

Director's Note

Shakespeare, Ibsen, Shaw, O'Casey, Miller, Williams, McGuinness – great playwrights whose works enrich the world of drama and the emotional and intellectual world of all those fortunate enough to encounter them either on stage or as the written word. And then there is Brian Friel !!!

Is there anything new to be said or written about this giant among playwrights? For over 50 years he has produced a body of work which it is difficult to imagine ever being emulated.

Plays such as "Philadelphia Here I come", "The Loves of Cass Maguire", "Lovers", "Faith Healer", "Translations", "Dancing at Lughnasa" and "Molly Sweeney" have been produced and enjoyed all over the English speaking world and beyond. In the process he has garnered many prestigious awards both in Ireland and abroad. He is also renowned for his adaptations and translations of works by such writers as Chekhov and Turgenev among others. Also it must not be forgotten that he has had published a number of short story collections.

On a personal level I have to say what a delight it has been for the company and I to bring to you tonight's production. This is the third time I have had the pleasure of directing one of Brian Friel's plays.

To conclude I would like to mention a word that occurs a number of times in the text of "Aristocrats" and that is "absorb". I trust you will find tonight's production an absorbing, thought provoking and enjoyable experience.

Joe Jordan - Director

Writer

Brian Friel was born in Omagh, Co Tyrone in 1929, but has made the peninsula of Inishowen, in Co Donegal, his home since 1966. He has been described as "the greatest living English-language dramatist" and an "Irish Chekhov".

His numerous awards include the London Evening Standard Award for 'Aristocrats' in 1988.

Cast

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Tom Hoffnung | Brendan O'Sullivan |
| Casimir O'Donnell | Óran O'Rua |
| Uncle George | Gerry Doyle |
| Alice | Claire O'Donovan |
| Father | Michael Sharp |
| Judith | Hilary Madigan |
| Eamonn | Ronan Horgan |
| Claire | Máirín Condon |
| Willy Diver | John Canning |
| Voice of Anna | Muriel Caslin O'Hagan |

The Balally Players Theatre Company has been part of the amateur theatre movement in Ireland since its first performance in 1983.

Each year, the group stages a diverse range of productions in a great variety of genres. From some of the great plays of the past to modern works that have or are becoming classics in their own right, the group has consistently delighted audiences with the quality of the productions and performances presented over the years. Since 2006, the Mill Theatre has been home to the group and most of the major plays it has produced.

For more information on the group's current activities and past productions, visit the pages of our website at balallyplayers.com



The Balally Players Theatre Company

balallyplayers.com

Artistic Team

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Director | Joe Jordan |
| Set Design | Louis O'Byrne |
| Lighting Design | Paul Macken |
| Costume Design | Dympna Murray |
| Sound Design | Óran O'Rua |
| Production Manager | Doris Cullen |
| Stage Manager | Aoife Braiden |
| Asst Stage Managers | Lorraine O'Hagan & Eilís O'Brien |
| Sound Operator | Fiona Walsh |
| Make Up | Teresa Dempsey |
| Publicity | Claire O'Donovan |
| Poster and Programme | Declan Brennan |
| Set Builders | Patrick Hand, Bob Staines & Eamon Staines |

Balally Players

Aristocrats

by Brian Friel



Mill Theatre
Dundrum, Dublin
1 to 5 November 2011


Balally Players

milltheatre.ie

balallyplayers.com

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The O'Donnell family is on the way out. Over the course of four generations, it has seen its sons climb down from the top of the social ladder from a High Court justice to a part-time factory worker. It is a long time since members of this family were considered to be born into an aristocracy and as the play brings them all together for a wedding, there are signs that more than the life of their elderly father may be coming to an end.

The family gathers in the 1970s at its ancestral home, Ballybeg Hall, for the wedding of the youngest daughter, Claire. Her old, bedridden father, a living reminder of the oppressive past, can still be heard shouting demands over the house intercom. The memory of the mother haunts the place like a ghost.

The other siblings are Alice, who left long ago for London with her husband, Eamonn. Her life is now spent living the life of an alcoholic while her husband goes out to work. Casimir, the only son, is a failed solicitor. His home is in Germany, where he lives married to Helga, who supports him and their children.

The family reunion for the wedding is also joined by two other people, Willie Diver, a local man and Tom Hoffnung, an American who is doing research for a book he is writing about the Irish Catholic aristocracy - an isolated class in a remote part of the country, decaying like the mansion they all once called home.

Brian Friel explores issues of Irish identity in several of his plays - 'Philadelphia, Here I Come', 'Translations' and 'Dancing at Lughnasa'. In 'Aristocrats', Ballybeg Hall and its family are kept alive by memories whose crumbling walls and faded edges are shown to be overgrown with fantasy.

Brendan O'Sullivan (Tom Hoffnung). Brendan returned to acting in the last few years after a long break following his days in college. He first joined Balally Players in November 2010, playing the part of Bernard in the 'Mystery at Twickenham Vicarage'. In March he played the part of Bernard in Rathfarnham Theatre Groups hilarious production of 'Don't Dress for Dinner'. In June he also played Rosencrantz in the Balally Players production of 'Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead'. Brendan has also appeared on television in 'The Republic of Telly' and 'Raw' as well as some TV advertising campaigns.

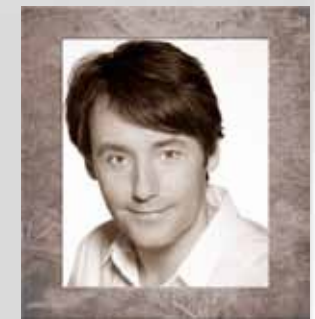


Michael Sharp (Father). Michael has played in drama, variety and pantomime with various Dublin groups, in the RTE Television drama documentary 'No More Blooms' and has played various parts with the Near FM radio drama group. His stage roles have included Eilert Lovborg in 'Hedda Gabler', Mitch in 'A Streetcar Named Desire', Danforth in 'The Crucible', Thérèse in 'Phèdre' and also Sir Andrew Aguecheek in 'Twelfth Night'. With Balally Players he has played Friar Laurence in 'Romeo and Juliet', Creon in 'Medea' and most recently Claudius in 'Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead'.



Claire O'Donovan (Alice). Claire's most recent stage appearance was as the long suffering 'Mother' in the Mill Theatre's fifth Anniversary production of 'Tarry Flynn' directed by Patrick McIntyre this year. Since joining Balally Players in 2008, her roles have included: Lydia in 'All My Sons' (also directed by Joe Jordan), Mrs Gogan in 'The Plough and The Stars', which took part in the All Ireland Three Act Circuit, Fiona Foster in 'How The Other Half Loves' as well as ensemble parts in 'Medea', 'Christmas at Airfield' and 'Romeo and Juliet'.

John Canning (Willie Diver). John has been a member of Balally Players for many years. He has played roles in several productions including 'At the Black Pigs Dyke', 'The Great Hunger' and 'Many Young Men of Twenty'. He played Curly in 'The Country Boy' (2003), which travelled to Delray Beach, Florida, as part of the 10th International Theatre Festival. John has also been involved in set design work with the group.



Gerry Doyle (Uncle George). Gerry is a long standing member of Balally Players. He has acted in many productions including 'I Do Not Like Thee Dr. Fell', 'One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest', 'It Runs in the Family', 'Joggers' and 'The Taming of the Shrew'. He is a past Chairman of the group and when not acting he is involved back stage and in front of house work.



Hilary Madigan (Judith). Hilary is a long term member of Balally Players. She has been involved in many productions including competitive drama. As Kathleen in the All Ireland winning 'Melody' she was awarded the Adjudicator's Award at the All Ireland Final, 2006. Following that she represented Ireland at the Mondial du Theatre, Monaco. Hilary also represented Balally Players at the A.I.I.T.F. in U.S.A. as Julia in 'The Country Boy'. Other recent roles include Barbara in 'Happy Birthday Dear Alice', The Nurse in 'Romeo and Juliet' and Aggie Flynn in 'Tarry Flynn'.

Máirín Condon (Claire). Máirín's most recent role was that of Madame Bovary in the Mill Theatre's fifth anniversary production of 'Tarry Flynn'. She holds an associate diploma in Speech and Drama from the Leinster School of Music. Earlier this year Máirín also starred as Jacqueline in the Rathfarnham Players production of Marc Camolotti's 'Don't Dress for Dinner'. Last year she appeared in the Balally Players one act 'Mystery at Twickenham Vicarage'. Máirín has also represented the award winning NUI Maynooth Drama Society twice at the Irish Student Drama Awards in the original plays 'Prism of Flesh' and 'Questions of Parting'.



Ronan Horgan (Eamonn). Ronan's involvement with theatre goes back to his younger days in Cork when he wrote and acted in an annual comedy sketch show. He then became involved with the U.C.C. Dramatic Society while at college. Ronan then took a break from acting for a number of years, and returned in January of this year in the role of George in Balally Players' production of 'All My Sons', directed by Joe Jordan and performed in the Mill Theatre. He followed this in June with his performance of the dual roles of Fr. Anthony and Petey Meegan in Mill Productions' 'Tarry Flynn', directed by Padraic McIntyre.



Óran O'Rua (Casimir O'Donnell). Óran began acting and directing with UCD Dramsoc, where he was awarded the Irish Student Drama Association's Best Actor award in 1998. He also adapted for the stage the Robbie Hyland poem, 'What Has To Be Done' and directed the ensuing production entitled, 'Betrayal'. Since joining the group in 2003, he has played roles on and off-stage, including Cripple Billy in 'The Cripple of Inishmaan', Barry in 'Happy Birthday Dear Alice', The Covey in 'The Plough and the Stars' and Feste in 'Twelfth Night'. In 2008, he directed a new piece of Irish writing by Ken Armstrong entitled, 'The Moon Cut Like A Sickle'.

Joe Jordan, Director. Joe directed his first play many years ago with Dublin's Lantern Theatre in Merrion Square. Since then he has directed with 33 Players, Strand Players, Olivians and the Dublin Shakespeare Society. Occasionally he has 'treaded the boards' with these groups and with others. His favourite writers include Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Henrik Ibsen, Harold Pinter, Brian Friel, Frank McGuinness and a writer he feels deserves a re-evaluation, Hugh Leonard. Joe is a great supporter of the One Act Circuit and is always on the lookout for a strong play with which to participate.

