Department of Theatre

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NOTES FROM DRAMATURG

Because it is set in the very small village of Ballybeg in rural Ireland in the 1930's, Brian Friel's DANCING AT LUGHNASA captures Irish life at a time of transition, between age-old customs and traditional religious beliefs on the one hand and modern technology and secular values on the other. The radio, especially, brings the "outside world" into the secluded village—and with it, the secular culture of popular music and city life, with values of its own. The fact that this is a "memory play" narrated by Michael from his adult point of view in (more or less) our own times makes the play quite retrospective and bittersweet. In effect, audience members are given a dual perspective: we see events on stage from the 1930's when Michael was a boy as if they are occurring in the present, but through his adult perspective and our knowledge of history since the 1930's, we also know what the future will bring to these characters, as they themselves do not.

Each of the five sisters has her own unique perspective on the major issues that are raised in the play. Often, these issues are presented in terms of "binary oppositions"—Catholicism versus paganism, home-based values versus those that are encountered "away", the modern world versus ancient traditions, the pleasures of the body (dancing, love, sexuality) versus moral uprightness and virtuous self-denial (religion, reason, education, restraint). Uncle Jack, the missionary, left Ireland to take Christianity to the supposed "pagans" of Africa; while there, however, he became the "converted" rather than the "converter"—perhaps having gone mad in the process, or perhaps having achieved a higher insight in his exposure to the "other", to different and perhaps better ways of understanding the world. In either case, he is no longer "himself" when he returns. But the disorienting "Other" resides in Ireland, too, not only in exotic Africa. In the pagan festival of Lughnasad, with its bonfires and carefree dancing, there abide rites and rituals that predate—and perhaps undermine—the ardent Christianity that Kate, in particular, holds dear.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche described the ongoing conflict between what he termed the Apollonian and Dionysian aspects of the culture, as well as of the individual personality. Apollo, the ancient Greek god of the sun, is associated with light, reason, probity, the intellect, and all "higher" things in life. Dionysus, the ancient Greek god of wine, is the embodiment of all that is unrestrained and uninhibited, the pleasures of the body, of sensuality and partying, of dancing and revelry, and of celebration of things that happen mostly in the dark rather than the daylight. In various disguises, the presence of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, even in rustic Ireland, unites the various themes of DANCING AT LUGHNASA.

William Hutchings
Department of English
University of Alabama at Birmingham
The University of Alabama at Birmingham
Department of Theatre

Presents

Dancing at Lughnasa

By

BRIAN FRIEL

Set Design

KELLY ALLISON

Costume Design

KIMBERLY SCHNORMEIER

Choreography

BE蔬 PARK PETERSON

Light Design

LANG REYNOLDS

Stage Manager

R. DANIEL WALKER

DANCING AT LUGHNASA is presented through special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc.

CAST
(In Order Of Appearance)

Michael................................................Jamie Emerson Cottle
Chris........................................................Nicole Sciaccia
Maggie......................................................Rachel Burttram
Agnes........................................................Ginny S. Loggins
Rose.........................................................Maria Stephens
Kate..........................................................Ellise P. Mayor
Jack...........................................................Ron Hubbard
Gerry.......................................................Michael Evan Hicks

Michael, who narrates the story, also speaks the lines of the boy, i.e. himself when he was seven.

The home of the Mundy Family, two miles outside the village of Ballybeg, County Donegal, Ireland.

Act I - A warm day in early August 1936.

Act II - Three weeks later.

There will be One Fifteen Minute Intermission.

DANCING AT LUGHNASA was first performed at the Abbey Theatre, in Dublin, Ireland on April 24, 1990. It was directed by Patrick Mason.

The production then transferred to the National Theatre in October 1990.

DANCING AT LUGHNASA was originally produced on the New York stage by Noel Pearson. The Abbey Theatre production was presented in association with Bill Kenwright and Joseph Harris, and opened on Broadway at the Plymouth Theatre on October 24, 1991. It was directed by Patrick Mason.

Winner of the 1992 Tony Award for Best Play, the Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Broadway Play, and the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Play. Chosen by TIME Magazine as one of the 10 best plays for 1991.

Opening Night, Tuesday, April 27, 1999

Sponsored, in part, by the UAB Cultural Activities Committee
TECHNICAL STAFF FOR THIS PRODUCTION

Technical Director ............................................. C. David Loggins
Assistant Stage Manager ....................................... Jayson Carlton
Vocal Coach ......................................................... Amelia Branyon
Movement Coach ................................................... Ron Hubbard
Dramaturg ............................................................ Dr. William Hutchings
Master Electrician ................................................... Michael Rawlins
Scenic Artist .......................................................... Kelly Allison
Assistant Scenic Artist .............................................. Aaron Isley
Property Master ....................................................... Michael Evan Hicks
Properties Running Crew ....................................... Randi Bourdages
Sound Board Operator ............................................. Jaysun Carlton
Light Board Operator ................................................ Dernoris T. Owens
Set Construction ..................................................... Daniel Duffany, Rachael Hood, Aaron Isley,
James T. Jones, Meredith Murphy, Michael Rawlins, Summer Williams
Lighting Crew ......................................................... Daniel Duffany, James T. Jones, Meredith Murphy
Poster Design ........................................................ Lang Reynolds

COSTUME STAFF FOR THIS PRODUCTION

Costume Studio Supervisor ....................................... Russell S. Drummond
Costumiere ........................................................... Jane Klemens
Draper/Cutter ......................................................... Esther Warrendorf
Costume Production Assistants ............................... Crystal L. Clark, Nancy Dean,
Tritano D. Evans, Theatre Class 122
Dresser ................................................................. Wendell Hunter

PRODUCTION STAFF

Department Chair/Producer ....................................... Lang Reynolds
Department Production Manager .................................. Kelly Allison
Office/Program Manager ........................................... Joyce Whitten
Administrative Associate .......................................... Billie Sheldon
Production Stage Manager ........................................ Ed Rosendahl
Music Director ......................................................... Derek Jackson
Youth Services Director ............................................. Amelia Branyon
Production Accountant/House Manager ....................... Sara M. Calloway
Media Relations ....................................................... Helen Hays
Box Office Manager .................................................. Marcus Thrasher
Student Office Assistants ........................................... Randi Bourdages, Georgianna Bowie,
Royce G. Garrison

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Phillip Anderson of Town & Gown Theatre and Ruth Anderson

NO LIMITS HAIR & STYLE SALON
Beauty Salon
805 9th Court South
Birmingham, Alabama 35205
205-251-8450

CABARET
A Musical

Music by JOHN KANDER
Lyrics by FRED EBB
Book by JOE MASTEROFF
Direction by JACK MANN
Choreography by LORI ANN CRAIG

May 6–16, 1999 at Clark Theatre