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The Playboy of the Western World

John M. Synge

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John Carroll University Department of Communications presents

The Playboy of the Western World

by

John Millington Synge

directed by Dr. Karen L. Gygli*

November 4, 5, 11, 12, 1994
Kulas Auditorium, 8 p.m.

Produced by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc.
CAST

Christopher Mahon (called Christy)
Old Mahon (his father, a squatter)
Michael James Flaherty (a publican)
Margaret Flaherty (called Pegeen Mike)
Shawn Keogh (her cousin, a young farmer)
Widow Quin (a woman of about thirty)
Philly Cullen (a small farmer)
Jimmy Farrell (a small farmer)
Sarah Tansey (village girl)
Susan Brady (village girl)
Honor Blake (village girl)
Nelly McLaughlin (village girl)
A Bellman
Peasant
Joseph M. Guay*
W. Francis Ryan
Bill Sindelar
Trishalana Kopaitich
Kevin Biacsi*
Tricia Rae-Sanok*
Benjamin A. Kuhlman
Chuck Gifford
Rebecca Biddiscombe
Angel Kornuc
Samantha D'Angelo
Bridget Lavelle
Aaron Berger
Brian Sparks

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The action takes place near a village, on a wild coast of Mayo.

ACT I       an evening of autumn
ACT II      the following morning
ACT III     that afternoon

There will be two ten-minute intermissions.

The music used for this show is performed and recorded by The Chieftains and Sharon Shannon.
Recently, I went to see Pulp Fiction, with the latest set of funny, hip killers. I laughed at the movie and enjoyed it, but my enjoyment was not unmixed with disquiet. It was unsettling to root for killers, to root for those characters. Yet the way Quentin Tarantine tells the story, that is the angle from which we see Victor and Jules, the hitmen.

John Millington Synge, writing at a time in Ireland when some nationalists were considering violence as a method in the pursuit of Home Rule, wrote a modern masterpiece that is thought-provoking, lyrical and funny all at the same time. Certainly in an early twentieth-century Mayo village, there were plenty of reasons for townfolk to admire someone who had struck out at an abusive authority figure, as Christy claims to have done. But Synge goes on to sympathetically portray the yearning for heroism and romance that Pegeen and the others in her village display. He has tremendous fun with how perceptions make the man, as Christy blossoms under the admiration of others from a shy bumbler to a daring "playboy" or champion. As Patricia Meyer Spacks states in her article "The Making of the Playboy," the play "presents essentially the vision of a man constructing himself before our eyes." Finally, Synge also explores the difference between a "gallous story and a dirty deed" -- the shock of witnessing a violent act as opposed to taking pleasure in hearing a story. The storyteller is a central figure in Irish culture and there is no one better than Christy -- except perhaps Synge. We hope you enjoy the tale set before you. Thank you for coming.

Dr. Karen Gygli, Director

Please Note

We ask that patrons refrain from eating, drinking or smoking in Kulas Auditorium. Taking of flash pictures during the production is distracting and potentially dangerous to the actors, as it may disorient them--please wait until after the performance.
John Millington Synge (pronounced like the word sing) was born in 1871 to a wealthy Protestant family near Dublin. His father died when he was a young boy and for the rest of his life he was close to his mother until she died in 1908. Synge graduated from Trinity College. An accomplished violin player, he traveled to Germany to study music. When he decided he'd rather make a career as a literary critic and writer, he went to Paris. He studied medieval literature at the Sorbonne, where he heard the lectures of d'Arbois de Jubainville, a professor who compared Irish culture with the Ancient Greeks. He also met William Butler Yeats in Paris, who told Synge that if he really wanted to be a writer, Synge should go back to Ireland and write of the land he knew, rather than imitating French writers. Synge followed this advice and travelled extensively in Ireland. He kept a journal of his experiences in the Aran Islands and set one of his most famous plays there, Riders to the Sea, in which an old woman loses all of her sons, who are fishermen, to the sea. He also journeyed throughout "the western world" of Mayo, a wild, desolate and poverty-stricken area of the country and used this experience to write The Playboy of the Western World. His plays were produced by the Irish National Theatre Society, first at Molesworth Hall which was a private home, then at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin. Unfortunately, Synge suffered from Hodgkin's disease and this eventually led to his death in 1909 -- he was weeks away from his 38th birthday. His fiance, Molly Allgood, an actress, had always told him she would never be able to come to his funeral, despite her presence at his sickbed. She took his unfinished play, Deirdre of Sorrows, completed it with Yeats and Lady Gregory, and directed a production of it in which she starred in 1910 at the Abbey Theatre.

In the last years of the nineteenth century, the Irish people experienced new pride in their artistic, cultural and literary history. Also, many artists and writers, such as Yeats, Synge, Lady Gregory and others in the Irish National Theatre Society, banded together to create new Irish works of quality. This movement is commonly known as the Irish Renaissance. This coincided with the push for Home Rule in Ireland (at this time Ireland sent representatives to the English Parliament, but had no such legislative body of its own). The Irish people had been represented as buffoons in print and on the stage. The “stage Irishman,” a stereotype found even in Shakespeare,
was a happy, lazy, coward, a childish drunkard who cared only for getting rich quick and who wasn't very bright. Such sayings as "begorra and begosh" were in fact inventions and had never been part of Irish speech. In print, Irish people were often stereotyped as apes, barely human, who needed supervision by England because they were incapable of taking care of themselves. (In the United States, blacks were similarly stereotyped in film, radio, and television before the 1960s as uneducated, lazy and happy-go-lucky, or were presented only as servants). Theatre audiences in Ireland flocked to the Abbey Theatre to see Yeats' play *Cathleen in Houlihan* or the plays of Lady Gregory where the Irish characters were idealized mythological heroes or heroines.

When *The Playboy of the Western World* was presented, it was to audiences very sensitive to the slightest hint of insult to the Irish people. Both at the Abbey Theatre, where the play opened on January 21, 1907, and later in New York City, riots broke out at performances, and in New York, the cast was actually arrested and jailed. Audiences were enraged at the subject matter: peasants who make a hero out of a murderer (who of course turns out not to have murdered anyone). Synge angrily replied in print that every expression and situation had a foundation in his travels and experiences with Irish peasant farmers, whose lives and speech were often violent and earthy. He argued that this should not blind audiences to the vitality and joy in the face of poverty and boredom, of the peasant life of the play.

However, later audiences could appreciate the broad comedy and ironic social commentary of the play. The language of the play is glorious, as beautiful a set of metaphors and expressions as can be found anywhere. Actors such as Stephen Rea, the leading actor in *The Crying Game* and a leader of Field Day (a political Irish arts association which encourages new plays about Irish experience), have played Christy Mahon. It is considered to be the definitive classic of Irish drama. In Cleveland, *The Playboy of the Western World* was performed in 1983 by the Great Lakes Shakespeare Festival, directed by Vincent Dowling, with Bairbre Dowling, his daughter, as Pegeen Mike, and Colm Meaney, an actor known as the father in the film *The Commitments* and as one of the actors in John Huston’s film *The Dead*, played Shawn. In the spring of 1995, the Steppenwolf Theatre of Chicago will also be producing *Playboy*, proving that this play continues to entertain and intrigue audiences today.
THE CAST

Aaron Berger (Bellman) hails from University Heights, right around the corner from school. He played Cleante in *The Imaginary Invalid* by Moliere. He was a singer in his last play, which was also his first.

Kevin Joseph Biscail (Shawn Keough) is a JCU alumnus whose most recent performance was the Beck Center's *Jesus Christ Superstar*. He has been seen in JCU theatre in *Hold the Script*, *Big River*, *Baby*, *The Crucible*, and *Holiday*.

Rebecca Biddiscombe (Sarah Tansey) is a junior double-majoring in English and communications who would like every audience member to know how excited she is to be sharing this, her first appearance on stage, with each one of them. An experienced backstage crewmember, her performance is dedicated to Flopsy and Mopsy. Special thanks to First in Flight; We'll fly together to the last. You are the wind beneath my wings!

Samantha D'Angelo (Honor Blake) is a sophomore currently pursuing a double major in English and communications. She performed in *Hold the Script*, and helped manage box office for various shows. When not working in the theatre, she hangs out at JCU's radio station, WUJC, where she deejays. Samantha would like to dedicate her performance to all those who helped her cultivate the accent and unladylike ways for this role.

Chuck Gifford (Jimmy Farrell) is a psychology major from Watersville, OH. Last year on stage, he was a young fool singing "Arkansas, Arkansas!" This year, he has the same foolish nature. Chuck is presently involved in choir and can't wait for the musical next year.

Joseph M. Guay (Christopher Mahon) is a senior, God help him, who attends classes in his spare time. His past roles include a homicidal maniac in *Ten Little Indians*, an insensitive husband in *The Wake of Jamey Foster*, and a theatrical con man in *Big River*, but he feels that the playboy best reflects his personality. Hailing from Pittsburgh, he hopes to direct in the near future. He dedicates his performance to Travis Lattimore and Carrie Lichtman.

Trishalana Kopaitich (Pegeen Mike) is a sophomore English major from Wickliffe, Ohio. She recently appeared in Rabbit Run Theatre's production of Neil Simon's *Rumors*. She was seen on the Marinello stage last fall as Mag in Brian Friel's "Winners" from *Lovers*. She enjoys dancing, singing boisterous songs, and her radio show (listen to it) on WUJC. She dedicates this performance to her disco globe and John Travolta's dance instructor.

Angel Kornuc (Susan Brady) is a sophomore majoring in education with a concentration in English. She is a class senator on the Special Events Committee, and an active volunteer representative for SADD. Angel was recently in *Guys and Dolls* and *Minnie's Boys* at Greenbrier Theatre in Parma. She also sings the National Anthem at several JCU sporting events. This is her first performance on the JCU stage.
PRODUCTION STAFF

Director
Assistant Director
Stage Manager
Scenic Designer
Lighting Designer
Costume Designer
Hair and Make-up Design
Sound Designer
Sound Operator
Light Board Operator
Running Crew
Construction Crew

Karen L. Gygli*
Valerie Williams
Rick Wilson
James F. Beck*
James F. Beck*
Constance Korosec
Anthony Marotta
James E. Parker*
David Blasko
Tom Artale
Dean Andrews, Mary Kay Lardie
Tom Artale, Joseph Kilbane,
Mike Olsen, Ed Steiner, John Stillwagon,
Brian Ungerbuehler, Rachel Zucca
and students of CO 275
Mike Cavanaugh, Matt Sabo,
Greg Weishaar
Michael Betts
Valerie Williams, Rick Wilson
Susan Filon
Susan Filon
Rose Abood
Michael James
Melissa Tilk*
L. David Erste
Michael James
Gina Manfredi
Joseph M. Guay*
Melissa Tilk*
John Yaseinosky
Bridget Lavelle

Lighting Crew
Prop Master
Properties
Wardrobe
Dresser
Publicity
House Managers
Box Office

Program
Graphic
Dialect Coach

Mike Cavanaugh, Matt Sabo,
Greg Weishaar
Michael Betts
Valerie Williams, Rick Wilson
Susan Filon
Susan Filon
Rose Abood
Michael James
Melissa Tilk*
L. David Erste
Michael James
Gina Manfredi
Joseph M. Guay*
Melissa Tilk*
John Yaseinosky
Bridget Lavelle
THE PRODUCTION STAFF

Karen Gygli (Director) received her B.A. from Ohio Dominican College and her Ph.D. in theatre from Bowling Green State University. She directed Holiday, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Eighth Order, Ten Little Indians, and The Wake of Jamey Foster at John Carroll University and Bus Stop and The Rimers of Eldritch at Maryville College in Tennessee.

Valerie B. Williams (Assistant Director) is a sophomore from Cincinnati who performed in Hold the Script and worked on costumes for Big River last year. She is also a class officer of the Student Union, and she plans to major in communications. She would like to thank the wonderful cast and crew and those who helped her with duties as AD.

Rick Wilson (Stage Manager) is a senior from Cleveland. After graduation he plans to enter a job in the field of communications. He was on stage as the doctor in Big River and Assistant Stage Manager for The Wake of Jamey Foster last year.

James F. Beck (Scenic/Lighting Designer) received his B.A. from Hiram College and an MFA in Production Design and Technology from Ohio University. Jim currently serves as both faculty member and technical director at JCU. Since coming to JCU, Jim has directed and designed The Crucible, Baby, Could Angels Be Blessed, and Big River and designed the set for Ten Little Indians, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Eighth Order, The Diviners, The Nerd, The Wake of Jamey Foster, The Day They Shot John Lennon and Holiday.

James E. Parker (Sound Designer) is a '93 grad and recipient of the Alpha Psi Omega Outstanding Achievement in Theatre award. He has numerous credits here at John Carroll including: directing of The Diviners, lighting design for The Nerd, On Tidy Endings, Ten Little Indians, Big River and Misery Loves Company's production of Camille, set design and graphic artist for Speed-the-Plow, and sound design for The Wake of Jamey Foster. He also designed lights and video production for The Day They Shot John Lennon earlier this semester.
Benjamin A. Kuhlman (Philly Cullen) is a freshman from Madison in his first show worth mentioning since his sixth grade portrayal of Ebenezer Scrooge, who is here to learn how to go to medical school. Ben would like to live the life of Michael Crichton, M.D., best-selling author and stethoscope-wielding graduate of Harvard Medical School, and a millionaire.

Bridget Lavelle (Nelly McLaughlin) is a recent JCU graduate who majored in English, and plans to pursue a Master of Arts degree in English with a concentration in Irish Literature. She hopes to revisit her many relatives in County Mayo, Ireland next summer. This is her first appearance on stage.

Tricia Rae-Sanok (Widow Quin) is a 1993 graduate of JCU thrilled to be on stage again. She is currently in sales for a major telecommunications company while searching fruitlessly for French-speaking actor positions in the PD. Special thanks to her husband John for handling everything with subtle grace.

W. Francis Ryan (Old Mahon) is Director of the Institute of Humanities and teaches history at John Carroll. He has appeared in plays at St. Jerome's College, Canada, and Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Va.

Bill Sindelar (Michael James Flaherty) was last seen on the JCU stage playing Silas Phelps in Big River. This sophomore from Maple Heights also has other shows under his belt, including Grease and The Wizard of Oz. In the summer, you may have seen him at Sea World doing the pre-show at the Pirates of Pinniped sea lion and other extravaganza. One day he hopes to use his communications degree to become the world's greatest sportscaster.

Brian Sparks (Peasant) hits the stage at John Carroll for the second time. Although his role as a villager is small, Brian feels he has the most important line in the show: "Run from the idiot!" A sophomore communications major from Toledo, Brian is also involved in WUJC, The Carroll News and Phi Theta Mu. He has previously appeared in Big River at JCU and Brigadoon in high school.

SPECIAL THANKS

Kathy Dolan
Dr. Jacqueline Schmidt
Dr. Alan Stephenson
Emerald Irish Imports
Bowling Green State University

Great Lakes Theatre Festival
Cleveland Playhouse
Ursuline College
The Carroll News
Case-Western Reserve Eldred Theatre

Hair by Tony Marotta at Anthony’s Coiffures
Constance Korosec (Costumer) is Director of Fashion and Associate Professor at Ursuline College, where she directs the fashion merchandising and fashion design programs. She established the Ursuline College Historic Costume Study Collection in 1984 and is currently working on her Ph.D. degree in Theatre Arts at Case Western Reserve University. She has long been associated with CVLT and has costumed such shows as Squabbles, Stepping Out, Scrooge, and How the Other Half Loves on the main stage.

*ALPHA PSI OMEGA*

Alpha Psi Omega (ΑΨΩ) is the national theatre honorary fraternity. Members of Alpha Psi Omega are committed to the production of quality collegiate theatre throughout the United States. The Mu Theta cast of Alpha Psi Omega is chartered at John Carroll University, and its members serve the local communities in their production of theatre. Induction eligibility into the fraternity is determined by participation in theatre.

We hope that you enjoyed PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD. Don't miss the remainder of our exciting season:

**THE DESTINY OF ME**
directed by James F. Beck

Kulas Auditorium
March 24, 25, 31 and April 1
8 p.m.

and another student-directed production (to be announced) which will play in the Marinello Little Theatre in February.