them was a 19-year-old girl, Molly Allgood, with whom Synge was soon in love. She was a Roman Catholic, which promised to cause consternation in his family when their affair should become known. But she inspired the
I read about the Blaskets and Dunquin,
The Wicklow towns and fair days I’ve been in.
I read of Galway, Mayo, Aranmore,
And men with help along a wintry shore.

Then I remembered that that “I” was I,
And I’d a filthy job—to waste and die.

By the spring, the filthy job was done. He entered Elpis Hospital again on February 2, 1909, and died there on March 24. At the funeral, his family and his artistic colleagues formed two immiscible groups, and the fisherfolk, tramps and playboys of Ireland of course knew nothing of it.

Tim Robinson
Tim Robinson is a writer and mapmaker. He is author of the two-volume survey of the Aran Islands, Stones of Aran: Pilgrimage (1986) and Stones of Aran: Labyrinth (1995).

Druid and John Millington Synge

In 1982, Garry Hynes described John Millington Synge as Druid’s “house playwright.” That statement was intended to be humorous—but there’s a lot of truth in it too. Druid’s development from being a regional theatre to the internationally acclaimed company we know today has been intimately interconnected with its work on Synge. Similarly, our knowledge of the playwright himself has been refined—and redefined—by the company’s productions of his dramas. And of course there are echoes of Synge in Druid’s productions of other important Irish dramatists, such as John B. Keane, M. J. Molly, Martin McDonagh and others.

The history of Druid begins in 1975, with a production of The Playboy of the Western World. Two of the company’s three founders—actor Marie Mullen and director Garry Hynes—had recently completed their studies at University College Galway, where both had been active in the student drama society. The third founder, Mick Lally, was teaching in Tuam, and acting with Galway’s Taidhbhearc na Gaillimhe, the national Irish language theatre. A decision had been made to produce summer theatre for Galway, and The Playboy was chosen as an ideal inaugural production.

The play opened on July 3, 1975, and was an instant success, receiving attendances of up to 200 people a night at Galway’s Jesuit Hall. The company’s founding members had central roles both on and off-stage, with Mick Lally and Marie Mullen playing opposite each other as Christopher Mahon and Pegeen Mike, while also taking on stage-management and costume design respectively. Garry Hynes directed, designed lights and, for a limited time, played Sara Tansey.

The company had been struck during this first production by the power of Synge’s work, and resolved to return to it at the earliest opportunity. This happened the following year, when Druid presented The Glen of Rathsavenna, an adaptation of Synge’s prose, which included performances of The Tinker’s Wedding (receiving one of its few ever Irish productions), and The Shadow of the Glen. In 1977, another production of The Playboy of the Western World was presented in Flaherty’s pub—where the real turf fire brought a (somewhat hazy) air of authenticity to the performance.

Arguably the most significant—and to date the most influential—production by Druid of The Playboy appeared in 1982. Regarded by many as the definitive Playboy, it did a great deal to revitalise Synge for Irish audiences, presenting the play’s sexuality and violence with an unflinching realism. Revised throughout the 1980s, this production made history in many ways. It firmly established Druid’s national and international reputation, picking up a host of awards during visits to Edinburgh, London, New York and Sydney. It also toured throughout Ireland, including a celebrated visit to each of the three Aran Islands—showing how Druid pioneered the development of regional theatre in Ireland.

Druid’s decision to stage all of Synge’s works together—a task never before attempted—was first mooted in the late 1990s, and has been eagerly anticipated since that time. Rising Irish film-star Cillian Murphy took on the role of Christy in the first Druid/Synge performance—a 2004 Playboy, which toured to Geesala, Co Mayo, the Aran Islands and Dun Chaoín in West Kerry—while also traveling to Castlebar, Ennis, Tralee and Dublin. In March 2005, Druid brought that production to the Perth Arts Festival in Western Australia, with Aaron Monaghan taking over the role of Christy. Productions of The Tinker’s Wedding and The Well of the Saints appeared in 2004, touring to the Dublin Theatre Festival.

Patrick Lonergan
Patrick Lonergan lectures at National University of Ireland, Galway, and is Director of the Synge Summer School.

Synge’s Influence

Looking back on the early days of the Abbey Theatre in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, W. B. Yeats claimed: “neither then nor at any later time could I discover whether Synge understood the shock that he was giving.” Whether or not Synge understood the shock of his work, however, there is no doubt that it has been felt time and again by other playwrights. Synge’s presence in Irish and world theatre is typically contrary: he is both utterly unique and immensely influential, a deeply distinctive writer whose work has inspired a wide range of artistic responses.

Synge’s impact on Irish drama is obvious enough. He didn’t invent the idea of an Irish linguistic mode in the theatre, but he made it theatrical. His ability to combine a dense, poetic language with vivid action, weighs on every line of Sean O’Casey’s Dublin trilogy. That baroque note sounds out through the work of M. J. Molly and John B. Keane, through Tom Murphy’s Bailegangaire and Sebastian Barry’s The Steward of Christendom, and through the plays of Martin McDonagh.
But Synge is also an immense influence on the great 20th-century dramatist who might seem to be his polar opposite. When Samuel Beckett’s biographer, James Knowlson, asked him in 1972, “who he himself felt had influenced his own theatre most of all, he suggested only the name of Synge. He was drawn to Synge’s unusual blend of humour and pathos, his stark but resilient tragi-comic vision, his imaginative power and clear-sighted pessimism. And he was impressed by the rich texture and vitality of Synge’s theatrical language, and the striking, bold simplicity of his verbal and visual imagery.”

Beyond Ireland, the founder of modern American drama, Eugene O’Neill, was stunned by what first opened my eyes to the existence of “one of the greatest achievements in the history of Irish theatre.” When, a short while later, he was forced into a sanatorium, he brought with him a copy of The Playboy of the Western World. For the black writers emerging from colonialism in the second half of the 20th century, like Wole Soyinka in Nigeria or Derek Walcott in the West Indies, Synge was again a mighty presence. Walcott has said that reading Riders to the Sea “released him creatively” and allowed him to write in 1954 The Sea at Dauphin, the first of many plays that used dialogue in the local idiom. With Mustapha Matura’s 1950 transposition of The Playboy to Trinidad, as The Playboy of the West Indies, it was obvious that Synge belonged to the world.

Fintan O’Toole

DRUID was founded in Galway in 1975, its foundation marking the establishment of the first professional theatre company in Ireland outside Dublin. Since then, it has been at the forefront of the development of Irish theatre: its regional touring pioneered the Irish touring network and its international success has been unparalleled by any other Irish arts organization. Recent international touring includes visits to London, Edinburgh, Sydney, Perth, Washington, D.C., New York and Tokyo. The company has had two artistic directors: Garry Hynes (1975–1991 and 1995 to present) and Maeliosa Stafford (1991–1994). Druid consistently brings groundbreaking productions of classic and new dramatic works to the world stage and, as such, has drawn extensively from the Irish dramatic repertoire and has worked with celebrated Irish and international playwrights. Productions that have gone on to gain international recognition include The Playboy of the Western World (1982), At the Black Pig’s Dyke (1992), Conversations on a Homecoming (1985) and Bailegangaire (1985), featuring Siobhán McKenna in one of her finest dramatic performances. The latter two productions formed part of a major association between Druid and Tom Murphy who was Writer-in-Association with the company and had four of his major works premiere in Galway.

In 1996, Druid premiered Martin McDonagh’s debut work The Beauty Queen of Leenane, in a co-production with the Royal Court Theatre. The Beauty Queen of Leenane opened in Galway and subsequently played in London, Sydney, Dublin and on Broadway, where the production won four Tony Awards, including Best Director for Garry Hynes, the first woman to win the award. In The Leenane Trilogy (also with the Royal Court), The Beauty Queen of Leenane was joined by premières of McDonagh’s A Skull in Connemara and The Lonesome West. Other recent successes include The Cripple of Inishmaan and The New Electric Ballroom (2008), Long Day’s Journey into Night (2007), The Walworth Farce (2006), and three works by John B. Keane, Sive (2002), Sharon’s Grave (2003) and The Year of the Hiker (2006).

DruidSyne, the company’s critically acclaimed production of all six of John Millington Synge’s plays on the same day, premiered at the Galway Arts Festival in 2005 and has since toured to Dublin, Edinburgh, Inis Meáin, Minneapolis and New York. DruidSyne has been described by Charles Isherwood of The New York Times as “the highlight not just of my theatregoing year but of my theatregoing life” and by The Irish Times as “one of the greatest achievements in the history of Irish theatre.”


For news on Druid, visit www.druid.ie and join the mailing list.

GARRY HYNES (director) was born in Ballaghaderreen County, Roscommon. In 1975, she founded Druid and worked as its Artistic Director from 1975 to 1991 and from 1995 to the present. From 1991 to 1994, she was Artistic Director of the Abbey Theatre, Dublin.

Her Druid productions include: The Cripple of Inishmaan (Galway, Irish & UK tour, New York); My Brilliant Divorce (Galway and Irish tour); Long Day’s Journey into Night (Galway and Dublin Theatre Festival); Leaves (Galway and Royal Court Theatre, London); The Playboy of the Western World (Tokyo International Arts Festival); Empress of India (Galway and Dublin Theatre Festival); The Year of the Hiker (Galway, Dublin and National Tour); DruidSyne (Galway Arts Festival, Dublin, Edinburgh International Festival and Inis Meáin 2005; Minneapolis and Lincoln Center Festival New York 2006); Sharon’s Grave, Sive, On Raftery’s Hill, The Beauty Queen of Leenane, The Leenane Trilogy (Royal Court co-productions); Lovers’ Meeting, Conversations on a Homecoming, Bailegangaire, The Shaughraun and The Wood of the Whispering.

Ms. Hynes’s Abbey Theatre productions include: King of the Castle, The Plough and the Stars, The Power of Darkness, Famine, A Whistle in the Dark and Portia Coughlan. Her other theatrical productions include: The Weir (Gate Theatre, Dublin); Juno (Encores New York City Center); Translations (McCartier/Manhattan Theater Club, New York); Mr Peters’ Connections (Signature Theatre, New York); Crimes of the Heart (Second
Mr. Bolger has also performed in many of CoisCéim’s productions, including, most recently, Knots at the Venice Biennale. This year, he also worked as Movement Director on the West End premiere of Gone with the Wind. In 2001, he co-wrote and choreographed the award-winning film Hit and Run, which won the Paula Citron Award for Choreography for the Camera, in the Moving Pictures Festival, Toronto, and the jury prize in the Dance on Camera Festival at Lincoln Center.

Mr. Bolger has also been nominated for the American Choreography Award. In 2005, he directed the award-winning opera production of Orfeo ed Euridice at the Gaiety Theatre, Dublin, and in Wiesbaden, Germany.

His work for Druid includes The Year of the Hiker, DruidSynge, Sive and Sharon’s Grave. Mr. Bolger’s other theatre work includes Big Maggie, Tarry Flynn, The Colleen Bawn, The Secret Fall of Constance Wilde (Abbey Theatre); Sophie’s Choice (Royal Opera House, London), The Coasts of Utopia, The Relapse, Love’s Labours Lost (Royal National Theatre, London), Martin Guerre (Cameron Mackintosh, UK/USA) and the Opening Ceremony of the Special Olympics. His film work includes Dancing at Lughnasa directed by Pat O’Connor.

Mr. Bolger is currently working on CoisCéim’s new show, Dodgems, which will premier in autumn 2008. In 2007, he was elected as a member of Aosdána.

Kathy Strachan (costume design) trained at Central, St. Martin’s, London. Her work for Druid includes DruidSynge, The Playboy of the Western World (Ireland and Perth), Sharon’s Grave, Sive, St. Patrick’s Day, Antigone, Cheapside, Belfry and The Summer House.

Her other theatre work includes Improbably Frequency, New Morning, Hidden Charges, Halloween Night, Three Days of Rain, Dead Funny, Shiver and The Life of Galileo (Rough Magic), The Doctor’s Dilemma (Abbey Theatre), The Mai, The Patriot Game and Kitty O’Shea (Peacock Theatre), Speed-the-Plow (Project), The Shadow of a Gunman (The Gate), The Silver Tassie and The Playboy of the Western World (Almeida), Macbeth (Nottingham Playhouse), The Innocents (Crucible, Sheffield),
About the Artists

Richard III, Frankenstein and No Man’s Land (Citizen’s Glasgow), Just Frank (Traverse), Dengang Na (Beren) and The White Devil (Stavagner).

Her work for film and television includes I Went Down, Saltwater, On the Nose, The Closer You Get, VICIOUS CIRCLE, Bachelor’s Walk, Don’t Look Down, Spin the Bottle, Six Shooter and Showbands.

Ms. Strachan won the Irish Film and Television Award for Best Costume Designer for You Get Went Down (directed by Ronan Fox), Hynes / Ronan Fox), Western World (directed by Ronan Fox); by Ronan Fox), DruidSynge Theatre); (Killkenny Arts Festival); Natural Shocks Theatre Co.); The Playboy of the Western World—Traverse), Propeller Theatre’s Batsheva Dance Company. In 2005, DEP toured No Man’s Land (by Fabulous Beast Dance Theatre Company, Hegarty Lovett, James Son of James, Declan Donnellan’s The Burial of the Dead, Declan Donnellan’s Boris Godunov (2003). St. Petersburg State Academic Capella National Tour (2003); Bolshoi Ballet National Tour (2000, 2002); Gate Theatre Dublin’s Beckett Festival (2000); John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts—Arts of the United Kingdom (summer 2001), Island: Arts from Ireland (2000) and Art of the State: Israel at 50 (1998); Lev Dodin’s Maly Drama Theatre of St. Petersburg’s Gaudeamus, the BAM Next Wave Festival/National Tour (1994) and Brothers and Sisters, Lincoln Center Festival (2000); Kirov Ballet/Vaganova Ballet Academy Project, BAM (1998); and Russian Village Festival National Tour (1990, 1991, 1995, 1997), among others.

Sam Jackson (composer) is a classically trained pianist who has composed and performed widely for various genres, including dance, film, cabaret and television. He currently tours as keyboard player for Moya Brennan of Clannad.

His work for Druid includes Leaves (Galway and Royal Court, London), Empress of India (Galway and Dublin ‘Theatre Festival), The Year of the Hiker (Galway, Dublin and National Tour). DruidSynge (Galway Arts Festival, Dublin, Edinburgh International Festival and Inis Meain), The Playboy of the Western World (Tokyo International Arts Festival, Perth, Australia tour, 2005), The Tinker’s Wedding and The Well of the Saints.

Other theatre credits include The Magic Tree (National Tour and Edinburgh Festival Fringe, 2008); Translations (McCarter/Manhattan Theater Club, New York), Lizzie Laselle and the Vanishing of Emlyn Clough, Yokohama Delegation (Performance Corporation & Kilkenny Arts Festival); Horae (Project ’06); A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Civic Theatre) and Twelfth Night (Dublin Fringe for Natural Shocks Theatre Co), The Murder Ballads (Kilkenny Arts Festival); Boy Gets Girl (Civic Theatre); Entertainment (Bedrock Theatre Co.).

His film and television work includes the DruidSynge DVD Wildfire Films, RTÉ—directed by Ronan Fox), Mighty Talk (Wildfire Films & RTÉ—directed by Ronan Fox); The Playboy of the Western World—Wildfire Films, directors Garry Hynes / Ronan Fox), War and Peace—The Musical (directed by Jo Mangan), Today’s Holy Land (directed by Tim Hood).

With vocalist Eilish Keogh, Mr. Jackson was winner of the Walton Memorial Ensemble Prize 2001. He was also awarded the Walton Memorial scholarship that same year and was winner of the Roland Piano Prize 1999.


He has been assistant director on Uncle Vanya; a Beckett short program: Rough for Theatre I, Footfalls and Rockaby; The Trial of Jesus, Bategangaite, Ariel, Chun na Fiarraige Síost/Riders to the Sea, Purgatory, The Dandy Dolls and DruidSynge.

As a dramaturge, Mr. Conway has worked on Tanks a Lot… by Raymond Keane and Judy Hegarty Lovett, The Bull and James Son of James by Fabulous Beast Dance Theatre Company, and a number of shows with Cups and Crowns Educational Theatre Company in Galway. He has lead courses in playwriting at Galway Arts Centre and with National Association for Youth Drama. He teaches contemporary theatre practices with National University of Ireland, Galway.

For over 20 years, David Eden Productions, Ltd. (DEP) has been one of the leading American organizations devoted to producing international work in the United States. Most recently, DEP has produced US national tours of the State Ballet of Georgia and the Russian Patriarchate Choir of Moscow. In 2006, DEP was responsible for national tours of Gate Theatre Dublin’s Waiting for Godot, Declan Donnellan’s Twelfth Night and the Batsheva Dance Company. In 2005, DEP toured Propeller Theatre’s The Winter’s Tale, directed by Edward Hall, and Piccolo Teatro di Milano’s Articchino. In 2004, David Eden curated the Lincoln Center Festival’s Ashton Celebration, a two-week retrospective at the Metropolitan Opera House celebrating the 100th birthday of Sir Frederick Ashton featuring of the master choreographer’s ballets.

About the Artists

DRUID

Creatives

Garry Hynes  Director
Francis O’Connor  Designer
Davy Cunningham  Lighting Designer
Kathy Strachan  Costume Designer
John Leonard  Sound Designer
Sam Jackson  Composer
David Bolger  Movement
Thomas Conway  Assistant Director
Maureen Hughes  Casting Director

Production Team

Eamonn Fox  Production Manager
Sarah Lynch  Stage Manager
Paula Tierney  Stage Manager
Barry O’Brien  Technical Manager
Doreen McKenna  Costume Supervisor
Gus Dewar  Master Carpenter
Val Sherlock  Wigs & Make-Up
Sandra Butler  Scenic Artist

Administration

Garry Hynes  Artistic Director
Bernie Harrigan  Finance Director
Tim Smith  General Manager
Thomas Conway  Literary Manager
Sinead McPhillips  Marketing & Development Manager
Ruth Gordon  Administrator
Carmel Curley  Financial Administrator

FOR DRUID

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