

# THE BEAUTY QUEEN OF LEENANE



*rapture*  
THEATRE

## EDUCATION RESOURCE

Higher and Advanced Higher Drama Studies

# INTRODUCTION

This resource has been developed to support Rapture Theatre's upcoming production of *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* by Martin McDonagh. The show will tour across Scotland from 01 Sep - 22 Oct 2022 and is produced in association with Motherwell Theatre and North Lanarkshire Council.

*N.B. Education Scotland have now lifted any restrictions set in place during the COVID-19 pandemic with regards to attending a live event. However, it is still advised to conduct a thorough risk-assessment of any planned activity. We also recommend that you contact your local theatre venue to discuss current policy arrangements or any concerns you may have.*

*The Beauty Queen of Leenane* was first presented as a Druid Theatre/Royal Court Theatre co-production in January 1996. The play won the George Devine Award, and Martin McDonagh received the Evening Standard Award for Most Promising Playwright. The production transferred to New York, opening on Broadway in April 1998, and was nominated for six Tony Awards, including for Best Play, winning four.\*

*\*Source: Dharma Online Library*

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## MARTIN MCDONAGH

Martin McDonagh is a British-Irish playwright, screenwriter, producer and director. He was born and brought up in London to Irish parents spending long summer holidays visiting family on the Galway coast. His early plays are heavily influenced by this location with all six of his first works set in this remote, isolated area.

Many of his plays have been produced on the West End and on Broadway including *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (1996), *The Cripple of Inishmaan* (1996), *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* (2001), and *Hangmen* (2015). He has received four Tony Award nominations and five Olivier Award nominations, winning Best New Play in 2016 for *Hangmen*.

Impressively, in 1997 both the *Leenane* trilogy as well as *The Cripple of Inishmaan* were being staged in London which meant McDonagh became the first playwright since William Shakespeare to have four plays running simultaneously on the London stage.

In recent years McDonagh is more well-known for his film works having directed the dark comedy *In Bruges* (2008), *Seven Psychopaths* (2012) and *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* (2017) the latter of which won three BAFTA Awards, four Golden Globe Awards and two OSCAR Awards.



***In McDonagh's plays, even the most seemingly normal person can turn out to be a sociopath.***

– Jumana Farousky, 'Martin McDonagh: The Dark Master', Time, Apr 2008.

# PLAY SYNOPSIS

Set in the mountains of Connemara, County Galway, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* tells the darkly comic tale of Maureen Folan, a plain, lonely woman in her early forties, and Mag, her manipulative, ageing mother.

Maureen's sisters have flown the nest, escaping the drab, isolated family home, leaving Maureen trapped in a dysfunctional relationship with her mother. The unexpected arrival of an invitation sparks hopes of a last chance romance and offers Maureen the prospect of an escape to a new life. Things may just be looking up for her, but not if the interfering Mag has anything to do with it. Events lead to Maureen's hopes and dreams being dashed and long-suppressed hatred increasingly unleashed. She sets out on wreaking a terrible revenge, bringing the play to its horrifying conclusion.

*The Beauty Queen of Leenane* is loaded with savage irony, surreal humour and a touch of melodrama.



Cast of *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* in rehearsals. ©infinite blue designs

# CHARACTERS & CAST

## Characters

- MAUREEN FOLAN. aged forty. Plain, slim.
- MAG FOLAN. her mother, aged seventy. Stout, Frail.
- PATO DOOLEY. a good-looking local man, aged about forty.
- RAY DOOLEY. his brother, aged twenty.

## Cast



### Julie Hale

Julie's recent theatre work includes the international tour of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (National Theatre), *Whisky Galore* (in Gaelic) with National Theatre of Scotland and *Cured* by Stef Smith, part of Glasgay Festival at The Arches, Glasgow.

### Paul Carroll

Paul most recently appeared as Feste & Antonio in East London Shakespeare Festival's production of *Twelfth Night*. His extensive theatre work includes *A Skull in Connemara*, *Outlaws to In-Laws*, and he has toured the world as the male soloist singer in *Riverdance*.

### Nuala Walsh

Nuala has a wealth of performances on stage and screen and has appeared in some of Britain's best loved TV shows, including *Call the Midwife*, *Brookside* and *Father Ted*. She has also performed in productions of McDonagh's other works *The Cripple of Inishmaan* and *A Skull in Connemara*.

### Ian O'Reilly

Upcoming actor Ian O'Reilly joins us as Ray Dooley. Ian is from County Mayo. Work on screen includes *Moone Boy* and *Dating Amber*. In Theatre, he has starred in *14 Voices from the Bloodied Field* and *The Cripple of Inishmaan*.



# THEMES

- **Mental Health**
- **Violence and Cruelty – psychological and physical**
- **Social Isolation**
- **Escape**
- **Irish Culture and History**
- **Conflict and Power**

## LEGACY OF “IN-YER-FACE” THEATRE

*In the 1990s... came a storm of new writing, vivid new plays about contemporary life by a brat-pack of funky young playwrights. For a few heady years, theatre was the new rock 'n' roll – a really cool place to be. At last, here was drama that really seemed to make a difference. It sweated newness out of every pore. But while new writers offered an amazing variety of different types of play, and spoke with a diversity of voices, the most cutting-edge new plays had one feature in common: they were all **in-yer-face**.*

Aleks Sierz, In Yer Face Theatre Website.

*In-yer-face* theatre can be shocking, unsettling and disturbing. The plays which have been labelled under this genre are by no means 'sentimental, domestic, kitchen dramas' but are designed to be 'experiential', allowing audiences to feel the extreme emotions being depicted on stage.

“Cool Britannia” with its brash lad/ladette persona was a big trend in many areas of culture during the 1990s, seeping into a variety of artforms, including literature, fine art and music. It's no surprise then that *in-yer-face* theatre should emerge from this time period. Many new works written during this period were performed on London stages, including the staged version of Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*. However, not every venue was 'Londoncentric' – The Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh played a significant role in bringing these works to new audiences, with Scottish writers such as David Greig and David Harrower also contributing greatly as writers.

According to Aleks Sierz, the big three *in-yer-face* theatre partitioners are Sarah Kane, Mark Ravenhill and Anthony Neilson. He also includes Simon Block, Jez Butterworth, David Eldridge, Nick Grosso, Tracy Letts, Martin McDonagh, Patrick Marber, Phyllis Nagy, Joe Penhall, Rebecca Prichard, Philip Ridley, Judy Upton, Naomi Wallace and Richard Zajdlic.

He goes on to describe it: “At its best, this kind of theatre is so powerful, so visceral, that it forces you to react – either you want to get on stage and stop what's happening or you decide it's the best thing you've ever seen and you long to come back the next night. As indeed you should.”

# RAPTURE THEATRE/CREATIVE TEAM

Rapture is one of Scotland's leading touring theatre companies. Our mission is to create exhilarating world class theatre, with audience engagement, experience and enjoyment at its heart.

Rapture Theatre is continually developing its Education & Community programme to ensure a relevant and sustainable approach to learning and skills-building, through creative participation. Projects vary from production to production but are always tailored to support and enhance the company's work. Projects include workshops, digital learning resources and pre and post-show discussions, all providing opportunities for participants to create and take part in theatrical experiences.

Creative Team for The Beauty Queen of Leenane

Director	Lyn McAndrew
Set & Costume Design	Ken Harrison
Lighting Design	Davy Cunningham
Sound Design	Debra Salem
Additional voice work	Ciarán Gray
Scenic Artist & Costume	Francis Collier
Scenic Artist	Anna Olson
Stunt Co-ordinator	Carter Ferguson

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## SQA LINKS

(Higher and Advanced Higher Drama)

Attending a live performance can enhance a pupil's understanding of a dramatic text. It also provides a unique experience which heightens and develops knowledge and appreciation of a production, along with the elements required to stage it (lighting, sound, design, etc).

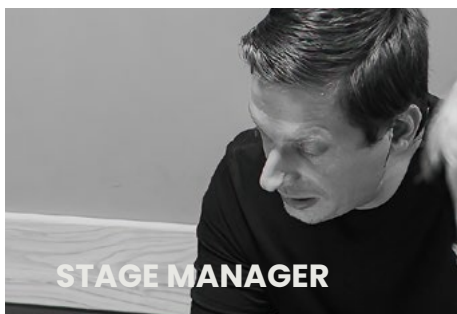
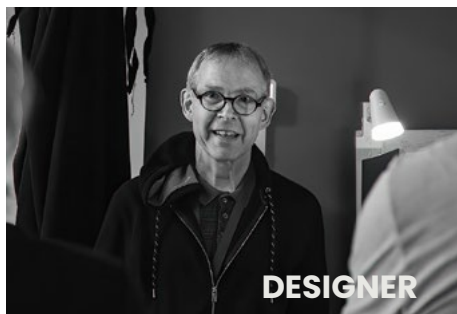
### **SQA Purpose and Aims:**

- generate and communicate thoughts and ideas when creating drama
- develop a knowledge and understanding of the historical, social and cultural influences on drama
- develop complex skills in presenting and analysing drama
- develop knowledge and understanding of complex production skills when presenting drama
- explore drama form, structure, genre and style

### **SQA Exam Paper:**

Analysis of a live performance [Section 3]

# BEHIND THE SCENES



Set design for The Beauty Queen of Leenane by Ken Harrison. ©infinite blue designs



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