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- The use of cameras or recording devices is strictly prohibited
- Smoking is not permitted in the Noel Fine Arts Center
- In the case of an emergency, ushers will assist audience members at each exit

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Director's Notes

In 1972, Samuel Beckett was asked from which playwrights he had learned the most. Beckett's reply: "Who else but John Millington Synge?"

John Millington Synge is another in a long line of influential Irish dramatists and *The Playboy of the Western World* is one of the few indisputably great plays of the past century. In it, Irish peasants proclaim pathetic Christy Mahon a heroic "wonder of the world" upon their discovery that Christy has killed his father. Hero worship becomes Christy and within hours he sees himself as he is seen. He proves his physical strength. Proof of the strength of his character comes later. The villagers turn on him when they see him attempt a second murder of his tyrannical "da" in their midst.

Synge directed the original production of *The Playboy*. The Hodgkin's disease that led to his death in 1909 forced him to curtail his work at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin where the play premiered in 1907. Lady Augusta Gregory's famous opening-night telegram to Synge—"Audience broke up at the word 'shift'"—has achieved legendary status in theatrical circles. The disturbances in the auditorium that took place for several performances of *The Playboy* were motivated by certain Irish nationalists who were in no mood for the Protestant Synge's slander on the good Catholic people of Ireland. They knew that Synge, certainly sympathetic to the nationalist cause, nevertheless stood outside of the struggle against the English colonizers. So, even though the mention of women's underwear led some to jeers and catcalls, it was Synge's depiction of the people of the "western world" in County Mayo that angered the nationalists. Instead of valorizing these country folk as industrious and

reverent, Synge instead showed them as they really were—industrious and reverent in a pinch, yes, but equally gluttonous and brutal.

W.B. Yeats told Synge to go west and listen to the language of the Irish people. John Gassner said that Synge, “like a true realist, shaped his poetry out of colloquial speech” and that “the distillation of poetry out of common speech was uniquely his accomplishment among the masters of the modern drama.” Synge was no fan of his most accomplished predecessor, Henrik Ibsen, because for him, Ibsen’s most influential dramas of the period, *A Doll’s House* (1879), *Ghosts* (1881), and even *The Wild Duck* (1884), were more scientific than theatrical. We see in Synge’s dramatic work a break from the coldly calculating realists of the turn-of-the-century theatre and a detour into fantasy and fable. Louis Kronenberger gets at the heart of the drama’s greatness: “*The Playboy* proclaims, along with the magic, the mendacity of words. No other comedy in the modern theatre speaks with so lyrical a voice, or breaks into so melodious a laugh. None tells its lies more beautifully or uproariously. Yet none, thanks to the candor with which it admits and even admonishes the lying, is more in league with the truth.”

**Synge's PREFACE to
*The Playboy of the Western World***

In writing THE PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD, as in my other plays, I have used one or two words only that I have not heard among the country people of Ireland, or spoken in my own nursery before I could read the newspapers. A certain number of the phrases I employ I have heard also from herds and fishermen along the coast from Kerry to Mayo, or from beggar-women and ballad-singers nearer Dublin; and I am glad to acknowledge how much I owe to the folk imagination of these fine people. Anyone who has lived in real intimacy with the Irish peasantry will know that the wildest sayings and ideas in this play are tame indeed, compared with the fancies one may hear in any little hillside cabin in Geesala, or Carraroe, or Dingle Bay. All art is a collaboration; and there is little doubt that in the happy ages of literature, striking and beautiful phrases were as ready to the story-teller's or the playwright's hand, as the rich cloaks and dresses of his time. It is probable that when the Elizabethan dramatist took his ink-horn and sat down to his work he used many phrases that he had just heard, as he sat at dinner, from his mother or his children. In Ireland, those of us who know the people have the same privilege. When I was writing *The Shadow of the Glen*, some years ago, I got more aid than any learning could have given me from a chink in the floor of the old Wicklow house where I was staying, that let me hear what was being said by the servant girls in the kitchen. This matter, I think, is of importance, for in countries where the imagination of the people, and the language they use, is rich and living, it is possible for a writer to be rich and copious in his words, and at the same time to give the reality, which is the root of all poetry, in a comprehensive and natural form. In the modern literature of towns, however, richness is found only in sonnets, or prose poems, or in one or two elaborate books that are far away from the profound and common interests of life. One has, on one side, Mallarmé and Huysmans producing this literature; and on the other, Ibsen and Zola dealing with the reality of life in joyless and pallid words. On the stage one must have reality, and one must have joy; and that is why the intellectual modern drama has failed, . . . In a good play every speech should be as fully flavoured as a nut or apple, and such speeches cannot be written by anyone who works among people who have shut their lips on poetry. In Ireland, for a few years more, we have a popular imagination that is fiery and magnificent and tender; so that those of us who wish to write start with a chance that is not given to writers in places where the springtime of the local life has been forgotten, and the harvest is a memory only, and the straw has been turned into bricks.

J. M. S. January 21st, 1907.

Dramaturg Notes: “Why *The Playboy* today?”

“On the stage, one must have reality, and one must have joy . . . the rich joy found only in what is superb and wild in reality.”

John Millington Synge

A controversial premiere is no guarantee of future theatrical relevance. More than 100 years, nearly 4000 miles, and innumerable cultural distinctions separate us, the Studio Theatre audience at UW-Stevens Point, from the first Dublin audience for John Millington Synge’s *The Playboy of the Western World*. The cultural concerns and historical goals of the Irish nationalists who rioted during the play’s first week at the Abbey Theatre are far removed from our own. Fortuitously for us, they were also distant from the theatrical concerns of Synge, co-founder of the Abbey and staunch champion of the “fiery and magnificent” imagination of the Irish people.

It is this imagination that is the heart of Synge’s drama, not political or nationalist concerns, and its verbal dexterity and emotional power are on full display in *The Playboy of the Western World*. Drawing upon the depth and breadth of Irish oral and literary tradition, Synge fashioned the play’s dialogue from existing song lyrics, poetry, folklore, and the idiosyncratic speech of Ireland’s itinerant workers and rural villagers, especially those of the western coast of Ireland. All of the characters in the play employ elevated language at various moments, but the “playboy” Christy Mahon, in particular, embodies the typically Irish appreciation for the transporting and transformative power of words. He is both story and storyteller, invented and reinvented through words.

Although *The Playboy of the Western World* both confused and angered its first Dublin audience, a century later it’s clear that Synge accomplished the playwriting task he set for himself: to craft distinctly Irish plays that would dramatize universally recognizable human situations and emotions – romantic, comic, and tragic – and thus force the world to sit up and take notice of Ireland’s native theatrical genius. Suffused with “rich joy,” this “wild and superb” comic tragedy still resonates with audiences who have never set foot in County Mayo, have never taken a sup of poteen, and have never heard the poets of the Dingle Bay.

The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point
Department of Theatre & Dance

Presents

The Playboy of the Western World

By John Millington Synge

Director
Jeffrey Stephens*

Dramaturg
Laurie Schmeling*

Dialect Coach & Fight Choreographer
Matthew Crider*

Stage Manager
Jackie Barthuly

Costume Designer
Cecelia Hill

Scenic Designer
Hilary Landowski

Lighting Designer
Nicole Card

Properties Designer
TJ Searl

Sound Designer
Britni Hart

*Denotes Faculty/Staff

The Playboy of the Western World

Cast

(IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

<i>Pegeen Mike (Margaret Flaherty)</i>	Tori Mittelman
<i>Shawn Keogh</i>	Luke Bradt
<i>Michael James</i>	Zachary Spooner
<i>(Pegeen's Father/ & owner of the pub)</i>	
<i>Philly Cullen</i>	Tom Bebeau
<i>Jimmy Farrell</i>	Sam Olson
<i>Christy Mahon</i>	Jacob J. Horstmeier
<i>Widow Quin</i>	Johanna Jackson
<i>Susan Brady</i>	Mona Maclay
<i>Sara Tansey</i>	Kate Vander Velden
<i>Honor Blake</i>	Emma Kennedy
<i>Old Mahon (Christy's father)</i>	Peter Hergarten
Ensemble	Jordan Krsnak Neal Javenkoski Alex Gudding

The action takes place on a wild coast of County Mayo, Ireland. The first act passes on an evening of late autumn, the other two acts on the following day.

There will be two 10-minute intermissions.

Acknowledgements

Kurtzweil's Antiques & Restoration

Production Staff

Assistant Stage Managers.....	Christy Siebers, Jourdyn Glaman
Assistant Lighting Designers.....	Wesley Haas, Brandon Mix
Properties Technicians.....	John Laedtke, Emily Lotz
Deck Run Crew.....	Molly Adams, Hayden Kraus, Sarah Shirley, Jenna Ventura-Butzler
Costume Run Crew.....	Krystina Hawkinson, Elise Lueneburg, Emily Nowak, Daniel Rigamer
Costume Shop Manager.....	Wendy Dolan*
Cutter/Draper.....	Barbara Cirmo*
Scene Shop Manager.....	TJ Loane*
Costume Shop Assistants.....	Molly Adams, Grace Coyne, Oriana Dentici, Hanna Gaffney, Maria Hintze, Daniel Rigamer, Christy Siebers, Shannon Ward, Vorland Design Technology Scholarship Recipients: Emily Billington and Cecelia Hill
Scene Shop Assistants.....	Tom Bebeau, Nicole Card, Brenda DeWaters, John Ford-Dunker, Alex Gudding, Jordan Krsnak, Brandon Mix, Tim Runde, Ashley Stock, Carl Swanson, Christopher Walls Vorland Design Technology Scholarship Recipients: Hilary Landowski and Nick Reising
Scene & Costume Shop.....	Theatre & Dance Practicum Students
Academic Department Associate.....	Ruth Daniels*
Theatre & Dance Office Student Assistants.....	Alison Dwyer, Sarah Godlewski, Tori Mittelman, Grace Wales
Box Office Supervisor.....	Chris Seefeldt*
House Managers.....	Kailey Field, Courtney Groves, Mike Kliss, Aristotle Leonhard, Zachary Woods
Public Relations Assistants.....	Theatre & Dance Practicum Students

J.M. Synge Biography

John Millington Synge was born near Dublin in 1871 and died in 1909. He received his degree from Trinity College, Dublin, then went to Germany to study music and later to Paris, where he lived for several years, working at literary criticism. Here he met William Butler Yeats, who persuaded Synge to live for a while in the Aran Islands and then return to Dublin and devote himself to creative work. *The Aran Islands* (1907) is the journal of Synge's retreat among the Islanders. The plays of Irish peasant life, on which his fame rests, were written in the last six years of his life. The first two one-act plays, *In the Shadow of the Glen* (1903), a comedy, and *Riders to the Sea* (1904), a tragedy, were produced by the Irish National Theatre Society. This group, with Synge, Yeats and Lady Gregory as co-directors, organized in 1904 the famous Abbey Theatre. Two comedies, *The Well of the Saints* (1905) and *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907), were presented by the Abbey players. The latter play created a furor of resentment among Irish patriots, stung by Synge's bitter humor. His later works were *The Tinker's Wedding*, published in 1908 but not produced for fear of further riots, and *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, a tragedy unfinished at the time of his death but presented by the Abbey players in 1910.

Meet the Company

- Barthuly, Jacqueline** (*Stage Manager*) Sophomore BFA Design Technology Major from Kenosha, WI. Recipient of the Theatre Arts Scholarship for Incoming Freshman in Drama.
- Bebeau, Tom** (*Philly Cullen*) Junior BFA Acting Major from Kaukauna, WI.
- Bradt, Luke** (*Shawn Keogh*) Sophomore BFA Musical Theatre Major from Maplewood, MN.
- Card, Nicole** (*Lighting Designer*) Junior BFA Design Technology Major from Appleton, WI. Recipient of the Theatre Arts Incoming Freshman in Design Technology Scholarship.
- Coyne, Grace** (*Makeup Designer*) Junior BFA Design Technology Major from Barneveld, WI. Recipient of the Theatre Arts Scholarship for Incoming Freshman in Design Technology.
- Glaman, Jourdyn** (*Assistant Stage Manager*) Junior BA Drama Major from Stevens Point, WI. Recipient of the Theatre Arts Incoming Freshman in Drama Scholarship and International Programs Theatre in London Scholarship.
- Field, Kailey** (*House Manager*) Sophomore BA Communications and Arts Management Major and Dance Minor from Apple Valley, MN.
- Groves, Courtney** (*House Manager*) Senior BFA Musical Theatre Major from Coon Rapids, MN.
- Gudding, Alex** (*Ensemble*) Sophomore BFA Acting Major from Fargo, ND.
- Haas, Wesley** (*Assistant Lighting Designer*) Sophomore BFA Design Technology Major from Milwaukee, WI.
- Hargarten, Peter** (*Old Mahon*) Junior BFA Acting Major from Appleton, WI.
- Hart, Britni** (*Sound Designer*) Junior BA Drama Major from Oshkosh, WI. Recipient of the Incoming Freshman in Design Technology Scholarship.
- Hill, Cecelia** (*Costume Designer*) Senior BFA Design Technology Major from Mequon, WI. Recipient of the Anne Gilfrey Schierl Award in Design Technology, James Vorland Technical Theatre and the Mary Lou Holls Scholarship.
- Horstmeier, Jacob J.** (*Christy Mahon*) Senior BFA Acting Major and Dance Minor from Random Lake, WI. Recipient of the Jason Hall Theatre Experience and the Kassie Dallmann Memorial Scholarship.
- Jackson, Johanna** (*Widow Quin*) Senior BFA Musical Theatre Major from Greeley, CO. Recipient of the Toy Box Theatre Award.
- Javenkoski, Neal** (*Ensemble*) Sophomore BFA Acting Major from Middleton, WI.

Meet the Company (continued)

- Kennedy, Emma** (*Honor Blake*) Senior BFA Acting Major from Waunakee, WI.
- Kliss, Michael** (*House Manager*) Junior BA Drama and Philosophy Major from Rhinelander, WI.
- Krsnak, Jordan** (*Ensemble*) Sophomore BFA Acting Major from Moorhead, MN. Recipient of the Incoming Freshman in Acting Scholarship.
- Laedtke, John** (*Properties Technician*) Sophomore BA Drama Major from Waupaca, WI.
- Landowski, Hilary** (*Scenic Designer*) Senior BFA Design Technology Major from Plover, WI. Recipient of the Crosby Scholarship in Technical Theatre in 2007, 2009 and 2011.
- Leonhard, Aristotle** (*House Manager*) Sophomore BA Drama and Pre-Med Major from Sheboygan, WI.
- Lotz, Emily** (*Properties Technician*) Sophomore BFA Design Technology and Elementary Education Major from Glendale, WI.
- Maclay, Mona** (*Susan Brady*) Sophomore BFA Acting Major and Philosophy Minor from Richland Center, WI.
- Mittelman, Tori** (*Pegeen Mike*) Sophomore BFA Acting Major from Burke, VA. Recipient of the Anne Gilfrey Schierl Fine Arts Award in Acting.
- Mix, Brandon** (*Assistant Lighting Designer*) Sophomore BFA Design Technology Major from Manitowoc, WI.
- Olson, Samuel** (*Jimmy Farrell*) Freshman BA Drama Major from West Allis, WI.
- Searl, TJ** (*Properties Designer*) Senior BFA Design Technology Major from Stevens Point, WI.
- Siebers, Christy** (*Assistant Stage Manager*) Freshman BFA Design Technology Major from Whitefish Bay, WI.
- Spooner, Zachary** (*Michael James*) Senior BA Drama Major from Conrath, WI. Recipient of the Theatre Arts Scholarship in Drama.
- Vander Velden, Kate** (*Sara Tansey*) Junior BFA Acting and BS Psychology Major from Random Lake, WI. Recipient of the Anne Gilfrey Schierl Fine Arts Award in Acting.
- Woods, Zachary** (*House Manager*) Senior BFA Acting Major from Oconomowoc, WI. Recipient of the Anne Gilfrey Schierl Fine Arts Award in Acting.

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