

2011 TOUR COVERAGE

**Press Coverage for the 2011 Tour of the  
Druid and Atlantic Theater Company production of  
*The Cripple of Inishmaan*  
by Martin McDonagh, directed by Garry Hynes  
Tour Produced by David Eden Productions**

“The big word I’d use to describe 'The Cripple of Inishmaan' is wonderful.” – *Boston Globe*

“heartstabbing, hilarious, and often as deadpan as Beckett.” – *Boston Phoenix*

“Fiendishly funny.... 'The Cripple of Inishmaan' revels in the mordant style of humor that is [McDonagh’s] signature; rarely has he devised characters as hilarious.... McDonagh's people are as irresistible to us as they are nasty to one another.” – *Washington Post*

[Playbill.com](http://Playbill.com), February 2, 2011, **Druid's Award-Winning *Cripple of Inishmaan* Begins 16-Week U.S. Tour in Boston Feb. 2**, by Kenneth Jones (tour announcement with full calendar/venue listing in News section)

[Playbill.com](http://Playbill.com), February 3, 2011, **PHOTO CALL: Druid and Atlantic Theater Company's *The Cripple of Inishmaan* Tours the U.S.**, by Krissie Fullerton (multimedia gallery with 20 production photos in News section)

[Boston Globe](http://BostonGlobe.com), January 30, 2011, **A Play That Punctures Perceptions of Ireland**, by Laura Collins-Hughes (advance feature incorporating interview of Garry Hynes)

[Boston Globe](http://BostonGlobe.com), February 5, 2011, **Dark Humor on the Emerald Isle**, by Don Aucoin (theater review)

[Boston Phoenix](http://BostonPhoenix.com), February 4, 2011, **The Druid’s fine trip to Inishmaan**, by Carolyn Clay (theater review)

[wickedlocal.com](http://wickedlocal.com), February 4, 2011, **Outstanding 'Inishmaan' for Irish (and all other) eyes**, by Alexander Stevens (theater review)

[Washington Post](http://WashingtonPost.com), February 10, 2011, **McDonagh's 'Cripple of Inishmaan': Fiendishly funny sendup of rural Irish life**, by Peter Marks (theater review)

[Express](http://Express.com) (free daily published by The Washington Post), February 10, 2011, **Irish Eyes: Garry Hynes, 'The Cripple of Inishmaan,' at Kennedy Center**, by Fiona Zublin (interview with Garry Hynes)

[broadwayworld.com](http://broadwayworld.com), February 10, 2011, **THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN at the Kennedy Center**, by Charles Shubow (theater review)

[dctheatrescene.com](http://dctheatrescene.com), February 10, 2011, **The Cripple of Inishmaan**, by Terry Ponick (theater review)

**PLAYBILL.COM**

**News: U.S./Canada**

## **Druid's Award-Winning *Cripple of Inishmaan* Begins 16-Week U.S. Tour in Boston Feb. 2**



Nancy E. Carroll Photo by Robert Day

By *Kenneth Jones*  
02 Feb 2011

The Druid and Atlantic Theater Company's production of Martin McDonagh's *The Cripple of Inishmaan* takes its first step in a 16-week U.S. tour on Feb. 2 at Boston's Paramount Center for the Arts.

The acclaimed production, seen in Ireland and Off-Broadway, is directed by Tony Award winner Garry Hynes (*The Beauty Queen of Leenane*). The Boston run to Feb. 6 is under the auspices of ArtsEmerson, marking Druid's Boston debut. Subsequent engagements will be hosted by the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC; University Musical Society in Ann Arbor, MI; Chicago Shakespeare Theater in Chicago, IL; Center Theatre Group's Kirk Douglas Theatre in Culver City, CA; Cal Performances in Berkeley, CA; Annenberg Center in Philadelphia, PA; Spoleto Festival USA in Charleston, SC; and International Festival of Arts & Ideas, New Haven, CT.

The American tour — "the longest U.S. tour by an Irish theatre company in Decades" — will present over 100 performances of the award-winning production before the company returns home to stage the play in late June at Galway, Ireland's Town Hall Theatre and on the titular island of Inis Meáin.

## DRUID/THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN

The cast of the hope-flecked comedy-drama includes Liam Carney as Babby Bobby, Nancy E. Carroll as Mammy O'Dougal, Ingrid Craigie as Kate, Dermot Crowley as Johnny Pateen Mike, Clare Dunne as Slippy Helen, Laurence Kinlan as Bartley, Dearbhla Molloy as Eileen, Tadhg Murphy as Billy Claven and Paul Vincent O'Connor as Doctor McSharry. Liam Carney, Ingrid Craigie, Clare Dunne, Laurence Kinlan and Tadhg Murphy are appearing with the permission of Actors' Equity Association.

The production features set and costume design by Francis O'Connor, lighting design by Davy Cunningham, sound design by John Leonard and music by Colin Towns.

*The Cripple of Inishmaan* is considered McDonagh's contemporary comic masterpiece "with eccentric island characters trading stories to within an inch of their lives, while young Billy Claven tries to make sense of who he is," according to production notes. "Set in 1934 on the sleepy island of Inishmaan, the Aran Islands are unexpectedly abuzz with the news that Hollywood filmmaker Robert Flaherty will use the neighboring island of Inishmore to film his movie 'Man of Aran,' and, for once, Billy is paying attention."

Almost 50,000 people have seen this production during its Irish and U.K. tours, and its sold-out, Off-Broadway engagement in 2008-2009. David Eden Productions is producer of the U.S. tour.

Here are *Cripple's* coming dates at a glance:

**Paramount Theatre** at Emerson College, Boston, MA, Feb. 2-6

**Eisenhower Theater, Kennedy Center**, Washington, DC, Feb. 8-12

**Gaiety Theatre**, Dublin, Ireland, Feb. 21-March 5

**University of Michigan**, Ann Arbor, MI, March 10-13

**Chicago Shakespeare Theatre**, Chicago, IL, March 16-27

**Center Theatre Group's Kirk Douglas Theatre**, Los Angeles, CA, April 5-May 1

**Cal Performances**, Berkeley, CA, May 4-14

**Annenberg Center**, Philadelphia, PA May 19-22

**Spoletto Festival**, Charleston, SC, May 26-June 2

**University Theatre**, New Haven, CT, June 15-19

**Town Hall**, Galway, Ireland, June 22-24

**Inis Meain**, Ireland, June 26

The tour is part of Imagine Ireland, a year-long season of Irish arts in America in 2011, an initiative of Culture Ireland, with funding from the Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Visit [www.imagineireland.ie](http://www.imagineireland.ie).



Liam Carney and Tadhg Murphy photo by Robert Day



**News: U.S./Canada**

**PHOTO CALL: Druid and Atlantic Theater Company's *The Cripple of Inishmaan* Tours the U.S.**

By Krissie Fullerton  
03 Feb 2011

*The Cripple of Inishmaan* is considered McDonagh's contemporary comic masterpiece "with eccentric island characters trading stories to within an inch of their lives, while young Billy Claven tries to make sense of who he is," according to production notes. "Set in 1934 on the sleepy island of Inishmaan, the Aran Islands are unexpectedly abuzz with the news that Hollywood filmmaker Robert Flaherty will use the neighboring island of Inishmore to film his movie 'Man of Aran,' and, for once, Billy is paying attention."

Here's a look at the staging:



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The cast of the comedy-drama includes Liam Carney, Nancy E. Carroll, Ingrid Craigie, Dermot Crowley, Clare Dunne, Laurence Kinlan, Dearbhla Molloy, Tadhg Murphy and Paul Vincent O'Connor.

DRUID/THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN

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For more information, please visit [ImagineIreland.ie](http://ImagineIreland.ie)



The Druid and Atlantic Theater Company's production of Martin McDonagh's *The Cripple of Inishmaan* took its first step in a 16-week U.S. tour on Feb. 2 at Boston's Paramount Center for the Arts. Read the [story](#).

# The Boston Globe

**A play that punctures perceptions of Ireland  
Irreverence lives in black comedy of 'Inishmaan'**



Tadhg Murphy (pictured) as Billy in "The Cripple of Inishmaan." Director Garry Hynes has spent her life in the west of Ireland, the same part of the country that Martin McDonagh has used as the landscape of his plays, including 'Inishmaan.' (Ros Kavanagh)

By Laura Collins-Hughes  
Globe Staff / January 30, 2011

The director Garry Hynes was on the phone from Ireland, and the talk had turned to John Millington Synge, the Irish playwright whose "Playboy of the Western World" courted outrage and provoked riots in Dublin a century ago.

"You know, at a time when the country demanded that all Irishmen were pure and good, he writes a play about a hero who murders his father," she said.

It was afternoon in Galway, where Hynes is artistic director of the Druid Theatre Company, and she was on her lunch break from a rehearsal of "The Cripple of Inishmaan." A dark comedy by Martin McDonagh that she revived to acclaim at the off-Broadway Atlantic Theater Company two years ago, it comes to the

Paramount Theatre this week, its second stop — after Roscommon — on a five-month tour of the United States and Ireland.

Hynes was mentioning Synge because McDonagh, whom she has championed since he was an unknown writer, “comes in for something of the same sort of criticism” that was aimed at his dramaturgical forebear. When McDonagh’s breakthrough 1996 play, “The Beauty Queen of Leenane,” became an international hit, there were those who took the success of a drama with a matricidal daughter at its center as “a slur on Irish nationhood,” she said.

“It’s nothing of the sort, you know?” said Hynes, who premiered that play in Galway and London, brought it to Broadway in 1998, and, for her production of it, became the first woman to win a Tony Award for best director. “There’s always been far too close a relationship in this country, I think, between art and how we see ourselves as being represented.”

Such sensitivity isn’t as acute as it once was, she allowed. “But you still find a significant minority who’ve been critical of Martin’s plays on the basis that they send up Irish people rather than authentically represent them — as if somehow or other authenticity was the first obligation of the artist. It absolutely isn’t.”

How the Irish are represented is, in fact, a theme of “The Cripple of Inishmaan,” set in 1934 on the Aran island of Inishmaan (Irish spelling: Inis Meáin), off the west coast of Ireland. The grain of historical truth around which McDonagh builds his play is the shooting there of American filmmaker Robert J. Flaherty’s famed “Man of Aran,” a movie that is often called a documentary despite its use of fictional elements to portray the people and the culture.

In McDonagh’s play, teenage Billy sees the filming as his chance to escape Inishmaan, where a pair of kind but dotty sisters have raised him since his parents’ drowning deaths years before. The islanders are variously drunken, violent, comically ignorant, and insensible of delicacy. All of them, his adoptive aunts included, call him Cripple Billy because of his bad arm and a leg that gives him a shuffling gait.

“The setting of the play is, you know, an invention for Martin,” Hynes said, seeming slightly worried that this might be misconstrued. “It wouldn’t have been to do with a detailed sort of reading of what the situation was.”

Wary of ethnic pigeonholing, Hynes argued that the fundamental allure of McDonagh’s drama has little to do with its locale.

“I think Martin’s appeal is that he — to be absolutely honest with you — he actually writes, you know, terrific plays. And any writer who does, it doesn’t really matter where they’re set,” she said. “But it is true to say that Martin takes *perceptions* of Ireland and punctures them. D’you know what I mean? So like, the running joke in, for instance, this play, ‘The Cripple of Inishmaan’: ‘Ireland mustn’t be such a bad place if German people want to come and live here.’ ‘Ireland mustn’t be such a bad . . .’ That is something Irish people say, or used to say.”

Even so, she noted, it’s not as if McDonagh himself is a local.

“You know, he didn’t *actually* grow up in Connemara,” she said. “He grew up in London — but at the same time has enough knowledge, through his relations and his parents and grandparents, of the place to be able to stand outside it and see it with a kind of an eye that other people might not necessarily have.”

“The Cripple of Inishmaan” marks Hynes’s return to the plays of McDonagh, whose “Leenane” trilogy, including “A Skull in Connemara” and “The Lonesome West,” she premiered at Druid and in London in the late 1990s.

The director has spent her life in the west of Ireland, the same part of the country that McDonagh has appropriated as the landscape of his plays. Born in tiny Ballaghaderreen, County Roscommon, she moved to Galway at 12 and lives there still.

“Garry has an incredible force and vision and passion as a director. She’s also deeply Irish,” said Neil Pepe, artistic director of Atlantic Theater Company, which has a long and lauded history of producing McDonagh, both on Broadway and off, with Hynes and without her. Atlantic is co-producing “The Cripple of Inishmaan” with Druid.



“You couple one of the great Irish directors with Martin’s irreverence and willingness to tell the truth no matter what, and I think sparks fly,” Pepe said.

It’s Hynes’s sense of what it means to be Irish, he suggested, that allows her to understand “the truth of both the humor and the tragedy” in McDonagh’s plays. But ask Hynes how being rooted in the west of Ireland helps in interpreting McDonagh’s work, and her answer is somewhat the opposite of Pepe’s. What it has allowed her to grasp, she explained, is the fiction of the plays: that they are acts of imagination.

“There is a sort of knowledge that the plays don’t have to be authentic or documentary,” she said. “I think we feel free to see how playful these plays are.”

“Playful” isn’t always the first word that comes to mind where the 40-year-old McDonagh is concerned. Though “The Cripple of Inishmaan” isn’t especially violent, his work — such as “In Bruges,” his 2008 hit-man movie — often is. As Pepe cheerfully pointed out, “bodies are sawed up” and “cats explode” in “The Lieutenant of Inishmore.” Atlantic’s 2006 production of the play, which transferred to Broadway, used three gallons of blood on stage every night, he said.

“Martin, over the years, has always had a reputation as a rebel, a bad boy, which I’ve always loved about him,” Pepe said. “He may very well be a rebel and may very well be strong enough to state what he feels and not really care what people think about it.”

And yet, Pepe is convinced that “there’s a huge heart to his work”: that it is entirely possible to locate in McDonagh’s plays “the love and the humor beneath the dark and the macabre.”

If he is right, perhaps that’s what the real people of Inishmaan will detect when they come face to face this June with the islanders the rebel’s imagination conjured.

“The odd thing about ‘Cripple of Inishmaan,’ ” Hynes said, “is it’s never actually been performed on the island.”

This production aims to change that, ending its tour with two performances in the same hall where the islanders in the play watch a screening of Flaherty's "Man of Aran."

"Next June in the hall on Inishmaan," Hynes said, "Inishmaan people will be watching Inishmaan people watching a film of themselves made in 1934. It's gonna be a rather special moment, I think. Art meets life meets art meets life."

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# The Boston Globe

STAGE REVIEW

## Dark humor on the Emerald Isle

Playwright uses small Irish town as a study of the good and bad of human nature



Tadhg Murphy and Clare Dunne play two of the quirky characters in "The Cripple of Inishmaan." (Robert Day)

By Don Aucoin  
Globe Staff / February 5, 2011

**Martin McDonagh never wants you to get too comfortable.**

Frequently hilarious though it is, there is a lacerating and unpredictable edge to the playwright's "The Cripple of Inishmaan," which has arrived at the Paramount Mainstage for a too-brief run of a coproduction by the Galway-based Druid Theatre Company and the New York-based Atlantic Theater Company.

So you laugh, you wince, you laugh again, you wince again. Mostly, you admire the playwright's skill at populating the stage with nine characters who are indelibly rooted in the particularities of time (1934) and place (an island off the western coast of Ireland) while also ranging across a wide spectrum of human nature, in all its variegations and contradictions.

Not that Billy Claven, the title character, splendidly played by Tadhg Murphy, can see much variety. To Billy, a youth of 17 or 18, there's no place like home . . . when it comes to stifling the spirit. For lack of anything better to do, he spends much of his time staring at cows.

Left an orphan when his parents drowned under mysterious circumstances, Billy has been raised by a pair of kindly, eccentric storekeepers, Eileen (Dearbhla Molloy) and Kate (Ingrid Craigie). He is severely disabled, with a deformed right foot and a right arm that dangles uselessly at his side, which earns him the nickname "Cripple Billy" among his fellow island inhabitants. They include JohnnyPateenMike (Dermot Crowley), the island gossip, and Slippy Helen (Clare Dunne), the volatile young woman on whom Billy has a crush.

When an American film company arrives to make a documentary at a nearby island (an episode inspired by Robert Flaherty's 1934 movie "Man of Aran") Billy seizes on the chance at least to try to break free and forge a new life for himself.

None of this makes "The Cripple of Inishmaan" sound funny, does it? But it is. McDonagh finds a vein of dark comedy in the brutal directness of the island's inhabitants, who are not necessarily mean-spirited but lack any of the usual social filters. "I've heard me mammy was a beautiful woman," Billy says to his physician. The doctor replies: "No, no, she was awful ugly." Billy: "Was she?" Doctor: "Oh, she'd scare a pig."

The playwright also has mordant fun with the oblivious, skewed logic of his characters' quirky digressions: the murder of a goose and a cat; the loose morals of the (unseen) daughter of Jim Finnegan (also unseen); the obsession with telescopes that transfixes Helen's brother, Bartley (Laurence Kinlan); Kate's habit of talking to a stone when under duress.

Under the supple direction of Garry Hynes, the Druid's artistic director, the ensemble delivers bravura performances across the board, including one by Boston's own Nancy E. Carroll as JohnnyPateenMike's 90-year-old mother, whom he feeds endless quantities of booze in the hope she will finally drink herself to death.

Crowley's portrayal of the amusingly appalling JohnnyPateenMike is a special treat. A puffed-up chap who calls himself a "newsman" and prides himself on ferreting out every available tidbit of gossip, then traipsing about the island trading information for food, JohnnyPateenMike thinks nothing of chiding a widower named BabbyBobby (Liam Carney) for holding out on him. "Your Mrs. up and died of TB the other year, and who was the last to know?"

JohnnyPateenMike says resentfully. "I was the last to know. I wasn't told until the day she died, and you knew for weeks and weeks, with not a thought for my feelings. . ."

As with his much bleaker "The Beauty Queen of Leenane," McDonagh displays an acute understanding of the way small communities, where everybody knows everything about everybody and no detail from the past is forgotten, can maintain a suffocating hold on the aspirations of their inhabitants. Even the good-hearted Eileen demonstrates a who-do-you-think-you-are parochialism, snapping peevisly at Billy after his big adventure: "Don't you be big-wording me again, Billy Claven." The "big word" Billy used was "evidently."

The big word I'd use to describe "The Cripple of Inishmaan" is wonderful. But remember, don't get too comfortable. McDonagh always has a surprise or two up his sleeve.

*Don Aucoin can be reached at [aucoin@globe.com](mailto:aucoin@globe.com).*

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## Review: The Druid's fine trip to Inishmaan



CELTIC DITTY McDonagh's portrayal of Aran Island life in 1934 is heartstopping, hilarious, and often as deadpan as Beckett.

By **CAROLYN CLAY** | February 4, 2011

Although Martin McDonagh's *The Cripple of Inishmaan* is the least likely of his plays to provoke a riot, as John Millington Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* did at its 1907 Dublin premiere, it is the most Synge-like of the Anglo-Irish dramatist's works. There is none of the torture and bloody body dismemberment with which the audacious author nudged his Irish Gothic closer to Gaelic Guignol. (Despite a few human dust-ups, one of them unflinchingly brutal, the majority of the play's violence is done to eggs.) But in addition to including an apparent resurrection, as *Playboy* does, *Cripple* ameliorates its corrosive portrayal of life in the bleak West of Ireland with compassion. And it's hard to imagine a production that could better harmonize the dark comedy's mean-spiritedness and poignancy, or sings its profanely melodic song, than Garry Hynes's for Galway's Druid Theatre (presented by ArtsEmerson on the Paramount Mainstage through February 6).

It was Hynes and the Druid who discovered the then-26-year-old McDonagh, premiering *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* in 1996. *Cripple*, the best of a trilogy set on the Aran Islands, debuted at Britain's National Theatre later that same year. Set in 1934 on the middle island of Inishmaan, the play is spurred by the filming on nearby Inishmore of the Robert Flaherty pseudo-documentary *Man of Aran*. Among those desperate to escape a life at once merciless and numbing by getting into the film is Cripple Billy, a lame 17-year-old orphan in the charge of two "pretend aunties" who run a shop that sells mostly peas. Treated with casual cruelty by a scant populace that regards him as "mangled and fecked," Billy hatches a scheme to get himself to Inishmore, where, improbably, his dream of escape comes temporarily true.

But if Billy hopes to flee his environs, the audience will be hard pressed to get enough of their harsh, colorful denizens. These include, in addition to the aunts (one of whom talks to a stone), town gossip JohnnyPateenMike, whose “biteens” of news would “bore the head off a dead bee,” the 90-year-old Mammy whom JohnnyPateen has been trying for decades to off with drink, and taciturn bruiser boatman BabbyBobby, with whom it proves unwise to mess. Among Billy’s contemporaries are the chronically pugilistic Slippy Helen, after whose favors Billy hankers, and her brother Bartley, who’s obsessed with American sweets and telescopes. What McDonagh breeds among these folk pits ruthless Irish stereotype in the tradition of Synge against the sentimental clichés perpetrated by American film; it’s also heartstabbing, hilarious, and often as deadpan as Beckett. (A sequence in which Bartley tries to select a candy, though played by Laurence Kinlan and the wonderful Dearbhla Molloy like a tennis game between earnestness and resignation, is pure vaudeville.)

McDonagh, who spent childhood summers in the West of Ireland, wields language that’s crude, colloquial, and as musical as a Celtic ditty. And you will probably never hear it as authentically spoken as by this company from Galway (though, given the accents, careful listening is required). Hynes’s production flies like a bird over the murky territory of black-Irish cartoon, at its center the painfully broken Billy of Tadhg Murphy. Ventured amid raillery about poteen, pet murder, and Billy’s parents’ suicide, his every journey across the wide stage, bad arm hanging and misshapen foot dragging, is a sad feat of physical fortitude.

This superlative production is part of an ArtsEmerson Irish festival that includes the world premiere of Kathrine Bates’s *The Color of Rose* (through February 13), a three-woman portrait of über Irish-American matriarch Rose Kennedy, and Mark O’Rowe’s *Terminus* (through February 13) in a production by the fabled Abbey Theatre, at whose home Synge’s audience erupted. No one will peg eggs at *Cripple*.

THEATER REVIEW

## Outstanding 'Inishmaan' for Irish (and all other) eyes



"Cripple Billy" (Tadhg Murphy) develops feelings for Helen (Clare Dunne), even though she's ruthless. (Robert Day)

By Alexander Stevens, [wickedlocal.com](http://wickedlocal.com) (Posted Feb 04, 2011)

Boston — I'd brave the snowstorm of the century to see a Martin McDonagh play performed in his native Irish tongue by an Irish cast.

Oh, that's right, I did.

Even as New England Cable News was proclaiming Wednesday's blizzard a "SuperStorm," we ventured out onto deserted streets to see "The Cripple of Inishmaan," performed by the Druid Theater of Galway, at the beautifully renovated Paramount Center, in Boston.

That's the way it is with Real Art, people; it's worth a sideways slide into a snow bank.

And, if you ask me, McDonagh makes real art. He's my favorite playwright working today. Blessed with an astonishing ability to create moments of genuine sadness (or outright horror) and then skillfully cut them with his pitch-black humor.



On a small island off the coast of Ireland, a Hollywood filmmaker has arrived to make a movie, sending a ripple of excitement through the nearby town of Inishmaan. We never meet the team of filmmakers — McDonagh's "Cripple" exists far from the bright lights of fame, in sleepy town where nothing ever happens and vicious gossip is an art form.

Various locals think they've got a shot at wowing the American filmmaker and finding fame and fortune in Hollywood. You understand why Helen (a pretty and pretty scary Clare Dunne) rolls the dice; she's a lovely lass, even if she's got a mean streak in her that borders on sadistic. But "Cripple Billy"? With a conviction that's both heart-warming and pathetic, the boy with various physical afflictions, including a profound limp (played perfectly by Tadhg Murphy) sees this as his one-way ticket out of this hellhole, where he's constantly maligned and dismissed as the "village cripple" — a village cripple surrounded by a gaggle of village idiots.

McDonagh has a knack with dunces — they play a prominent role in many of his plays. He somehow makes them hilarious, frightening and endearing all at once. "Cripple" is, among many other things, a rip at small-town life, where the brain atrophies through lack of stimulation. A dullard teen can waste an entire afternoon puzzling over which candy to choose at the town store, and Billy's elderly aunt calms her nerves by conversing with a stone.

The entire cast shines.

Billy has a horrible family history. The disappearance of his parents is a mystery that winds its way through the tale, and it's one of the places where McDonagh lands an impressive emotional wallop. For a playwright who's so adept at underscoring our taste for cruelty, it's remarkable the way he can lead you to the heart, when needed.

So let's cut to the chase: Go online to [artsemerson.org](http://artsemerson.org), and search for tickets. And do it now; the show closes on Sunday (Feb. 6). "Cripple" is a gift, built by the Druid and Atlantic theater companies and delivered by "ArtsEmerson: The World on Stage," the new and ambitious cultural presenter that takes its rightful place in the local arts scene with shows like "Cripple."

If you've never seen a McDonagh play, "Cripple" is a great primer. And if you're familiar with his work and you're a fan, then you should jump at this remarkable opportunity to see a production that oozes authenticity.

Get you ticket and head down to the Paramount, regardless of the weather.

"The Cripple of Inishmaan"  
Through Feb. 6  
The Paramount Mainstage  
Call: 617-824-8000  
[www.artsemerson.org](http://www.artsemerson.org)

# The Washington Post

THEATER REVIEW

## McDonagh's 'Cripple of Inishmaan': Fiendishly funny sendup of rural Irish life



"The Cripple of Inishmaan's" actors (including Ingrid Craigie and Laurence Kinlan) infuse the characters with an exhilarating sense of grievance.

Photo Credit: Mark Gail/the Washington Post Photo

*By Peter Marks*

Washington Post Staff Writer

Thursday, February 10, 2011; 10:39 PM

That postcard in your head of bucolic Irish hamlets filled with charmingly eccentric locals? Martin McDonagh wants to trample it, shred it, grind it into the damp earth of Erin. His fiendishly funny sendup of rural Irish life, "The Cripple of Inishmaan," is being revived in a definitive production by Druid, the Galway theater company that has long championed his work.

It's at the Kennedy Center's Eisenhower Theater only through Saturday - another of those wham-bam visits that whets the appetite for more evenings like it. Under director Garry Hynes's mischievous guidance, the actors infuse McDonagh's characters with such an exhilarating sense of grievance that they seem to treat spite as a weapon of mass destruction.

The play is about the corrosive brand of claustrophobia that afflicts country life - particularly as a city-dwelling writer might perceive it - and how an ingrown culture can curdle the soul. More to the geographic point, McDonagh is targeting life on Inishmaan in the Aran Islands, a collection of remote, scenic rocks where the rugged denizens have for centuries been tolerating the punishing elements - and one another.

McDonagh, who's best known for his Euro-hit-man movie, "In Bruges," has churned out some electrifying work for the theater: "The Pillowman" and "The Beauty Queen of Leenane" being his best plays. "The Cripple of Inishmaan" revels in the mordant style of humor that is his signature; rarely has he devised characters as hilarious as the claws-out mother and son who occupy one of the bilious ledges of the story, whiskey-swiggling Mammy O'Dougal (Nancy E. Carroll) and sniveling JohnnyPateenMike (Dermot Crowley).

Until late in the proceedings, when the story makes an unconvincing segue from hard-edged to soft, "Cripple" is as gleefully vinegary as anything McDonagh has conjured. The playwright uses as his inspiration perhaps the most significant cultural event ever to take place on the islands: the filming of "Man of Aran," the 1934 movie by Robert Flaherty that is considered a milestone of the documentary genre.

Contrary, though, to the kinetic imagery of the film, McDonagh's men and women of Aran are trapped in a world more like the one in "Groundhog Day" - an endless parade of suffocating days, all pretty much the same. It's no isolated act of whimsy that the favorite pastime of the title character, Cripple Billy (the excellent Tadhg Murphy) is staring at cows. Or that his stir-crazy aunt, Kate (Ingrid Craigie), talks to stones. Or that everyone on the island is, for want of meaningful things to do, hooked on JohnnyPateenMike's pathetic gossip reports, which consist of items like: "There's a sheep in Kerry with no ears."

The starkness of existence on Inishmaan has eroded the niceties and dried up most of the sentimentality. Which is why orphaned Billy is openly derided for his deformities, and alluring lasses such as Slippy Helen (Claire Dunne) see men as little more than momentary distractions. Billy, however, is bright and sensitive, the sort of young fellow who can surpass backwater expectations. So when the news reaches Inishmaan via JohnnyPateenMike that Flaherty is recording his movie on a nearby island, Billy becomes obsessed with getting away, seeing a little of the rest of the world and getting more of it than he bargained for.

If not conveyed with the requisite bite, "The Cripple of Inishmaan" could get confusingly cute in a hurry. McDonagh's people are as irresistible to us as they are nasty to one another. (He's one of the few dramatists capable of a sympathetic rendering of a pet-killer or of mining the laughs in a man who's encouraging his sot of a mother to drink herself to death.) Hynes understands the conflict in McDonagh's characters, between their ingratiating lack of pretension and their violent and other off-putting impulses.

And she finds actors who can play effortlessly with the tensions. In the uproarious pitched battle between Mammy O'Dougal and JohnnyPateenMike, Carroll and Crowley trade outrageous barbs like a pair of insult comics who know the routines all too well.

Dunne's Helen practices a more physical brand of comedy in her torment of her brother Bartley (Laurence Kinlan), and their interplay proves an entertaining display of mutual detestation. Billy's caretaking "aunties," solidly portrayed by Craigie and Dearbhla Molloy, are yet another polished comedy team, dryly recycling their cares and woes as if they inhabited a play of Beckett's.

Francis O'Connor's utilitarian sets don't supply much atmosphere, and Colin Towns's music comes across, at times, as a bit feeble. But Inishmaan's residents, as channeled here, don't need much assistance from ancillary sights and sounds. They are impressive dramatic events unto themselves, each and every one of them.

The Cripple of Inishmaan by Martin McDonagh. Directed by Garry Hynes. Sets and costumes, Francis O'Connor; lighting, Davy Cunningham; sound, John Leonard; composer, Colin Towns; fight direction, J. David Brimmer. With Paul Vincent O'Connor, Liam Carney. Through Saturday at the Kennedy Center, 2700 F St. NW. Visit [www.kennedy-center.org](http://www.kennedy-center.org) or call 202-467-4600.



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STAGE

**Irish Eyes: Garry Hynes, 'The Cripple of Inishmaan,' at Kennedy Center**



*Photo by Nick Burchell*

Posted By Fiona Zublin at 12:00 AM on February 10, 2011

There are few reminders of an Irish family making good in the U.S. as grandiose as the Kennedy Center. So it's fitting that "The Cripple of Inishmaan," Martin McDonagh's play about Irish peasants starstruck by a Hollywood director's nearby film set, is at the Kennedy Center through this weekend, courtesy of Ireland's Druid Theatre Company. Director Garry Hynes spoke with Express about Irish theater, at home and abroad.

**Why do you think there's such a fascination in America with Ireland and Irish literature?**

I think there's a huge diaspora. And of course, a great part of that diaspora is in America. It's also the quality of our writing. Plays by people like Martin McDonagh and Brian Friel attract huge audiences not because they're Irish, but because they're brilliant plays.

**In 1998, you were the first woman to win a Tony Award, for directing "The Beauty Queen of Leenane."**

On the one hand, it's a great honor. On the other hand, it feels as strange to say it now as it did when I was first nominated. People said, "If you should actually win, you would be the first woman." And I thought it had to be a mistake. Of course, about seven minutes after I won, Julie Taymor won a Tony Award for directing "The Lion King." [Taymor won for musical direction, Hynes in the play category.] So, no women at all for 50 years and then two in seven minutes.

**Do women have much of a presence in the Irish theater community as directors or writers?**

I think women are in much the same place in the Irish theater as they are everywhere else. Certainly, we have wonderful Irish writers, and we have quite a number of Irish women directors. But there could be more, and there should be more.

» Kennedy Center, 2700 F St. NW; through Sat., \$25-\$69; 202-467-4600. (Foggy Bottom)



BWW REVIEWS

## THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN at the Kennedy Center



Photo Credit: Robert Day

Thursday, February 10, 2011; Posted: 02:02 PM - by Charles Shubow

It was just a week ago I commended the Shakespeare Theatre Center for bringing the Scottish National Theatre production of *Black Watch* to the Baltimore/Washington area.

Well, I must do it again. Thank you Kennedy Center for bringing this incredible production of *The Cripple of Inishmaan*. This is a co-production of Galway's Druid Theatre and New York's Atlantic Theater Company and if you can make it this week, you are in for a real treat.

I first saw this Martin McDonagh play at Baltimore's Everyman Theatre in 2006 and was thoroughly impressed with their production directed by Artistic Director Vince Lancisis. I do love this play. McDonagh's characters are unforgettable. I can still recall Wil Love's portrayal of JohnnyPateenMike (yes that is his name). The Druid Theatre's Dermot Crowley is terrific in this role where he delivers orally the news of the day to the small island of Inis Meain (in Gaelic) in exchange for groceries. His attempts to kill his 90 year old mother Mammy O'Dougal (Nancy E. Carroll) by constantly giving in to her alcohol addiction but is unsuccessful.

The year is 1934. Billy Craven (a star turn by Tadhg Murphy) is indeed the "cripple" of the play's name and is called "Cripple Billy". His parents died in a boat accident after he was born and he is brought up by his "new" Aunts Kate and Eileen (the hysterical dry Ingrid Craigie and Dearbhla Molloy) who own a grocery store. An example of their talk - "Too bad Billy will never be kissed". The reply? "Unless it's by someone who's blind." Did I mention that Billy likes to stare at cows?

The sister/brother combination of Slippy Helen (Clare Dune) and Bartley (Laurence Kinlan) bring comic delight to a play that is also poignant. Dune is spectacular and I envision her as a star in the future. She reminds me of a young Kate Burton.

The play's major event concerns the news from JohnnyPateenMike that a Hollywood film is coming to the island of Inishmore and the inhabitants of Inishmaan are excited to audition. Their only way to get to Inishmore is through BabbyBobby (Liam Carney) who owns a small boat and "Cripple Billy" has his eyes on going to Hollywood to star in the film. I will not spoil it for you.

Director Garry Hynes does a masterful job in pulling all the right strings with this incredible cast. She in fact founded Druid in 1975.

You may miss some of the language due to the expected Strong accents and you'll hear some Irish terms like bullocks, biteen, mingy, fecking, and eejit.

I have to admit I'm a big fan of playwright Martin McDonagh. His first play opened February 1, 1996 at the Druid Theatre in Galway. It was *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* which went on to win four Tony Awards in 1998. *The Cripple of Inishmaan* premiered in 2008 also in Galway played to a three month sold-out Off-Broadway run at the Atlantic Theatre. On January 27, 2011, this production began one of the longest tours by an Irish theater company with a five month tour of the U.S. and Ireland.

The Company returns to Ireland next and then heads to Ann Arbor, MI, Chicago, Los Angeles, Berkely, Philadelphia (May 19-22 at the University of Pennsylvania), Charleston, and New Haven.

Fittingly, Druid's final performance of the tour will be on the island of Inis Meain itself where the play will be performed for the very first time. In fact, the 1934 documentary film "Man of Aran" attempted to depict the daily life of those living on the Aran islands. So on June 26, 2011, the islanders will gather in a community hall to watch actors playing the islanders who during the course of the play watch a film about the island's people. I do hope there is a documentary film maker to record this event!

I also highly recommend McDonagh's wonderful film "In Bruges" starring Colin Farrell.

**DRUID/THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN**

My only disappointment is the music by Colin Towns. I'm familiar with his work on the hit British television comedy "Doc Martin" which has a wonderful theme. (I highly recommend the show on WETA Saturday evenings. Just imagine Monk playing a Doctor in Cornwall.) I wish he used more Irish themes during the play.

To quote the Everyman Theatre's Lancisi, "McDonagh is one of only a few brilliant comic playwrights writing for the theatre today. His comedy is of a unique brand. Using quick turns of phrases and laughter through violence, he fascinates audiences, makes them laugh, and shocks them with unexpected plot twists all along the way."

For tickets, call 202-467-4600. You can also see video clips of the play at [www.kennedy-center.org](http://www.kennedy-center.org). Also visit the Druid's website at [www.druid.ie/productions/the-cripple-of-inishmaan-2011](http://www.druid.ie/productions/the-cripple-of-inishmaan-2011). Don't miss it. You must hurry. The run ends Saturday, Feb. 12.

For comments, write to [cgshubow@broadwayworld.com](mailto:cgshubow@broadwayworld.com).





In collaboration with  
**THEATREMOG**

## The Cripple of Inishmaan



Tadhg Murphy as Billy Claven and Clare Dunne as Slippy Helen  
(Photo: Robert Day)

February 10, 2011 By Terry Ponick

Morning, noon, and night, gigantic waves from the windswept Atlantic crash against the craggy cliffs of three forlorn rocky outcrops at the mouth of Galway Bay. These are Ireland's legendary Aran Islands, the setting for Martin McDonagh's *Cripple of Inishmaan*, now playing at the Kennedy Center's Eisenhower Theater. A co-production of Galway's renowned theater, Druid, and New York's Atlantic Theater Company, it's part of a five month tour of the U.S., and no fan of contemporary Irish drama will want to miss it. McDonagh has come to be known as a Jekyll-and-Hyde playwright whose hilarious, rustic characters and plots take a dark, violent turn without notice. (The effect, at times, is a little like "Green Acres" meets Norman Bates.)

*Cripple of Inishmaan* takes us back to the rural west of Ireland in 1934. The impoverished Aran Islands, Inishmore, Inishmaan, and Inisheer—the English spellings for the large, middle, and small islands of the trio—and their small, Irish-speaking communities lacked modern conveniences, including electricity, and automobiles. Making the best of it, they relied on small farms, fishing, and themselves to sustain a simple, grueling daily existence.

Imagine the islanders' surprise, then, when American moviemaker Robert Flaherty showed up on the main island of Inishmore, carrying cameras and crew to film a documentary on the lives and hard times of the inhabitants. More surprising still, all the parts in the film were to be played by local residents. The resulting product, "Man of Aran," is regarded today as a classic documentary film even though key scenes were scripted to provide a plot.

McDonagh seizes on this real-life event to create a fictional backstory that unfolds primarily on the difficult-to-reach island of Inishmaan, well beyond the view of Flaherty's cameras.

The island's lone general store is staffed by elderly, cranky, but (usually) good-hearted Kate (Ingrid Craigie) and Eileen (Dearbhla Molloy). Both rely on the devious JohnnyPateenMike (Dermot Crowley) for outside news. He's a local "character" with no visible means of support, the kind we'd probably find pushing a Safeway cart down the street today in DC. On the island, he extracts free groceries in exchange for his tedious tidbits, supplementing this by stealing from his infirm Mammy's (Nancy E. Carroll's) pension and insurance proceeds. Meanwhile, he tries to kill her off with an ample diet of whisky and locally concocted 'white lightnin' ("poteen").

The store's patrons also include bumbling Bartley (Laurence Kinlan) and his nasty, potty-mouthed sister Slippy Helen (Clare Dunne). Good-natured but simple-minded, Bartley cares only about certain brands of imported American candies ("sweets") and longs to obtain a fancy telescope. Helen loves to cuff him around and to lob eggs at both him and other targets of opportunity.

Enter Billy Clavan (Tadhg Murphy), aka "Cripple Billy," the play's title character. With his deformed leg and arm, he's regarded as useless, a butt of jokes for the islanders. Orphaned not long after birth by his parents (the cause of whose demise changes at every retelling), he's been raised by his "aunts," Kate and Eileen, who have feelings for him but patronize him as well.

Not surprisingly, Billy longs to escape his surroundings. Miraculously, the opportunity arises when JohnnyPateenMike reveals the arrival of Flaherty's crew on Inishmore. Hoping to get a part in the film, Bartley and Helen hitch a ride to the big island in surly fisherman BabbyBobby's (Liam Carney's) curragh (a light, Aran rowboat). Billy contrives to go along—changing his own life and the lives of others forever.

For all its hilarity, and occasional violence, *Cripple of Inishmaan* is a problem play whose snappy dialogue only thinly masks the ongoing pain of its characters.

Billy's problems are the most obvious. "Differently-abled," his physical deformities are disabling but his quick, inventive mind is intact, and he's actually smarter than any character in the play. But the island's denizens patronize him, sneering at him, imagining his head to be as infirm as his body.

But the neighbors, too, have issues. As the stress of poverty and isolation bears down upon them, each lives a life of quiet desperation. Billy's dotty aunties express this

through bizarre behavior. JohnnyPateenMike thoughtlessly invades everyone's space. Helen and BabbyBobby act out their frustrations by lashing out. And Mammy drives her son mad by resolutely refusing to die.

On a deeper level, the tomfoolery, the jokes, the snappy patter of McDonagh's dialogue is all surface, a way for his characters to avoid that which can't be expressed. Beneath the entertainment lie heavy hearts longing for lives that can never be.

Druid/Atlantic's production of *Cripple* is bright, sprightly, and deep. With its dark, minimal but highly effective sets, the play unfolds briskly and irresistibly, save for a few moments in the second act where the playwright's otherwise snappy dialogue could still use a snip or two.

The onstage Irish dialect is generally easy to understand even for those unfamiliar with it. But we did miss a line or three in the first act, probably because the actors needed to speak up a bit more in the Eisenhower's ample space.

In a play that largely relies on character, the company couldn't have chosen a better ensemble cast, all crisply directed by Garry Hynes. Ingrid Craigie's and Dearbhla Molloy's dotty aunties distill the essence of small-town morality, passing judgment upon all while silently forgiving their own peccadillos. They are this play's Greek chorus, trying to piece together the narrative while ignoring its key lessons.

As Bartley and Helen, Laurence Kinlan and Clare Dunne add some welcome Three Stooges slapstick to the proceedings. In Kinlan's hands, Bartley becomes the only true naïf in the play, an innocent goof with simple needs and little if any understanding.

Clare Dunne's Helen is another story. She's the play's seething id. Her salty language—probably atypical in a 1934 islander—would embarrass a Baltimore stevedore. Her aggressive head-slapping and profligate misuse of eggs barely mask an almost lethal boredom and frustration. It's an immensely satisfying, over-the-top performance.

In smaller roles, Liam Carney, Nancy E. Carroll, and Paul Vincent O'Connor help make the production tick. Carney's brooding BabbyBobby possesses a heart that conceals perhaps the deepest feelings in the play, though Bobby's methods could use some refinement.

Meanwhile, O'Connor's Doctor McSharry brings some objective cohesion to the play's narrative by attempting to impose objective truth on medicine as on life, with limited success in both.

Carroll's Mammy O'Dougal is a small role that packs a good wallop. Her Mammy is an ornery cuss whose sheer will to survive overcomes her seeming frailty, driving her good-for-nothing son to near-madness.

But this play really revolves around the characters of JohnnyPateenMike and Cripple Billy. A cowardly blowhard, Dermot Crowley's Johnny is a dreamer, not a doer. He only imagines boldness and courage, whereas Tadhg Murphy's much put-upon Cripple Billy

actually has the guts to take action. The interplay between Crowley and Murphy, between blather and action—the Irish dilemma—is the heart and the soul of this play.

*The Cripple of Inishmaan* is a must see. It's brilliant, gripping drama, hilarious, thoughtful, and sometimes genuinely scary. It's yet another nail in the coffin of Yeats' "Celtic Twilight," which has given way in the last quarter century to a new generation of Irish playwrights who, like Martin McDonagh, are providing English-speaking theater with its latest, and edgiest, Golden Age.

*The Cripple of Inishmaan* must close Feb 12, 2011. In the Eisenhower Theatre of the Kennedy Center, 2700 F St NW, Washington, DC. Details here. Buy tickets.

**The Cripple of Inishmaan**

by Martin McDonagh

Directed by Garry Hynes

Produced by Druid and Atlantic Theater Company. Presented at the Kennedy Center

Reviewed by Terry Ponick

*Highly Recommended*

*Running time: Two hours, fifteen minutes including intermission.*

2011 TOUR COVERAGE

Random Excerpts from Twitter Feed of the 2011 Tour of the

Druid and Atlantic Theater Company production of

*The Cripple of Inishmaan*

by Martin McDonagh, directed by Garry Hynes

Tour Produced by David Eden Productions



PinkySwearProd Pinky Swear Prod

Karen on Cripple of Inishmaan: Be sorry if you missed it. DRUID did a feckin' grand job. Ireland must not be such a bad place. [#DCTheatre](#) - 14 Feb



MToddMorgan Todd Morgan

So glad I got to see McDonagh's 'Cripple of Inishmaan': Fiendishly funny sendup of rural Irish life <http://t.co/Q3f8Coe> via [@washingtonpost](#) - 13 Feb



addedadvantage elizabeth nelson

'The Cripple of Inishmaan' is an embarrassment of good. - 12 Feb



THJones THJones

Excited to see Martin McDonagh's 'The Cripple of Inishmaan' at the Kennedy Center [#brutalirishpessimism](#) - 12 Feb



Brieeeeeee Brieahn J. DeMeo

Sad for me good for Druid, The Cripple of Inishmaan is sold out [@kencen](#) [#imagineireland](#) - 12 Feb



charlenevsmith Charlene V. Smith

"Are ya feckin coming or not, ya decker?" 30 minutes until CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN. - 12 Feb



TheThomasKeegan Thomas Keegan

Can't stop thinking about the Druid's production of "The Cripple of Inishmaan" last night. Simply remarkable! - 12 Feb



bestyworsty Emmy W

What a gorgeous production of The Cripple of Inishmaan. Amazing. - 11 Feb



betsyselman Betsy Selman

So jealous to read [@kencen](#)'s tweets about Cripple of Inishmaan. I want it to come back to [@ArtsEmerson!](#) - 11 Feb