**The Playboy of the Western World**

**by J.M. Synge**

**Programme notes for Audio Described Performance**

**Gaiety Theatre, 5th October 2019, 2.30pm**

Welcome to the introductory notes for **Lyric Theatre's** production of **The Playboy of the Western** by J.M. Synge. The play is directed by Oonagh Murphy. Set and costume design is by Molly O'Cathain. Lighting is designed by Amy Mae and the composition and sound designer is Jane Deasy. The Movement Direction by Paula O'Reilly.

The audio described performance is in the Gaiety Theatre on the 5th of October and begins at 2.30pm. It lasts for two hours and fifteen minutes, including an interval.

**ABOUT THE PLAY**

Pegeen is fed up. She’s not getting younger and is desperate to escape the confines of a life stuck in the middle of nowhere. When the stranger Christy Mahon arrives at her father’s shebeen, with a story that sets the village talking, he is welcomed with admiration by the locals, even Pegeen. But all is not as it seems, and soon the playboy’s past threatens to catch up with him.

John Millington Synge is one of Ireland’s greatest writers and a key figure in the Irish Literary Revival. He rose from obscurity to international acclaim over six intense years, before his untimely death at the age of 38. Met with controversy when it was first staged at the Abbey Theatre in 1907, his brutally hilarious masterpiece, The Playboy of the Western World is about life on the margins and the lengths we go to to create a reality more exciting than the place we find ourselves.

**ABOUT THE SET**

The play is set in a dismal, tobacco stained shebeen in the early 1980s. The backdrop, a wall with peeling blue-grey paint revealing the cement behind it. The fixtures and fittings are from the late 1950s/early 1960s and worn with age. Set to the right of the wall is a wooden door where patrons enter. Over the door an EXIT sign in red. To the right of the door is a picture of Jesus looking to heaven. On the wall to the left of the door a small light and a tiny holy water font. To the left of this a calendar stained brown with age. The shebeen is set on two levels. Right of centre two steps lead down to a lounge area in the front right hand corner. The upper level with a basic concrete floor, the lower level carpeted with a threadbare grey carpet. The bar area set on the upper level to our left. A large jar of pickled onions, a tray of whiskey glasses and a small fan sit upon it. Three shabby high stools sit nestled around the bar. Behind the bar to the very left a shutter which holds the liquor safely locked within it at times. Behind the bar to our right is wooden shelving with goods for sale – cigarettes, tins and jars of food and other basic food requirements.

Above the bar set into the wall a third level, a bedroom framed in white resembling a snapshot photo. The room is reached by a stairway from behind the bar. A small bedroom decorated in faded pink print wall paper. To the right a single bed dressed with a pink and lilac blanket and mismatching pink pillows. A simple wooden dressing table beside the bed is lilac.

Going back downstairs to the upper level of the bar to right a small table with two small wooden stools upholstered in blue. In front of the bar to our left another small table with two chairs with rusting metal frames and red worn upholstered seating and back rest.

Lastly, stepping down into the lower level into the lounge area once more. L-shaped bench seating upholstered in red, enough to sit six or seven people comfortably, with a small wooden table for them to rest their drinks and an ashtray. To the front left of the seating a brown Calor gas heater.

**ABOUT THE CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES**

I will describe the characters in order of appearance. Firstly, we have **Pegeen Mike** played by **Eloise Stevenson**. Pegeen is a pretty young woman in her early twenties. Her long brown hair pulled back in a ponytail accentuate her pale face and high cheekbones. She first appears wearing jeans and a pale blue cotton top, white runners on her feet. Later in the play she wears a red knee length pencil skirt and a blue and white striped short sleeved shirt, tied at the front to reveal her midriff.

Next we have **Shawn Keogh** played by **Michael Condron**. A man in his late thirties or early forties. His prematurely balding short dark hair combed back. Shawn dresses smartly, if a bit uptightly. First appearing in brown slacks with a dark jumper, the dusty pink collar of a polo shirt peeping out from the top of it. Over which he wears a blue grey jacket. On his feet white runners. Later we see him in beige bermuda shorts with a dark brown short sleeved shirt with colourful prints on it buttoned up to his neck. This shirt is tucked in tightly to his shorts with a brown leather belt. On his feet white runners with shin length white socks.

**Michael James Flaherty** played by **Charlie Bonner**, **Philly Cullen** played by **Jo Donnelly** and **Jimmy Farrell** played by **Tony Flynn** are the next to come rolling in. Michael is Pegeen’s father who saunters around the place drinking and socialising. A beer-bellied ruddy-faced man in his sixties. He wears brown slacks and a sweat-stained light brown polo shirt, scuffed brown shoes on his feet. Stubble upon his face and grey short hair sticking up in places.

**Philly** is a woman in her fifties, shorter but as wide in belly as Michael. She wears blue bootleg trousers with turn-ups. Dirty boots on her feet and an off white cotton t-shirt decorated with pink flower print. Her hair greying, she wears it in a short bowl cut.

**Jimmy,** unlike his friends is slim, a little gaunt in the face. His short dark hair is greying and greasy, slicked back with a slight quiff hanging over his face. His trousers a dark grey, hang off him. His cream brown vertically striped shirt rolled up at the sleeves. Scuffed boots on his feet.

Then we have **Christy Mahon** the playboyplayed by **Michael Shea**. A handsome, fit young man in his early twenties. His dark brown hair cut short, a whisper of a moustache rests upon his lips. He first appears in mud-strewn grey jeans with a greying white t-shirt and black boots equally filthy. Later he wears a smart dark brown pin-striped two-piece suit with a crisp white shirt underneath and dark brown trilby hat. Later still, cream polo trousers that rest at his shins. Over his bare torso a colourful silk jockey jacket – pink, yellow, red and blue with the number 13 pinned to the back of it. On his feet his dirty old black boots.

**Honor Blake** played by **Hazel Clifford**, **Susan Brady** played by **Holly Hannaway** and **Sara Tansey** played by **Megan McDonnell** come as a gang of teenage girls wearing the 1980s fashion of the time. Firstly, in denim attire and t-shirts, trinkets and colourful hair clips and scrunchies in their hair. Later they are dressed to party in more colourful attire in mini-skirts and bright, figure-hugging tops.

**Widow Quin** is played by **Aoibhéann McCann** in this production. Amazonian in stature, the tallest of this possy. Her black voluminously permed thick head of hair frames her strong, handsome features. Thick, black eye pencil and dark eye make-up frame her inquisitive eyes. She wears tight grey jeans tucked into shin high boots. A tight cream blouse and a black leather jacket.

Lastly, **Old Mahon** played by **Frankie McCafferty** appears in grey filthy overalls and a woollen beanie hat, grey hair peeping out from under it and grey stubble on his chin. Finished off with boots caked in mud.

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That concludes the introductory notes for this production of **The Playboy of the Western World.** They were prepared by Máirín Harte who, along with Bríd Ní Ghruagáin will be describing the performance. Audio description at the Dublin Theatre Festival is provided by Arts & Disability Ireland with support from The Arts Council.

For updates about audio described and captioned performances, text ACCESSARTS to 51444 or head to www.adiarts.ie for more information.

Thank you. Go raibh maith agaibh.

