



AUCKLAND CITY, A MOSAIC OF CULTURES

ARTS ALIVE

AUCKLAND CITY COUNCIL IS PROUD TO SPONSOR AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY'S 1999 SEASON

the cripple of Inishmaan

Welcome to Martin McDonagh's *THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN*, the third production of Auckland Theatre Company's 1999 Montana Season, *CULTURE OF DESIRE*.

Alongside Patrick Marber (*CLOSER*), Martin McDonagh is regarded as one of the UK's hottest new playwrights. Born of Irish parents but raised in England, his first work, *THE BEAUTY QUEEN OF LEENANE* took London by storm, going on to win awards on both sides of the Atlantic, including the 1998 Tony Award for Best Play. Where earlier dramatists such as Synge, O'Casey and Friel celebrated the proud nobility of the Irish people pitted against poverty, political oppression, remote geography and bleak climatic conditions, McDonagh revels in the black comedic absurdity of their plight. If life on Inishmaan is hard in the extreme, then the people are harder; shaped and blasted by the unforgiving and isolating sea which surrounds them. In these conditions, only the strong survive, and with this as their motto, the people of Inishmaan go about their business. All that is unnecessary is dispensed with; social niceties, respect for the aged and infirm, and sensitivity to the feelings of others. Here, you call a spade a spade, a shark a shark and a cripple a cripple because that is what they are. Such candour is brutal but explicable, borne out of a love unspoken but understood.



As in the play, the past shapes the future. The three generations of performers that comprise tonight's cast are a testament to this country's rich theatrical history. Some have worked in the profession for over fifty years. Others are just beginning their journey. It has been a privilege to work with them and a pleasure to watch them play.

We salute our cultural partners, particularly Principal Sponsor Montana Wines. We welcome Rydges Hotel, and gratefully acknowledge the continuing support of TVNZ, Air New Zealand, Arthur Andersen, BDO, Consultus, Canon and NewstalkZB. Tonight's performance is made possible through major funding from Creative New Zealand and Auckland City's Arts Alive Programme. ATC is indebted to Paul Minifie and the team at the Maidment Theatre for its support.

With *THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN*, ATC celebrates its 30th production. To all who have participated in our progress to date, on both sides of the curtain, we extend our gratitude for your company and support, and look forward to seeing you at *FORESKIN'S LAMENT*.

Simon Prast
PRODUCER

This production is dedicated to
Jim Macaulay, Founding Chairman
and Friend of ATC, who passed away
on 13 May 1999.

AUCKLAND
THEATRE
COMPANY



Dear Auckland Theatre Company Patron

Taking chances, daring to dream, having the courage to push the envelope ... these are just some of the values explored in this third Auckland Theatre Company play in the 1999 Montana Season CULTURE OF DESIRE. This exploration in Martin McDonagh's THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN echoes a

journey often taken by entrepreneurs, a journey frequently beset by difficulties and self-doubt. But without the courage to take the first step, journey's end would never be reached.

When Montana first planted Sauvignon Blanc in Marlborough twenty-five years ago, the sceptics chortled. When Montana told a bleary-eyed Auckland audience at the morning sabrage of the first vintage of Deutz Marlborough Cuvée in 1990 that this was a quantum leap ahead for sparkling wine, they nodded politely...until they tasted. And when Montana bought The McDonald Winery in Taradale in 1989 and committed to continuing Tom McDonald's dream of making great New Zealand red wine, it also seemed a bit far-fetched. In April this year we proudly opened the Tom McDonald Cellar at Tom's old winery and released our first vintage of "Tom", a classic Bordeaux-style Cabernet-Merlot of a quality that stands in tribute to Tom's vision and courage.

We are not at the end of our journey, but we are well on the way. We enjoy our milestones and take time with our friends to smell the roses.

We invite you to do so too. Enjoy this production!

Peter Hubscher
MANAGING DIRECTOR
Montana Wines Limited



Dear Auckland Theatre Company Patron

As an inner city hotel, we at Rydges Auckland, believe we should reflect the life and culture of our city. That's why you'll find a commitment to contemporary Auckland art on our walls and some of the best culinary artists in our kitchens.

The contemporary design of the building, the state of the art technology and our focus on guest comfort ensures that the hotel is not only a great place to stay but a great meeting place too.

After you enjoy the show, THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN, let us welcome you to Circa our restaurant led by one of New Zealand's most innovative chefs, Rick Rutledge-Manning. As regular theatre goers you probably know how hard it is to find a pleasant café or restaurant open late in Auckland.

Well, Circa is open late and I would encourage you to pop by for a late supper after the play.

Thank you for joining with Rydges Auckland to support the Auckland Theatre Company.

John Clarke
General Manager
Rydges Auckland

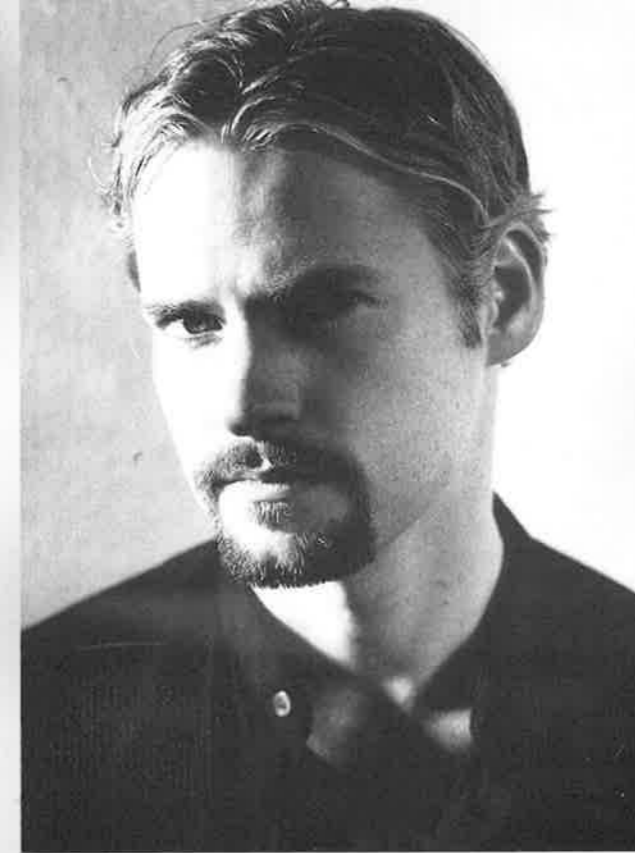


'...if you don't care what they're saying about it when they reject it, then when they start saying it's brilliant you still take it with a little pinch of salt. I always felt and still do that my own opinion on the stuff was the most important.'
Martin McDonagh in *The Irish Times*

Martin McDonagh is the son of a Sligo mother and a Galway father and grew up in London, mainly in Elephant and Castle, and later in Camberwell. Summer holidays were spent in Easkey and in Connemara. He left school when he was sixteen and has only ever seen between nineteen and twenty plays, including his own.

At 28, he has become one of the most sought-after young playwrights in Britain. His debut play, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, directed by Garry

Hynes in a Druid Theatre Company/ Royal Court production, opened the new Town Hall Theatre, Galway, in 1996 before playing at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs. It won both the 1996 Writers' Guild Award for Best Fringe Play and the Evening Standard Most Promising Playwright Award. In 1997 it was revived in the Royal Court's main house at the Duke of York's Theatre, following on from an



Martin McDonagh

Irish tour which saw the play performed in some of the most westerly communities in Europe including seven off-shore islands from Cape Clear in the Atlantic to Rathlin Island in the North Sea.

The Beauty Queen of Leenane was soon followed by two other plays that make up The Leenane Trilogy: *A Skull in Connemara* and *The Lonesome West*. The trilogy

premiered as a Druid Theatre Company/Royal Court co-production in 1997 at the Duke of York's Theatre. The Leenane Trilogy was seen in Australia as part of the 1998 Sydney Festival. *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* played on Broadway and won four Tony Awards.

The Cripple of Inishmaan premiered at The Cottesloe Theatre of the National in January 1997. It is part of McDonagh's next trilogy, The Aran Trilogy, three plays set on different Aran Islands at different points in time.

'...his vivacious fairy tales of desperation about backwater Irish life display an uncanny sense of character, comedy and construction.'
The New Yorker

'...the most wickedly funny, brilliantly abrasive young dramatist on either side of the Irish sea.'
The New York Times

'A Star is born, bright and blazing...a fresh voice, full of anguish and raucous laughter, and in seemingly effortless command of the tense, vaulting language of the stage.'
The Sunday Times

"So you're getting your curragh ready. All spick and span you're getting it. All ready for a trip or something. That's a nice boat, that is. A nice boat for a tripeen. And it's even more nice now that you've got it all prepared for yourself. All prepared and ready."

Johnnypateenmike,
The Cripple of Inishmaan

CANVAS CURRACH

I am a racer. Light, made for speed.
I hardly touch the water. Fragile
but I can carry three big men
and outlast them. It's all in the balance.
I will never drown.

I have no sail to wear but my black dress
clings to my ribs, seamless.
I am a slim greyhound of the sea.
The deeper your oars dig in
the lighter I skim.
I am built to run. Race me!

Mary O'Malley, *Where the Rocks Float*,
Salmon Poetry, Dublin, 1993

EDGE

Edenlike as your name
this sea's edge garden
where we rest, beneath
the clarity of a lighthouse.

To fly into risk,
attempt the dream,
cast off, as we have done
requires true luck

who know ourselves
blessed to have found
between this harbour's arms
a sheltering home

where the vast tides of the Atlantic
lift to caress
rose coloured rocks.

So fate relents.
Hushed and calm,
Safe and secret,
On the edge is best.

John Montague, *Irish Poetry After Yeats*,
Edited by Maurice Harmon,
Wolfhound Press, 1979

EXPOSURE

It is December in Wicklow:
Alders dripping, birches
Inheriting the last light,
The ash tree cold to look at.

A comet that was lost
Should be visible at sunset,
Those million tons of light
Like a glimmer of haws and rose-hips,

And I sometimes see a falling star.
If I could come on meteorite!
Instead I walk through damp leaves,
Husks, the spent flukes of autumn.

Imagining a hero
On some muddy compound,
His gift like a slingstone
Whirled for the desperate.

How did I end up like this?
I often think of my friends
Beautiful prismatic counselling
And the anvil brains of some who hate me

As I sit weighing and weighing
My responsible *tristia*.
For what? For the ear? For the people?
For what is said behind-backs?

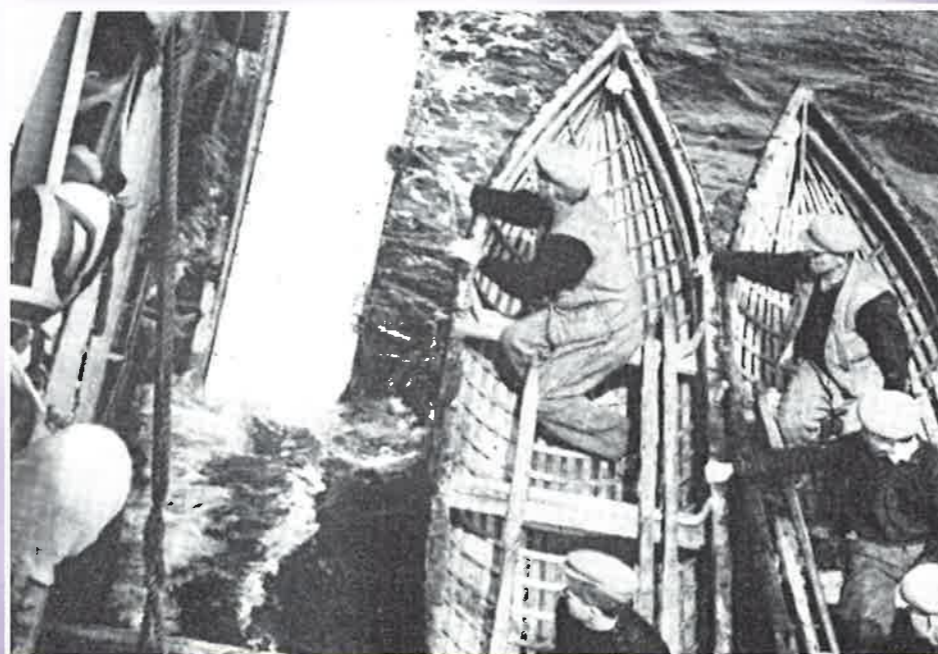
Rain comes down through the alders.
It's low conducive voices
Mutter about let-downs and erosions
And yet each drop recalls

The diamond absolutes.
I am neither interneer nor informer:
An inner emigre, grown long-haired
And thoughtful: a wood-kerne

Escaped from the massacre.
Taking protective colouring
From bole and bark, feeling
Every wind that blows.

Who, blowing up these sparks
For their meagre heat, have missed
The once-in-a-lifetime portent.
The comet's pulsing rose.

Seamus Heamey, *Irish Poetry After Yeats*,
Edited by Maurice Harmon,
Wolfhound Press, 1979



SIMON PRAST Director



Simon graduated from Theatre Corporate Drama School in 1984. As Producer of the Auckland Theatre Company for the last seven years, he is responsible for presenting over 30 productions to Auckland audiences. In 1998 Simon's directorial debut, *Twelve Angry Men*, received recognition as Best Production in the New Zealand Herald and Listener Magazine. His most recent production was *Closer*. Simon is also well known to Auckland audiences for his performances at Theatre Corporate and the Mercury Theatre which include *The Crucible*, *Hamlet*, *Glorious Ruins*, *Via Satellite*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Amadeus*, *M Butterfly* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Throughout New Zealand he is known for his many television roles including those in *Hercules*, *Xena*, *Shortland Street* and *Gloss*. In 1998 Simon co-starred in Garth Maxwell's *When Love Comes*, which featured at the Sundance and Toronto Film Festivals. Simon's mother is obsessed with Riverdance and maintains that Simon bears resemblance to Michael Flatley. Simon doesn't see it himself!

JOHN VERRYT Set and Costume Designer



Auckland based designer John Verryt started his design career at Theatre Corporate and the Mercury Theatre, designing for both opera and theatre, including *The Barber of Seville*, *Porgy and Bess*, *The Sex Fiend*, *Amadeus*, *Private Lives* and *The Rose Tattoo*. More recently, John has established himself as one of Auckland's most respected set and costume designers. His work includes *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *King Lear* (for which he won the 1996 Chapman Tripp Award for Costume Designer of the Year) and *Gold*, all for Theatre at Large, and *Forbidden Memories* for Douglas Wright Dance Company. For Opera New Zealand John designed

Carmen in 1993, followed by *Lucia de Lammermoor* in 1996, which is opening soon for a season at the LA Opera Centre. Last year he designed the sets and costumes for *Gianni Schicchi* and *The Spanish Hour*, and most recently the set for *La Boheme*. John has designed numerous productions for Auckland Theatre Company, including *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me*, *The Learner's Stand*, *Market Forces*, *Skylight*, *Social Climbers* and *Twelve Angry Men*.

BRYAN CALDWELL Lighting Designer



Bryan's first design was for Inside Out Theatre's *The Lover and Beloved* at the Mercury Theatre, Auckland in 1987. From that start, Bryan lit over fifteen productions for the Mercury Theatre including *The Cherry Orchard*, *The Rose Tattoo*, *The Secret Rapture* and *Ladies Night*, while continuing to light Inside Out Theatre's productions of *The Decline and Fall of a Good Family*, *The Song of the Civilised Thief*, *The Crossing* and *The Spectacle of One*. As a freelancer Bryan has lit and production managed ten productions for the Watershed Theatre including *Cabaret*, *Into The Woods*, *Assassins*, *Hamlet* and *Pinocchio*, and over thirty productions for independent companies, dance, and commercial events. Bryan has had a close collaboration with Production Designer Tracey Collins since 1988, recently co-producing and designing *Alice in Wonderland* at the Bruce Mason Theatre, and the installations *I Had A Thought* and *Our Name is Object* at Artspace, Auckland. For the Auckland Theatre Company, Bryan created the lighting designs for *Closer*, *The Wind in the Willows*, *Vita and Virginia*, *Julius Caesar*, *Twelve Angry Men*, *Honour*, *Masterclass*, *All My Sons*, *Arcadia*, *Molly Sweeney* and *Uncle Vanya*. This year Bryan is being enticed into new lighting challenges: developing light/music interfaces for the electronic music of *Pitchblack*, designing his first opera *La Boheme* for Opera NZ and interior lighting design.

LEIGHTON CARDNO*Billy*

A recent graduate of the School of Performing and Screen Arts, UNITEC, this is Leighton's professional stage debut. While at the School performances included *Life's Carousel*, *Our Town*, *Macbeth*, *King Arthur*, *The End of the Golden Weather*, *Agamemnon*, *Hiawatha* and *Petrouchka*.

**STUART DEVENIE***Dr. McSharry*

Trained at Victoria University Stuart has been involved with theatre for over 25 years. This involvement includes directing, teaching and performing. His many theatre performances include *Assassins*, *Into the Woods*, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Oleanna*, *Lovelock's Dream Run*, *Bliethe Spirit*, *Second Mr Tanqueray*, *Design for Living*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Travesties*, *The New Rocky Horror Picture Show*, *Noel and Gertie*, *China Wars*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, *Larnach*, *Treasure Island*, *M Butterfly*, *On the Razzle*, *Torch Song Trilogy*, *Macbeth*, *The Miser*, *Tom and Viv*, *Arsenic and Old Lace*, *Jumpers* and *Foreskin's Lament*. He appeared in the recent television production of *Market Forces*, which has just finished filming its second season. Other television credits include *Close to Home*, *A Week of It*, *McPhail* and *Gadsby*, *Gliding On*, *Ray Bradbury Theatre*, *Pioneer Women*, *Country GP*, *Colenso*, and *Hercules*. For film Stuart's credits include Peter Jackson's *The Frighteners*, *Jack Brown Genius* and *Brain Dead*. For theatre Stuart has directed *Raw*, *Perfect Strangers*, *Play Strindberg*, *Cold Turkey*, *The Learner's Stand*, *Private Lives*, *Bliethe Spirit*, *Amadeus*, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* and *Agnes of God*. Stuart's posts include Consulting Acting Tutor South Pacific Pictures, Senior Acting Tutor Northland Polytechnic, Senior Acting Tutor Toi Whakaari/New Zealand Drama School, Artistic Director Centrepoint Theatre, Associate Director Court Theatre, Founding



Councillor Circa Theatre, Producer Radio Drama NZBC and Director TV ONE. For Auckland Theatre Company Stuart performed in the critically acclaimed *Twelve Angry Men*, *All My Sons*, *Molly Sweeney*, *Uncle Vanya* and *Market Forces*. Having believed, since the age of six, that his surname was Irish, Stuart was distressed to discover he had no Irish ancestry at all, gaining another quarter of Scottish ancestry in the process.

LEE GRANT*Eileen*

Lee, now based in Perth, remains one of New Zealand's foremost actresses. In 1991, she was awarded an MBE for her contribution to the arts. Her many stage performances, numbering 100 since 1968, were mostly for the Mercury Theatre and include the highly successful production of *My Fair Lady* at the Aotea Centre. She has been involved in a variety of television productions including *Kurt Vonnegut Theatre* and *The Ray Bradbury Theatre*. Lee's film credits include a core-cast role in the US production *White Fang*. For Auckland Theatre Company Lee has performed in *Uncle Vanya*, *Three Tall Women*, *Angels in America* and *Daughters of Heaven*.

**JONATHAN HARDY***Johnny pateenmike*

Recently declared a 'star' for his work on the US television production of *Farscape*, Jonathan had an actual star named after him in the Aquila galaxy. He has many years of experience worldwide in theatre, television and film both in front of the audience and behind the scenes. His many theatre performances in the United Kingdom include *Look Back in Anger*, *The Beggars Opera*, *Peter Pan*, *Diary of a Madman*, *War & Peace*, *Seneca's Oedipus* and *Comedy of Errors*. In the United Kingdom has been a company member for the White Rose Theatre Company, The Chester Repertory Company, Worthing Theatre Company, The Royal Shakespeare Company, Bristol Old Vic, The National Theatre Company and the English Company of Palma di Majorca. From 1972 he was a member of several Australian theatre companies including the Melbourne Theatre Company, Sydney Theatre Company and the Victoria State Opera. His many Australian theatre productions include *Private Lives*, *Madame Butterfly*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, *The Elixir of Love* and *Once a Catholic*, the highly acclaimed production of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, *The Shaughraun*, *The Crucible*, *Richard III*, *Simpatico* and *Breaker Morant*, which he later adapted for film, and most recently *Kiss Me Kate* and, for Black Swan Theatre Company (Perth), *The Year of Living Dangerously*. Television credits include *All Saints*, *State Coroner*, *Prisoner*, *Mission Impossible*, *The Man from Snowy River* and *The Thorn Birds*. Film credits include *Mad Max I*, *The Delinquents*, *Death Warmed Up* and *Down Rusty Down*. Jonathan was Artistic Director of the Mercury Theatre for several years where he rescued opera by taking it under the company's wing. He currently lives in Australia and returns to Auckland Theatre Company for the second time, his first production being the highly acclaimed *Twelve Angry Men*. Jonathan will appear later this year as Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman*.

**SOPHIA HAWTHORNE***Helen*

For the Auckland Theatre Company Sophia has previously appeared in *Closer*, *The Wind in the Willows*, *Social Climbers* and *The Seagull*. Other Auckland performances include *Into the Woods*, *Titus Andronicus* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Sophia also performed in *The Sound of Music* and *The Crucible* and has appeared in Wellington in *She Stoops to Conquer*. Sophia's film performances include *When Love Comes*, which recently featured at the Sundance and Toronto Film Festivals, *Savage Honeymoon*, which is currently at the Cannes Film Festival and will open later this year, and *Destroying Angel*. She won the TVNZ Young Achievers Award in 1995, which enabled her to study opera in New York. Sophia trained at Limbs and The Actors' Space.

**BRUCE HOPKINS***Babby bobby*

Born on Stewart Island, and subsequently the first person from there to act on *Hercules* and *Xena* (as far as he is aware anyway!), Bruce spent his earlier years playing waterpolo, studying for, and receiving, a Diploma in Physical Education from Otago University and working as a commercial crayfisherman. That is until he found the world of dance. Whence he spent ten years as a professional dancer with Limbs and Impulse Dance Theatre in New Zealand and Human Veins Dance in Australia. With impending parenthood at the door, Bruce spent the next two years at the Mercury Theatre as a company actor and most recently as a freelance performer. Recent performances include dancing with Black Grace and performing in Sam Shepard's *A Fool for Love*. Highlights from Bruce's career include performing for Kiri Te Kanawa at her 50th birthday, hosting on Newstalk ZB in the comedy duo "Des and Les" and winning the inaugural NZ Theatresports Tournament as a member of "The Von Trapp Family". This year sees the release of



three films Bruce has appeared in: *Channeling Baby, I'll Make You Happy* and *Savage Honeymoon*. Working with Simon Prast has proved amusing for Bruce. One of his most memorable stage moments was shared with Simon and Lee Grant while performing the inaugural season of *Via Satellite*. Simon had managed to step into a plastic bucket and the entire theatre (audience included) went into hysteria as Simon freed said foot. Falling off the stage during *Oedipus Rex* claims a close second spot for memorable moments.

DOROTHY MCKEGG
Kate



Dorothy studied singing, piano and drama at the Royal College of Music in London. While there she also performed at the London Palladium. As a founding member of Downstage Dorothy has performed in many plays in Wellington. In 1996 she received the Chapman Tripp Award for Best Actress for her role in *Tzigane*. Her many film credits include *Sleeping Dogs, Middle Age Spread, Matrons of Honor* and *Carry Me Back*. For television she performed in the BBC series *Quite Contrary*, and in New Zealand, *Home Movie, Mortimer's Patch, Close to Home, Gliding On, Country GP* and *Market Forces*. Dorothy was a member of the Mercury Theatre for eight years. For Auckland Theatre Company Dorothy performed in the critically acclaimed *Amy's View*.

ELIZABETH MCRAE
Mammy



Elizabeth has extensive experience in theatre, television and film. Theatre performances include *Once A Catholic, Middle Age Spread, Dirty Linen, Marat/Sade, Under Milkwood, The Crucible, Caucasian Chalk Circle, Dark of the Moon, Admirable Crichton* for the Mercury Theatre, *Pygmalion, The Plough and the Stars, Happy days, Not I, Vinegar Tom* for Theatre Corporate and *Ricordi* at the International Festival of the Arts. Elizabeth is well

known for her role on *Shortland St* as Marj. Other television credits include *Home Movie, Country G.P.* and *A Going Concern*. Film credits include *Scarecrow, Never Say Die, An Angel at My Table, Death in the Family, Return Journey, The Secret, Gordon Bennett, One of Those Blighters* and *A Dolls' House*. For Auckland Theatre Company Elizabeth performed in *The Wind in the Willows, Social Climbers* and *Uncle Vanya*. Elizabeth has spent many years perfecting her New Zealand accent.

WILLIAM PLUMB
Bartley



A graduate of Victoria University, Willie has appeared on stage from a very young age. He made his Auckland Theatre Company debut in 1998 in *The Wind in the Willows* and only recently finished performing in *Amy's View*. In Wellington he has performed for Bats Theatre in *Blue Vein*, for Circa Theatre in *Mojo*, for Downstage Theatre in *Cabaret* and *The Visit* and for the St James Theatre in *La Boheme*. For television Willie appeared in the US television programme *William Tell* and in the NZ film *Saving Grace*.

Auckland Theatre Company
Presents

the *cripple* of
Inishmaan

By Martin McDonagh

The Cripple of Inishmaan was first performed in the Cottesloe Auditorium of the Royal National Theatre, London on 12 December 1996
Original New York Production by The Joseph Papp Public Theatre/The New York Shakespeare Festival, George C. Wolfe, Producer

This is the third production of the Montana 1999 Culture of Desire
The Cripple of Inishmaan opened at The Maidment Theatre 20 May 1999

Cast in order of appearance

Eileen	Lee Grant
Kate	Dorothy McKeeg
Johnnypateenmike	Jonathan Hardy
Billy	Leighton Cardno
Bartley	Willie Plumb
Helen	Sophia Hawthorne
Babbybobby	Bruce Hopkins
Doctor McSharry	Stuart Devenie
Mammy	Elizabeth McRae

Director	Simon Prast
Designer	John Verryt
Lighting Designer	Bryan Caldwell
Wardrobe	Elizabeth Whiting
	Fiona Nichols
	Mirinda Penny
	Fritha Walker
	T.O. Robertson
	Suzanne Gratkowski
	Third Stage Ltd.

Afro Celt Sound System 'Vol. 1 Sound Magic'
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There will be a 20-minute intermission

AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY

Producer	Simon Prast
Associate Producer Marketing	Amy Drury
Business Manager	Susanne Ritzenhoff
Production Manager	Ross Joblin
Patron Services	Leal Butler
Administration Assistant	Carly Tawhiao

TRUST BOARD

Hinemoa Elder Chair Tim MacAvoy Simon Prast David Haywood
John Taylor Marc Spendlove Dayle Mace

From the mid 1990s, London's theatres have seemed insatiable in their desire for new Irish writing. The invasion was an unexpected reversal of recent trends, yet the hints had been there for some time already. So what fuelled this new drive?

The New

Almost 100 years ago, in 1904, the Abbey Theatre opened in Dublin. For a period of approximately 25 years, it was to be the focal point of a nationalistic interest in Irish drama. The theatre opened with W.B. Yeats' *On Baile's Strand* and by 1907 was established well enough to weather the considerable storm that blew up over J.M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*. Other successes followed, including most notably Sean O'Casey's *The Shadow of a Gunman*, *Juno and the Paycock*, *The Plough and the Stars* and *The Silver Tassie*. After this brief flowering, the Abbey's influence declined. It no longer exerted such strong influence over local playwrights.

Now, in the 90s, Irish drama is undergoing an impressive revival. The difference between today and 1904, however, is the dominance of the Abbey. At the start of the century, it was Anglo-Irish writers who, by and large, filled the Abbey's repertoire. Today, new plays are more likely to be regional and Catholic, mounted by small and diverse touring companies and, like their predecessors in the first Irish revival, take greater liberties with form. The Abbey, on the other hand, seems weighed down by its historic role as protector of Ireland's dramatic heritage, too conservative to tackle the challenge of the new writing.

First of the new wave was Sebastian Barry, whose hauntingly lyrical memory play, *The Steward of Christendom* explored a previously dark era of Irish history, that of the role of the Dublin Metropolitan Police in the birth struggles of the republic. Its tragic view of the Catholic loyalist's position within a Protestant hierarchy was based on Barry's own great grandfather's life.

Jimmy Murphy's *Brothers of the*

Irish Revival

Brush, about three Dublin house painters, was acclaimed on its first production in London.

The most recent, and possibly most spectacular, arrival has been that of 28 year old Conor McPherson, whose play *The Weir* is a spellbinding exploration of the power of simple story-telling. His ear for dialect, like that of Martin McDonagh's, recalls Synge's recreation of the Connemara tongue.

Success has not been a solely male preserve. Both Marina Carr and Gina Moxley have both been included in Faber's new anthology of Irish writing, *The Dazzling Dark*.

Tonight's playwright, Martin McDonagh, shot from the Galway home of his first play, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, in 1996 to the main stage of London's Royal National Theatre with *The Cripple of Inishmaan* within a year. He followed up his initial success with two other plays in his Connemara trilogy, *A Skull in Connemara* and *The Lonesome West*, both of which were premiered in London.

And of course, still writing for an international stage, are Brian Friel and Tom Murphy.

The list of successes is impressive but what has caused it?

In part, it is due to the flourishing of regional companies since 1990. Druid in Galway, Meridian in Cork and Yew in Mayo all actively pursue new Irish plays. No longer does the Abbey maintain a stranglehold on the supply of fresh drama. The regionalisation of theatre has also encouraged a refreshing diversity; there is no common idiom or background

linking all of the above writers. Barry writes of Dublin in the past, McDonagh of the west in both past and present and Carr of the claustrophobic Midlands.

Maybe because of this diversity, a sense of contemporary Irish identity is beginning to emerge. As Garry Hynes, late of the Abbey and now of Druid, maintains, "Things like the Kerry babies case, the sexual abuse of children by priests, the treatment of orphans by nuns have all forced us to change our perception of what being Irish means. We have almost had to devise a sense of nationhood . . . Ireland has begun to grow up."

Lastly, all of the above plays pay testimony to the enduring strength of theatre - its ability to captivate, intrigue and stimulate by the sheer power of story-telling. *The Cripple of Inishmaan* is an excellent example of that power at work.

Steve Walker

Directors and Producers



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THE ARAN ISLANDS

There is something compulsive in one's relationship to an island. A mainland area with its ambiguous or arbitrary boundaries doesn't constrain the attention in the same way. With an island, it is as if the surrounding ocean like a magnifying glass directs an intensified vision onto the narrow field of view. A little piece is cut out of the world, marked off in fact by its richness in significances. So an island appears to be mappable. Already a little abstracted from reality, already half-concept, it holds out the delusion of a comprehensible reality.

The three islands of Aran (Oileáin Árann in Irish) are called Árainn, Inis Meáin and Inis Oírr. I give them their proper names rather than the anglicised ones of Inishmore, Inishmaan and Inisheer, because they are of the Irish-speaking region of Ireland. The three islands sail in line-astern across the mouth of Galway Bay. First the biggest, Árainn, with a population of about nine hundred and the islands' chief village, the fishing port of Cill Rónáin. The landfall for its trawlers is Ros a' Mhíl on the Connemara coast, but the steamer brings in bread and tourists from Galway near the head of the bay, a three-hour sail if the weather favours. The next is Inis Meáin, the loneliest one, and the last is the smallest, Inis Oírr. About three hundred and twenty people live on each of these two.

Tim Robinson, *Setting Foot on the Shores of Connemara and Other Writings*, Lilliput Press, Dublin, 1996



THE PEOPLE OF ARAN

Although these people are kindly towards each other and to their children, they have no feeling for the sufferings of animals, and little sympathy for pain when the person who feels it is not in danger. I have sometimes seen a girl writhing and howling with toothache while her mother sat at the other side of the fireplace pointing at her and laughing at her as if amused by the sight.

A few days ago, when we had been talking of the death of President McKinley, I explained the American way of killing murderers, and a man asked me how long the man who killed the president would be dying.

'While you'd be snapping your fingers,' I said.

'Well,' said the man, 'they might as well hang him so, and not be bothering themselves with all them wires. A man who would kill a king or president knows he has to die for it, and it's only giving him the thing he bargained for if he dies easy. It would be right he should be three weeks dying, and there'd be fewer of those things done in the world.'

If two dogs fight at the slip when we are waiting for the steamer, the men are delighted and do all they can to keep up the fury of the battle.

They tie down donkeys' heads to their

hoofs to keep them from straying, in a way that must cause horrible pain, and sometimes when I go into a cottage I find the women of the place down on their knees plucking the feathers from live ducks and geese.

When the people are in pain themselves they make no attempt to hide or control their feelings. An old man who was ill in the winter took me out the other day to show me how far down the road they could hear him yelling 'the time he had a pain in his head.'

JM Synge, *The Aran Islands*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1907

Main road of Inishmaan, 1972
Daphne Pochin Mould, *The Aran Islands*
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GLOSSARY

GASIR (pronounced Gosawer) LADEEN - young boy or little thing
POTEEN - unlicensed whiskey (moonshine)
SKITTER - cow/sheep/chicken dung (a pile of owl's shit)
FECKERS - everyone on the island other than the person using the word
BITEEN - a little bit
PEGGED - thrown
EEJIT FECKIN BROTHER - Bartley McCormack
CURRAGH/CURRACH - the only way off the island

Aran Islands Population Figures

Year	Inishmaan	Inisheer	Inishmore
1821	387	421	2285
1861	478	532	2289
1901	421	483	1959
1936	375	445	1289
1956	361	376	944
1971	319	313	864

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