Players & Painted Stage:
The Leonard L. Milberg Irish Theater Collection

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In a good play every speech should be as fully flavoured as a nut or apple, and such speeches cannot be written by anyone who works among people who have shut their lips on poetry.

In Ireland, for a few years more, we have a popular imagination that is fiery and magnificent, and tender; so that those of us who wish to write start with a chance that is not given to writers in places where the springtime of the local life has been forgotten, and the harvest a memory only, and the straw has been turned into bricks.

—John Millington Synge, preface to The Playboy of the Western World (1907)

Players & Painted Stage presents a small selection from the more than 1,000 plays, playbills, manuscripts, broadsides, and posters gathered for the Leonard L. Milberg Collection of Irish Theater, given in honor of Paul Muldoon. The exhibition begins in 1841 with Dion Boucicault’s London Assurance, continues at the top of the stairs with Samuel Beckett’s 1952 En attendant Godot [Waiting for Godot], and closes with Garry Hynes’s 2006 production of Translations by Brian Friel.

Happily, the collection itself is not closed but continues to grow, thanks to the generosity and care of Leonard Milberg, Class of 1953. In compiling the masterworks of modern Irish playwrights, he focused on complementing the existing collections in the Princeton University Library. Therefore, writers already well represented here, such as George Bernard Shaw, Oscar Wilde, and W. B. Yeats, were excluded to make room for 82 other Irish playwrights, whose works are now equally available to students and scholars. Nearly every item in this exhibition is a part of the extensive collection that Mr. Milberg formed for the Princeton community and continues to support.

We wish to thank Mr. Milberg, the Office of President Shirley Tilghman, the Friends of the Princeton University Library, the Fund for Irish Studies, the Program in Theater and Dance, the Council of the Humanities, and McCarter Theatre, all of whom contributed significantly to this exhibition and to the many exciting events that accompany it.


In 1955, the Irish writer William Carleton published "Willy Reilly and His Colleen Bawn" about an Irish Catholic gentleman who loved a Protestant mistress. The popular melodrama was quickly adapted for the stage. One note from the play, captured by Jack H. Yeats, is reproduced on the Players & Players Stage poster.


5. Irish Play, prospectus. [Dublin: Abbey Theatre], 1906.


7.Courtesy of Michael Cullen


The Druid Theatre Company was founded in 1975 by director Gary Hynes and actors Marie Muller and Mick Lally. Located in Galway, the Druid was the first nontrivial theater company in Ireland outside Dublin. This 8½ hour marathon of all J. M. Synge's plays was first performed as the Druid Synge in 2003.


Mac Intyre's breakthrough came with \textit{The Great Hunger}, an adaptation of Patrick Kavanagh's poem, which premiered at the Peacock Theatre on May 9, 1983 and went on to tour internationally.

O'Rowe is one of a new generation of Irish playwrights. His fifth play, \textit{Howie the Rookie}, premiered at the Bush Theatre on February 10, 1999.


Case 1
1. Dion Boucicault (1820–1890), Arrah-na-Pogue [Arrah of the Kiss], or, The Wicklow Wedding, prompt book, no date.
   This drama opened at Dublin’s Theatre Royal in the fall of 1864. Boucicault wrote the part of Shan the Pea for himself. His wife, Agnes Robertson, played Arrah Weslieh, who was nicknamed Arrah of the Kiss.
   Rare Books and Special Collections.

   Also called The Brides of Garryowen, this popular melodrama opened in both New York and London in 1860. The story was based on Gerald Griffin’s novel The Colleen Bawn (1829).

3. Dion Boucicault (1820–1890), The Curran Brothers, manuscript playbook, 1852.
   This comedy subtitled The Tumultus is an English adaptation of Alexander Dumas’s Les trois Corses. The play was first produced at London’s Prince’s Theatre in 1852. Manuscript Collection, Rare Books and Special Collections.

4. Dion Boucicault (1820–1890), Hunted Down, playbill.
   London: Globe Theatre, 1876.

5. Dion Boucicault (1820–1890), Led Astray, playbill.
   London: Gaiety Theatre, 1874.
Case 1

   Boucicault's first success came when he was only 21 years old. This comedy premiered at the Theatre Royal, London, March 4, 1841, and includes a line as "Ma is a creature of the house--the dinner hour, I suppose."


   The play concerns an Irish Nationalist, or Fenian, who is sentenced to death but spared at the last minute by his boyhood friend Con the Shaughraun, originally played by Boucicault.
   Gift of Michael Cadman.


    The lithograph on the cover of this sheet music shows the American actor T. H. Clowery as the character Shaun the Post in Boucicault's *Arabian Night.* It was published in conjunction with an 1865 production at Niblo's Garden, New York.


2. Oscar Wilde (1854–1900). The Importance of Being Earnest: A Trivial Comedy for Serious People. London: L. Smithers and Company, 1895. The first production of this play opened on St. Valentine’s Day 1895 at London’s St. James Theatre. It was Wilde’s fourth popular West End play in only three years. An Ideal Husband had opened a month before and was still playing to packed house at the Haymarket Theatre a few blocks away. Robert H. Taylor Collection, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.


5. Sir William Robert Wilde (1813–1876). Lough Corrib: Its Shores and Islands, with Notices of Lough Mask. 2nd ed. Dublin: McGlashan and Gill, 1872. William Wilde, father of Oscar Wilde, was a surgeon who also wrote extensively on Irish history and folklore. Rare Books Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.

6. Lady Wilde (1826–1896). Poems by Sprontra (Lady Wilde). Dublin, London: James Duffy, 1864. Jane Francesca Wilde, Oscar’s mother, wrote under the pseudonym Sprontra. Quoting from About and Poet by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, she dedicated this volume “to my son Willie and Oscar Wilde. ‘I made them indeed speak plain the word Country. I taught them, no doubt, not a country’s a thing men should die for the need.’” Robert H. Taylor Collection, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.
    Theater Collection, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.

    Robert H. Taylor Collection, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.

3. Oscar Wilde (1854–1900). Letter to George Bernard Shaw, postmarked May 9, 1893.
    In this letter, Wilde refers to Shaw’s play The Man of Means as “Op. 2 of the great mirthful school.” He also describes Shaw’s play as his own “Lady Windermere’s Fan and A Woman of No Importance.” Wilde is paying Shaw the compliment of regarding their works together in the dramatic literature of the period. His letter also identifies a “Celtic school of drama” several years before Yeats and Lady Gregory.
    Robert H. Taylor Collection, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.

    Pictured by Aubrey Beardsley. London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane; Boston: Copeland and Day, 1894.
    Aubrey Beardsley first met Wilde in 1893, not long after the first French edition of Salomé was published. Beardsley was inspired to make a drawing, “I have kissed your mouth, John the Baptist,” which was published that same year in the first issue of The Studio. Wilde’s publisher, John Lane, saw it and invited Beardsley to illustrate the play’s English translation by Lord Alfred Douglas.
    Rare Books Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.
Shaw enjoyed his first commercial success with this play, which opened at the Avenue Theatre, London, on 20 April 1894 on a double bill with W. B. Yeats’s *The Land of Heart’s Desire*. The season was financed by Arthur Hewitt, who went on to support Yeats and the Irish National Theatre in Dublin. Shaw’s poster and playbill were designed by the young Aubrey Beardsley.
Rare Books Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.

Oscar Wilde admired this play. See his letter to Shaw on the shelf above this one.
Robert H. Taylor Collection, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.

Robert H. Taylor Collection, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.
   *Galiste: The Organ of the Irish Literary Theatre, no. 1*
   (May 1899).
This verse drama was published in 1892 and first performed in 1899 by the newly formed Irish Literary Theatre. Inspired by Irish folklore, the story takes place in Ireland during a famine. The aristocratic heroine (whose name is more often spelled Cathleen) sacrifices her soul in order to save the starving people of Ireland. The play was condemned as blasphemous.
   Rare Books Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.

Written by Yeats in collaboration with Lady Gregory, this play was the first to be produced by their newly incorporated Irish National Dramatic Society on April 2, 1902. The Irish acting company of Frank and William Fay provided the actors, and Maude Gonne, founder of Inghinidhe na hÉireann (Daughters of Ireland), played the heroine Cathleen ni Houlihain, an allegorical figure of Ireland.
   Rare Books Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.

This copy, owned by Lady Gregory, is inscribed by Yeats to “Lady Gregory from her friend the writer of something of this book—March 1904.” In the following letter to Lady Gregory, Yeats sent a 14-line haiku poem of Cathleen ni Houlihain.
   Courtesy of Leonard L. Molberg.

The Abbey Theatre, also known as the National Theatre of Ireland, later became the first state-subsidized theatre in the English-speaking world.
5. William Butler Yeats (1865–1939). The Land of Heart’s Desire. Chicago: Stone and Kimball, 1894. Frontispiece designed by Aubrey Beardsley. This was the first play by Yeats to receive a public performance. It was presented at the Avenue Theatre, London, during the 1894 season of plays funded by his aunt, Annie金nan.

Rare Books Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.


Robert J. Taylor Collection, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.


Rare Books Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.


Joyce admired the work of the Irish Literary Theatre but was disappointed when the director rejected his translation of a contemporary German play. His response, an essay criticizing the theatre, was likewise refused by his college’s newspaper. So Joyce paid to have it published privately with an essay by a college friend.

Rare Books Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.

9. Set design for The Hour-Glass. In William Butler Yeats (1865–1939). Plays for an Irish Theatre, with Designs by Gordon Craig. London and Stroud-on-Avon: A. H. Bullen, 1911. The Hour-Glass, based on the Irish tale The Priest’s Soul, tells the story of an errant priest who must find someone to plead his soul. When the play opened on March 4, 1903, at Mobberley Hall in Dublin, Yeats was dissatisfied with the rather traditional production. The year before, he had met Gordon Craig, an innovative Set designer who introduced him to the idea of using props and monochromatic lighting across instead of realistic sets. In 1911, Yeats and Craig collaborated on a revival of The Hour-Glass.

Rare Books Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.
This draft of a section of Lady Gregory’s memoir covers the beginning of her career as a writer, the Gaelic Revival, her decision to write an English version of the Cuchulain legend, and her discussions with W. B. Yeats, Edward Martyn, George Russell (U.B. and others).
Courtesy of Leonard L. Milberg.

The Abbey Theatre opened on December 27, 1904, with three one-act plays: On Baile’s Strand by W. B. Yeats, Spreading the News by Lady Gregory, and Cuibhne na Houile by Tuite and Gregory. Spreading the News proved so popular that it was part of the repertoire of each of the early tours by the Abbey Players, including this touring production in 1908.

1. Lady Gregory (1852-1932). Our Irish Theatre: A Chapter of Autobiography. New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1912. Isabelle Augusta Gregory, widow of Sir William Gregory, dedicated herself to the promotion of Irish nationalism through the appreciation of Irish literature and culture. Beginning at the age of 50, she mastered the Irish language, wrote and translated more than 40 plays, and even performed the title role in Cuibhne na Houile in 1918—shortly after her 67th birthday.

2. Abbey Theatre playbill. Dublin: Abbey Theatre, no date. The Irish National Theatre Society was formed in 1903 by W. B. Yeats, Lady Gregory, George Russell (Ali), Edward Martyn, and J. M. Synge. Performances were held at the Molesworth Hall until Annie Hurstman and actor William Fay purchased the Hibernian Theatre of Varieties on Abbey Street for the company.


When Dervorgilla was first performed at the Abbey Theatre on October 31, 1907, actress Sallie Allgood played the beautiful queen. Daughter of the King of Meath and wife of Tomas O'Rourke, she ran away with the King of Leinster in 1576 but was soon returned to her husband. Yet in 1903, Gregory made the interesting choice of presenting the queen near the end of her life.


Grace Conyngham Plunkett was a popular caricaturist specializing in the literary and theatrical personalities of Dublin. She is, however, best remembered as the tragic bride of 1606, she and her fiancé, Joseph Plunkett, a leader in the Irish struggle for independence, planned an Easter wedding, but Joseph was captured and sentenced to death for his role in the Easter Rising. They married just hours before his execution, and the ballad Grave was written in his honor.

Courtesy of Leonard L. Milberg.


St. John Ervine was born John Cairns Irvine and grew up in a Protestant family in a largely Catholic suburb of Belfast. Mixed Marriage was his first play to be performed, premiering at the Abbey Theatre on January 30, 1911. The plot follows Protestant laborer John Rainey, whose son falls in love with a Catholic girl.


This play was first performed at the Abbey Theatre on October 17, 1912. Ervine continued to write into the 1940s and 1950s, and many of his later works were produced by the Ulster Group Theatre.


The Country Dressmaker was performed at the Abbey Theatre in the same season (1907) as Synge’s The Playboy of the Western World and became one of the Abbey’s most popular plays. Yeats performed the work of Synge, and only four of Fitzmaurice’s many plays were produced by the Abbey.


Colum’s first play, Broken Soil (1903), was performed by the Irish Literary Theatre. Two years later, The Land was one of the Abbey Theatre’s first successes. However, Colum chafed under the tight artistic control held by Yeats and his Abbey co-directors, Synge and Lady Gregory. In 1906, a group of actors and writers led by George Russell (AE) and Colum resigned from the Abbey and formed the Theatre of Ireland, financed by Edward Martyn.
A practicing surgeon, Gogarty had three plays produced by the Abbey Theatre. He is best remembered as the model for Buck Mulhigan, who appears in the opening pages of James Joyce's *Ulysses*.
Rare Books Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections

Boyle had four plays produced by the Abbey Theatre, beginning in 1903 with *The Building Fund*. In 1907, following the row over Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*, Boyle withdrew his plays from the Abbey and cut his ties with the company, accusing Synge of a " gross misrepresentation of the character of our western peasants."

Playbill Dublin: Abbey Theatre, 1925.

It was Lady Gwendolen's neighbour, Edward Martyn, who introduced her to W. H. Yeats in the summer of 1897, at a new mythic tea party that resulted in the formation of the Irish Literary Theatre. Their earliest productions included *The Hooter Field*, presented in 1898 at the Autumn Concert Rooms in Dublin.

5. Photograph of the original Abbey Theatre, Dublin, no date.

Robert H. Taylor Collection, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.


In 1909, Yeats encouraged the adventurer and novelist Dunsany, born Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett, to try writing plays. The result was The Glittering Gate, which Yeats staged at the Abbey Theatre in 1909. The play follows two English burglers as they break into Heaven but find it filled only with laughter.

1. John Millington Synge (1871–1909). *The Aran Islands*, Dublin: Maunsel & Company, 1907. Drawings by Jack B. Yeats. One of 50 copies signed by Synge and Yeats. In 1896, when Synge met W. B. Yeats in Paris, they both encouraged him to go back to Ireland and spend time in the isolated Aran Islands, where Irish traditions were still untouched. Synge took his advice and spent six summers there, collecting folklore and learning the language. Sir John Synge, William's younger brother, sometimes accompanied him, and Jack's sketches were used to illustrate Synge's published memoir.

   Courtesy of Leonard J. Milberg.


   Nora, the heroine of Synge's earlier performative play, decides to leave her loveless marriage and accompany the charming vagabond who wandered into her home the night before. The one-act play was presented by the Irish National Theatre Society at Molesworth Hall on October 9, 1903, and immediately denounced as a threat to Irish womanhood.


   Set in the Aran Islands, *Riders* depicts the anguish and estrangement of a mother who has lost all of her men in her family but her youngest son, to whom she cannot give her blessing as he leaves to cross treacherous waves to the mainland.

   Rare Books Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.


When *The Well of the Saints* premiered at the Abbey Theatre in 1905, it was labeled sacrilegious. The comedy follows two blind beggars who believe they are beautiful until a stranger restores their sight, whereupon the husband rejects his wife. When they lose their sight a second time, they refuse the help of the saint, preferring to remain blind.

Rare Books Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.


Synge’s career as a playwright lasted only six years, from 1903, when *In the Shadow of the Glen* was produced, until 1909, when he died.
When *The Playboy of the Western World* opened at the Abbey Theatre on January 26, 1907, the performance was sold out. During the second act, the audience began to hiss and then yell, responding to the character of Christy Mahon as he attempted, for the second time, to kill his father and then mention maldime and their undergarments. Riots continued at performances throughout the next week.

2. "Irish Home Rule in the Drama," *Current Literature* 50, no. 1 (January 1911).
Princeton University Library.

At the second performance of *Playboy*, Yeats came onto the stage and addressed the audience: "You have disgraced yourself again, is this to be the recurring celebration of the arrival of Irish genius?"

When the Abbey Players toured with a production of *Playboy* in the United States, they were accused of obscenity in Philadelphia. At the trial, the company was represented by the New York lawyer and arts patron John Quinn, who was able to save the actors from a jail sentence.
Rare Books Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.

Gift of Michael Cadden.


1. John Millington Synge (1871–1909). Deirdre of the Sorrows. Churchtown, [Ireland]: Cuala Press, 1910. Elizabeth Corbet Yeats, sister of Jack and William Butler Yeats, printed and published this book at the fine-art press she established in 1904. Elizabeth and her sister Lily worked with young Irish women, whom they trained not only in the printing, printing, and drawing crafts, but also in Irish dance, language, and games. Cuala Press published more than sixty works by the leading members of the Irish literary revival, including W. B. Yeats, J. M. Synge, Douglas Hyde, Lady Gregory, and George Russell (Ed.). Many of the illustrations for these publications were drawn and colored by Jack Yeats.


Case 7

   *Sovereign Love* was Murray's first play, produced in 1909 by the Cork Dramatic Society under the title *The Wheel of Fortune*. It was revived in 1913 for the Abbey Theatre, opening on September 11 of that year.

   Murray began writing plays at the suggestion of his friend, playwright and Cork Dramatic Society founder Daniel Corkery. Murray wrote plays about rural life, as in *Autumn Fire*, which tells the story of a love triangle between a widowed farmer, his new wife, and his son.

   *Maurice Harte* concerns a man whose parents convince him to remain in the seminary despite his lack of faith, and subsequently suffer a breakdown. The play caused so much controversy among local priests that Murray was forced to leave his teaching position in Ráthduff, Cork for a job in Dublin.

5. Lennox Robinson (1886–1958), *The Fur-Off Hills*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1931. When the 1907 Abbey touring company came to Cork, in the south of Ireland, Robinson was in the audience. Beezley’s play was first performed at the Abbey. The following year, Yeats hired Robinson as manager of the theater. *Fur-Off Hills*, a popular comedy, was first performed on October 22, 1928.


1. James Joyce (1882–1941). *Exiles*. New York: B. W. Huebch, 1918. Joyce and his family moved to Zurich during World War I and it was there he wrote *Exiles*. During this period, he managed an English language theater company who performed *Exiles*, as well as Synge's *Riders to the Sea* and Synge's *The Heather Field*. Joyce's play presents a love triangle between an Irish writer, Richard Rowan, who has just returned to Dublin, his wife Beatrice, and their old friend Robert Land.

2. *Extracts from Press Notices of Exiles* by James Joyce. London: Grant Richards, 1918. In 1917, on the advice of Ezra Pound, Joyce offered his play *Exiles* to the Abbey Theatre. Yeats replied: "I do not recommend your play to the Abbey Theatre because it is a type of work we have never played in it. It is too far from folk drama."

3. Production photograph from *Exiles* at the Neighborhood Playhouse, New York, 1925. Sylvia Beach Collection, Rare Books and Special Collections.


1. Paul Vincent Carroll (1900–1968). *Things That Are Conner’s Playbill*. Dublin: Abbey Theatre, [1932]. Although the 1930 Dublin production of *The Wretched Par* was Carroll’s first staged play, his breakthrough came when *Things That Are Conner’s* premiered at the Abbey Theatre in 1932 and was awarded the first of that year’s Abbey Theatre prizes. The family drama shines a critical light on an overbearing mother who wants her daughter to marry a suitable man.

2. Paul Vincent Carroll (1900–1968). *Shadow & Substance*. New York: Random House, 1937. This play won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award in 1938 for Best Foreign Play and in the following year received the Cement Award of the Irish Academy of Letters. It deals with the Catholic Church in Ireland and questions of faith when an innocent young housekeeper is involved.

4. Teresa Deevy (1894–1963), "The King of Spain’s Daughter." *Theatre Arts Monthly*, 19, no. 6 (June 1935). Before Deevy began writing plays, she was a member of Cumann na mBan, a women’s auxiliary unit of the Irish Volunteer Force. In 1930, Lennox Robinson produced her first play, *The Rogues*, at the Abbey Theatre and over the next seven years staged five more of her plays. When *Wife to James Whelan* was rejected in 1937, Deevy ended her relationship with the Abbey and stopped writing for live theater.


In 1923, O'Casey submitted two scripts to the Abbey Theater, Kathleen Lithens In and The Cowing of Dores. Kathleen was performed on a hill with Shadow of a Gunman, but Cowing of Dores was rejected. Three years later, O'Casey used the basic structural idea of the script—staging a pub scene while a pivotal meeting was going on just outside—for the second act for The Plough and the Share. A complete, edited transcript is published in the Princeton University Library Chronicle (Fall 2006–Winter 2007).

Courtesy of Leonard L. Milberg.
Case 9

   As a young man, O’Casey was a member of the Irish Citizen’s Army for a short time and was arrested during the 1916 rebellion under suspicion of causing violence. These experiences led to his Dublin trilogy: Shadow of a Gunman (1923), Juno and the Paycock (1924), and The Plough and the Stars (1926).

   The title of O’Casey’s short play refers to the banter of the Irish Citizen Army and its plot censtens life in a Dublin tenement during 1916 so-called, known as the Easter Rising. The play opened at the Abbey Theatre on February 8, 1926 and was well received until news spread about its realistic language and subject matter, in particular a prostitute. By the fourth night, the audience was filled with Republican activists who tried to stop the production. Police had to be called to control the disturbances.

   In anticipation of hostility to O’Casey’s play, Yeats wrote a speech defending O’Casey, which he sent to the Irish Times before taking the stage at the Abbey stage to try to quiet the audience.


   O’Casey was born John Casey to a poor Protestant family who lived in a Dublin tenement. He had little formal schooling, working instead as a laborer from a young age. He began writing stories and songs for the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Gaelic League under the alias name "Seán O’Cathasaigh."

Opening on March 3, 1926. O’Casey’s second play concerns Captain Jack Boyle and his wife Juno, who live in a Dublin tenement at the time of the 1922–23 Civil War. Darry Fitzgerald and Nora Allgood originated the title roles.


Thomas Ashe was sentenced to death for his role in the 1916 Easter Rising but his punishment was later commuted to penal servitude. In September 1917, Ashe led a hunger strike of Republican inmates who were demanding to be recognized as political prisoners. He collapsed and died on September 25, after being force-fed by prison guards.
Case 10

Mayne was both an actor and a playwright for the Ulster Literary Theatre, established in 1904 when Yeats refused to allow an Ulster Branch of the 26th Literary Theatre. Each member of the U.L.T. worked under a pseudonym; Mayne’s real name was Samuel John Waddell.


The *Drona* had its premiere at The Abbey Theatre, on April 24, 1904, produced by the Abbey Theatre. Originally a two-act play, Mayne re-rewrote and expanded it to three acts the following year.

The title refers to the character of Daniel Murray, who spends years trying to invent a mechanical apparatus that would make him rich.


The Ulster Literary Theatre in Belfast produced their own magazine, *Ulaid*, edited by David Patkhill and W.D. Reynolds. The first issue opened with an editorial: “Ulaid means Ulster . . . and as the Theatre is the most essential of all art activities, and the most test of a people’s emotional and intellectual vitality, *Ulaid* stands out as the organ of the Theatre, the Ulster Literary Theatre . . . We intend to strike out [sic] keynote through the Theatre where our own plays will be produced, and to let that discovery our pathway for us and voice our aims and hopes and hatreds and loves best expressed that way . . .”

Bare Books and Special Collections.
Case 10
1. “The Plays of Gerald MacNamara.” Edited by Kathleen Doherty. Journal of Irish Literature Vol. 17, no. 2-3 (May-September 1988). Together with Rutherford Mayne, David Parkhill, and Bulmar Hobson, MacNamara helped to found Belfast’s Ulster Literary Theatre (shortened to Ulster Theatre in 1915). Each man wrote or acted under a pseudonym, including MacNamara whose real name was Harry C. Morrow.

2. Gerald MacNamara (1866–1938). Thompson in Tir-na-n-Og. Dalkey: Talbot Press, (1912). Thompson character, Thompson, is an Orange, a member of one of the Ulster Protestant Orange Societies, who accidentally steals himself. He wakes up in Tir-na-n-Og, the land of the young or the afterlife, where everyone speaks Gaelic. The popular comedy ends with Thompson on trial for speaking English.

3. “Stage Directions for a Play Called ‘William John Jameson’ now being written by Gerald MacNamara.” Dublin Magazine: Vol. 1, no. 7 (February 1924): 598-99. Few plays by MacNamara were ever published. Most are known because of excerpts, like this one, published in Dublin Magazine.


3. Joseph Tomelty (1911-1995). Is the Priest at Home? Belfast: H.R. Carter, 1954. In 1940, Tomelty became a founding member and manager of the Ulster Group Theatre. He wrote nineteen plays for this company. The last and most successful being Is the Priest at Home?

Jack Yeats, the younger brother of William Butler Yeats, was a
painter and an illustrator. Beginning in 1902, while living in
western Ireland, he collaborated with artist Pamela Colman Smith
and publisher Elinor Matthews to produce monthly broadsheets with
poetry by his brother and friends. Smith and Yeats illustrated
the sheets with woodcuts and colored them by hand. This issue
illustrates Yeats’s miniature theaters at the bottom center.
Courtesy of Leonard L. Milberg.

2. Jack B. Yeats (1871–1957). In Sand, a Play. With The
Green Wave, a One Act Conversative Piece. Edited and
with a preface by Jack McGowan and with a drawing by
the author. [Dublin]: Dolmen Press (1964).
Jack Yeats wrote nine plays for the legitimate stage and had three
produced at the Abbey Theatre: Harlequin Postilion, La La Non,
and In Sand.

of the Western Seas. London: Eklion Mathews, [1901].
The English toy theater—sold for “a penny plain and two-pence
colored”—grew out of the Regency trade in prints, toys, and
novelities sold in the shops around Covent Garden. Jack Yeats and
his wife created similar miniature stages, with painted cardboard
scapes and figurines for children. Three of them, James Flanery,
The Treasury of the Garden (1902), and The Revenge of the Guphy
(1903), were published by Yeats’s friend Elinor Mathews.


Two actors, Hilton Edwards (1903–1982) and Mitchell MacLiammóir (1899–1978) co-founded the Gate Theatre in 1927. The company’s first production, *Pero* (1930), premiered on October 19, 1928, at the Peacock Theatre, a wing of the Abbey Theatre. MacLiammóir and Edwards were Dublin’s best-known gay couple. Universalist and affectionately referred to as “the boys.”


Both Lord and Lady Longford were playwrights and theatrical producers. They worked with Edwards and MacLiammóir at the Gate Theatre from 1933 to 1939 and then formed Longford Productions, which produced 151 plays at the Gate.


In addition to writing plays, Johnston was a practicing lawyer and then a broadcaster for the Irish Nationalist party. The *Golden Cuckoo* was produced by Longford Productions in April 1939 at the Gate Theatre.


When Johnston submitted his first play *Shadowsdance* to the Abbey, under the pseudonym E. W. Tiberia, it was rejected by Lady Gregory and returned to the author with “the old lady says no” written on the title page. Johnston resubmitted the play and sent it to the Gate Theatre, where it opened on July 3, 1929.


Mac Liammór was one of the leading child actors on the English stage, in the company of Noel Coward. In the 1920s he traveled all over Europe, eventually settling in Dublin. Born Alfred Willmore, he took the name Michéal mac Liammór when he began writing short stories around 1922.


Many of his plays, including his most successful one, Ill Met by Moonlight, invoke the Irish fairy world. Set in western Ireland, the play tells the story of a professor’s house built on a fairy fort and how the fairies transformed one of his guests.


Case 12: 1940s and 1950s at the Abbey


2. George Shiels (1886–1949). Bedmates. Dublin: Gael Co-operative Society, 1922. Shiels' first play staged by the Abbey Theatre was Bedmates, a one-act comedy, which premiered on January 6, 1921.

3. Donagh MacDonagh (1912–1968). Happy as Larry. Dublin: Maurice Fridberg, [1946]. MacDonagh was a practicing lawyer when he also began working for Radio Eorain in 1939, broadcasting Irish ballads and folk music. Most of his plays are written in verse and employ musical settings. The comedy Happy as Larry was first produced by Austin Clarke and the Lyric Theatre Company.

4. Donagh MacDonagh (1912–1968). Happy as Larry, playbill. London: Criterion Theatre, 1947. MacDonagh was the son of the Nationalist leader Thomas MacDonagh, who was executed for his role in the 1916 Easter Rising. His mother, Miriel MacDonagh, was an active Nationalist and the sister of Grace Plunkett, the popular artist who is better known as the tragic bride of 1916. MacDonagh's aunt became an Irish legend when she married poet and naturalist Joseph Plunkett on May 3, the day before he was also executed for his role in the rebellion.

5. Unattributed photograph of Austin Clarke. In 1917, Clarke received his M.A. at University College, Dublin, studying under Thomas MacDonagh. When MacDonagh was executed for his role in the 1916 rebellion, Clarke replaced his teacher in the English department.


The Gaelic League (Comhradh na Gaeilge in Irish) was founded in 1893 by Douglas Hyde for the purpose of keeping the Irish language spoken in Ireland. Their statement of purpose included the affirmation: "Tir gan teagmháin, tir gan amhm — a country without a language is a country without a soul."


Hyde wrote plays as a way to promote the speaking and understanding of Irish. He was later elected the first president of Ireland, serving from 1938 to 1945.


Cú Úilda is a pseudonym for Peadar Mac Fhoinghhiel, who was born in County Donegal. In 1893, he joined the Gaelic League, and from 1923 served as its President. Under the pseudonym Cú Úlda, he wrote plays, edited anthologies of Irish verse, and authored *A Handbook of Irish Teaching*.


Eoghan Ó Tuairisc, or in English Eugene Watten, was born in Ballinasloe, County Galway. His three-act comedy, first produced under the title *Cúir an Ghleas* (i.e., won the Jurist's Drama Prize in 1961. The play is set on the night of the full Moon moon, as eight passengers arrive unexpectedly at a small, lonely railway station.


*Lord Edward* was first produced, in English, by Longford Productions at the Gate Theatre on June 10, 1941.

Cyril James Cusack was born in Durban, South Africa. His family returned to Ireland and Cusack joined the acting company of the Abbey Theatre in 1932. After World War II, he was a manager of the Gaiety Theatre in Dublin. His first play, *Tar Éis an Affrinn*, was produced in the Abbey in 1942.


Mac Liammhir taught himself to speak Irish and in 1928, founded the Taibhdheare: Irish-speaking theatre in Galway, which opened with his play *Diarmuid agus Gráine*. It is a retelling of the Irish myth of a love triangle between the aging leader of the Fianna, the woman he loved, and his soldier Diarmuid.


Behan’s second play, *An Giall*, was commissioned in 1958 by Richard Mac Giolla Lesta, an organisation to promote the Irish language and its heritage. Behan is said to have written it in twelve days. The play opened on June 16, 1958 at the Damer Hall, Dublin.


McDonagh was born in Irish parents in London but currently lives in Ireland. *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* was written in only eight days and opened at the Druid Theatre, Galway, in 1996.

Les Éditions de Minuit (Midnight Editions) was founded during the German occupation of France to print and distribute censored literature. After the liberation, the press was purchased by 33 year old Edouard de Limburg, who was, like Beckett, a French resistance fighter. In 1951, de Limburg became Beckett’s editor and publisher with his novel Molloy and the following year, the play Waiting for Godot. Courtesy of Leonard L. Milberg.


The second edition of Godot was photographically updated but with the addition of photographs from a production in Germany.


The French actor and director, Roger Blin agreed to produce one of Beckett’s plays and chose Godot over Eleutheria (Beckett’s first full-length play) partly because it had fewer characters. Blin’s production, opening on January 5, 1953, was the first joint production of a Beckett play.


This is the first English language edition of Waiting for Godot. Presented to the Princeton University Library by the family of Leonard L. Milberg in honor of his 75th birthday.


The first English language production opened in August 1955 at the private Arts Club, London, followed by a production at the Playhouse, Dublin, in October and another in New York the following spring.


Graphics


1. Samuel Beckett (1906–1989), Murphy. 1st ed. London: George Routledge and Son, 1938. In the letter on the right hand page, Murphy writes “With regard to the disposal of these my body, mind, and soul, I desire that they be burnt and placed in a paper bag and brought to the Abbey Theatre ... [and into] the necessary house [i.e. bathroom], where their happiest hours have been spent...”
Sylvia Beach Collection. Rare Books and Special Collections


Samuel Beckett was born in Foxrock, County Dublin, on April 13, 1906. Throughout 2006, the centenary of his birth, there have been numerous conferences, productions, and publications of Beckett's work. Gift of Michael Cadden.

Posters


Case 15


   In 1967, Behan’s autobiography was adapted for the stage by Frank McMahon and premiered at the Abbey Theatre. Revived in 1971, the New York run received a Tony Award and in 2000, the story was adapted again as a film directed by Peter Sheridan.

   In 1957, Behan joined Fianna Fáil, the youth organization of the IRA, and two years later, was arrested for possession of explosives. He spent three years in reform school (or Borstal). In 1942 he spent time in Mountjoy prison where he learned to speak and write Irish. Behan wrote *Quare Fellow* about his prison experience. The play opened at the Pike Theatre in Dublin on November 19, 1954 and two years later, was produced by Joan Littlewood’s Theatre Workshop at the Theatre Royal.


   The play’s title refers to a prisoner sentenced to death. We never see the man on stage but Behan heard the character on Bernard Keenan, a murder victim inside Mountjoy prison.


Case 16

1. Production photograph of Tom Hickey and Godfrey Quigley in The Gigli Concert by Tom Murphy, 1983. Photograph by Fergus Bourke.

   Born in Tuam, County Galway, Murphy had been raised as a metalworker before he and his childhood friend, Nell O'Donnell, decided to write their first play. The result was On the Outside about two friends trying to gain admittance to a dance hall. Murphy's next and perhaps most famous play, A Whistle in the Dark was rejected by the Abbey Theatre and premiered instead at the Theatre Royal, London in 1961.

   Murphy was not happy with an earlier play, The White House (1972), and so he rewrote it as Conversations. This new play was produced by the Druid Theatre Company, Galway, and opened April 18, 1985. The setting is a town in rural Galway where a group of friends meet for the first time in ten years.

   This play was first produced by the Abbey Theatre, opening September 29, 1983. The action takes place in Dublin's office of J.P.W. King, who calls himself a Dymasautologist, or spiritual healer.

   The most recent of Murphy's plays, Alice Trilogy, premiered on November 10, 2005 at the Royal Court Theatre, London.


4. Marina Carr (b. 1964). The Mai. Oldcastle, County Meath: Gallery Books, 1995. This is the play that brought Carr her first international success, when it opened October 5, 1994 at the Abbey Theatre. The Mai (pronounced Ma) is a headmistress who lives on an inland island near the lake. Her story embodies five generations of women, from the 145-year-old Grandmother Frawley to her 14-year-old granddaughter Killie and the story's narrator.
Case 16 Hugh Leonard (b. 1926)

1. Hugh Leonard (b. 1926). Leonard’s Last Book. Emmiskerry, County Wicklow: Egoist Press, 1978. After his first play, The Italian Road, was rejected by the Abbey Theatre in 1954, John Keyes Byrne adopted the pseudonym Hugh Leonard, the name of a character from the rejected play.

2. Michiko Kakutani. “Today’s Irish Dramatists—and the Literary Ghosts That Haunt Their Imagination.” New York Times, November 2, 1980. Written in conjunction with the New York opening of Leonard’s A Life, this article includes a caricature of the poet by Al Hirschfeld. In his play, Leonard asked, “who is the better man: the one who never dissolved, lied, loathed or betrayed a trust, but was without a shred of affection for his fellow humans, or one of life’s dreamers, who probably never read a book in his life and yet owned good nature?”

3. Hugh Leonard (b. 1926). Da. Newark, Del.: Proseusnum Press, 1975. Da had its premiere at the Olney Theatre, Maryland, on August 7, 1973, where several of Leonard’s other plays had been produced. The first Irish production was at the Olympia Theatre, Dublin, on October 5th, 1973. The semi-autobiographical play tells the story of Charlie, a successful writer, who returns to his parents home in Dublin to bury his father.

Case 17


2. John B. Keane (1928–2002). The Man from Clare, playbill. Dublin: Abbey Theatre at The Queen’s Theatre, 1964. The play concerns an aging athlete who is no longer strong enough to be the best footballer in Clare. It was first produced in the Father Matthew Hall, Cork, by the Southern Theatre Group opening July 1, 1962.

3. John B. Keane (1928–2002). Sharon’s Grave. Dublin: Progress House, 1995. Keane’s plays bring to the stage the local customs and folk culture of County Kerry, where the prolific regional playwright lived for most of his life. If Kerry’s landscape and traditions, Keane said, in a radio interview, “it’s magic. There’s a sort of a guinesser liney in Kerry that will be found no place else in the world. And I think that we’ll reflect the vagueness and the grandeur and the beauty of our scenery as well. We’ll reflect the place we live in.”

5. Bernard Farrell (b. 1941). *I Do Not Like Thee, Doctor Fell*. Dublin: Co-op Books, 1979. First produced by the Abbey Theatre on the Peacock Stage, opening March 15, 1979. The comedy was so successful that it was moved to the larger Abbey Theatre stage, toured the country, and then concluded its long run at the old Gaiety Theatre in Ballbridge.


This play follows the experiences of eight men who volunteer to serve in the 36th (Ulster) Division at the beginning of the First World War. It reaches a climax at a battle near the Somme River, in the north of France, on July 1, 1916.


In 1980, McGuinness attended an Irish Arts Council writing workshop run by director Patrick Mason, whose *The asylum of the Turtle* had prised McGuinness to write for the theatre. McGuinness's first play, *Factory Girls* (1982), debuted at the Abbey's Peacock Theatre and three years later, his *Sons of Ulster* had such success on the same stage that it was transferred to the Abbey's main house.


The play concerns an Englishman, an Irishman, and an American who are being held in a cell by Leebowse terrorists and how they cope with not knowing when they'll be released. McGuinness credits Samuel Beckett for influencing his script, saying: "After Beckett, nothing in the theatre was the same, particularly for Irish playwrights. He gave me licence to write about time."


The play opened on July 16, 1992 at the Hampstead Theatre with the cast: Stephen Rea, Hugh Quarshie, and Alec McCowen.


*Caniculerand* opened on July 14, 1993 at the Abbey Theatre and *Amphitride* on September 3, 1992 at The Pit in the Barbican, London, produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company. A revised version of the latter was presented by Tin Drum Theatre Company at the YMCA, Wexford on June 1, 1996.


The trilogy consists of Standfast (1988), Poor Beast in the Rain (1989), and Briefing (1991). All three plays were produced as The Rathfarn Trilogy by the Oxford Stage Company at the Chester Gateway Theatre, Liverpool, on October 24, 2000 and then toured to Manchester and London.


Barry calls himself the writer of ghost plays. "Though many of the people of the plays carry the names of people who actually lived and form whom I am technically descended, they exist here in an afterlife, in another life, in a galaxy of pictures painted freely, darkly."


Barry's first play, Boys Gone Mad, tells the story of two elderly brothers living together on a farm in the Irish countryside. It premiered at the Abbey Theatre.


This play was commissioned by the Gate Theatre and toured small theatres before opening at the Abbey Theatre on June 9, 1998. The first Irish production was at the Gate Theatre on September 14, 1998.


Woods worked as a journalist with the Irish national broadcasting company until 1994 when he began writing full-time. Opening on June 9, 2005 at the Abbey Theatre, the play is a new adaptation of the classical Irish legend of Deirdre and Aedán, a story also explored in plays by Yeats, Synge, and Friel.


Produced by the Druid Theatre, Limerick, and opening September 21, 1995, this play concerns an 1828 paternity suit brought against a Catholic priest.

Field Day Theatre Company was founded by Friel and writer
Stephen Rea. *Translations* was their first production, opening September 23, 1980 in the Guildhall, Derry. Field Day represented an attempt to respond to the unsettled political situation in Northern Ireland in a manner which might be socially, morally and creatively responsible.


The play's action takes place in 1933, in the town of Balfe Bog, an Irish-speaking community in County Donegal. A government surveyor has been ordered to translate the local Gaelic place names into English, which leads to an examination of the relationship of language to local identity.


Even before the Field Day Theatre Company's opening performance, four prominent Northern Irish writers were invited to join the project: Seamus Deane, David Hammonds, Seamus Heaney, and Tom Paulin. Along with Friel and Rea, they formed Field Day's Board of Directors. (Thomas Kilroy joined in 1988).


Friel's play was first presented at the Longacre Theatre, New York on April 5, 1979 and had its Irish premiere at the Abbey Theatre in 1970. Four monologues told by a turntable healer, Friel, his wife Grace, and his manager Teddy, we hear differing versions of the healer's performance and one particular event that changed each of their lives.

Friel’s most recent play opened on February 1, 2005 at the Gate Theatre, Dublin, with Tom Courtenay in the leading role of Christopher Gore. Set in 1878, Gore is a well-meaning English landlord whose cousin has come to marry the anthropophagi of the indigenous Irish. By measuring their skulls, he hopes to demonstrate their inferior place in the natural order.

This play opened on September 20, 1988 at the Gaiety, Derry, produced by the Field Day Theatre Company. It tells the story of Fionnuala Hugh O’Neill, Earl of Tyrone, originally played by Stephen Rea, who fought against Queen Elizabeth’s army. O’Neill was succeeded by Ulster in 1597, along with several other Irishmen, all who became known as the Flight of the Earls, marking the end of tribution in Ireland.


Friel’s first play was produced by Edward-Mac Liammóir Gate Theatre Productions in association with the Dublin Theatre Festival and opened on September 28, 1964 at the Gaiety Theatre. The semi-autobiographical plot focuses on Garech O'Donnell, who has accepted his aunt’s invitation to leave Ireland for Philadelphia.


In this play, the volunteers are political prisoners who have been excavating an archaeological site in Ireland. On the last day of the dig, the volunteers learn that they have been sentenced to death by their fellow internees for reason. *Volunteers* premiered at the Abbey Theatre on March 5, 1975.

2. Brian Friel (b. 1929). Dancing at Lughnasa. London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1990. Lughnasa, also known as Lughnasa or Lughnasadh, was a Celtic festival celebrated at harvest time. Friel’s play takes place over two August days in 1936, at the home of the five Mundy sisters, as narrated by Michael, the son of the youngest sister. The play opened on April 24, 1990 at the Abbey Theatre.


5. Brian Friel (b. 1929). Molly Sweeney, playbill. London: Almeida Theatre, 1994. Friel not only wrote but also directed this story of a blind woman who might be able to see again. The play opened on August 9, 1994 at the Gate Theatre, Dublin.
This play’s title was *Northern Star* or *O’Flaherty’s Wife’s Doughnut* when it opened at the Lyric Theatre, Belfast, on November 7, 1984. The title refers to Henry Joy McCracken, a leader of the unsuccessful 1798 rebellion. In Parker’s play, McCracken recalls the ages of his life as he registers a final address on the eve of his hanging. When the Field Day Theatre Company reproduced the play in 1998, Parker’s friend Stephen Rea directed.


Case 20


   When Paulin was commissioned to write a play for the Field Day Theatre Company (he was also on its Board of Directors), the result was *Rita Act*. Based on Sophocles' *Antigone*, Paulin's reinterpretation offers a sympathetic view of Antigone while portraying Creon as politically corrupt. The play opened on September 18, 1984, in Derry, Northern Ireland. Stephen Rea directed and also played the role of Creon.


   In addition to writing plays and poetry, Paulin is the G. M. Young Lecturer in Irish at Hertford College, Oxford. He is a well-known broadcaster and a regular member of the panel for the BBC television arts program *Viewpoint Review*.


Case 20


The Belfast Play Theatre Company produced Kilroy's *Double Cross* during its sixth season. The play parallels episodes in the lives of Brendan Bracken, mentre for Information under Winston Churchill, and William Joyce, an Irishman known as Lord Haw-Haw, who broadcast Nazi propaganda for Joseph Goebbels. Kilroy attended both roles to be performed by Stephen Rea, who starred under the direction of Jim Sheridan when the play opened on February 3, 1986, at the Glandore in Derry.


When *Talbot's Box* premiered at the Abbey Theatre on October 13, 1979, Kilroy was working there as play editor. In his examination of the life of the Irish mystic M. A. O'Connor (1856-1922), Kilroy used innovative staging, lighting, and narrative discontinuities.


Unlike other plays by Kilroy, which often examine political and sexual themes, this work takes a nostalgic look at an English acting troop stranded in Ireland during World War II.

The <i>New York Times</i> called McPherson’s newest play “quiet, haunting and absolutely gorgeous.” The action follows a man seeking help from a therapist because he has seen the ghost of his recently deceased wife. <i>Shining City</i> premiered under McPherson’s direction at the Royal Court Theatre, London, on June 8, 2006, and is currently in performance at the Billmore Theater in New York.


In 1992, while still at Trinity College Dublin, McPherson co-founded the Fly by Night Theatre Company, for which he wrote, directed, and designed his earliest plays. <i>This Lime Tree Bower</i>, which opened on October 26, 1995, features overlapping monologues by three young men from a small rural town near Dublin whose lives are intertwined.


Set in a pub in rural Ireland, <i>The Weir</i> was inspired by McPherson’s visits to County Limerick in rural southwest Ireland, where his grandfather used to tell him ghost stories. For this play, produced in 1997 by the Royal Court Theatre, London, McPherson received Most Promising Playwright Award from the London Critics’ Circle and the London Evening Standard.


1. Martin McDonagh (b. 1970). The Cripple of Inishmaan. London: Methuen Drama, 1997. This play was so successful when it opened in January 1997 in the Cottesloe Theatre at the Royal National Theatre, that it was transferred to the larger Lyttelton Auditorium in April. It made its American debut at the Joseph Papp Public Theatre the following April where, following the success of The Beauty Queen of Leenane, it sold out its entire run while the play was still in rehearsal.

2. Martin McDonagh (b. 1970). The Lieutenant of Inishmore. poster. New York: Atlantic Theater, 2006. Ireland's three Aran Islands, located 30 miles west of Galway, include Inishman [Middle Island], Inishmore [Big Island], and Inisheer [East Island]. McDonagh's Aran Island trilogy includes The Cripple of Inishmaan (1996), The Lieutenant of Inishmore (2001), and The Bunch of Amateurs, which has never been produced. These islands are among the few places in Ireland where Gaelic is still spoken.


4. Martin McDonagh (b. 1970). The Pillowman, playbill. New York: Booth Theater, 2005. Katurian, the play's protagonist, is an amoral writer of short stories, many of them revolving around the murder of, and sometimes also murder by, children. The play was first performed at the National Theatre in London on November 13, 2003. A New York production followed at the Booth Theater, opening on April 10, 2005.
O'Rowe began writing plays in his early twenties and his first production was *From Both Hips*, staged by the Fishamble Theatre Company in Dublin.

Set in a completely re-imagined Dublin underworld, *Made in China* involves martial artists, rogue cops and savage low-lifes. It was produced by the Abbey Theatre, opening April 1, 2001.

Nolan is a founding member and playwright for the Red Kettle Theatre Company, which produced Mudshyne in October 1991. The play is set at Fassler in a small round village in Southern Ireland, where the Protestant Church is closing due to lack of members.


The action of this play takes place during the summer of 1666 and the title refers to Valentine Greatrakes (1528-1642), a miracle-worker practising in County Waterford, Ireland.
1. Anne Devlin (b. 1951). _Ourselves Alone with A Woman Calling_ and _The Long March_. London: Faber and Faber, 1986. _Ourselves Alone_ was Devlin’s first play to be produced, opening at the Liverpool Playhouse Studio on October 24, 1985 and transferring to the Royal Court Theatre, Upstairs on November 10, 1985. The title is an English translation of Sine Fém, the political song of the Irish Republican Army and follows three Belfast women during the 1981 hunger strikes in Hunger Street.

2. Anne Devlin (b. 1951). _After Easter_. London: Faber and Faber, 1994. The plot of _After Easter_ involves a young woman, Greta, who is returning to Northern Ireland after a mental breakdown and self-exile from her home. The play opened at the Other Place, Stratford-Upon-Avon, on May 18, 1994 produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company.


6. Owen McCafferty (b. 1961). _Court no. 1 In Convictions_. Belfast: Tinderbox Theatre Company, 2000. McCafferty’s play was part of a series of seven one-act plays were performed in various locations in the Crumlin Road Courthouse, Belfast, on October 30, 2000.
In 1983, together with four Belfast actresses, Jones formed the Clowndiva Theatre Company, whose members wrote, produced, and performed their own works. Jones went on to form DubbelJoint productions in 1991, which produced Stones in His Pocket, opening August 7, 1996 at Ambassadors on Carriage (The Rock Theatre). The play was revived at the Lyric Theatre, Belfast on June 3, 1999, and won the 1999 Irish Times/ABB Irish Theatre Award for Best Production.


The play's plot involves a Protestant man who attends a World Cup soccer match between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and leads to a re-valuation of his political identity. Jones's company DubbelJoint productions debuted this play on August 7, 1996.

Mitchell wrote his first play in 1991 and since then has authored over thirty, scripts for radio, stage, and film. As a Protestant playwright in Northern Ireland, Mitchell's work has often been the focus of controversy. In November 2005, he was forced out of his home in the Belfast suburb of Rathcoole after it was attacked by loyalist paramilitaries. He and his family remain in hiding somewhere in Northern Ireland.


First performed at the Abbey Theatre, June 10, 1998. Mitchell's play was also filmed and broadcast on BBC Two February 2, 2002.

Mitchell's plot focuses on a Belfast wife and mother, whose loyalties are also tied to the Ulster Defence Association. The play opened at the Royal Court Theatre on November 11, 2003.
Case 34
   Born in a Protestant neighborhood of Belfast, many of Reid’s plays have focused on the violence between Protestants and Catholics in northern Ireland. The Closed Door premiered at the Peacock Theatre on April 24, 1981.

   Graham Reid’s best-known play, Remembrance is about a romance between a Protestant widower and a Catholic widow in a modern revision of Romeo and Juliet.

   Debuting on November 4, 1967 at the Lyric Theatre Belfast, Tea in a China Cup was an immediate success. Reid’s play introduces three generations of Protestant working-class families in a community of Ulstermen (members of Ulster Protestant Orange Societies). Set in 1792, the play is constructed of symbolic scenes and battle-reenactments from one character’s memories.

   Although the author left Belfast for London in 1985, she continued to produce many of her plays in Ireland. The Battle of the Belfast City premiered at the Lyric Theatre Belfast on May 3, 1989. The plot centers on three generations of a northern Irish family during the weeks of an anti-Anglo-Irish Agreement rally.
Case 24


Haire’s first play, The cooker’s horn was staged in 1968 by the Unity Theatre in London. His third play, Bloom of the Diamond Shore, is an Ulster love story set in the summer of 1972. The play opened on October 9, 1973 at the Abbey Theatre.


Lynch’s first success came from Interrogation, which debuted at the Lyric Theatre Belfast on January 27, 1982. Ambrose Friggarty is a Belfast father, being interrogated by the Royal Ulster Constabulary who hope to him to confess to armed robbery. We witness the verbal and physical torture staged at that time.


Co-written with the members of the Charabanc Theatre Company, Lay Up Your End focuses on the Belfast millworkers’ strike in 1911. The play opened on May 15, 1983 at the Arts Theatre, Belfast.
Case 24

   Born in County Antrim, Hutchinson currently lives and works in California. In 1977, one of his earliest plays Say I, Say He was produced at the Crouchly Theatre in Sheffield before moving to London and then New York.

   Hutchinson is best known for Rot in the Skull, a drama about an IRA member confessed by a Royal Ulster Constabulary in a London police station. The play opened at the Royal Court in London on August 31, 1984.


   Tracey and Jollis, both suffering from brain damage, try to communicate in Hutchinson’s most recent play, produced by the Royal Shakespeare Theatre and Belgrade Theatre in fall of 2004.
Case 25


O’Brien is best known for his play Eden, which opened on January 24, 2001 at the Peacock Theatre and transferred to the larger Abbey Theatre main stage. Set in the Irish midlands, the play explores the failing relationship between a husband and wife.

Savoy takes place on the opening night in 1994 at the Savoy Cinema in Edenderry. The play was produced by the Abbey Theatre and opened on the Peacock stage on May 17, 2004.

Written with unusual sympathy for the changing role of police officers in the Irish midlands, Donnelly’s Upstairs opened at the Peacock Theatre on August 7, 1980. The playwright went on to win the Harvey’s Award in 1983, the Writer-in-Residence Fellowship for Mayo County Council in 1993 and Writer in Association with the Abbey Theatre in 1994.

In 1994, Welsh moved to Cork and joined the Corn House Theatre Company. The company's production of *Disco Pigs* two years later was a turning point for the playwright. The play premiered at Triskel Arts Centre in Cork, moved to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, then Dublin, and finally London’s Bush Theatre, where it won the prestigious Stewart Parker Award (1997).


A *New York Times* reviewer wrote that *Bloodbound* “demonstrates the power of Welsh’s writing and her ability to create a spine-chilling atmosphere.” Welsh’s play was originally produced by the Dublin Theatre Festival and opened at the New Theatre of the Irish Repertory Theatre on October 5, 2000.


Morrison’s most successful play to date is *Hard to Believe*, which was commissioned by the Ballymena Theatre Company and was played at the Ulster Society of the Irish, Kilbenny, on March 21, 1995. Also known for his contemporary re-stagings of classical texts, Morrison’s version of *Verdi’s La Traviata* opened in the London Coliseum on September 27, 2006.
Max Beerbohm (1872–1956)

Caricature of Oscar Wilde and John Toole,
Garrick Club '93.

Pen and ink, watercolor, 1898
This drawing was made the year humorist Max Beerbohm joined the staff of the humorist Review as drama critic. One of his chief targets of satire was playwright Oscar Wilde, this time seen with the comic actor John Toole.
J. Harlin O’Connell Collection, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.

Max Beerbohm (1872–1956)

Caricature of W. B. Yeats and Edward Martyn
"Celtic Ambo"

Pen and ink drawing, 1899
Together with Lady Gregory, Yeats and Martyn founded the Irish Literary Theatre in 1899. However, Martyn disagreed with Yeats’s vision for a national theater and broke with him in 1906 to establish the Theatre of Ireland with George Russell (J.B.) and Padraic Colum.
Robert H. Taylor Collection, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.
Rallying Songs, no. 3
Dublin: The Art-Depot, [ca. 1917–1918]
This rare broadsheet contains lyrics by Sean O’Casey (Seán Ó Cathasaigh), as well as those of Padraic Kenney (Padraic Ó Ceannagainh), Maeve Cavanagh, Countess Constance Markievicz (Constance de Markievicz), Joseph Crofta, and others. O’Casey’s “The Renny Bunch of Rans O’” is a variation on the British ballad published by J. Hulme, between 1840 and 1866.

Dion Boucicault (1820–1890)
Arrah-na-Pogue! [Arrah of the Kiss]
Birmingham: Theatre Royal, 1865
Arrah-na-Pogue takes place over 48 hours during the Irish rebellion of 1798. After the play was first performed at the Theatre Royal, Dublin, on November 7, 1864, Boucicault revised it, simplifying the plot and inserting a dramatic scene in which his character, Sham the Peet, must climb an enormous ivy-covered tower wall. The first English production opened at the Princess’s Theatre, London, on March 22, 1865, and ran for 164 nights.
Dion Boucicault (1820–1890)

The Corsican Brothers
London: Sadler's Wells, 1859

The Corsican Brothers, or The Fatal Duel was adapted from Alexandre Dumas's Les frères corbeaux (1846). Boucicault's adaptation was first staged on February 24, 1852, at the Princess's Theatre, London.

Dion Boucicault (1820–1890)

London Assurance
London: Theatre Royal, Hay-Market, 1847

Actor and playwright Dion Boucicault was the author of approximately 150 original plays, adaptations, and translations. Boucicault achieved his first theatrical success with London Assurance, originally titled Out of Town. The play was first performed by Charles Mathews and Madame Vestris's company at the Theatre Royal, London, in 1847.
Dion Boucicault (1820–1890)
Playbill for *The Long Strike*
London: Lyceum Theatre, ca. 1866
*The Long Strike*, or *The Working Men of Manchester* is Boucicault's adaptation of Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton: Tale of a Manchester Life* (1848). The play includes a scene in which a telegraph is used to announce the discovery of a missing witness.

David Levine (b. 1926)
Caricatures of Sean O'Casey, Lady Gregory, Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw, W. B. Yeats, and Samuel Beckett
Pen and ink drawings, 1997
Courtesy of Leonard L. Milberg
Samuel Lover (1797–1868)

Rory O'More

Dublin: Theatre Royal, 1838

Rory (Ruaidhri Ó Mhóire) (1621–1659), King of Larnia, was one of the principal organizers of the Irish Rebellion of 1641. Lover wrote a popular ballad about the hero, which ends:

Then Rory, the rogue, stole his own round her neck
No soft and so white, without freckle or speck,
And he took 'le in her eyes that were burning with light
And he kiss'd her sweet lips—don't you think he was right?

"Now Rory, leave off, sir; you'll bug me no more,
That's eight times so-day you have tried it before."

"Don't have another," says he, "to make sure
For there's back in soul and body," says Rory O'More.

The Mirror of Ireland

Dublin: National Library of Ireland, 2005

In 2005 the National Library of Ireland mounted an exhibition celebrating the centenary of the Abbey Theatre and featuring material from its Abbey Theatre Photographic Collection.

James Robinson Planché (1794–1880)

The Brigand

Dublin: Theatre Royal, 1839

This melodrama opened at the Drury Lane Theatre, London, in 1829 and toured successfully for many years.
Frederick Reynolds (1764–1841)
The Will
Dublin: Theatre Royal, 1821
Reynolds was the author of more than 100 plays, including this comedy, which was first performed at the Drury Lane Theatre, London, in 1794.

Spy (Leslie Ward, 1851–1922)
"Portrait of Dion Boucicault" in Vanity Fair, 1882
Lithograph
From 1868 to 1914, Vanity Fair magazine was published weekly for the stated purpose of exposing contemporary vices and those responsible for them. Each issue contained an original lithographic caricature of a popular figure of the day. Many were by Sir Leslie Ward, working under the pseudonym Spy.

John Millington Synge (1871–1909)
The Playboy of the Western World
Dublin: Abbey Theatre, [1907?]
This poster is signed by its designer, Alan Barlow, and has autographs by the play’s director, Vincent Dowling, and several of the actors.
John Millington Synge (1871–1909)

*The Playboy of the Western World*

Galway: Druid Theatre, 2004

A stranger, Christy Mahon, stumbles into an isolated community in County Mayo and claims to have killed his father. He quickly becomes a local hero, attracting the attention of all the women, especially Pogge Mike, the publican’s daughter. Even though she is engaged to another man, Pogge and Christy declare their love for each other. When it is discovered that his father is not dead, the moral always triumphs.

*DruidSynge: The Plays of John Millington Synge*

Galway: Druid Theatre, 2006

A marathon one-day presentation of all six plays by Synge was developed by the Druid Theatre, Galway, and premiered at the Galway Arts Festival in July 2005. *DruidSynge* toured Dublin, Edinburgh, and Leeds. In 2006, the production moved to Minneapolis, where it opened at the Guthrie Theater, and then spent two weeks in New York City. The production continues to tour.

Frank McMahon (b. 1926)

*Borstal Boy*

New York: Lyceum Theatre, 1970

This production, based on Brendan Behan’s autobiographical book, was adapted for the stage by Frank McMahon and directed by Tomás MacArla. It was first performed at the Abbey Theatre in 1967 and opened at the Lyceum Theatre, New York, on March 31, 1970. This is a digital reproduction of the original poster designed by LeRoy Neiman.
Abbey Theatre poster
Dublin: Abbey Theatre, 1916
A poster for the 1916 Easter Week performance of Kathleen ni Houlihan and The Mineral Workers with a change of program on April 25, 1916, when the advertised performance was cancelled due to the Easter Rising.
Courtesy of Leonard L. Milberg.

William Butler Yeats’s signed application to the Incorporated Stage Society, 1904.
Yeats’s application was proposed by the British actress Annie Elizabeth Frederika Honeyman (1860-1937). Honeyman first met Yeats in 1894, when she was financing a season of plays at the Avenue Theatre, London, that included plays by Yeats and George Bernard Shaw. Her belief in Yeats’s work led her in 1904 to purchase a building for the Irish National Theatre, to underwrite the Abbey Theatre’s first season, and to design costumes for several productions.
Courtesy of Paul B. Muldoon.
Marina Carr (b. 1964)

The Mai


The Mai premiered on October 3, 1994, at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, and won the award for Best New Play at the Dublin Theatre Festival. The Abbey revived the play in 1995 and named Carr writer in residence for the year.

Gift of McCarter Theatre.

Marina Carr (b. 1964)

Portia Coughlan

Princeton: McCarter Theatre, 1999

Carr is from County Offaly, and the Irish Midlands feature prominently in the landscape and language of her work. Portia Coughlan was commissioned by the National Maternity Hospital to celebrate its centenary and was first performed at the Abbey Theatre on March 30, 1996.

Gift of McCarter Theatre.

Brian Friel (b. 1929)

Dancing at Lughnasa

New York: Plymouth Theatre, 1991

Dancing at Lughnasa opens with a monologue by Michael, son of the youngest of the five unmarried Moons sisters, who raised him in their home in rural Ireland. Michael reminisces about the summer of 1936, when he was seven years old, and the sisters got their first radio.
Brian Friel (b. 1929)  
*The Home Place*  
London: Comedy Theatre, 2005

In Brian Friel’s most recent play, *The Home Place*, time is running out for a nineteenth-century Anglo-Irish landlord in Ballyshag, County Donegal. The events of Home Rule are creeping up on the landowners, and the consequences are allowed to reverberate in the music of the drums and the humanity of the characters.

Brian Friel (b. 1929)  
*Making History*  
[Derry]: Field Day Theatre Company, 1988

Field Day Theatre Company was established in 1980 by writer Stephen Rea and playwright Brian Friel. The company continues to present live theater and also publishes works of poetry, prose, and literature. One out in 2006 is a series of monographs featuring Irish composers, and next year, Field Day hopes to release *PRI: Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century Verse in Irish*.

Brian Friel (b. 1929)  
*Translations*  
New York: Plymouth Theatre, 1995

In 1833, in northwestern Donegal, British Army cartographers charged with surveying Ireland and translating all Irish place-names into English encountered the master and students of a hedge school, an illegal school for Catholics where lessons were taught in Gaelic.
Des Keogh (b. 1936)
*The Love-Hungry Farmer*
New York: The Irish Repertory Theatre, 2003

Irish actor Des Keogh adapted the humorous writings of John B. Keane into a one-man show entitled *The Love-Hungry Farmer*. Keogh plays the character John (Basco Miel), a man in his late 50s who is desperate for female companionship. The comedy was first performed at the Irish Repertory Theatre in New York City, honouring Keane who died the previous year.

John B. Keane (1928–2002)
*Sharon’s Grave*
Galway: Druid Theatre, 2003

*Sharon’s Grave* was originally produced by the Southern Theatre Group in Father Matthew Hall, Cork, on February 1, 1960. Revived by the Druid Theatre, it was presented at the Dublin Theatre Festival in 2003 with a cast that included Collin Walsh, Tom Hickey, David Horlin, Frankie McCafferty, Tom Vaughan Lawlor and Michael Fitzgerald.

John B. Keane (1928–2002)
*Sive*
Ennis: Druid Theatre, 2002

Keane wrote 14 plays and 32 works of prose and poetry. *Sive* was his first play, performed in 1959 at Walsh’s Barroom, Lisdoonvarna, County Clare. The play was revived by the Druid Theatre in 2002 to honour the playwright at his death. Set in a remote area of North Kerry, *Sive* tells the story of a gifting matchmaker who plans a marriage between a beautiful, young girl and an old man.
Brian Friel (b. 1929)
*Wonderful Tennessee*
New York: Plymouth Theatre, 1993
Set on a Donegal pier in the present, *Wonderful Tennessee* tells the story of a mailed birthday card for three middle-class couples. Each couple, saddled with a disappointing marriage and career, wants to visit an island whose Gaelic name means "Island of Mystery" and is known as a destination for people who want to be cured.

Des Keogh (b. 1936)
*The Love-Hungry Farmer*
New York: Irish Repertory Theatre, 2003
Irish scribe Des Keogh adapted the humorous writings of John B. Keane into a trio of one-act plays entitled *The Love-Hungry Farmer*. Keogh plays the character John B. McLane, a man in his late 50s who is desperate for female companionship. The comedy was first performed at the Irish Repertory Theatre in New York City in honor of Keane, who died the previous year.

John B. Keane (1928–2002)
*Sharon’s Grave*
Galway: Druid Theatre, 2003
*Sharon’s Grave* was originally produced by the Southern Theatre Group in Father Mathew Hall, Cork, on February 1, 1969. Revived by the Druid Theatre Company, it was presented at the Dublin Theatre Festival in 2003.
Hugh Leonard (b. 1926)

*Du*

New York: The Irish Repertory Theatre, 1996

Leonard's plays *Midsummer's Lock* and *The Patrick Pearse Most* were both presented by the Olney Theatre in Olney, Maryland before Leonard offered to premiere his new play *Du* in the theater on August 7, 1973. *Du* went on to become the first Irish play to win a Tony Award and a 1988 film with Lombard Hughes receiving his award-winning performance.

Frank McGuinness (b. 1953)

*Someone Who'll Watch over Me*

New York: Booth Theatre, 1992

The play is set in a dank basement cell in Beirut, where three characters are held hostage. In the original 1992 London cast were Stephen Rea as an Irish journalist, Alan McGowan as an English schoolteacher, and Hugh Quarshie as an American doctor.

Tom Murphy (b. 1935)

*The Plays of Tom Murphy*, playbill

Dublin: Abbey Theatre, 2001

Tom Murphy was honored by the Abbey Theatre in 2001 with a retrospective season of six of his plays, including *The Meaning After Eugenius*, *The Gigli Concert*, *Panino*, *A Whistle in the Dark*, *Blindness*, and *Sanctuary Lamp*. 
Sebastian Barry (b. 1955)

*Boyo's* (1982)

Limerick: Belltable Arts Centre, 1982

Barry’s play about two farm workers on the Cork-Kerry border, who still dream of life in the Wild West, was first presented at the Abbey Theatre on August 22, 1988.

Tom Paulin (b. 1949)

*The Rint Act*

Derry: Field Day Theatre Company, 1984

*Rint Act* premiered on September 19, 1984 at the Guildhall, Derry, by the Field Day Theatre Company. It was directed by Stephen Rea and performed by Joseph Cilly as Hammon, Nuala Hayes as Eurydice, Des McAuley as Tennesas, Veronica Quilligan as Antígona, Stephen Rea as Creon, and Hillary Reynolds as Ixion.

Sean O’Casey (1880–1964)

*The Plough and the Stars*

Bath: Theatre Royal, no date

Gift of J. Howard Woolmer


