

THE GRINNELL COLLEGE DEPARTMENT
OF THEATRE & DANCE PRESENTS

John Millington Synge's

The Playboy of the Western World



Directed by Ellen Mease

March 9-12, 2017
Thursday-Saturday 7:30 p.m. & Sunday 2:00 p.m.

Flanagan Studio Theatre
Bucksbaum Center for the Arts



GRINNELL COLLEGE

The Playboy of the Western World



Print by Jack B. Yeats, capturing the atmosphere of the off-stage mule race in *The Playboy of the Western World*. Synge and Yeats travelled together in the west of Ireland when writing and illustrating articles for the *Manchester Guardian*, and would have come across many such scenes.

There will be one brief intermission after Act 2.

Please turn off all cell phones and pagers.
No texting or photography permitted during performance.



John Millington Synge's

The Playboy of the Western World

Directed by Ellen Mease

Commemorating the 110th anniversary of *Playboy's* premiere at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, January 1907.

Scenic Designer	Stewart Benjamin Farrar
Lighting Designer	Becca Jeffords
Costume Designer	Erin Howell-Gritsch
Sound Designer	Michael Croswell
Fight Choreographers	Jesse May '02, Per Janson '03
Dialect Coach	Per Janson '03
Technical Director	Erik Sanning '89
Stage Manager	Emily Griffith '17



Christopher Mahon	Matt Steege '17
Old Mahon, his father, a squatter.....	Liam Stowe '18
Michael James Flaherty (called Michael James), a publican	Luke Saunders '12
Margaret Flaherty (called Pegeen Mike), his daughter ..	Sara Ashbaugh '18
Shawn Keogh, her second cousin, a young farmer.....	Joseph Robertson '19
Philly O'Cullen, a small farmer	Dylan Bremner '20
Jimmy Farrell, a small farmer	Nathaniel Zhu '19
Widow Quin, a woman of about thirty	Sarah Trop '17
Sara Tansey.....	Grace Lloyd '16
Susan Brady	Stella Gatzke '17
Honor Blake.....	Alex Ullberg '17

SCENE

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

SPECIAL THANKS

Alumni/ae in the Classroom, Mike Burt, Rob Clower, Paul Nelson, Kraig Schmidt, Justin Thomas, Rick Whitney, Morgan Witham



Every life is a symphony, and the translation of this life into music, and from music back to literature or sculpture or painting is the real effort of the artist.

--J.M. Synge

Synge's Achievement

The leading dramatist of the Irish theatre at a critical point in the development of the concept of Irish national identity as Ireland struggled for Home Rule, John Millington Synge created between 1902 and 1909 (the year of his death) a distinguished body of realist peasant drama, its stories drawn from the folklore and life of the Irish countryside, its dialogue consisting of powerfully cadenced prose poetry drawn from a rich bilingual synthesis of Hiberno-English dialects. Synge's musical ear for prose dialogue; his compelling characters, especially the women of the plays; his dramatic craftsmanship; and his truth to the emotional experience about which he writes—all distinguished him immediately from his playwriting peers, including William Butler Yeats, Oscar Wilde, and George Bernard Shaw.

Today we especially appreciate the black humor and tragicomic ironies that link Synge to classic Absurdist like Ionesco and Beckett, or the sheer physical exuberance and rambunctious violence of some of the plays, anticipating the macabre sight gags of a play like Martin McDonagh's *Lieutenant of Inishmore*, with its dead cat and stack of chopped up human body parts on the kitchen floor. Synge's notebooks document coarse, bawdy, and graveyard humor from the Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights and from the satire of Rabelais and Jonathan Swift, literary traditions matched in the folk traditions of the Irish countryside. In Synge's early play *In the Shadow of the Glen*, Patch Darcy is eaten by crows in his ditch, and the heroine, Nora Burke, choosing a free life on the road, may die in a ditch, swollen like a dead sheep. In *Playboy of the Western World*, Christy raises his potato shovel and splits his father's skull, leaving him for dead in the potato



patch; Pegen Mike burns her lover's leg with red-hot peat from the turf-fire. Synge wrote for strong stomachs, refusing the melancholy of a "Celtic twilight" and the romantic agonies of turn-of-the-century Decadents. The timber of poetry must have "strong roots among the clay and worms," he believed. *The Playboy of the Western World* is built on deliberate contrasts or counterpoint between the romantic and Rabelaisian, the lyrical love scenes subverted by grotesque and ugly humor. "The romantic note and a Rabelaisian note are working to a climax through a great part of the play, and the Rabelaisian note, the 'gross' note, if you will, must have its climax, no matter who may be shocked," he wrote in response to the play's critics. Savage action and fiery poetic speech balance one another in the closing scenes, when Christy is roped, branded, and captured for hanging, hurling defiant boasts and joyous curses. Life is hard and then you die laughing, as in the Irish saying, "When they've buggered you to the last ditch, the only thing to do is sing." Yeats puzzled over Synge's style and summed it up best: "The strength that made him delight in setting the hard virtues by the soft, the bitter by the sweet, salt by mercury, the stone by the elixir, gave him a hunger for harsh facts, for ugly surprising things, for all that defies our hope. . . . Benign images ever present to his soul must have beside them malignant reality, and the greater the brightness the greater must the darkness be" (*Synge I: Poems xxxiv*).

Some history of the dramatic movement Synge was to dominate is important here. Under W.B. Yeats and Lady Gregory, during the Irish literary revival at the turn of the century, the idea of an Irish theatre was to "show that Ireland is not the home of buffoonery and of easy sentiment, as it has been represented, but the home of an ancient idealism. We are confident of the support of all Irish people who are weary of misrepresentation, in carrying out a work that is outside all the political questions that divide us" (Yeats, 1897). Drawing on the example of Europe's independent theatre movement, the founders sought "the freedom to experiment" lacking in nineteenth-century European and English commercial theatres. But more significantly, an Irish theatre would rectify the cultural record, especially misrepresentation on London stages, whose stereotypical caricatures of



the “fighting Irish” with the alcohol-fueled “gift of gab” demeaned a proud people readying itself for self-government. Under Yeats and Lady Gregory, the emergent Irish dramatic movement had initially turned “for ancient idealism” to depictions of the peasantry (virtuous, long-suffering, oppressed but proud) and the Irish heroic sagas of the eighth and ninth centuries for subject matter, dramatizing the epic fortunes of the warrior aristocracy of pre-historic Ireland and especially the legendary exploits of the knights of the Red Branch, the most important of the three royal courts of Emain Macha, the seat of the High Kings of Ulster. Dramatists like Yeats, aligned politically with Irish nationalist revolutionaries such as Maud Gonne, hoped to kindle patriotic fervor with plays of heroic self-sacrifice—*Countess Cathleen*, *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (with Maud playing Ireland)—and episodes from the life of the Irish Achilles, the Red Branch semi-divine hero Cuchulain—*On Baile’s Strand*, for instance. Yeats wondered, after the 1916 Easter Rising, whether he ought to be held accountable for the arrest and execution of its leaders, who took their last stand by the bronze sculpture of Cuchulain in Dublin’s General Post Office as British gunboats discharged from the Liffey. Yeats banked especially on the revival of verse drama as he contributed to the movement early on. But such plays were too often “caviar to the general,” and because Yeats spent much of his time in London and on the Continent, the appearance of “art for art’s sake” elitism made him an easy target for Irish partisans, many of them well-educated and high-minded, who questioned his credentials to represent truly anything like an Irish national character.

Synge deliberately rejected the use of idealizing myth, to turn to the depiction of contemporary peasant life. His Trinity College training in Irish language (Gaelic) and Irish archaeology, his later post-graduate study of Celtic, Breton and Greek comparative mythology and folklore under de Jubainville in Paris, and his more-than-amateur interest in linguistics and philology prepared him well for his study of Anglo-Irish dialect and island culture during his five trips to the Aran Islands off the west coast of Galway. It would be hard to overstate the influence of his Aran experience on his art. In 1898, when Synge made his first



trip, the islanders still spoke Irish (when eastern Ireland had long since adopted English as its first language), though some islanders had English as a distant second language. It was the English from the period of Cromwell, when English troops occupied the islands and intermarried with the inhabitants. The peculiar Anglo-Irish dialect bears still the traces of seventeenth-century English syntax and cadence. The plight of the islanders, eking out lives under the primitive conditions of the rocky islands, gave him what T.S. Eliot called an “objective correlative” for the emotional expression of what he had learned from reading Darwin as a young man. Whatever momentary beauty or ecstatic sensation or instance of profoundly felt life human beings achieve, there is always a price to be paid in suffering. Synge saw this abstract universal pattern—life’s cruel struggle shot through with brilliance--revealed concretely in the experiences he recorded on Aran, which gave him the characters, incidents, and language he needed to turn an idea into emotionally compelling art.

A Synge Chronology

1871 Synge was born April 16 in Rathfarnham, a suburb of Dublin, the youngest of five children in a proud, genteel Anglo-Protestant Ascendancy family dating back to the seventeenth century. His father, a barrister, died when he was a year old. The family lived on land rents (£400 annually) paid by peasants who worked family property in Co. Galway. When Synge expressed an early sympathetic interest in the tenants’ hard lot, his practical mother (a zealous evangelical Protestant) put him in his place with “What would become of us if our tenants in Galway stopped paying their rents?” The family line featured clerics, bishops and missionaries. Synge’s uncle was the first Protestant clergyman assigned to the Aran Islands, a Catholic stronghold. One brother served as a medical missionary in China. Another brother worked as a land agent, whose diligence in evicting some tenants from the family’s seat in Wicklow, Glanmore Estate, earned an outraged notice in *The Freeman’s Journal* (1887). Synge himself would grow up to reject the orthodoxies of his class, evangelical Christianity,



and Ascendancy values, cultivating a pantheistic spirituality and a moderate political sensibility appropriate for an independent thinker of skeptical bent.

1885 Around age fourteen Synge read Darwin's *The Descent of Man* (1874) and suffered a crisis of faith.

"When I was about fourteen, I obtained Darwin's *Descent of Man*. It opened in my hands at a passage where he asks how can we explain the similarity between a man's hand and a bird's or bat's wings except by evolution. I flung the book aside and rushed out into the open air—it was summer and we were in the country—the sky seemed to have lost its blue and the grass its green. I lay down and writhed in an agony of doubt."

1886 Co-founded the Dublin Naturalists' Field Club for systematic study of natural history. He'd already developed a naturalist's keen eye and note-taking habits as a boy, when he wandered the Wicklow Hills collecting moths, butterflies, beetles and birds' eggs (for ornithology). Like Rousseau and Wordsworth, Synge's early connection with the natural world provided crucial perspective for his later imaginative exploration of human behavior and emotion in the plays and prose. Further scientific training allowed him to better evaluate Darwin's arguments, the strength of which far outweighed the Christian evidence he'd sought for reassurance following the crisis at fourteen.

"Natural history did [much] for me. . . . To wander as I did for years through the dawn of night with every nerve stiff and strained with expectation gives one a singular acquaintance with the essences of the world. The obscure noises of the owls and robins, the heavy scent of the hemlock and the flowers of the elder, the silent flight of the moths I was in search of gave me a passionate and receptive mood like that of early [man] . . . the forces which rid me of theological mysticism reinforced my innate feeling for the profound mysteries of life."

"By the time I was sixteen or seventeen I had renounced Christianity after a good deal of wobbling."



1887 Began studying the violin, picking up music theory at the Royal Academy of Music (1889) and playing in Academy orchestral concerts (1891). Academy scholarship in counterpoint and harmony (1892).

1888 Matriculated at Trinity College, Dublin. Studied modern languages, Hebrew, Irish (Prize), History (Prize), while pursuing professional violin training on the side. A “moderate Nationalism” and love of everything Irish replaced religion.

1892 Pass degree from Trinity. He fell in love with Cherry Matheson; she rejected his marriage proposal, presumably for religious reasons (her father led a pious sect, the Plymouth Brethren).

1892 National Literary Society founded.

1893 Left for Germany to study counterpoint and to hone his violin and piano technique.

1893 Following the death of Charles Stewart Parnell in 1891, political disillusionment turned Irish intellectuals toward a nationalist artistic and cultural renewal. The Irish Literary Revival began with Dr. Douglas Hyde’s establishment of the Gaelic League to revive the ancient Irish language, to collect myths, legends, folklore and poems, and to make them more widely known by translating them into English with an Irish flavor. Hyde’s collection of *The Love Songs of Connaught* will provide most of the lyrics for Christy Mahon’s courtship of Pegeen Mike in *The Playboy of the Western World*.

1894 At 23, Synge gave up his musical studies and moved to Paris to study literature and languages.

1895 Enrolled at the Sorbonne to study medieval French literature. Also philosophy and political philosophy (Marx and the French anarchist Sébastien Faure). Renewed his study of Irish antiquities and the Irish language.



1896 Synge traveled to Italy (Dante and Petrarch), where new women friends advised him about Cherry Matheson. In June he proposed again to Cherry and was again rejected. The poetry of this period reflects his “romantic agony” (also evident in his early play *When the Moon Has Set*, drafted in the late 90s). Back in Paris, he met Yeats for the first time. On Dec. 21 at the Hotel Corneille on the Left Bank, Yeats advised him, “Give up Paris, you will never create anything by reading Racine, and Arthur Symons will always be a better critic of French Literature. Go to the Aran Islands. Live there as if you were one of the people themselves; express a life that has never found expression.”

1897 Joined the Irish League (Yeats and Maud Gonne’s revolutionary Nationalist group) in January, resigned in April. Studied mysticism and theosophy. A growth developed in his neck and he went underwent surgery in Dublin at the Mount Street Nursing Home. This was the first indication of the Hodgkin’s disease (lymphatic sarcoma) that would kill him within twelve years. His physician was Dr. Oliver St. John Gogarty, who later became the model for James Joyce’s Buck Mulligan in *Ulysses*.

1898 Comparative study of ancient Irish and Greek cultures under d’Arbois de Jubainville. Met Margaret Hardon. First trip to the Aran Islands, a group of three off the west coast of Ireland, about thirty miles from Galway. On May 10th he arrived on Aranmor, and stayed in the islands until June 25th, taking photographs and writing a journal of his experiences. He visited Lady Gregory at Coole Park in Galway, and met Edward Martyn, an Irish Literary Theatre co-founder. He proposed to Margaret Hardon and was rejected.

1899 Visited Brittany and Aran for the second time.

1899 W.B. Yeats’s *Countess Cathleen*, Irish Literary Theatre first performance (by English actors).

1900 Visited Aran for the third time and began writing *When the Moon Has Set*, making use of much earlier notebook material, including substantial aesthetic theory.



1901 Visited Aran for the fourth time and completed *The Aran Islands*. Two-act version of *When the Moon Has Set* was rejected by Yeats and Lady Gregory.

1902 Yeats and Lady Gregory's *Cathleen ni Houlihan* premiere, produced by brothers Frank and William Fay with Irish actors for The Irish National Dramatic Company, later The Irish National Theatre Society.

1902 Wrote *The Shadow of the Glen*, *Riders to the Sea* and *The Tinker's Wedding*, at the Synge family's summer cottage in County Wicklow.

1903 Synge's *In the Shadow of the Glen* opened Oct. 17. (Produced by The National Theatre Society under brothers Frank and William Fay. William created the part of the Tramp, and would play Bartley in *Riders to the Sea*, Martin Doul in *The Well of the Saints* and Christy Mahon in *The Playboy*.) Synge visited West Kerry for the first time. Began writing *The Well of the Saints*.

1904 Synge's *Riders to the Sea* opened Feb. 27. (National Theatre Society). Synge visits Mayo for the first time and revisits West Kerry.

1904 Abbey Theatre opened Dec. 27, under co-directors W.B. Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory. An Englishwoman, Miss. A.E. Horniman, put up the money to buy the theatre.

1905 *The Well of the Saints* produced at the Abbey Theatre. With the artist Jack B. Yeats, the poet's brother, Synge toured the Congested Districts of western Ireland to secure material for articles commissioned by the *Manchester Guardian*. Molly Allgood and her sister Sara joined the Abbey Theatre Company. Synge returned to West Kerry for a third time.

1906 Synge fell in love with Molly Allgood (Maire O'Neill), who had taken the role of Nora Burke in *The Shadow of the Glen*; they become secretly engaged. (She was Catholic; he thought his Protestant mother



would object to the engagement.) Synge completed *The Playboy of the Western World* and accompanied the Abbey tours of England, Ireland and Scotland. His mother moved to Glengageary, and he gave up his recently acquired flat in Rathgar to join her there.

1906 National Theatre Society Ltd. registered as a company.

1907 *Playboy of the Western World* opened Jan. 26 at the Abbey Theatre, riots throughout the weeklong run. Molly Allgood played Pegeen Mike. Despite the Dublin protests, the play was performed with great success in Oxford and London. *The Aran Islands* was published in the spring. In early summer Synge spent about three happy weeks with Molly at Glencree in County Wicklow, a pastoral setting that will be reflected in his romantic tragedy, *Deirdre of the Sorrows*. Synge was again operated on for a swelling in his neck. He began writing *Deirdre of the Sorrows* as a starring vehicle for Molly. He suffered the first indications of a metastatic tumor in his side.

1908 *The Tinker's Wedding* published. Exploratory surgery revealed that the growth in Synge's side was inoperable. He continued to work on *Deirdre of the Sorrows* and postponed his marriage plans. During his autumn trip to visit old friends in Germany, his mother died.

1909 Synge died on March 24 in Dublin's Elpis Nursing Home of Hodgkin's disease. First performance of *The Tinker's Wedding* at His Majesty's Theatre, London.

1910 First performance of *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, Molly playing the lead and directing as well. *The Works of John M. Synge* published.

1910 Death of Edward VII. Miss Horniman withdrew her funding from the Abbey because producers refused to cancel performances in His Majesty's honor.

1911 First Abbey tour of U.S. began in Sept. *Playboy* riots in New York and Philadelphia. Played in Pittsburgh's Carnegie Music Hall Jan. 23, 1912. Thirty cities in five months.



1912-13 Second Abbey tour of the U.S., playing in Pittsburgh at the Nixon Theatre Feb. 3-8, and including Chicago, Notre Dame, Montreal, New York, Philadelphia and Boston.

1914 Third Abbey tour of the U.S., twenty cities in two months.



Synge at the Abbey Theatre. Pencil sketch
by J. B. Yeats. January 25, 1907.



The Playboy of the Western World (1907)

Synge's Preface to *The Playboy of the Western World*:

In writing *The Playboy of the Western World*, as in my other plays, I have used one or two words only that I have not heard among the country people of Ireland, or spoken in my own nursery before I could read the newspapers. A certain number of the phrases I employ I have heard also from herds and fishermen along the coast from Kerry to Mayo or from beggar-women and ballad-singers nearer Dublin; and I am glad to acknowledge how much I owe to the folk-imagination of these fine people. Anyone who has lived in real intimacy with the peasantry will know that the wildest sayings and ideas in this play are tame indeed, compared with the fancies one may hear in any little hillside cabin in Geesala, or Carraroe, or Dingle Bay. All art is a collaboration; and there is little doubt that in the happy ages of literature, striking and beautiful phrases were as ready to the story-teller's or the playwright's hand, as the rich cloaks and dresses of his time. It is probable that when the Elizabethan dramatist took his ink-horn and sat down to his work he used many phrases that he had just heard, as he sat at dinner, from his mother or his children. In Ireland, those of us who know the people have the same privilege. When I was writing *The Shadow of the Glen*, some years ago, I got more aid than any learning could have given me from a chink in the floor of the old Wicklow house where I was staying, that let me hear what was being said by the servant girls in the kitchen. This matter, I think, is of importance, for in countries where the imagination of the people, and the language they use, is rich and living, it is possible for a writer to be rich and copious in his words, and at the same time to give the reality, which is the root of all poetry, in a comprehensive and natural form. In the modern literature of towns, however, richness is found only in sonnets, or prose poems, or in one or two elaborate books



that are far away from the profound and common interests of life. One has, on one side, Mallarmé and Huysmans producing this literature; and on the other, Ibsen and Zola dealing with the reality of life in joyless and pallid words.

On the stage one must have reality, and one must have joy; and that is why the intellectual modern drama has failed, and people have grown sick of the false joy of the musical comedy, that has been given them in place of the rich joy found only in what is superb and wild in reality. In a good play, every speech should be as fully flavored 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 is a memory only, and the straw has been turned into bricks. (January 21, 1907)

Recognized as Synge's masterpiece and the greatest play of the Irish theatre, *The Playboy* is in large part an Oedipal coming-of-age story, whose unlikely hero, a puny and unpromising dreamer, mistakenly believes that he's killed his father, in a quarrel in a potato field about the old man's demand that his son marry an old widow lady who had suckled him when he was a baby. "I just riz the loy [spade] and let fall the edge of it on the ridge of his skull, and he went down at my feet like an empty sack, and never let a grunt or groan from him at all."

Synge drew the idea from a story he heard on the Aran Islands:

He often tells me about a Connaught man who killed his father with the blow of a spade when he was in passion, and then fled to this island and threw himself on the mercy of some of the natives with whom he was said to be related. They hid him in a hole and kept him safe for weeks, though the police came and searched for him, and he could hear their boots grinding on the stones over his head. In spite of a



reward which was offered, the island was incorruptible, and after much trouble the man was safely shipped to America.

This impulse to protect the criminal is universal in the west. It seems partly due to the association between justice and the hated English jurisdiction, but more directly to the primitive feeling of these people, who are never criminals yet always capable of crime, that a man will not do wrong unless he is under the influence of a passion which is as irresponsible as a storm on the sea. If a man has killed his father, and is already sick and broken with remorse, they can see no reason why he should be dragged away and killed by the law.

Such a man, they say, will be quiet all the rest of his life, and if you suggest that punishment is needed as an example, they ask, "Would any one kill his father if he was able to help it?"

While the islanders excuse the parricide, Synge's myth-making villagers from the wild coasts of Mayo hail Christy Mahon as a hero for his mythic deed. The miserable stranger groaning with fright who enters the shebeen to drink his porter and gnaw his turnip before again taking to the road finds himself proclaimed a wonder for a "gallous deed," the murder of his abusive "da." By the middle of the first act, in the first of several magnificent comic reversals, Christy's gotten himself hired as pot-boy and protector of the pub owner's daughter, Pegeen Mike. News of the "curiosity man" attracts the Widow Quin, locally infamous for killing her man (who died of tetanus after a blow from a rusty pick axe). She's hankering for another. By the end of Act One the unlikely hero has two of Synge's most engaging female characters competing for his hand.

The next morning, admiring girls from the local mountains bring him gifts for his breakfast--fine duck eggs, butter, a fat pullet (road-kill hit by the curate's car)—an Epiphany parody of the three Magi bearing gifts to the Christ-child. Everyone's hungry for a hero in this fallen and neglected corner of the world. Giddy with his newly won esteem, Christy beats all comers at the carnival



games, and enjoys the honors of an Olympian athlete. He woos and wins Pegeen, and gains the drunken blessings of her father. When Christy's bloodied but very much alive father turns up, "resurrected" like a Punch-and-Judy farce hero, mighty illusions dissolve. Christy's exposed and ridiculed as a lying braggart and a cheat. In his humiliated confusion, he attempts to kill his father for real, to regain the love of the girl he'd won with his fiery talk and his big deed. In the harsh light of reality, though, "there's a great gap between a gallous story and a dirty deed. The murderer in their midst will bring in the peelers (cops) and they'll all have to pay. The villagers turn on Christy, aghast at his deed and shown up as fools for having championed him in the first place. Bound, burned, betrayed by the woman he loves, Christy seems destined for the gallows for his gallous deed. Unbowed, he imagines himself the heroic hanged man, hurling joyous curses and bound for hell:

That's your kind, is it? Then let the lot of you be wary, for, if I've to face the gallows, I'll have a gay march down, I tell you, and shed the blood of some of you before I die. . . .

If I do lay hands on you, it's the way you'll be at the fall of night, hanging as a scarecrow for the fowls of hell. Ah, you'll have a gallous jaunt, I'm saying, coaching out through limbo with my father's ghost. . . .

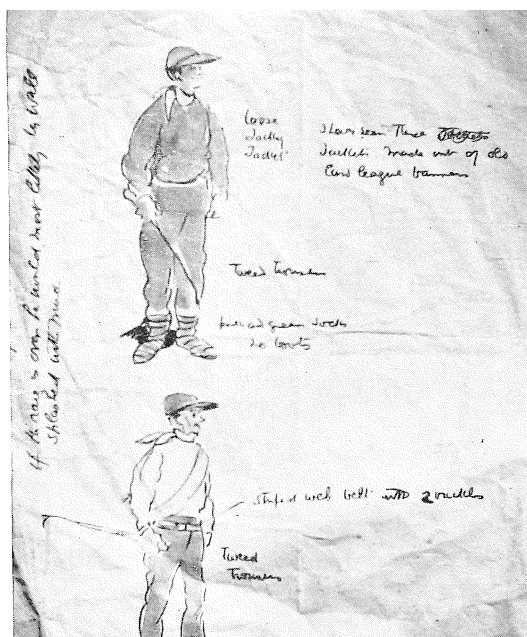
If I can wring a neck among you, I'll have a royal judgment looking on the trembling jury in the courts of law. And won't there be crying out in Mayo the day I'm stretched upon the rope, with ladies in their silks and satins sniveling in their lacy handkerchiefs, and they rhyming songs and ballads on the terror of my fate.

. . . you can shake out hell's flags of welcome for my coming in two weeks or three, for I'm thinking Satan hasn't many have killed their da in Kerry, and in Mayo too!!!!



Old Mahon is resurrected for a second time, but there will be no third murder. Old Mahon stands with his son, outfacing the crowd. Christy doesn't even need to prove he's "master of all fights now." Old Mahon will take his cues from his son. Christy takes his father in tow, "like a gallant captain with his heathen slave," and proclaims his liberty, with blessings on the Mayo mob. "You've turned me a likely gaffer in the end of all, the way I'll go romancing through a romping lifetime from this hour to the dawning of the Judgment Day." The end is Pegeen's tragedy. She's lost the only playboy of the western world. She will wed her dull, timid village suitor by default. The Mayoites sink back into the status quo ante, enjoying peace for their drinks.

Up to the very last draft, Synge had Pegeen leave in pursuit of Christy and Old Mahon, to share their "romping lifetime," a free life on the open road.



Jack Yeats' sketches of jockey costumes for *The Playboy*, painted on brown paper and sent to Synge in a letter dated January 11th, 1907.



THE PLAYBOY CONTROVERSY

The Playboy enjoyed the notoriety of a week of riots, police protection, and negative press in its premiere at the Abbey Theatre in January 1907. Synge himself was declared the Abbey's "evil genius" for what the urban Catholic Dublin audience interpreted as an insult to Irish sensibilities and a misrepresentation of the Irish national character.

The Freeman's Journal (January 28, 1907) wrote "[*The Playboy*] is unmitigated, protracted libel upon Irish peasant men and, worse still, upon Irish peasant girlhood. The blood boils with indignation as one recalls the incidents, expressions, ideas of this squalid, offensive production. No adequate idea can be given of the barbarous jargon, the elaborate and incessant cursings of these repulsive creatures."

The Daily Express, January 29, 1907:

As soon as the curtain was raised on *The Playboy* it at once became evident that a large section of the audience were intent on expressing their disapprobation of the piece. . . . Indeed, the disturbance became so loud that it was impossible for those in the front seats to hear a word said on the stage, the mingled boohs, groans, and hisses turning the play into a dumb show. . . . The play was . . . continued, but the row became worse than ever, and six constables had to be called in, whose presence, however, had no effect in checking the disorder, and they left the building at the request of Lady Gregory and Mr. Synge.

Lady Gregory, recalling the incident in her book *Our Irish Theatre*, wrote:

There was a battle of a week. Every night protestors with their trumpets came and raised a din. Every night the police carried some of them off to the police courts. Every afternoon the paper gave reports of the trial before a magistrate who had not heard or read



the play and who insisted on being given details of its incidents by the accused and by the police . . . There was a very large audience on the first night . . . Synge was there, but Mr. Yeats was giving a lecture in Scotland. The first act got its applause, and the second, though one felt that the audience was a little puzzled, a little shocked at the wild language. Near the end of the third act there was some hissing. We had sent a telegram to Mr. Yeats after the end of the first act 'Play great success'; but at the end we sent another--'Audience broke up in disorder at the word shift'.

The offending word occurs when Christy stakes everything on winning Pegeen, even if offered "a drift of chosen females, standing in their shifts itself, maybe, from this place to the eastern world," girls in their slips lined up like a drove ("drift") of ewes or heifers in a stud's harem.

In an earlier version Synge had written, instead of "shift," "standing stripped." Drafts of the play suggest Synge created Christy in part as a Cuchulain-surrogate. Christy's image, girls standing in their shifts, is an affectionate parody of one of the war stories about the ancient Irish warrior. Once Cuchulain's battle-fever was so high that it was only cooled when his comrades lined up thirty stark-naked maidens to make the warrior shrink in shame as he averts his gaze. His sexual modesty dampens his rage. Sensitive to his audience's tastes, perhaps Yeats persuaded Synge to change the image, at least clothing the harem in slips. It wasn't enough. The comic exaggeration and frankness about the marketing of sex in the wonderful image were probably lost in the hubbub over the single word "shift," a Victorian unmentionable.

Putting the controversy in perspective:

It is not surprising . . . to find the Dublin audience reacting with overt hostility to Synge's attack on the nationalist



belief in an idealized Catholic peasant, especially when he supplanted that image with his own representation of the violence and verbal extravagance at the center of Irish country life. That portrayal seemed especially offensive since it was presented in a nationalist theatre that had been founded to counter the traditional stereotype of the stage Irish. In reading the character of Christy Mahon as another example of the colonial stereotype, the audience misread the degree to which he is a parody of the conventional figure. At the same time, the transformation of Christy from a mock into a real playboy is also a parody of the pious idealization of the Irish countryman created by the patriot. The play unquestionably challenges the prevailing platitudes about country life . . . –Ed Hirsch, “*The Gallous Story* and the *Dirty Deed: The Two Playboys*” (1985)

The society depicted in *The Playboy of the Western World* is a colony in the throes of a land war, as the last phase of the campaign against feudalism in Ireland is enacted. . . . Synge did not suppress the ugliness of colonialism—“the loosed khaki cut-throats,” “the broken harvest,” or the rigged juries “selling judgments of the English law” are all mentioned—but this is mere backdrop. . . . His deeper interest was in how the colonized cope with the violence in themselves, their situation and their daily life. There is no obvious outlet in the world of the play for these instincts. The Mayoites offer no allegiance to the hated English law, which might allow them to channel their violence into socially sanctioned punishments like the hanging of a murderer. . . . Such a people desperately need a hero who can bring their instincts to violence into a single clear focus: a hero, moreover, whom they can then convert into a scapegoat, onto whom may be visited any troublesomely violent tendencies that are still unfulfilled. –Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland* (1995)



A Note on The Tramp

Synge's descriptions of rural life in his prose and the Wicklow plays--*The Shadow*, *The Tinker's Wedding*, and *The Well of the Saints*—identify three somewhat separate populations: the shepherds living and tending their flocks on mountain commons, farmers and agricultural workers in the villages of arable valleys, and the able-bodied tramps, vagrants and tinkers traveling from village to village. The tinkers are a case apart, fully outcast from civil society, though they survive parasitically at its margins. The tramps and vagrants earn special mention.

In “The Vagrants of Wicklow,” Synge associates his own condition as a writer with the tramp. (And he often signed his letters to Molly Allgood, his fiancée, “Your Tramp.”)

In the middle classes the gifted son of a family is always the poorest—usually a writer or artist with no sense for speculation—and in a family of peasants, where the average comfort is just over penury, the gifted son sinks also, and is soon a tramp on the roadside. . . .

In this life, however, there are many privileges. The tramp in Ireland is little troubled by the laws, and lives in out-of-door conditions that keep him in good humour and fine bodily health. This is so apparent, in Wickow at least, that these men rarely seek for charity on any plea of ill-health, but ask simply, when they beg: ‘Would you help a poor fellow along the road?’ or, ‘Would you give me the price of a night’s lodging, for I’m after walking a great way since the sun rose?’

It need hardly be said that in all tramp life plaintive and tragic elements are common, even on the surface. Some are peculiar to Wicklow. In these hills the summer passes in a few weeks from a late spring, full of odor and color, to an autumn that is premature and filled



with the desolate splendor of decay; and it often happens that, in moments when one is most aware of this ceaseless fading of beauty, some incident of tramp life gives a local human intensity to the shadow of one's own mood.



Pastel drawing in color by James Paterson, late June, 1906.



Playboy of the Western World Glossary and unusual phrases:

Achill an island off the western coast. Widow Quin hopes to smuggle Christy (in his petticoat) on the ferry to catch the Achill boat, out of harm's way

Ballina a town inland in County Mayo

banbhs (pr. bonhams or bannuvs): young pigs

bedizened adorned richly, "the diamond jewelleries of Pharaoh's ma" in Pegeen's colorful mockery of Shawn

Belmullet a remote town in the west of Ireland

blackthorn a cane made from a blackthorn plum bush

Boers Dutch settlers in South Africa suppressed by the British in the Boer War 1899-1902. Irish commandoes fought with the Boers against the British in the war, their treason against the hated British a hanging crime. Synge's Mayoites celebrate such heroic resistance fighters.

bona fide a real traveler = a person living at a distance of more than three miles and therefore entitled under licensing laws to obtain drink as a traveler after a pub's closing hours. The licensing laws were much abused by the locals.

boreen a lane, or country road (-een is the diminutive throughout, as in houseen, little house)

broken harvest the poor potato harvest

butt bottom or end (of his tailpocket, of the ditch, of a rope, etc.)

carcase carcass. Dead livestock were thrown over cliffs into the Atlantic

Carrowmore a town in northern County Mayo

Castlebar large city in Co. Mayo

cess expression meaning bad luck derived from the practice of assessment of the Irish for provision of British military forces. "Bad cess to ya" is a common curse meaning "may you come to a bad end"

cholera morbus bilious diarrhoea and stomach cramps

cnuceen (pr. kah-nook-keen) a small hill

cockshot-man at fairs, a man who allowed sticks or wooden balls to be thrown at him for a fee.



Connaught an area in Co. Galway, one of the original five kingdoms of ancient Ireland. Jimmy's "blue jugs in a cabin of Connaught" in Act III refers to Danish Vikings who settled in Dublin making blue pottery, but they never reached Connaught, so such a thing would be a rarity. Jimmy's informant, about the skulls on show in Dublin, would be referring to the Natural History Museum's collection of skeletal remains.

creel cart a wicker basket cart with open or grated sides, for carrying turf, pigs, sheep, fish

Crossmolina a town in the middle of County Mayo

curagh (or curragh) a small, light, wicker-frame boat covered in skins or tarred canvas

cute clever plus sly and cunning

dispensation in the Catholic Church, a license granted by a pope, archbishop or bishop to allow a person to do what is forbidden by ecclesiastical law. A dispensation is required to permit marriage between Pegeen and Shawn, who are second cousins.

drift a small flock (of mountain ewes in Synge's *Shadow of the Glen*) or small drove (heifers in *Playboy*); "a drift of chosen females, standing in their shifts itself" (the scandalous line in *Playboy*)

drouthy thirsty. Michael James explains that Christy's safe from the peelers or local cops because they're more interested in free whiskey (illegal moonshine or poteen) than in rounding up outlaws or stray dogs

a dung fork and stabbing a fish Christy's adept at illegally poaching salmon (usually poachers took the spawning redds in winter)

ended wars the Boer War fought in 1899-1902. Irish laborers fought on the side of the Dutch settlers against the English

Erris plain area near Crossmolina, Co. Mayo

felts thrushes. Old Mahon mocks his son's affection for his pet birds. Synge was himself an expert amateur ornithologist.

frish-frash leavings in a cup

furze a spiny yellow-flowered shrub

GLOSSARY



gallous mischievous, spirited, plucky. Punning on “gallows,” a hanging matter, but with overtones of gallant and admirable wildness, intensity, derring-do

gamy gaiety plus energy, athletic and/or virile

gob a worthless youth with a foul mouth (gob = mouth)

a great warrant to tell highly skilled and famous for telling stories

gripe of the ditch grasp or hollow of the ditch

hanging his dog from the license Jimmy Farrell hanged his dog because he couldn't afford to pay for it; it struggled for its life for three hours as police tried to collect the license fee and Jimmy argued the dog was dead. The dog may have survived its ordeal. One of many instances of grotesquely humorous violence referred to in *Playboy*.

hooker stoutly built sailing-cutters, extensively used in the coastal trade around the West and into Galway. They carried hay and turf, cattle and horses.

hooshing sweeping silently, spiriting away

inveigle entice, lure

Keel near Achill Head on the far west coast of Co. Mayo. In *Playboy* Christy promises to go there and live with the madmen if Pegeen does not turn him in to the peelers.

keen (caoine) a wailing chant in lamentation for the dead

khaki cut-throats a reference to the uniforms of the British soldiers; the occupying force reminds the locals of the Boer Wars

Kilmainham a notorious jail in Dublin, site of the 1916 illegal executions of the leaders of the Easter Rising. Now a museum of the history of the Struggles and of capital punishment around the world.

Kruger Paul Kruger, president of the South African Republic established by the Boers

land wars at their peak in the 1880s, to nationalize the ownership of land and so protect tenant farmers from eviction

lepper leaper (one who leaps)

liefer willingly, gladly



GLOSSARY

loosed khaki cut-throats brutal soldiers (see **militia**), another reminder of the Boer wars, recently ended and the British regimentals joining in the occupation of Ireland

loy a narrow spade widely used in Ireland for digging potatoes or peat for turf fires

lug earlobe. As in “the butt of my lug.” Old Mahon remembers, in his drunken hallucinations, rats as big as badgers biting his neck at the earlobe (an image drawn from the way in which weasels grab rabbits)

maiming ewes a favorite form of malicious mischief, like cattle-hocking, hamstringing livestock with a knife or hatchet. The practice was widespread during the Land Wars, as a form of political resistance against colonial landlords. The movement sought to nationalize the ownership of land and so protect tenant farmers from eviction.

making game mocking repartee, often a prelude to courtship.

Mayo the wild coast of County Mayo, in western Ireland, setting for *Playboy*.

Meath one of the five ancient kingdoms of Ireland

Michaelmas feast of St. Michael, September 29

militia the brutal and unruly soldier of the times, roughly equivalent to the British Territorial Regiments or occupying army (established during the land agitation in the 1880s)

mitch off sneak away, play truant

mitred bishops “mitred” refers to the hats the bishops wore at the time

the Mulrannies insane people who were driven from California and now live in Mayo in *Playboy*. Along with squinty-eyed Red Linahan or the lame Patcheen, the Mulrannies aren’t even interesting in their disabilities.

Neifin mountain in western Co. Mayo, the second-highest peak; Christy dreams of escaping there and making love to Pegeen on Neifin.



GLOSSARY

the old hen influenza

Owen a river in the glen Owen

parlatic paralytic (unable to stand, usually with drink)

paters paternosters, the Lord's Prayer

peeler a policeman, named after Sir Robert Peel, who established Ireland's first constabulary

penny poets selling ballads at fairs, like Autolycus in *The Winter's Tale*

penny pot-boy a serving-man in a cheap public house, like a Shakespearean tavern "drawer"

picking cockles the coldest, wettest and most ill-paid of work

pitchpike two-pronged fork used for pitching hay or dung

polis the police

poteen illegal strong whiskey (distilled from potatoes, oats or rye), a major industry in western Ireland, where police preoccupied themselves with searching out stills. Synge noted that most of the drownings in Aran were caused by drunkenness, but "their grey poteen, which brings a shock of joy to the blood, seems predestined to keep sanity in men who live forgotten in these worlds of mist" (*Aran Islands*).

priesteen little priest

publican a pub owner

quality name a name borne by the aristocracy. Christy in *Playboy* swells to the suggestion that he is 'landed gentry'; the historical Mahons were a famous military family.

ricing your ankles in *Playboy*, girls such as Pegeen would go barefoot. The phrase may have offended early audiences.

scribes of bog strips of peat country

shebeen a low wayside public house (Michael James Flaherty's establishment) or a unlicensed or illegally operated pub

shift chemise, a woman's undergarment like a slip, worn next to the skin and reaching to the knees

skelping slapping, spanking

Sligo harbor town in northern Mayo (boats left here for Glasgow)



sop of grass tobacco tuft of uncured tobacco leaf

spavindy (adj.) lame or halting from the spavin, a disease of the hock-joint of horses that causes lameness. Spavin often refers to a kicking donkey, one that kicks out backwards (of a cranky nature).

St. Martin's Day a festival on November 11 preceding a period of penance (St. Martin's Lent) that extends through Christmas

still the simple apparatus of a boiler, worm, etc. for making poteen, illicit whisky.

Stooks of the Dead Women rocks on the sea-shore, pointed like stooks, conical clusters of sheaves of oats set up to dry. "Do you see that sandy head? That is called the Stooks of the Dead Women, for one time a boat came ashore there with twelve dead women on board her, big ladies with green dresses and gold rings, and fine jewelries, and a dead harper or fiddler along with them." (Synge, *In Wicklow, West Kerry and Connemara*)

straitened waistcoat the lunatic's strait-jacket, Old Mahon's fond remembrance of his times in the asylum

streeleen trail or stream of talk. In *The Playboy Pegeen* uses the term describing the fine talk of the eighteenth-century Gaelic poet Owen Roe O'Sullivan, whose hot temper led to a tavern brawl and death from injuries received

streeler rugged youth, used mainly by urban street urchins

stretched out retching speechless on the holy stones the summit of Synge's grotesque humor. A Lenten pastoral of 1908 warned the people that it was 'henceforth a mortal sin' to give out alcoholic drinks at a funeral or a wake, so the image does not improbably stretch the truth about behavior at a wake.

strong farmer a farmer of substance, making a good living off the land

supeen a small drink

swiggling swaying and wriggling

thraneen scrap of thread, shred

tinkers itinerant craftsmen who mended household metal utensils and worked tin; with a low reputation as beggars and thieves; the ordinary name for gypsies; tramp, vagabond

turbary the right to dig turf or peat on another's land



turf peat, a common fireplace fuel, cut from the bogs, conveyed in panniers slung on donkeys or by high-sided carts, and stored to dry beside cottages

Union the welfare workhouse where the old and destitute found shelter. “In Wicklow, as in the rest of Ireland, the union, though it is a home of refuge for the tramps and tinkers, is looked on with supreme horror by the peasants. The madhouse, which they know better, is less dreaded” (Synge).

wake the watching of the dead, a gathering of valediction, keeping the laid-out corpse company as the lonely soul orients itself to its new state. Traditionally with lots of drinking and lively talk to encourage the dead. Started originally to ensure that the person was actually dead before the burial.

wattle a small switch

western world in *Playboy*, west Ireland and the United States

what call has the like of you reason or justification

winkered mule Christy rides a mule with blinkers or blinders

--adapted from compilations by Elizabeth van den Berg, T.R. Henn's Synge: *The Complete Plays* (Methuen 1963), Anne Saddlemeyer's J.M. Synge: *Collected Works IV Plays Book II* (Oxford 1968)



Sara Ashbaugh '18 (Margaret “Pegeen Mike” Flaherty) is a Political Science and Russian major from Columbia, Missouri. This is her fourth Mainstage production at Grinnell. Her other roles include Anna in Eugene O’Neill’s *Anna Christie*, Maire in Brian Friel’s *Translations*, and Antonio in *The Tempest*. She spent the last semester abroad in London.

Dylan Bremner '20 (Philly O’Cullen) is from Atlanta, Georgia. He participated in theatre throughout high school, including *Clybourne Park*, *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, *Sun Dried*, and *All My Sons*. He also won first place in a cross-school theater competition when he lived in Italy for a year. He played Talthybius in the student-run production of *The Trojan Women* in the fall. *Playboy* is his second Grinnell production.

Stella Gatzke '17 (Susan Brady) is a Russian and English double major from Harper Woods, Michigan. At Grinnell, she has recently appeared onstage as Hecuba in *The Trojan Women* and as Patricia Lyndsay in *The Boy Who Fell from the Roof*.

Grace Lloyd '16 (Sara Tansey) graduated from Grinnell College with a degree in English and Theatre and Dance and a concentration in Technology Studies. She now works as an admission counselor for the college, and is happy to continue helping the Department of Theatre and Dance in their productions as an alumna.

Joseph Robertson '19 (Shawn Keogh) is a Philosophy and Theatre and Dance double major from Denver, CO. He appeared as Ferdinand in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* last year, *The 21st Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, and *The Laramie Project Project*.

Luke Saunders '12 (Michael James Flaherty) is the assistant director of development and alumni relations communications at the college. Since graduating, his roles on the Grinnell College stage include Chris in Eugene O’Neill’s *Anna Christie* and Hugh in Brian Friel’s *Translations*.



Matt Steege '17 (Christopher Mahon) is an English and History double major from Racine, Wisconsin. His previous roles at Grinnell include Prospero in *The Tempest*, Werner Heisenberg in *Copenhagen*, Menelaus in *The Trojan Women*, and Hamlet in the play of the same name.

Liam Stowe '18 (Old Mahon) is a Political Science major from Des Moines, Iowa. He enjoyed performing with the Repertory Theatre of Iowa before attending Grinnell. This is his third performance at Grinnell College following last year's appearance in *The Tempest* as Stephano and in the Salman Rushdie adaptations.

Sarah Trop '17 (Widow Quin) is a Computer Science major from Seattle, Washington. Before Grinnell, she performed in a variety of musicals, notably as Queen Aggravaine in *Once Upon a Mattress* and Cogsworth in *Beauty and the Beast*. *Playboy* is her third production at Grinnell, and last spring she played Lucy Evans in a student adaptation of Salmon Rushdie's "*The Harmony of the Spheres*."

Alex Ullberg '17 (Honor Blake) is an English major from Flossmoor, Illinois. They performed in *Balancing Acts* in 2014, and took a theatre course on their Grinnell-in-London semester.

Nathaniel Zhu '19 (Jimmy Farrell) is a prospective Physics and French double major. He has appeared in many productions before and during college, including as Gonzalo in last year's *The Tempest*.

CREW

Zoë Aber '18 (Assistant Stage Manager) is a History major with a concentration in Environmental Science from Kansas City, Missouri. Her previous involvement in Grinnell College theatre includes being Assistant Director of *The Tempest* and Assistant Stage Manager of *Anna Christie*.



Vanessa Chen '20 (Assistant Director) is an intended Biochemistry major from Guangzhou, China. This is her first time being involved in a theatre production. She was the Sound Board Operator for Dance Ensemble last semester.

Lily Fitzsimmons '20 (Scenic Charge) is from St. Louis, Missouri. In high school she stage managed for theatre productions including *Animal Farm*, *RENT*, and *The Addams Family Musical*. Last semester she joined Grinnell's Theater and Dance Department to assistant stage manage for *Constellations*.

Hannah Hong '18 (Costume Crew Chief) is a Biology major from Iowa City, Iowa. She was involved in costumes in West High's theater department and continues her work with costumes at Grinnell. *Playboy* is her third production here.

John Kim '19 (Assistant Director), a Theatre and Dance major, worked on last year's *Laramie Project Project* and Eugene O'Neill's *Anna Christie* in 2014.

Annie Li '20 (Costume Crew) is an undecided major from Beijing, China. She acted and directed in high school. This is her first Grinnell theatre production.

Anh Thu Pham '19 (Costume Crew Chief) is a prospective Computer Science and Theatre and Dance double major. She worked on costumes for *Constellation* and *Black Girl: Linguistic Play*. She performed in *The Lord of the Flies*, *The Laramie Project Project*, the One-Acts Festival, and 24 Hour Theatre. She is also a member of RTS Improv Troupe.

Reed Roffis '18 (Light Board Operator) is a Biology and Theatre and Dance double major from Boulder, Colorado. This is his first time behind the scenes of a production. His previous roles at Grinnell include Doalty in *Translations*, Sebastian in *The Tempest*, Roger in *Lord of the Flies*, and Mitch Mahoney in *The 21st Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*.



Nora Schoenle '19 (Sound Board and Projections Operator) is a Theatre and Dance and Computer Science double major from St. Louis, Missouri, who has previously worked on sound and projections in the department's productions of *Translations*, *The Tempest*, and *Constellations*.

Waez Sheikh '19 (Costume Crew) is an Economics major with a concentration in Statistics from Lahore, Pakistan. This is his first time working in theatre at Grinnell.

PRODUCTION and DESIGN TEAM

Kate Baumgartner '15 (Assistant Technical Director) has been building, designing, and tech directing with various performance groups in the Grinnell area since 2005.

Michael Croswell (Sound Designer) is a composer and sound designer from Saint Paul, MN. Past collaboration at Grinnell is a production of *Hamlet* directed by Ellen Mease. Recent work includes composing music and sound for Theater Mu's regional premier of "You For Me For You" in The Dowling studio at The Guthrie. An immersive production of "Crime and Punishment" by Live Action Set that received a 2016 Ivey Award for best production design. Michael also created music and sound for a production of *The Tempest* by Normandale Community College in May 2015. Recent regional work is a production of "Freakshow" at The University of Nebraska at Omaha in February 2015. Michael also works as a teaching artist and in 2016 he was commissioned to compose a new work for a combined orchestra that featured The Saint Paul Music Academy and The Saint Paul Civic Symphony. In May of 2016 Michael will travel to Prague to perform with The Echofluxx Ensemble at Echofluxx 16, Festival of New Media, Art, and Music.



S. Benjamin Farrar (Scenic Designer) is a designer for live performance and film as well as a photographer and graphic designer. Benjamin is the resident designer for Soledad Barrio and Noche Flamenca (a professional dance company based in Madrid, Spain). He has worked as a designer and assistant designer in many venues in New York City, including The Public Theater, The Joyce Theatre, The Lortel Theatre, The Pearl Theatre, The Cherry Lane theatre, and The New Victory Theatre. He has designed throughout North America in venues such as The Majestic Theatre in Boston, White Bird in Portland, The McCarter in Princeton, The Royal Conservatory in Toronto, Wolf Trap in Virginia, and The Zellerbach Playhouse in Berkeley. He has also designed for venues in Australia, Mexico, Argentina, Peru, Brazil, England, Scotland, and Switzerland. Benjamin has worked as a guest designer at NYU Gallatin School in New York and Dickinson College in Pennsylvania. Benjamin is also a photographer who has been exhibited in galleries in New York and online. He is a graduate of The University of Iowa and Vanderbilt University.

Emily Griffith '17 (Stage Manager) is a Theatre and Physics double major from Luckey, Ohio. She has recently stage managed for *The Trojan Women*, TEDx Grinnell College, and *The Tempest*. She currently works as the Production Stage Manager for the department and is a member of the SEPC.

Erin Howell-Gritsch (Costume Designer) has designed all Mainstage costumes at Grinnell College since 1999, where she is the resident costume designer. Last year she taught Costume Design and Costume Construction. She was previously an Assistant Professor of Theatre at Cornell College. Other design credits include the University of Iowa (Theatre, Dance, Playwright's Festival, Black Action Theatre), Riverside Theatre, RT Shakespeare Festival, RT Young People's Company, Graffiti Theatre, Theatre de la Jeune Lune, Ballet Iowa, and Hurley Dancers. Erin holds a Master of Fine Arts in Theatre Design from the University of Iowa and a Bachelor of Science from Iowa State University.



Per Janson '03 (Dialect Coach), a Theatre and English double major and Africana Studies concentrator, worked after graduation as an archival intern at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin and studied physical theatre at the Accademia dell'Arte in Arezzo, Italy. He then studied at the Brown University/Trinity Rep Consortium, first in the Theatre and Performance Studies Master's program and then in the MFA acting program. Since 2010 he has lived in New York City, where he is artistic director of The Light Fantastic Theater Company, which brings theater to nontraditional venues such as homeless shelters, correctional facilities, and low-income senior centers. Per's two-week residency with the *Playboy* cast was funded in part by the Alumni/Alumnae in the Classroom program.

Becca Jeffords (Lighting Designer) is thrilled to return to Grinnell this year to work on *Playboy of the Western World*. Becca is a lighting designer based out of Chicago. She received her MFA in Lighting Design from Northwestern University and her BFA in Production Design from Columbus State University. Recent designs include: *Betrayal* (Raven Theatre); *In the Penal Colony*, and *A Turn of the Screw* (Chicago Fringe Opera); *How the World Began* (Rivendell Theatre); *Soon I Will Be Invincible*, and *Sparky!* (Lifeline Theatre); *A Funny Thing Happened on the way to the Forum* (Porchlight Music Theatre); *A Nice Indian Boy* (Rasaka Theatre); *The 2014 Winter Pageant* (Redmoon Theatre); *The Three Faces of Dr. Crippen*, *The Dead Prince*, *Half-Brothers Mendleshon*, and *Funeral Wedding: The Alvin Play* (Strange Tree Group); and *Mr. Chickee's Funny Money* (Chicago Children's Theatre); *The Glass Menagerie* and *South of Settling* (Steppenwolf). For more information about Becca's upcoming work please visit www.beccajeffords.com



Jesse May '02 (Fight Choreographer) is from Des Moines originally. After graduating from Grinnell as a Theatre major he acted for twelve years in New York: with the Mirror Repertory in *H6R3* with Austin Pendleton and Lynn Redgrave; Off-Broadway (*The Contrast*); Off-Off Broadway (The Spiral Theatre's *The Christmas Guest*); numerous Off-Off-Off Broadway productions; and appearing in commercials for Pepsi and TimeWarner, the acclaimed LGBT webseries "Anyone But Me", and the Queen Latifah film *The Cookout*.

Ellen Mease (Director) directs and teaches European dramatic literature, criticism, theory, and theatre history from the Greeks to Beckett and Stoppard. She also teaches interdisciplinary Humanities classes on ancient Greece (Hum 101), Roman and early Christian culture (Hum 102), and medieval/Renaissance culture (Hum/SSSt 140). On Grinnell's London program in 2003 and 2010 she taught courses on plays of ideas, Samuel Beckett, and the 19th c. English "Age of Revolution." In Florence 2006-07 she taught courses on Dante's *Divine Comedy* and the Florentine Golden Age/Italian Renaissance. During the Beckett centenary in 2006, she served as festival dramaturg for Pittsburgh Irish and Classical Theatre's BeckettFest, when she also directed *Krapp's Last Tape*, *A Piece of Monologue*, *Play* and *That Time*. In 2008 she was the dramaturg for PICT's complete cycle of the plays of John Millington Synge, when she also directed his last play, *Deirdre of the Sorrows*. Apart from most of Beckett's plays, directing credits also include Frayn's *Copenhagen*; Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, *Arcadia*, *Travesties*; Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, *Uncle Vanya*, *The Cherry Orchard*; Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, *Doll's House*, *Lady from the Sea*; Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, *12th Night*, *Measure for Measure*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *The Tempest*. She directed Brecht's *Galileo* in spring 2009, for the 400th anniversary of Galileo's sighting of the largest moons of Jupiter. Acting credits include Dysart in *Equus* and the Donne scholar in *Wit*. B.A., Drama, Vassar (PBK); M.A. Drama, U. Va.; Ph.D., Drama and Humanities, Stanford.



Cassie Reardon (Assistant Scenic Designer) Cassie studied scenic design at the University of Iowa and has freelanced as a scenic artist in the Iowa City area since 2007. She is very excited to be working with the staff, faculty and students here in Grinnell.

Erik Sanning '89 (Technical Director) is a graduate of Grinnell College. He spent the first two years after graduation working as the Technical Director/Lighting Designer for Ballet Iowa. In the summer of '91 Erik was able to return to Grinnell as the Technical Director. In addition, he is also one of the founding members of Grinnell Productions, a semi-professional theatre company that was based here in Grinnell. Erik has also been a member of IATSE, the professional stagehands union, since 1990.

PRODUCTION STAFF



Stage Manager	Emily Griffith '17
Assistant Stage Managers	Zoë Aber '18
Assistant Directors	Vanessa Chen '20 John Kim '19
Fight Master	Zoë Aber '18
Assistant Scenic Designer	Cassie Reardon
Scenic Charge	Lily Fitzsimmons '20
Sound Board/Projections Operator	Nora Schoenle '19
Light Board Operator	Reed Roffis '18
Wardrobe Crew Chiefs	Hannah Hong '18 Anh Thu Pham '19
Costume Crew	Muzi (Annie) Li '20 Waez Sheikh '19
Poster Art	Stewart Benjamin Farrar
Poster Design	Joyce Bergan
Program Design	Joyce Bergan

**ADMINISTRATION****Production Stage Manager**

Emily Griffith '17

Assistant to the Chair

Sophiyaa Nayar '17

Box Office Manager

Lauren Fenton '17

Publicity Assistant

Nolan Boggess '19

FRONT OF HOUSE**Front of House Staff**

Sarah Cannon '19

Luis Rojas '18

Jeremy Epstein '19

Jonathan Sundby '17

Lauren Fenton '17

Keli Vitaioli '19

Emily Griffith '17

Yue Yu '17

Michelle Risacher '17

COSTUME STUDIO**Costume Storage Coordinator**

Stella Gatzke '17

Stitchers

Britt Bovbjerg '19

Hannah Hong '18

Olivia Caro '17

Anh Thu Pham '19

Stella Gatzke '17

SCENE SHOP**Properties Storage Coordinator**

Sandy Barnard '17

Scene Shop Staff

Erin Gaschott '17

Rowan Queathem '17

Keith Hoagland '18

Nora Schoenle '19

Molly Kraus-Steinmetz '17

Lucas Verrastro '17

Emily Mamrak '19

Anna Warm '19

Lilly Webster '17

CAINLEAN NA Seilimide

Shete
Dairmnahts

Jan 11th
1907

Dairm England

Dear Syngie

Your letter just came & hasten to

do you some sockeye costumes

White
handkerchief
round neck

This was
the costume
that

"To brave
mudlarks
used to wear



Home made
Jockey cap. with a long peak

— (football Jersey

Tweed trousers (always tweed
stuffs in boots (on fringe trousers
near white jockey
trousers

half Wellington boots

not long boots. which are very
seldom seen except at the bigger
meetings



Godspell - an Open Space Production

Directed by: Nolan Boggess '19

The Loft Theatre, 926 Broad St., Grinnell

April 13-16, 2017

Elephant's Graveyard

Directed by: Sophiyaa Nayar '17

Flanagan Studio Theatre

April 21-23, 2017

Dance Ensemble/ACTivate Spring 2017

"Staying with the Trouble"

Artistic Director: Celeste Miller

Choreography: Celeste Miller & guest artist Dora Arreola

Roberts Theatre

April 27-30, 2017