

IRISH REPERTORY THEATRE

The Friel Project

Molly
Sweeney



SINCE 1988



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IRISH REPERTORY THEATRE

CHARLOTTE MOORE, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR | CIARÁN O'REILLY, PRODUCING DIRECTOR

ON THE FRANCIS J. GREENBURGER MAINSTAGE

As part of THE FRIEL PROJECT

MOLLY SWEENEY

BY BRIAN FRIEL

DIRECTED BY CHARLOTTE MOORE

STARRING

RUFUS COLLINS, JOHN KEATING, AND SARAH STREET

scenic design

CHARLIE
CORCORAN

costume design

LINDA
FISHER

lighting design

MICHAEL
GOTTLIEB

sound design

HIDENORI
NAKAJO

production stage manager

JEFF
DAVOLT

assistant stage manager

PAMELA
BRUSOSKI

press representative

PRINT SHOP
PR

general manager

LISA
FANE

OPENING NIGHT: MAY 23, 2024

THE FRIEL PROJECT IS UNDERWRITTEN IN PART BY MARY LOU AND JOE QUINLAN

THIS PRODUCTION OF *MOLLY SWEENEY* HAS BEEN LICENSED BY ARRANGEMENT WITH THE AGENCY (LONDON) LTD, 24 POTTERY LANE, LONDON W11 4LZ E-MAIL: INFO@THEAGENCY.CO.UK

IRISH REPERTORY THEATRE'S 2023-2024 SEASON IS SUPPORTED, IN PART, BY YOUR TAXPAYER DOLLARS THROUGH THE NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS WITH THE SUPPORT OF GOVERNOR KATHY HOCHUL AND THE NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE AND THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CITY COUNCIL; AS WELL AS CULTURE IRELAND, THE AGENCY FOR THE PROMOTION OF IRISH ARTS WORLDWIDE; THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND THE CONSULATE OF IRELAND IN NEW YORK; THE HOWARD GILMAN FOUNDATION, THE SHUBERT FOUNDATION, THE CHARINA ENDOWMENT FUND, THE MORRIS & ALMA SCHAPIRO FUND, THE HAROLD & MIMI STEINBERG CHARITABLE TRUST, THE HUGOTON FOUNDATION, THE LEON LEVY FOUNDATION, THE TOW FOUNDATION, IRELAND FUNDS AMERICA, MUTUAL OF AMERICA, THE MICHAEL TUCH FOUNDATION, AND OUR MANY GENEROUS MEMBERS AND DONORS.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

While *Molly Sweeney* was not written to be set in a specific time period, the text is influenced by the context in which it was written; that of 1990s Ireland. The position of women and people with disabilities in Ireland throughout the 20th century gives important background to Molly's life and her story on stage.

“But a lovely woman. No trouble at all. If they were all as nice and quiet...”

Life for Irish women when Brian Friel was growing up was dictated by the traditional gender roles set out by the Catholic Church, which expected them to prioritize their domestic roles as wives and mothers. Women such as Friel's own mother would have been subject to the marriage bar which required women to resign from civil and public service jobs once they got married and banned married women from applying for vacant positions. This bar was not lifted until 1973.

By the latter half of the century, significant strides were being made towards gender equality. In the 1990s, women in Ireland were increasingly asserting their rights and challenging societal norms, leading independent lives outside of marriage. This period witnessed significant changes in Irish law, including the introduction of legislation which aimed to address gender inequality in various spheres of life. In 1990, Ireland passed legislation criminalizing marital rape, recognizing the rights of women within marriage and addressing a long-standing gap in legal protection. When Friel wrote *Molly Sweeney*, divorce was not yet legal in Ireland. Campaigns in the early 1990s urged women not to vote in favor of legalizing divorce for fear that men would leave their households in droves. Divorce was finally legalized until 1996, while *Molly Sweeney* was having its New York premiere.

“She had a full life and never felt at all deprived.”

The 1990s in Ireland also saw an improvement in the treatment of people with disabilities. Throughout the 20th century and far before it, disabled individuals in Ireland faced systematic marginalization and discrimination, with limited resources and societal attitudes towards disability hindering access to education, employment, and social participation for disabled individuals. Historically, disabled people in Ireland were often institutionalized, segregated from society, and denied opportunities for independent living. Institutions such as asylums and industrial schools subjected disabled individuals to harsh conditions and limited their autonomy. Prevailing stigmas surrounding disability perpetuated misconceptions and barriers to inclusion; on stage, we see this difference in the treatment of Molly in comparison to her mother.

Molly lives a full life because of successful efforts to improve the lives of disabled people in Ireland throughout the 20th century, driven by advocacy groups and legislative reforms. Established in 1931, the National Council for the Blind of Ireland is an organization working to empower blind and visually impaired individuals in Ireland. The NCBI offers a range of support services to promote the full participation and integration of blind individuals in society. In 1960, the Irish Wheelchair Association was founded to improve the lives of people with physical disabilities.

In 1998, four years after *Molly Sweeney* was written, Ireland passed the Employment Equality Act, which prohibited discrimination against employees or job seekers on the grounds of disability. This legislation marked a crucial step towards promoting equal opportunities for disabled individuals in the workforce and combating systemic discrimination. The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, which was developed in the late 1990s and passed in 2004, aimed to provide inclusive education for students with special needs, including those with physical or intellectual disabilities. This legislation mandated supports and accommodations to facilitate the participation and integration of students with disabilities in mainstream educational settings.

MOLLY SWEENEY: PRODUCTION HISTORY

Molly Sweeney premiered at The Gate Theatre in Dublin on August 9th, 1994, with Brian Friel taking on the role of director for the first time in his decades-long career. Despite his previous two shows – *Dancing at Lughnasa* and *Wonderful Tennessee* – being produced at Ireland’s national theater, The Abbey, Friel decided to stage *Molly Sweeney* at The Gate due to its more intimate setting. The Gate was approximately half the size of The Abbey, seating 330 guests at the time.

The original cast included Catherine Byrne as Molly, Mark Lambert as Frank Sweeney, and T. P. McKenna as Mr. Rice. McKenna had previously appeared in *The Communication Cord* a decade prior to *Molly Sweeney*, and would go on to star in *Aristocrats* at London’s National Theatre in 2005. Catherine Byrne was a veteran of Friel’s plays by this time, having also appeared in *Dancing at Lughnasa* and *Wonderful Tennessee*, and would go on to star in *Aristocrats* in 1999.

Joe Dowling, former director of The Abbey Theatre, asserted that Byrne was an influential figure for Friel while he was writing *Molly Sweeney*, telling *The New York Times* in 1996, “I think, though I haven’t spoken to Brian about it, that to a large extent it was written for her. It certainly was written with her in mind.” While some considered Byrne to be Friel’s muse at the time, the actress denied this claim, pointing to his long history of playwrighting before the pair had met.

Friel famously doubted the function of a director, having stated that, “I want a director to call rehearsals, to make sure the actors are there on time and to get them to speak their lines clearly and distinctly. I’ve no interest whatever in his concept or interpretation. I think it’s almost a bogus career. When did these people appear on the scene? One hundred years ago?” With *Molly Sweeney*, he fulfilled his wish of a director-free rehearsal room (he added that all one needs is “an efficient stage manager”) by placing himself in the role, extending his function as playwright.

Molly Sweeney was Friel’s first play after *Wonderful Tennessee* which, despite fine reviews, closed on Broadway after just nine performances. The stakes were heightened for this new play, with theatergoers questioning if Friel had lost his magic. They concluded he hadn’t, when *Molly Sweeney* opened to high praise from Irish publications after its run at The Gate, and the show transferred to The Almeida Theatre in London with the same cast. The transfer was successful, with BBC radio saying the play “has restored Friel, put him back on course.”

Molly Sweeney moved to Broadway almost one year after its London debut. It opened in January 1996 at Roundabout Theatre Company’s Laura Pels Theater in the Criterion Center with Catherine Byrne still in the titular role. She was joined by Alfred Molina and Jason Robards in the production which won the Lucille Lortel Award for Outstanding Play.

Molly Sweeney has been produced across the world since it opened in 1994, with notable productions in The Guthrie Theatre in 2002, directed by Joe Dowling, and The Gate Theatre in 2011, where it first premiered. The Irish Repertory Theatre first staged *Molly Sweeney* in 2011, directed by Charlotte Moore and featuring Geraldine Hughes in the titular role, with Ciarán O’Reilly and Jonathan Hogan as Frank Sweeney and Mr. Rice. The production moved to the Long Wharf Theatre in New Haven with Simone Kirby taking over the role of Molly. In 2020, Geraldine Hughes and Ciarán O’Reilly reprised their roles for Irish Rep’s inaugural Performance on Screen during the theatre’s COVID-19 shut down.

“I am particularly indebted to Oliver Sacks’ case history ‘To See and Not See’ and the long strange history of such cases.” — Brian Friel



The Friel Project Directors

Ciarán O'Reilly (*Philadelphia, Here I Come!*), Doug Hughes (*Translations*), and Charlotte Moore (*Aristocrats, Molly Sweeney*)

MEET THE CAST!



**RUFUS
COLLINS**



**JOHN
KEATING**



**SARAH
STREET**

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CAST

Mr. Rice Rufus Collins
Frank Sweeney John Keating
Molly Sweeney Sarah Street

TIME & PLACE

Unspecified Time
Ballybeg, County Donegal, Ireland

RUNNING TIME: 2 hours and 15 minutes, including an intermission

Special thanks to David Toser

WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

RUFUS COLLINS (*Mr. Rice*) is thrilled to be back at the Rep where he appeared previously in *Translations*, *The Dead*, *1904*, *The Quare Land* and *Aristocrats*. Broadway: *The Royal Family*, *To Be or Not To Be*, *A Day in the Death of Joe Egg*, *An Ideal Husband*, *The Homecoming*. Off-Broadway: *Road to Damascus*, *The Seagull*, Orson's *Shadow*, *House and Garden*. Regional highlights: *Lifespan of a Fact* (Hartford Theater Works), *My Fair Lady* and *Gypsy* (Sharon Playhouse), *Venus in Fur* (Goodman), *Seminar* (Philadelphia Theatre Co.), *Michael Von Seibenburg Melts Through the Floorboards* (Humana), *The Old Masters* (Long Wharf), *The Autumn Garden* and *Dissonance* (Williamstown), *The Real Thing* and *Sherlock's Last Case* (Huntington), *In This Corner* (Old Globe), *Dinner with Friends*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Indian Ink*, *The Ruling Class*, *Macbeth*. Film: *After the Wedding*, *The Geezer*, *Wanted*, *Joshua*, *Milia*. Television: *The Blacklist*, *The Deuce*, *Madam Secretary*, *Elementary*, *Mysteries of Laura*, *Forever*, *Mozart in the Jungle*, *Law & Order* (all versions).

JOHN KEATING (*Frank Sweeney*) is delighted to be back at Irish Rep for his 27th show with the Company. Recent favorites include *Translations*, *Autumn Royal*, *Two by Synge*, *Lady G*, *Pigeon in the Taj Mahal*, *The Weir* (three runs, including the virtual run in 2020), and *The O'Casey Cycle* (2020 Callaway Award) and he was very honored to share the Irish Rep Sustained Excellence Award with Terry Donnelly in 2019. A prominent New York stage actor, John has also performed with Theatre for a New Audience 6 times (most recently in Arin Arbus' *The Winter's Tale* and Trevor Nunn's *Pericles*), and many other NYC companies, including Atlantic, Roundabout, Mint, Irish Arts, Pond, La Mama, Coop, Pearl, and most leading American regional theatres. TV includes *Boardwalk Empire* (recurring), *The Blacklist*, *John Adams*, *The Following*, *Ray Donovan*, *SVU*, *Alpha House*, *High Maintenance*, *Nurse Jackie*, *Lipstick Jungle*. Film includes Kelly Reichardt's *First Cow* (Time Magazine film of the year 2020), Aaron Schimberg's *A Different Man* (winter 2024), *The Lone Ranger*, *Emerald City*,

Misty Button, *Freedom*. John has narrated over 200 audiobooks (Audie winner, SOVA nominee).

SARAH STREET (*Molly Sweeney*) is delighted to be back at the Irish Rep. Recent theatre credits include *Aristocrats* directed by Charlotte Moore (Irish Rep), *Good Vibrations* U/S directed by Des Kennedy (Irish Arts Center), *Intelligence* directed by Jess Chayes (Dutch Kills Theater Co. at Edinburgh Fringe), *Belfast Girls* directed by Nicola Murphy (Irish Rep), *Afterwards*, written and directed by Enda Walsh (Irish Arts Center). Other theatre credits include: *Skylight*, *Palm Beach Dramaworks* directed by Vanessa Moroscoe, *Dublin Carol* directed by Ciarán O'Reilly, *Juno and the Paycock* directed by Neil Pepe, *The Plough and the Stars* and *Rebel in the Soul* directed by Charlotte Moore (Irish Rep), *Sing Street* V/O (The New York Theatre Workshop) directed by Rebecca Taichman, *The Naturalists* co-directed by Colleen Clinton and Lily Dormont (The Pond Theatre), *Muswell Hill* directed by Shannon Patterson (The Barrow Group), *Dying for It* directed by John Keating (Origin Theatre) and *Abigail's Party* directed by Lee Brock (The Barrow Group/The Pond Theatre). Recent TV credits include-Inside *Amy Schumer* Season 5 (Paramount Plus) *Law & Order: SVU* (NBC). Sarah also works in film, commercials and voiceover. She was just nominated for "Outstanding Actress in a Film" at The Nice International Film Festival 2023. Her first feature film *The Mustache Ride* is currently in development. sarah-street.com

BRIAN FRIEL (*Playwright*) (1929-2015) is widely regarded as one of Ireland's greatest dramatists, having written over 30 plays across six decades. He was a member of Aosdána, the society of Irish artists, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Irish Academy of Letters, and the Royal Society of Literature where he was made a Companion of Literature. He was awarded the Ulysses Medal by University College, Dublin. Plays include *Hedda Gabler* (after Ibsen), *The Home Place*, *Performances*, *Three Plays After* (*Afterplay*, *The Bear*, *The*

WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

Yalta Game), *Uncle Vanya* (after Chekhov), *Give Me Your Answer Do!*, *Molly Sweeney* (Winner of the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Foreign Play), *Wonderful Tennessee*, *A Month in the Country* and *Fathers and Sons* (both after Turgenyev), *The London Vertigo* (after Charles Macklin), *Dancing at Lughnasa* (Winner of 3 Tony Awards including Best Play, New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Play, Olivier Award for Best Play), *Making History*, *The Communication Cord*, *American Welcome*, *Three Sisters* (after Chekhov), *Translations*, *Aristocrats* (Winner of the Evening Standard Award for Best Play and New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Foreign Play), *Faith Healer*, *Living Quarters*, *Volunteers*, *The Freedom of the City*, *The Gentle Island*, *The Mundy Scheme*, *Crystal and Fox*, *Lovers: Winners and Losers*, *The Loves of Cass Maguire*, and *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*.

CHARLOTTE MOORE (*Director, Artistic Director*) Recent directing assignments: *Aristocrats* (as part of Irish Rep's 35th season long celebration: *The Friel Project*), *Dear Liar* (as part of the *Letters Series*), *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, *Two by Synge*, *The Streets of New York*, *Meet Me in St. Louis**, *Love, Noël**, *Molly Sweeney**, (*Performances on Screen), *London Assurance*, *Love, Noël: The Songs and Letters of Noël Coward*, *The Plough and the Stars* as part of *The O'Casey Cycle*, *On a Clear Day You Can See Forever*, *Three Small Irish Masterpieces* by W.B Yeats, *Lady Gregory* and *J.M. Synge*. New York premiere of Brian Friel's *The Home Place*, World premiere of Larry Kirwan's *Rebel in the Soul*, *Finian's Rainbow*, *The Phyllis Newman Women's Health Initiative Gala*, Truman Capote's *A Christmas Memory*, *Juno and the Paycock* and *Dancing at Lughnasa*. New York stage appearances include *A Perfect Ganesh*, *Meet Me in St. Louis*, *The Perfect Party*, *Morning's at Seven*, *Private Lives* (with Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton), and many performances with the New York Shakespeare Festival. Ms. Moore has received two Tony Award nominations, the Outer Critics Circle Award, the Drama Desk Award, the Drama League Award, the Irish

America Top 100 Irish Award, The Eugene O'Neill Lifetime Achievement Award, and the 2008 Irish Women Of The Year Award. She is the recipient of the St. Patrick's Committee in Holyoke's John F. Kennedy National Award, and has thrice been listed as one of the "Top 50 Power Women" in *Irish America Magazine*. Charlotte was named "Director of the Year" by *The Wall Street Journal* in 2011. Charlotte has been inducted in to the Irish America Hall of Fame and awarded the Presidential Distinguished Service Award for the Irish Abroad in 2019 by President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins.

CHARLIE CORCORAN (*Scenic Design*) NY designs include: *Endgame*, *The Butcher Boy*, *A Touch of the Poet*, *Autumn Royal*, *The O'Casey Cycle* (Henry Hewes Design Award), *The Seafarer*, *On Beckett*, *Shining City*, *The Emperor Jones* (Hewes Design Award nom.), *The Weir* (Irish Rep), *The Quare Land* (Origin First Irish Award), *Billy and Ray* (Vineyard Theatre), *Straight* (Acorn Theatre), *The Marriage of Figaro*, *The Triumph of Love* (Juilliard), *Craving for Travel* (Peter J. Sharp Theatre), *The Last Smoker In America* (Westside Theatre), *A Perfect Future* (Cherry Lane), *The Bully Pulpit* (Beckett Theatre), *Exits And Entrances* (Primary Stages). Regional theatre designs include: *A Comedy of Tenors* Outer Critics Circle Award, Cleveland Playhouse, McCarter Theatre), *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* (The Goodman Theatre), *The Barber Of Seville*, *The Marriage Of Figaro* (The McCarter Theatre), *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *Absurd Person Singular*, *Noises Off* (Two River Theatre), *Without Walls* (Center Theatre Group), *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* (Buck's County Playhouse), *Bad Jews* (Ensemble Theatre Company/English Theatre of Frankfurt) Opera designs include: *Fidelio* (Santa Fe Opera), *Cosi Fan Tutte* (co-production Metropolitan Opera and Juilliard), *Don Giovanni*, *Katya Kabanova* (Juilliard), *The Turn of the Screw*, *The Flood* (Opera Columbus), *The Magic Flute*, *The Bartered Bride* (Granada Theatre, Santa Barbara), *L'Opera Seria* (Wolftrap Opera). TV designs include: *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee*

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(TBS), *Mozart in the Jungle* (Amazon), *Believe* (NBC), *Madam Secretary* (CBS).

LINDA FISHER (*Costume Design*) Costume designs have appeared in such Broadway productions as *A Tuna Christmas* and *Morning's at Seven* (1980, for which she also designed several tours and the CBS cable version). She also created the costumes for *A Greater Tuna* and *Red, White, and Tuna* for Regional, Off-Broadway and television, plus a fourth in the series, *Tuna Does Vegas*. Other Film/TV credits include: *After the Storm*, Stephen King's *The Langoliers*, *The Private History of a Campaign That Failed*, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, and *Rachel River* for American Playhouse. At Irish Rep (Her 30th Show): *The O'Casey Cycle* (co-design with David Toser), *Three Small Irish Masterpieces*, *Rebel in the Soul*, *The Burial at Thebes*, *Da*, *Port Authority*, *Transport*, *A Celtic Christmas*, *The Streets of New York* (twice), *A Life*, *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, *Eclipsed*, *The Hostage*, *The Colleen Bawn*, *Endgame*, *The Hairy Ape*, *Take Me Along*, *The Master Builder*, *Ernest in Love*, *Molly Sweeney*, *The Shaughraun* (twice), *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Beyond the Horizon*, *Donnybrook!* and more. Designs for other Off-Broadway companies include: Manhattan Theatre Club, Playwrights' Horizons, Roundabout Theatre, and the Public Theater. Regional theatres include: Westport Country Playhouse, Dallas Theatre Center, The Guthrie Theatre, Long Wharf Theatre, Arena Stage, Houston's Alley Theater, Seattle Rep, Alaska Rep, Westen Playhouse and the Williamstown and Berkshire Theatre Festivals. BFA from the University of Texas and MFA from the Yale Drama School.

MICHAEL GOTTLIEB (*Lighting Design*) has designed over 50 productions at the Irish Repertory Theatre, where his credits include *A Touch of the Poet* (Henry Hewes Design Award nomination), *The O'Casey Cycle* (Henry Hewes Design Award nomination), *Bill Irwin: On Beckett*, *Woody Sez*, *Woman & Scarecrow* and *The Weir*. His other New York designs include the Broadway musical *Lysistrata Jones*, *Storyville* (York), *Major Barbara* (Pearl), *Signs of Life* (AMAS), *Spain* (MCC), and *Election Day* (Second Stage). Regional work includes

credits at The Goodspeed, Trinity Rep, The Hangar, The Long Wharf and The Old Globe. He has an Emmy Award and several other award nominations for his work in television. Michael is a graduate of Vassar and The British & European Studies Group, London. mgld.com

HIDENORI NAKAJO (*Sound Design*) NYC: *Still* (Colt Coeur), *The Life & Smiles of Marc Summers* (New World Stages), *The Creeps* (Playhouse 46), *OCTET* (Signature, Obie Award, Drama Desk nom., Lucille Lortel nom., Henry Hewes Design Awards nom.), *Autumn Royal* (Irish Rep, Drama Desk nom., Henry Hewes Design Awards nom.), *mɔ:nɪŋ [morning// mourning]* by Gelsey Bell (Prototype Festival), *Dodi & Diana* (Colt Coeur), Regional: *OCTET* (Berkeley Rep), *Moby Dick* (A.R.T., Elliot Norton Award), *Guys & Dolls* (Guthrie), *Still* (Dorset Theatre Festival), *Other World* (Delaware Theater Company), *Hold These Truths* (People's Light), *Into the Burrow*, *A Peter Rabbit Tale* (Alliance, GA), *A Gift of Love with Adam McKnight* (Alliance, GA). Broadway Associate: *Camelot*, *The Kite Runner*, *The Front Page*. Broadway Assistant: *The Lightning Thief*, *Be More Chill*, *Allegiance*, *Gigi*. Tour Associate: *The Kite Runner* (North American Tour), *My Fair Lady* (NE Tour). He served Japanese theatrical productions as a bilingual engineer/coordinator for Ikuko Kawai & Orchestra Hibiki (Jazz at Lincoln), *One Green Bottle* by Noda Map (La MaMa) and more for Lincoln Center Festival 2015-17. A member of IATSE ACT and Local USA 829.

JEFF DAVOLT (*Production Stage Manager*) For Irish Rep: *Endgame*, *Autumn Royal*, *Dublin Carol*, *The Dead*, *1904*, *The Seafarer*, *The Weir*, *Sea Marks*, *The Burial at Thebes*, *Lady G*, *Afterplay*, *Love Noël*, *YES! Reflections of Molly Bloom*. Selected NYC: *Rock & Roll Man*, Actors Studio Rep Season (2021/2022), *Fruma Sarah - Waiting in the Wings*, *Spamilton*, *Rock of Ages*, *The Great Divorce*, *The Last Smoker in America*, *Lucy*, *Lenin's Embalmers*, *End Days*, *Junie B. Jones*, *EST Marathon* (2007-2009), The HOWL Arts Festival, and several industrial shows. TV: *The Victoria's Secret Fashion Show* (CBS), *The History Makers* (PBS), *Antigone in*

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Ferguson (PBS). Regional: *Seussical* (National Tour), *L'Histoire du soldat*, Bernstein's *MASS*, *Matilda*, *Dames at Sea*, *White Christmas*, *Smokey Joe's Café*, *The Full Monty*, *Man of La Mancha*, *Chicago*, *La Cage aux Folles*, *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*, *HMS Pinafore*, *The Pirates of Penzance*. Directing: *Suicide...Anyone?*, *Max & Ruby* (National Tour), *Dearest Mommie - The Musical*, *Greater Tuna*, *Sylvia*, *Sister Mary Ignatius / Actor's Nightmare*, *An Inspector Calls*, *Jake's Women*, and numerous AIDS Walks. Graduate: University of Missouri - Columbia. Member: AEA/SDC/SMA.

PAMELA BRUSOSKI (*Assistant Stage Manager*) has been a stage manager at Irish Rep for over 20 years and for more than 40 shows. Notable/favorite productions include *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Finian's Rainbow*, *The Emperor Jones*, *Molly Sweeney*, and *Freedom of the City*. Broadway: *Beauty and the Beast* and *Little Women*. Selected Off-Broadway: Charles Grodin's *The Right Kind of People* (Primary Stages), *A Last Dance for Sybil* with Ruby Dee and Ossie Davis (New Federal Theatre), Mint Theater Company, The York Theatre Company, and Carnegie Hall. Regionally: Pioneer Theatre Company, Pittsburgh CLO and Pittsburgh Public Theater. MFA in Directing: Brooklyn College (CUNY).

CIARÁN O'REILLY (*Producing Director*) Favorite directing credits include: *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* (as part of Irish Rep's 35th season long celebration: *The Friel Project*; Lortel Nom., Drama Desk Nom., OCC Nom.) *Love Letters*, *Endgame* (Off-Broadway Alliance Award for Best Play Revival, OCC Nom., Lortel Nom., and Drama Desk Nom.), *The Butcher Boy*, *A Touch of the Poet*, *Autumn Royal*, *A Touch Of the Poet**, *The Weir** (*Performances on Screen), *Lady G: Plays and Whisperings of Lady Gregory*, *Dublin Carol*, *The Shadow of a Gunman*, *The Seafarer*, *The Dead*, *1904*, *Shining City*, *Off the Meter*, *On the Record*, *The Weir* (Callaway Nom.), *Banished Children of Eve*, *The Emperor Jones* (Callaway Award, O'Neill Credo Award, Drama Desk, Drama League, and Lucille Lortel Nom.), *The Hairy Ape*

(Drama Desk Drama League and Callaway Nom.), *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* (Drama Desk Nom). Irish Rep acting roles include *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* (AEA Richard Seff Award), *Da*, *Juno and the Paycock*, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Molly Sweeney*, *Candida*, *Aristocrats*, *A Whistle in the Dark*, *The Shaughraun*, and *The Irish and How They Got That Way*. He appeared in the Roundabout Theatre Company's production of *A Touch of the Poet* with Gabriel Byrne. He has appeared at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin and made his Broadway debut in *The Corn is Green*. Films include *The Devil's Own* (starring Harrison Ford), *Law & Order*, *The Irish...and How They Got That Way*, *Third Watch*, *Bored to Death* and *The Knick*. Ciarán has been inducted in to the Irish America Hall of Fame and has been awarded the Presidential Distinguished Service Award for the Irish Abroad, 2019 by President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins.

IRISH REPERTORY THEATRE Founded by Ciarán O'Reilly and Charlotte Moore in 1988, Irish Repertory Theatre opened its doors with Sean O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars*, and is now in its 35th Season. Irish Rep is the only year-round theatre company in North America devoted to bringing Irish and Irish-American works to the stage. Recognized with the Jujamcyn Theatres Award in 2007, a special Drama Desk Award for "Excellence in Presenting Distinguished Irish Drama," in 1992, the Lucille Lortel Award for "Outstanding Body of Work," in 2005, and a 2013 Outer Critics Circle Special Achievement Award for 25 years of producing outstanding theatre. Irish Repertory Theatre is proud to present the very best in Irish theatre, from the masters to the new generation of Irish and Irish-American writers who are transforming the stage. Located in the heart of New York's Off-Broadway community, Irish Rep offers an engaging perspective on the Irish and their unique contributions to the world of drama. In May 2020, Irish Rep presented full-length digital productions as filmed during the COVID-19 pandemic as Irish Rep Online, welcoming new audiences from around the globe.

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A Letter from the Directors

In 2005, our lease was running out on our space on West 22nd Street. Chelsea had become a much more sought-after destination than when we had begun seventeen years before and the real estate wolves were circling to claim our cherished ground.

We knew if we didn't find a way to own our crib, we were destined to become a traveling fit-up show and probably fade away. Friends came to our rescue but none more elegant than Brian Friel, who sent the following dispatch:

"For seventeen years the Irish Repertory Theatre has offered excellent theatre to thousands of New Yorkers, some with Irish connections, some without.

And because that excellence has been pursued with dedication and so selflessly, and because the best theatre involves an experience of the spirit, the ground they occupy has now been made sacred by them.

They have made their space hallowed.

It would be unthinkable if 132 W. 22nd St. were to slip from them and become secularized.

It must remain under their wonderful guardianship." — Brian Friel

Those ringing words inspired us then and has sustained us through the years. Many of those years were occupied in presenting this great playwright's work, fourteen productions in all, which makes this hallowed space all the more sacred by his genius.

CHARLOTTE MOORE, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

CIARÁN O'REILLY, PRODUCING DIRECTOR

BRIAN FRIEL (1929-2015)

Brian Friel was a dramatist and writer often referred to as the 'Irish Chekhov' for his plays exploring social and political life in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Over the course of a career spanning more than sixty years, Friel examined the tangled relationships between nationality, history, and narrative, with large, intergenerational casts of characters. His work was influenced by his upbringing in the rural north of Ireland, with more than a dozen of Friel's works set in the fictional Donegal town of Ballybeg (translating to "small town").

Friel was born in Killyclogher near Omagh, County Tyrone, to Sean Friel, a primary-school principal, and Mary McLoone, a postmistress. Friel spent half of his childhood in his father's home city of Derry before attending St. Patrick's College in Maynooth as a seminarian — he was never ordained, but graduated with a BA in 1948. In 1954, Friel married Anne Morrison, with whom he raised four daughters and a son. Alongside his work as a teacher, Friel began his career as a writer of short fiction, publishing his first short story in an Irish literary magazine before having work published in *The New Yorker*. By 1960, he was able to leave his teaching post to work full time as a writer.

Friel was given the opportunity to hone his skills as a dramatist when, in 1963, Tyrone Guthrie invited him to observe rehearsals in the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, an experience which Friel described as "enabling." Shortly after, Friel wrote his first major success, *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*, which takes place the evening before a young man emigrates to the United States from Ballybeg. Initially produced at the Gaiety Theatre as part of the Dublin Theatre Festival, the play came to Broadway in 1966, where it received six Tony Award nominations including Best Play and Best Director.

Friel's momentum as a playwright coincided with The Troubles in Northern Ireland, a period of violent sectarian conflict between nationalists, who wanted Northern Ireland to be part of the Republic of Ireland, and unionists, who wanted Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom. In 1972, Friel was a member of the crowd present at the Bloody Sunday massacre in Derry as he marched in protest of internment without trial. British soldiers opened fire on protesters, killing at least thirteen civilians and injuring several more. The incident — and its cover-up — inspired Friel's 1973 play *The Freedom of the City*, which led Friel to meet actor Stephen Rea.

In 1980, Friel and Rea founded Field Day Theatre Company, and its inaugural production of Friel's new play *Translations* was performed in the Guildhall in Derry. Field Day began publishing pamphlets — and, later, anthologies — on a wide variety of historical, cultural, and academic subjects. At this point in his career, Friel began adapting the works of Anton Chekhov — including *Three Sisters*, *Uncle Vanya*, and *The Bear* — a practice he would continue for more than two decades.

Perhaps Friel's best-known work, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, premiered at the Abbey Theatre in 1990, and shortly thereafter transferred to the National Theatre in London, winning the Olivier Award for Play of the Year. *Dancing at Lughnasa* ran for more than a year on Broadway and received three Tony Awards including Best Play. A film version was released in 1998 starring Meryl Streep and directed by Pat O'Connor.

In 2006, Friel was elected to the position of Saoi of the Aosdána, the highest honor bestowed by the Irish association of artists, and in 2009 Queen's University, Belfast, inaugurated the Brian Friel Theatre and Centre for Theatre Research. Friel died on October 2, 2015.

TIMELINE OF BRIAN FRIEL'S LIFE AND WORK



Photo: Bobbie Hanvey

1929 Brian Friel born on January 9th in Killyclogher, County Tyrone, to Sean Friel, a primary-school principal, and Mary McLoone, a postmistress.

1939 Friel and his family move to Derry, his father's home city.

1948 Friel graduates from St. Patrick's College in Maynooth with a BA.

1952 Friel Publishes his first short story, *The Child*, in the Irish literary magazine *The Bell*.

1954 Friel marries Anne Morrison. They will go on to have four daughters and a son.

1958-1959 His first radio play, *A Sort of Freedom*, is produced by BBC Radio Northern Ireland, followed shortly by his second, *To This Hard House*. *The New Yorker* magazine publishes his story *The Skelper*.

1960 His first stage play, *The Francophile*, later retitled *A Doubtful Paradise*, is premiered by the Group Theatre in Belfast. The same year, with a contract from *The New Yorker*, he leaves teaching to write full time.

1962 His play *The Enemy Within* premieres in the Abbey Theatre. His first short-story collection, *A Saucer of Larks*, is published. He begins writing a weekly column in the Irish Press.

1963 *The Blind Mice* premieres in Dublin at the Eblana Theatre. At the invitation of Tyrone Guthrie, Friel spends time as "an observer" at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis.

1964 *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* premieres at the Gaiety during Dublin Theatre Festival, produced by the Gate Theatre.

1966 *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* transfers to the Helen Hayes Theater on Broadway and runs for nine months. At the same theater, *The Loves of Cass McGuire* premieres – and closes after 20 performances. Friel publishes a second short-story collection, *The Gold in the Sea*.

1967 *The Loves of Cass McGuire* premieres at the Abbey Theatre, *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* opens in London, and *Lovers* is staged at the Gate Theatre.

1969 *The Mundy Scheme* premieres at the Olympia Theatre in Dublin; its New York run at the Royale Theatre closes after two performances.

1971 *The Gentle Island* premieres at the Olympia Theatre.

1972 Friel marches with members of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association in Derry to protest against internment without trial. During the march, British soldiers open fire in the Bogside area, killing at least 13 civilians and injuring others, in an event which would become known as Bloody Sunday.

1973 *The Freedom of the City* opens at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, informed by Bloody Sunday and the exoneration of British authorities by the Widgery tribunal. The play also premieres at the Royal Court in London, where Friel first meets actor Stephen Rea.

1975-1979 *Volunteers* (1975), *Living Quarters* (1977), and *Aristocrats* (1979) open at the Abbey Theatre.

TIMELINE OF BRIAN FRIEL'S LIFE AND WORK

1980 Friel and Stephen Rea found Field Day Theatre Company, with *Translations* as the company's first production in the Guildhall in Derry. *Faith Healer* has its Irish premiere at the Abbey Theatre, following a 20-day run on Broadway the previous year.

1981 *Faith Healer* premieres at the Royal Court; *Translations* opens in New York and London. Friel's translation of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* premieres in Derry for Field Day followed by a tour.

1982 Premiere of *The Communication Cord* in Derry before touring. Friel is elected a member of Aosdána, an Irish association of established artists.

1987 Friel is appointed to the Irish Senate, Seanad Éireann, where he serves until 1989. His adaptation of Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* premieres in London at the National Theatre.

1988 *Making History* premieres at the Guildhall in Derry as Friel's final play for the company.

1990 *Dancing at Lughnasa* premieres at the Abbey Theatre then transfers to the National Theatre in London, winning the Olivier Award for Play of the Year. Irish Repertory Theatre produces a revival of *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*

1991 *Dancing at Lughnasa* runs for more than a year at the Plymouth Theatre on Broadway, and wins three Tony Awards, including the award for Best Play. The American premiere of *Making History* takes place at the Irish Repertory Theatre.

1992 Friel's version of Charles Macklin's *The London Vertigo* premieres at Andrew's Lane Theatre in a production by the Gate. His version of Turgenev's *A Month in the Country* premieres at the Gate.

1993-1997 *Wonderful Tennessee* (1993) premieres at the Abbey; its New York run at the Plymouth Theatre ends after nine shows. Friel resigns from Field Day in 1994 and his play *Molly Sweeney* premieres at the Gate Theater before transferring to the Almeida in London. *Give Me Your Answer, Do!* (1997) premieres at the Abbey Theatre.

1998 The film adaptation of *Dancing at Lughnasa*, with a screenplay by Frank McGuinness, is released. Friel's version of *Uncle Vanya* premieres at the Gate Theatre.

1999 The Friel Festival takes place in Dublin, coinciding with Friel's 70th birthday. *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *The Freedom of the City*, *Living Quarters*, and *Making History* are performed at the Abbey; *Aristocrats* is performed at the Gate; an RSC production of *A Month in the Country* is staged.

2001-2005 The National Library of Ireland archives Friel's body of work. *The Yalta Game* (2001) premieres at the Gate. *Two Plays After* (2002), *Performances* (2003), and *The Home Place* (2005) premiere at the Gate Theatre. Irish Repertory Theatre presents a revival of *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*

2006 Elected to the position of Saoi, Aosdána's highest honor.

2007 Friel's version of Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* opens at the Gate Theatre.

2009 *Aristocrats* is produced at the Irish Repertory Theatre.

2011 Friel is named Donegal Person of the Year for 2010. Irish Repertory Theatre presents *Dancing at Lughnasa* and *Molly Sweeney*; the latter moves to Long Wharf Theatre, New Haven.

2012 Irish Repertory Theatre produces *The Freedom of the City*.

2015 Brian Friel dies on October 2nd.

2016 *Afterplay* has its New York premiere at the Irish Repertory Theatre.

2017 Irish Repertory Theatre presents the New York premiere of *The Home Place*.

2018 *Two by Friel* is staged at the Irish Repertory Theatre, featuring *Lovers: Winners* and *The Yalta Game*.

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The Laurels was home to Brian Friel's mother and is the setting of his play *Dancing at Lughnasa*.

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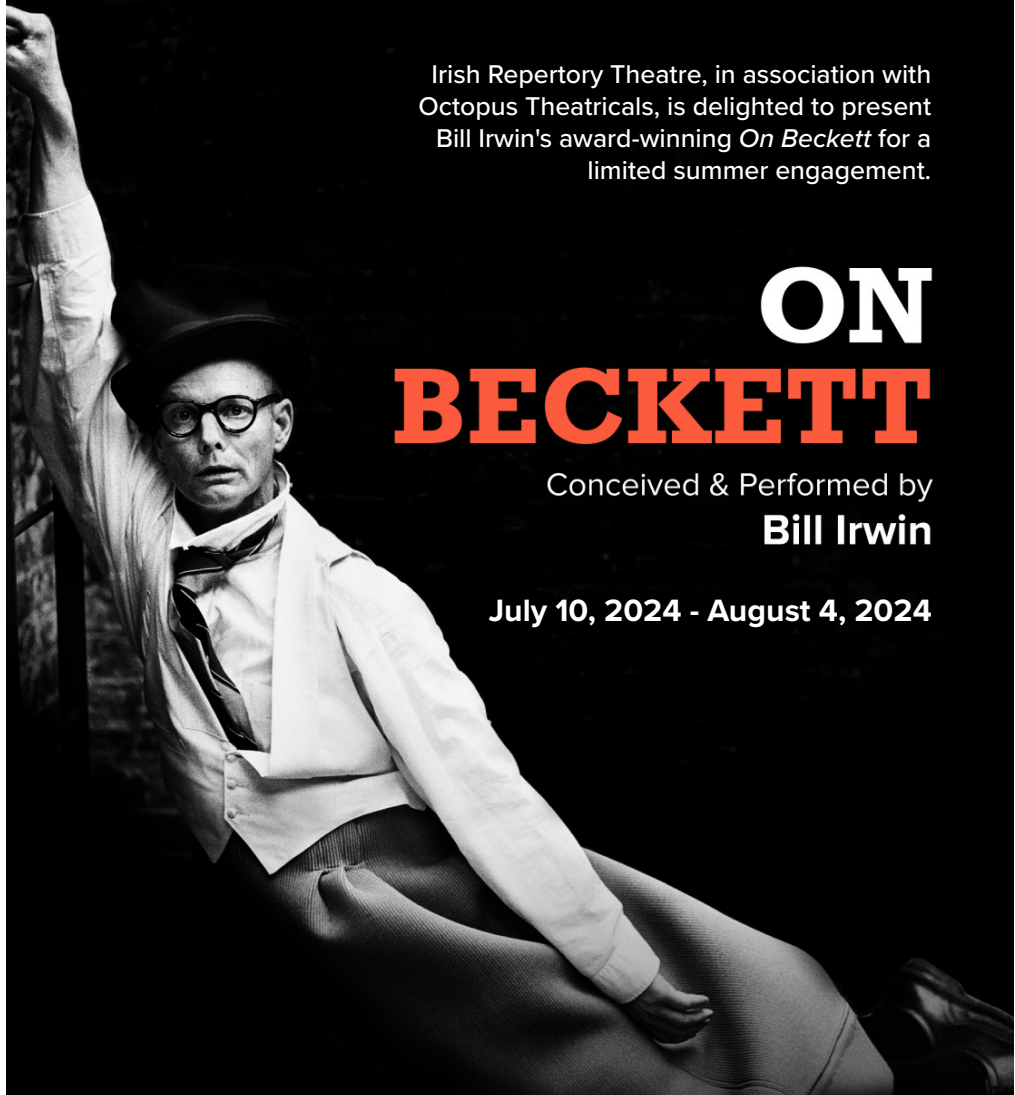
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Bill Irwin and John Douglas Thompson in the
2023 Irish Rep production of *Endgame*. Photo by Carol Rosegay.