The Beauty Queen of Leenane

BY

MARTIN MCDONAGH

DIRECTED BY

BJ JONES

Scenic Design Todd Rosenthal, USA
Costume Design Theresa Ham, USA
Lighting Design JR Lederle
Sound Design Andre Pluess, USA
Casting Director Lynn Baber, CSA
Production Stage Manager Michelle Medvin, AEA

OPENING NIGHT: MARCH 23, 2018
at the North Shore Center for the Performing Arts in Skokie

The Beauty Queen of Leenane was first presented by
The Druid Theatre Company/Royal Court Theatre at the Town Hall Theatre,
Galway, Ireland, on February 1, 1996.

The Druid Theatre Company/Royal Court Theatre production was first presented in
New York by Atlantic Theater Company on February 11, 1998 and subsequently on Broadway
by Atlantic Theatre Company, Randall L. Wreghitt, Chase Mishkin, Steven M. Levy and Leonard
Soloway in association with Julian Schlossberg and Norma Langworthy on April 14, 1998
at the Walter Kerr Theatre.

The Beauty Queen of Leenane is presented by special arrangement with
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CAST (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

Wendy Robie* ........................................................................................................ Mag Folan
Kate Fry* ........................................................................................................ Maureen Folan
Casey Morris ................................................................................................. Ray Dooley
Nathan Hosner* .................................................................................. Pato Dooley

Understudies: Joe Fernandez (Pato), Sarah Hecht (Maureen),
Donna McGough (Mag), Glenn Obrero (Ray)

Understudies will not substitute for listed players unless
a specific announcement is made at the time of the performance.

*Member of the Actors Equity Association,
the union of professional actors and stage managers.

Setting
Leenane, a small town in Connemara, County Galway, Ireland.

The Beauty Queen of Leenane will be performed
with one 15 minute intermission.

ADDITIONAL PRODUCTION STAFF

Understudy Casting ......................................................... Paskal Rudnicke Casting
Fight Choreographer ........................................................... David Woolley
Assistant Director ................................................................. Nate Cohen
Dialect Coach ............................................................................ Brigid Duffy
Assistant Scenic Designer .......................................................... Lauren Nigri
Properties Master ................................................................. Lydia Hanchett
Production Assistant ............................................................... Katy Garcia
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whatsoever is strictly prohibited.
Over the years I have been drawn to Martin McDonagh’s work for a number of reasons. I find his sense of humor adolescent and amusing; I love his ability to shock for shock’s sake, and I relate to his quirky characters built on a landscape of loneliness and isolation. From the fable-like period piece *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, through the Leenane trilogy, with a side trip to the gory *Lieutenant of Inishmore*, he has remained true to his own stylistic voice.

When thinking about what I wanted to direct this year, my attraction to *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* was McDonagh’s style: theatrical fireworks that light up a dark landscape and reveal even darker crevices, much like the Burren region of western Ireland. So many of his works echo Synge, Beckett, and in more modern synchronicity Tarantino and even Letts.

But as with all my work, it feels personal. *Beauty Queen* is about the relationship of two women, a mother, Mag, and daughter. Maureen, a spinster, spends her days taking care of her mother who abuses her in both subtle and insidious ways. Maureen boils with a rage that spills over into shocking violence. The isolation and desperation are coated with McDonagh’s trademark comedy built on character tropes – it is both familiar and sorrowful.

Margaret Hickey was my aunt, and she lived downstairs from us with my grandmother Julia Griffin. These women, deeply connected to their Irish roots, helped my mom raise my brother and me, and they had a profound impact on my life. Margaret worked for a man for her entire career and she basically ran his business. In another era, her name would have been on the door, and she would have been financially rewarded. That injustice has stuck with me. Perhaps that is why there are so many women working here at Northlight on our staff and as artists. And why I’m drawn to stories about women like last season’s world premieres, *Faceless* and *Miss Bennet*.

Unlike Mag and Maureen, Margaret and Julia had a loving relationship, but their sense of loneliness and isolation was clear to me. Margaret never married. Engaged during WWII, to a soldier who would never return, she attended Friday night Novenas in hopes of his homecoming well into the 1960s. I attended with her sometimes, and she would reward me with Beatles albums after church. But the years wore on, and it became clear that this was her life.

Maureen doesn’t bear her life sentence with the grace and quiet sufferance of my aunt. But in McDonagh’s characters I saw the theatricalized extreme that the existential loneliness of the West of Ireland can create.

So with these gifted artists, Kate Fry and Wendy Robie, I take on this overdue date with McDonagh’s seminal masterpiece. I hope it moves you as it does me.

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And her mother... Julia Griffin.

BJ Jones, Artistic Director
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Martin McDonagh, one of the most celebrated Irish playwrights of all time, wasn’t born in Ireland. His childhood was spent more in the South London neighborhood where he was born and raised than it ever was in the rural locations that have become famous in his plays. The sharply drawn community on Ireland’s rocky and wild west coast that is the setting for *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (as well as *A Skull in Connemara* and *The Lonesome West*, the two other plays that complete his *Leenane Trilogy*) is McDonagh’s own invention.

His parents (mother from Sligo, father from Galway) left Ireland in the 1960s for England seeking better opportunity, so McDonagh experienced Ireland secondhand, through stories told to him by family and friends and trips to see relatives once or twice a year. The stories he tells of Ireland in his plays are a combination of reverence of Irish tradition and utter irreverence for accuracy or realism.

Fintan O’Toole, the journalist who chronicled McDonagh’s early and meteoric success as a writer, compared his writing to the music of the Irish folk-punk band The Pogues: rooted in the lyrical storytelling of Irish heritage but with an unromantic aggression inspired by London’s anti-establishment youth movement in the 1980s. McDonagh refused the role of documentarian – the location of the plays and their inhabitants are memories and family lore infused with cultural touchstones from his life outside of Ireland. His scripts echo the films of Martin Scorcese as much as they do the bloody Grand Guignol theater, but also the lighthearted patter of soap operas and sitcoms, as well as the uncompromising radical political groups McDonagh grew up watching on television in the 1980s and 90s. McDonagh’s stories and characters feel familiar drawn from situations similar to our own lives until they suddenly veer into a darkly comic and deeply sinister place.

His Leenane has been described not as a place to live, but a place to leave. In its depressed economy and isolated location, the inhabitants of Leenane live in a state of tense boredom, which can lead to dangerous diversions. His characters argue over their preference for one kind of biscuit or a particular brand of crisps, and these ordinary objects become points of serious contention. McDonagh says it is a place where “you can’t kick a cow without having someone bear a grudge for 20 years.” Over time, small events loom large and resentments build, held onto for decades or more, even passed down from generation to generation.
For the residents of Leenane, there is a unique notion of right and wrong that has settled over the entire town. Nastiness is common, sometimes simply a means of entertaining oneself until a better song comes on the radio. The characters are like adult children, without a clear sense of what is a reasonable response nor an understanding of ultimate consequences. Their actions are extreme, as if the entire town has opted in on a code of social behavior that leads to meanness and violence.

In a 1998 *New York Times* profile, McDonagh’s plays are described as “a darkly comic and violent world of misfits, grotesques and haunted lonely people. Their very distinctive language is at once recognizably Irish and yet hyperreal and unsentimental.” McDonagh’s characters behave so cruelly to each other that the violence becomes humorous in the extreme as it exposes dormant tendencies toward brutality, especially toward members of one’s own family.

There is an incongruity between McDonagh’s Ireland and more picturesque, traditional views of Ireland, but he never set out to resurrect a place that actually exists for his plays. All playwrights create the world for their characters to inhabit from the ground up, taking what they know to build a sense of authenticity but then letting their imaginations run to places that they have not or cannot visit. Instead of imagining yourself in Ireland, think of yourself in a little corner of Martin McDonagh’s mind. Welcome to Leenane.
I find his sense of humor adolescent and amusing; I love his ability to shock for shock’s sake, and I relate to his quirky characters built on a landscape of loneliness and isolation. -BJ Jones

1. The Lieutenant of Inishmore, 2009. (l-r) Matt DeCaro and Jamie Abelson
3. A Skull in Connemara, 2001. (l-r) Si Osborne, Mike Thornton, John Gawlik, Mary Seibel
A tale of family, prejudice, desire, and the Cubs with echoes of A Streetcar Named Desire.

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KATE FRY (Maureen Folan) is happy to be back at Northlight, where she performed in Outside Mullingar and The Miser. Most recently, she played Emily Dickinson in The Belle of Amherst at Court Theatre, where she has appeared in many productions over the years. Other Chicago credits include work with Writers Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, and Victory Gardens Theatre. She has also worked with Center Theatre Group in LA, McCarter Theatre Center in Princeton, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, and Lincoln Center. She is the recipient of three Joseph Jefferson awards, the local Sarah Siddons award, an After Dark award, and Chicago Magazine’s actress of the year. Kate is married to actor/teacher Timothy Edward Kane, with whom she has two sons.

CASEY MORRIS (Ray Dooley) is thrilled to be making his Northlight Theatre debut! Last fall, you may have seen Casey in the role of Mike Danver in Janine Naber’s Welcome to Jesus at American Theater Company. Other Chicago theatre credits include: Ah, Wilderness! (Goodman Theatre, u/s), What of the Night? (Stage Left & Cor Theatre), Hand to God (Victory Gardens, u/s), The Grapes of Wrath (The Gift Theatre), EOM (Ignition Festival ’16, Victory Gardens), Voyage (Cock and Bull), The Revel (The House Theatre of Chicago, u/s), Post Apocalypto (Sketchbook ’15, Collaboration), in a Little World of Our Own (Irish Theatre of Chicago, u/s), and Charlotte’s Web (Emerald City Theatre). Casey received his MFA from The Theatre School at DePaul University and is represented by Grossman & Jack Talent.

NATHAN HOSNER (Pato Dooley) returns to Northlight after appearing in Discord. Chicago credits include productions with Lookingglass, Court, Writers, Chicago Shakespeare, Goodman, Paramount, About Face, First Folio, Shaw Chicago and Shakespeare Project of Chicago. Other credits include: Peter and the Starcatcher (first national tour) and productions with American Players Theatre, New Theatre, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Arkansas Shakespeare Theatre, BoarsHead Theater, Illinois Shakespeare Festival, and Door Shakespeare. Nathan is a graduate of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, London.

WENDY ROBIE (Mag Folan) is delighted to be back in Chicago after an extended visit to the West Coast to appear in David Lynch’s Twin Peaks: The Return (Showtime) reprising her role as “Nadine Hurley.” In Chicago, Robie has appeared at Drury Lane, Chicago Dramatists, Northlight, Chicago Shakespeare, Goodman Theatre, Remy Bumppo, and Next Theatre. As a Company Member for Stratford Shakespeare Festival, Ontario, Robie played “Regan” in Brian Bedford’s King Lear in 2007. Most recently in Seattle, Robie played “Volumnia” in the critically acclaimed all-female production of Coriolanus: Fight Like A Bitch. Film: Wes Craven’s The People Under The Stairs, Vampire In Brooklyn, The Attic Expeditions, Lost Voyage, Devil In The Flesh, The Dentist II, Were
The World Mine. TV: Star Trek DS9, Any Day Now, Party Of Five, Quantum Leap, Dark Skies, C-16, Baywatch, Prophet Of Evil, A Place For Annie, and two seasons as “Nadine” in the original Twin Peaks. Proud member of Actors’ Equity (AEA) since 1985.

**BJ JONES (Director/Artistic Director)** is in his 20th season as Artistic Director of Northlight where he commissioned and directed the world premieres of Faceless, Charm, White Guy on the Bus, Stella & Lou, The Outgoing Tide (Jeff Nomination – Best Director), Better Late, and Rounding Third. Notably he has directed productions of Outside Mullingar, Grey Gardens, The Price (Jeff Nomination- Best Director), A Skull in Connemara, The Cripple of Inishmaan, and The Lieutenant of Inishmore. As a producer he has guided the world premieres of Shining Lives, The Last Five Years, The Gamester, and Studs Terkel’s ‘The Good War’. From Second City to Shakespeare, BJ has directed Pitmen Painters (Jeff Nomination – Best Director, TimeLine), A Number (Next), 100 Saints You Should Know (Steppenwolf), and The Dresser (Body Politic). Regional: Glengarry Glen Ross (Suzie Bass Nominee – Best Director, Atlanta’s Alliance Theatre), Enchanted April (Asolo Theatre), and productions at Cherry Lane Theatre NY, Galway Arts Festival, Baltimore Center Stage, and Utah Shakespeare Festival. As a performer, Mr. Jones is a two-time Joseph Jefferson Award winner and has appeared at Northlight, Goodman, Steppenwolf, Court, and other theatres throughout Chicago. Film/TV credits include The Fugitive, Body Double, Law and Order: Criminal Intent, Early Edition, Cupid, and Turks, among others.

**MARTIN MCDONAGH (Playwright)** is an award-winning writer/director. His latest film is Three Billboards Outside of Ebbing, Missouri. Plays: The

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**TODD ROSENTHAL** (Scenic Design) has designed 28 productions for Steppenwolf. Broadway credits include *August: Osage County* (Tony Award), *The Motherfucker with the Hat* (Tony nomination), *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Of Mice and Men* (Filmed by National Theatre Live), *This is Our Youth* and *Fish in the Dark*. Upcoming Broadway: *Straight White Men*. Off-Broadway credits include *Red Light Winter* (Barrow Street), *Domesticated* (Lincoln Center) and *Qualms* (Playwrights Horizons). Designer for six years for Big Apple Circus. International credits: *August: Osage County* (London & Australia), *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (Ireland), *Nice Fish* (London). Regional credits include Goodman (artistic partner), Guthrie, Berkeley Rep and many others. Museum exhibitions include “Mythbusters: The Explosive Exhibition” and “The International Exhibition of Sherlock Holmes.” Awards include Olivier, Helen Hayes, Ovation, Garland, Jefferson, Bay Area Outer Critics Circle, and Michael Merritt. He is a professor at Northwestern University and a graduate of Yale Drama.

**Theresa Ham** (Costume Design) is a Chicago-based Costume Designer. Previously at Northlight: *A Civil War Christmas*. Off Broadway: *Ride the Cyclone* (MCC Theatre). Recent Chicago credits: *Ragtime* (Marriott); *The Little Mermaid*, *Sweeney Todd*, and *Jesus Christ Super Star* (Paramount); *Rock of Ages* (Drury Lane); *The Audience* (Timeline); *Ride the Cyclone* (Chicago Shakespeare); and *Assembled Parties* (Raven). Regionally: *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (DTC) and *Carmen* (Finger Lakes Opera). Her work has been seen at DePaul Opera Theatre, Ryan Opera Center and Lyric Opera Chicago. She is also an Artistic Associate with Bohemian Theatre Ensemble and Stage Left Theatre. Upcoming: *Once* (Paramount). Ms. Ham is an adjunct faculty member at Wilbur Wright College. She has received two Joseph Jefferson Awards for Outstanding Costume Design. Ms. Ham holds an MFA in Costume Design from Illinois State University. She lives in Beverly with her husband, Patrick and their son, Cole.

**JR Lederle** (Lighting Design) Northlight credits include *The Legend of Georgia McBride, Relativity, By the Water, Charm, Shining Lives, Outside Mullingar, White Guy on the Bus, Detroit ’67, The Odd Couple, Ten Chimneys, Season’s Greetings, A Life, Grey Gardens, The Retreat From Moscow, Lady, Stella & Lou, The Outgoing Tide, Better Late and Chapatti* (the last four also at the Galway International Arts Festival, Ireland). Other work has been seen at Lookingglass, Victory Gardens, About Face, Remy Bumppo, Writers, Steppenwolf and Walkabout. JR designed lighting for seven years of the Steppenwolf TRAFFIC Series, and five Steppenwolf performances in Chicago’s Millennium Park. He has served as head of the Lighting Department at Steppenwolf since 1995.

**Andre Pluess** (Sound Design) has designed the Broadway productions of *Metamorphoses, I Am My Own Wife* and *33 Variations* (Drama Desk Award nomination) as well as the world premiere of *The Clean House* at Yale Repertory and Lincoln Center. Based in Chicago, his work has appeared on most of the city’s stages including Northlight (*Shining Lives* with Amanda Dehnert), Goodman, Steppenwolf, Court and Lookingglass, where he is an associate artist. He has composed music and designed sound for theaters.
around the U.S., most frequently at the Oregon and California Shakespeare Festivals, Berkeley Repertory, Arena Stage, American Conservatory Theater, Seattle Repertory, La Jolla Playhouse and Center Theater Group. Choral works include: Winesburg, Ohio, Eastland, Whitman and Undone (with Ben Sussman) and Paris By Night (with Amy Warren).

DAVID WOOLLEY (Fight Choreographer) returns to Northlight where his last show was City on the Make in 1985! Upcoming shows include: The Gentleman Caller (Raven Theater) and The Adventure of the Elusive Ear (Purple Rose Theatre). Off Broadway: The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity (Second Stage Theater), Edmond (Provincetown Playhouse). Regional: Three Musketeers and Henry V (Utah Shakespeare Festival); God of Carnage, Norma and Wanda (Oakland Press Award) and Escanaba in da Moonlight (Purple Rose Theatre). Mr Woolley is co-creator and performs as Guido in Dirk & Guido: The Swordsmen!. He is the recipient of two Joseph Jefferson Awards for fight direction, a professor at Columbia College Chicago and a member of the College of Fight Masters with the Society of American Fight Directors.

MICHELLE MEDVIN (Production Stage Manager) is excited to return to Northlight after subbing on last season’s Miss Bennet. Michelle has stage managed with Steppenwolf Theatre for many years, and favorite credits there include two versions of The Crucible, Tribes, Clybourne Park, August: Osage County, The Pillowman, Purple Heart (also at Ireland’s Galway Arts Festival), Art and many others. She has also worked with Victory Gardens Theater, Chicago Children’s Theatre, Hartford Stage, Dallas Theater Center and Portland Center Stage.

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Michelle currently serves as Production Manager and Adjunct Faculty for the Theatre and Performance Studies program at Governors State University. She is proud to be a member of Actors’ Equity, a graduate of Smith College, Mary’s wife, and Elliott & Lena’s mama.

TIMOTHY J. EVANS (Executive Director) leads Northlight Theatre’s overall strategic, management and long-range initiatives. Prior to his arrival at Northlight, Tim spent over 20 years at Steppenwolf Theatre Company in management and producing positions. He created, curated and produced Steppenwolf’s acclaimed TRAFFIC Series including a partnership with Chicago Public Radio for subsequent broadcasts. Tim founded Steppenwolf Films, of which he is still a partner with Gary Sinise, Terry Kinney and Jeff Perry, to develop film and television projects. He has served on the Board of Trustees of the League of Chicago Theatres and on the theater selection panel for the Princess Grace Foundation Awards. He also serves on the USA selection committee for The Eisenhower Fellows, Philadelphia, PA. Previously, Tim served on the board of the Independent Film Project (IFP) and was a charter member of the Governor’s Task Force for Media Development.

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- Latecomers will be seated at the discretion of management.

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- Assisted listening headsets are available in both North Shore Center theatres. A valid driver’s license, state ID or major credit card will be requested. A T-coil amplification system is installed in the Northlight Theatre for those that have a compatible hearing aid. Please see the house manager for assistance.

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