

## The Season

November 15, 16, 17, 18  
Twelve Angry Men  
by Reginald Rose  
Compass Theatre Ickenham

January 24, 25, 26, 27  
John Gabriel Borkman  
by Henrik Ibsen  
Travellers

March 28, 29, 30, 31  
As You Like It  
by William Shakespeare  
Travellers

May 23, 24, 25, 26  
Dancing at Lughnasa  
by Brian Friel  
Travellers

### Company contacts

**Secretary:** Crystal Anthony,  
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Harrow Weald.

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Compass Theatre for Twelve Angry Men  
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This season supported by  
**HOGARTH RECRUITMENT**

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# PROSCENIUM

**77th SEASON**  
**2000-2001**

Dancing at Lughnasa

## Dancing at Lughnasa

Brian Friel

Michael.....	Vincent Eavis
Chris.....	Daniela Eavis
Maggie.....	Isabelle Cartwright
Agnes.....	Nicola Bielicki
Rose.....	Angie Sutherland
Kate.....	Janet Harrison
Gerry.....	Jake Dodd
Jack.....	David Watkins

Directed by.....	Evelyn Moutrie
Set by.....	Alan Glover
Lighting designed by.....	Barny Daley
Lighting operated by.....	Paul Davis
Sound.....	Barny Daley
Choreography.....	Janet Harrison
Stage Management.....	Jenny Glover
	Margaret Rudolph
	Thomas Glover
	June Watkins

### Time:

**Act 1** A warm day in early August 1936

**Act 2** Three weeks later

### Place:

The home of the Mundy family, two miles outside the village of Ballybeg, County Donegal, Ireland

**Thanks also** to East Lane Theatre Club for the generous loan of the range.

**Special thanks** to Jonjo Brooks for the artwork for the kites.

## Brian Friel

- 1929 Born in Omagh, Co Tyrone
- 1939 Family moves to Derry City
- 1950 Marriage to Anne Morrison. Five children – four daughters, one son
- 1958 First radio plays produced by BBC, Belfast
- 1962 *The Enemy Within* produced at the Abbey Theatre (then at the Queen's) Dublin. First collection of short stories, *The Saucer of Larks*
- 1963 Spends six months with Tyrone Guthrie at the new Guthrie Theater, Minneapolis
- 1964 *Philadelphia, Here I Come* produced at the Gaiety Theatre, Dublin. (Helen Hayes Theatre, New York, 1965; Lyric Theatre, London 1967)
- 1966 Second collection of short stories: *The Gold in the Sea. The Loves of Cass McGuire* opens, Helen Hayes Theatre, New York (Abbey Theatre, Dublin 1967)
- 1968 *Crystal and the Fox*, Gaiety, Dublin (Mark Taper Forum, Los Angeles)
- 1969 *The Mundy Scheme*, Olympia, Dublin (Royale Theatre, New York)
- 1971 *The Gentle Island*, Olympia, Dublin (Peacock Theatre, 1989)
- 1973 *The Freedom of the City*, Royal Court Theatre, London (Abbey, Dublin; Alvin Theatre, New York 1974)
- 1975 *Volunteers*, Abbey, Dublin
- 1977 *Living Quarters*, Abbey, Dublin
- 1979 *Aristocrats*, Abbey, Dublin (Hampstead Theatre, London 1988; Manhattan Theatre Club, New York 1989; Gate, Dublin 1990)  
*Faith Healer*, Longacre Theatre, New York (Abbey, Dublin, 1980; Royal Court, London 1981)
- 1980 Cofounder with Stephen Rea of Field Day Theatre Company. *Translations*, its first production, opens in Derry (Hampstead Theatre and National's Lyttelton Theatre 1981; Manhattan Theatre Club 1981)
- 1981 Translation of *Three Sisters* opens in Derry (visits Royal Court)
- 1982 *The Communication Cord* opens in Derry (Hampstead Theatre 1983)
- 1986 Editor of *The Last of the Name*, reminiscences of a Donegal weaver
- 1987 Adaptation of Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*, National's Lyttelton Theatre (Long Wharf Theatre, USA; Gate, Dublin 1988)
- 1988 *Making History* opens in Derry (visits National's Cottesloe Theatre)
- 1990 *Dancing at Lughnasa* premieres at Abbey Theatre, Dublin (April 24<sup>th</sup>)  
National's Lyttelton Theatre (October 15<sup>th</sup>)



## *Lughnasa Customs*

“As I remember, I heard the old people say that it was on the first Sunday of the month of Lughnasa they used to have a great day on the tops of the hills about here looking for bilberries. This Sunday was set out especially for the young people to go off to the hills as soon as the mid-day meal was eaten and they would not return again until twilight had fallen...Those nearer Beltany went to the top of that hill and in the same way people living near Carn Treuna went there. Indeed the young boys used to go to which ever place their girls would be...”



*Children dancing, Galway*



*Islanders of Inishmaan, Galway, 1938*

“After reaching the top of the hill they would sit and eat their lunches. They used to bring flat cakes of oatmeal and milk for the day. Then they would go here and there over the hill to look for bilberries. Sometimes they would scatter in pairs – boys and girls – and other times they would go in groups...When they returned from their gathering of bilberries they had a strange custom. They all sat down on the hilltop and the boys began to make bracelets of bilberries for the girls. They had brought short threads in their pockets for the purpose...Each man would compete with another as to which would make the best and prettiest bracelet for his own girl. When that was done a man or woman would be named to sing a song. The melody would begin then and and would go round from one to another, and anyone who had a note of music at all in his or her head would have to keep the fun going...”

## *Lughnasa Customs*

“After the singing they would begin the dancing. According to the old talk, they had no instrument for music at all; they had to make do with lilting. In those days boys and girls were good at lilting and they would make enough music for those who were dancing...”

“When all was over then, and they were preparing to go home, the girls would take off the bilberry bracelets and leave them on the hilltop. Whatever meaning there was to that none of the old people were able to tell me, but they all knew it and they heard from their elders that it was customary for them to do that. They would all come down then and go home.”

*An oral account from Gortahork, Co Donegal, 1942*

*(From the archives of the Department of Irish Folklore, University College Dublin)*

“The top of Carrick was always a gentle place. It was maybe that before St Patrick’s day for he was keen to build on it and he would have had a wee church there but that the old druids disliked it. They raised a bull that gored the walls of the church to bits every night, do that the saint was no farther forward in the morning. That went on for long enough and in the end Patrick lost heart and went on to Armagh. It was then maybe that the people rose and destroyed the bull – better they had done it earlier: then the saint might have stayed.”

“Not so long ago thousands would be here on the first Sunday in August. There would be games and dancing and lots of harmless fun, though to be sure there might be too much drink betimes, strong stuff, too, that paid nothing to the excisemen. It was maybe on that Sunday that the bull was killed. There must have been something to start the thing, but who knows now.”

“Now they say it is bilberries they come for and to meet their sweethearts and indeed it might be that such gatherings were on the hill before Patrick’s day and lasted ever since. The old people say that the Carrick was a cultivated place when he came and the rest of the country was all scrub and trees and full of wild pigs and even worse things that nothing is known of now, God be thanked.”

*An oral account from Carrickatuke, Co Armagh, 1941)*

*(From the archives of the Department of Irish Folklore, University College Dublin)*

## *The Lughnasa Festival*

Throughout the whole of Ireland and in parts of Great Britain and France a festival celebrating the beginning of harvest was held every year in early August. In Ireland that festival was called Lughnasa after Lugh, the pagan god, who had once more provided the rich crops. (Lugh's counterpart was the Roman god Mercury, the Greek Hermes). Mountain tops were favourite sites for the festival, sometimes involving a journey that took hours. Wells, river banks and lakes were also chosen as sacred areas for the primal rites.

The festival varied from place to place and from generation to generation. The sacrifice of animals seems to have disappeared early in its evolution in Ireland, but many elements remained constant throughout the centuries. There was always a solemn first cutting of the corn or wheat, which the head of the family or the chief man of the community would offer to Lugh. In Ireland, where potatoes had taken the place of bread as the main food, a special meal from the first digging was eaten on Lá Lughnasa, the first day of the festival.

In return for these hilltop offerings, Lugh gave his people another kind of first-fruit, the small dark bilberries growing wild on the hillside. No Lughnasa custom has been more lasting than the picking of bilberries – they were looked on as an earnest of the earth's fruitfulness and the bounty of the deity. It was important that everyone should eat them and that some should be brought home to the old and the weak who were unable to climb the hill.

But in all the records and recollections of the Lughnasa festivities in Ireland, dancing is the most prominent and persistent element.

In Kerry, for example, the best dancing couple was chosen on the hill-tops of Drung Hill and Cnoc na d'Tobar. Lughnasa dancing competitions were held, too, on the Playback mountain in County Leitrim, on the Blackstairs in Wexford and on Slieve Bloom between Leix and Offaly. And at Ganiamore in County Donegal the prize for the best male dancer was his choice of bride from all the female contestants.

The Lughnasa festival was so important in the lives of the people and so involved with their notions of welfare that Christianity had to adopt it or permit it to survive. "It could not crush it as it may have crushed observances at the other quarterly feasts. It succeeded in turning the most important assemblies into Christian devotions...but in taking them over it took over inevitably some of the old stories, altered only in making a saint, not a god, the people's champion. If it left a great number unconverted to Christian devotion, it succeeded in suppressing specifically pagan customs"

*Most of the above is taken from The Festival of Lughnasa by Máire MacNeill, University College Dublin, 1982*

## *De Valera and rural Ireland*

"...later, at another election rally, he made the oft-quoted statement that no man was worth £1,000 a year; that he himself, if circumstances demanded, would break stones by the roadside for £1 or so per week. We have no doubt that he would do just that and make a good job of it. For his long-cherished vision of rural Ireland was of a strong, virile Irish-speaking peasantry, happy and content in reaping a rich harvest from the soil, concerned only with their spiritual welfare."



*Eamon de Valera, 1<sup>st</sup> Taoiseach of Ireland (1937)*

*Editorial on the death of Eamon De Valera, Connaught Telegraph, 4/9/1975*



This season has been generously supported by Hogarth Recruitment, providers of administrative, commercial and managerial staff.

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If you are interested in supporting Proscenium please contact  
Crystal Anthony on 020 8954 2761

Primary programme source: National Theatre, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, 1990

## Proscenium

George Woollands and Margaret Rendle founded Proscenium in 1924. The company's first production was the now little-known *The Tide*, by Basil McDonald Hastings. Since then the company has performed nearly two hundred and fifty plays, using Harrow as a base since 1945. In this time Proscenium has built up a strong reputation for performing challenging plays (both classic and contemporary) to a high standard.

If you would like to find out more about Proscenium, please contact:

The Secretary, Proscenium, 020 8954 2761

Or visit our new website at: [www.proscenium.org.uk](http://www.proscenium.org.uk)

Or send us an email: [info@proscenium.org.uk](mailto:info@proscenium.org.uk)

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## Our Next Production

will be in **October 2001** at the **Compass Theatre, Ickenham**

For full details of this, and our other productions in the 2001/2002 Season, join our free mailing list.

If you would like to do so, please give your name and address to one of our ushers, or contact

The Secretary, Proscenium, 020.89542761

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**In accordance with the requirements of the Council:**

**"Persons shall not be permitted to sit or stand in any of the gangways intersecting the seating, or to sit in any of the other gangways."**