Brian Friel is widely recognized as Ireland’s greatest living playwright, winning an international reputation through such acclaimed works as *Translations* (1980) and *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990). This collection of specially commissioned essays includes contributions from leading commentators on Friel’s work (including two fellow playwrights) and explores the entire range of his career from his 1964 breakthrough with *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* to his most recent success in Dublin and London with *The Home Place* (2005). The essays approach Friel’s plays both as literary texts and as performed drama, and provide the perfect introduction for students of both English and Theatre Studies, as well as theatregoers. The collection considers Friel’s lesser-known works alongside his more celebrated plays and provides a comprehensive critical survey of his career. This is the most up-to-date study of Friel’s work to be published, and includes a chronology and further reading suggestions.

**Anthony Roche** is Senior Lecturer in English and Drama at University College Dublin. He is the author of *Contemporary Irish Drama: From Beckett to McGuinness* (1994).
THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO BRIAN FRIEL

EDITED BY

ANTHONY ROCHE

University College Dublin
The Cambridge Companion to Brian Friel
Edited by Anthony Roche
Frontmatter
More information
CONTENTS

List of contributors vii
Acknowledgments x
Note on the text xi
Chronology xii

1 Introduction
ANTHONY ROCHE 1

2 The early plays
THOMAS KIROY 6

3 Surviving the 1960s: three plays by Brian Friel 1968–1971
FRANK MCGUINNESS 18

4 Friel and the Northern Ireland “Troubles” play
STEPHEN WATT 30

5 Family affairs: Friel’s plays of the late 1970s
ANTHONY ROCHE 41

6 Five ways of looking at Faith Healer
NICHOLAS GRENE 53

7 Translations, the Field Day debate and the re-imagining of
Irish identity
MARTINE PELLETIER 66

8 Dancing at Lughnasa and the unfinished revolution
HELEN LOJEK 78
CONTENTS

9 The late plays
GEORGE O’BRIEN 91

10 Friel’s Irish Russia
RICHARD PINE 104

11 Friel and performance history
PATRICK BURKE 117

12 Friel’s dramaturgy: the visual dimension
RICHARD ALLEN CAVE 129

13 Performativity, unruly bodies and gender in Brian Friel’s drama
ANNA McMULLEN 142

14 Brian Friel as postcolonial playwright
CSILLA BERTHA 154

Select bibliography
Index

166
172
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Frank McGuinness was born in Buncrana, County Donegal, and is a playwright who lectures in the School of English and Drama at University College Dublin. His plays include The Factory Girls, Baglady, Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme, Innocence, Carthaginians, Mary and Lizzie, Someone Who’ll Watch Over Me, The Bird Sanctuary, Mutabilitie, Dolly West’s Kitchen, Gates of Gold and Speaking Like Magpies. His work has received many awards in Ireland and abroad. His versions of Ibsen, Chekhov, Lorca, Brecht, Sophocles, Euripides, Racine and Pirandello have been performed throughout the English-speaking world.

Anna McMullan is Chair in Drama Studies at Queen’s University Belfast. Her book, Theatre on Trial: Samuel Beckett’s Later Drama, was published in 1993, and she has published many articles on contemporary Irish theatre. She co-edited with Caroline Williams the Contemporary Drama section of the Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing volume V (2002) and co-edited with Cathy Leeney The Theatre of Marina Carr: “Before Rules Was
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George O’Brien was born in Enniscorthy, County Wexford, in 1945, reared in Lismore, County Waterford, and educated at Ruskin College, Oxford, and the University of Warwick. He is the author of Brian Friel (1989) and Brian Friel: A Reference Guide (1995), as well as three volumes of memoirs. He is Professor of English at Georgetown University, Washington, DC.

Martine Pelletier is a lecturer in English and Irish Studies at the University of Tours. She has published widely on Brian Friel, the Field Day Theatre Company and contemporary Irish and Northern Irish theatre. She is currently working on an updated English version of her book, Le Théâtre de Brian Friel: Histoire et Histoires, published by Septentrion in 1997 for Academica Press.

Richard Pine is Academic Director of the Durrell School of Corfu and the author of The Diviner: The Art of Brian Friel (1999). A graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, he worked in the Irish broadcasting service from 1974 to 1999, and is a former Chair of the Media Association of Ireland and secretary of the Irish Writers’ Union. His books include The Dublin Gate Theatre 1928–1978 (1984); Laurence Durrell: The Mindscape (1994/2005); The Thief of Reason: Oscar Wilde and Modern Ireland (1995) and Music and Broadcasting in Ireland (2005). He is the official historian of the Royal Irish Academy of Music, of which he is an Honorary Fellow.

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Stephen Watt is Professor of English at Indiana University, Bloomington. His most recent books include the co-edited anthologies A Century of Irish Drama (2000) and Ian Fleming and James Bond: The Cultural Politics of 007 (2005), and Office Hours: Activism and Change in the Academy (2004, co-authored with Cary Nelson). He is currently completing a book on Samuel Beckett and contemporary Irish and Northern Irish literature.
I would like to express my thanks to all the contributors to this book – for their wholehearted support of the enterprise, for delivering on time and for the quality of their contributions. I am grateful to Richard Pine and to Frank McGuinness for being invaluable sounding boards to me throughout. I wish to thank Ray Ryan, my commissioning editor at Cambridge University Press; the three anonymous readers for their endorsement of what I proposed and for some invaluable suggestions; and to Maartje Scheltens at Cambridge for easing the final stages of delivery. Thanks are also due to Michael Colgan, Marie Rooney and Jenni Rope at the Gate Theatre, Dublin, for advice and support; and to Lyn Haill and her staff in the Print and Publications section of the Royal National Theatre, London, for all of their help. Special thanks are due to Brian Friel himself, in particular for his kind permission to reproduce unpublished material from the Friel Archive at the National Library of Ireland in two of the chapters. My final acknowledgment is my greatest, to my wife Katy Hayes, who helped me in so many ways to see this through.
The references to *Philadelphia, Here I Come!, The Freedom of the City, Living Quarters, Aristocrats, Faith Healer* and *Translations* are to Brian Friel, *Plays One* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1996). The references to *Fathers and Sons, Making History, Dancing at Lughnasa, Wonderful Tennessee* and *Molly Sweeney* are to Brian Friel, *Plays Two* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999). In relation to the following plays, the editions preferred are the most widely available: the Gallery Press edition of *Give Me Your Answer, Do!* and the Faber and Faber editions of *Three Plays After, Performances* and *The Home Place*. All of the other references are to the single edition currently in print, either from the Gallery Press or Faber and Faber. Full details of editions used are given in the notes to each chapter.

In quotations from Friel’s texts, abbreviations made by the author of the chapter are indicated by square brackets framing three-dotted ellipses [. . .]; unbracketed ellipses are located in Friel’s original text.
CHRONOLOGY

1929  Born Brian Patrick Friel on 9 (or 10) January in Killyclogher, near Omagh, County Tyrone, in Northern Ireland; to Sean Friel, a native of Derry and a primary school principal, and Mary McLoone, post-mistress, from Glenties, County Donegal.

1939  The Friel family moves to Derry, where Friel’s father has a teaching position at the Long Tower school; Friel attended same.

1941  Attends secondary school at St. Columb’s College, Derry.

1945  Attends St. Patrick’s College, Maynooth, outside Dublin, as a seminarian. Graduates with a BA in 1948 without becoming a priest.

1949  Trains as a teacher in St. Joseph’s Training College, Derry.

1950  Teaches at various primary and secondary schools in Derry.

1951  Publishes first short story in The Bell.

1954  Marries Anne Morrison. The couple go on to have four daughters and one son.


1960  First stage play, The Francophile, retitled A Doubtful Paradise, premieres at the Group Theatre, Belfast. Leaves teaching to write full time.

1962  Play The Enemy Within premieres in Dublin by the Abbey Theatre at the Queen’s (6 August). First collection of short stories, The Saucer of Larks, published. Begins writing a weekly column for the Irish Press.

1963  The Blind Mice premieres in Dublin at the Eblana Theatre (19 February). Spends some months in USA at Tyrone Guthrie’s invitation to watch rehearsals at the new Guthrie Theatre, Minneapolis.
chronology

1964 Philadelphia, Here I Come! premiered by Gate Theatre Productions at the Gaiety Theatre during the Dublin Theatre Festival (28 September).


1968 Lovers plays as part of the Lincoln Center Festival in New York (25 July–14 September) before running for over three months at the Music Box there and going on a nationwide tour. Crystal and Fox premiers at Gaiety Theatre, Dublin (12 November–6 December).


1970 Visiting writer in Magee College, Derry.

1971 The Gentle Island premiers at the Olympia Theatre, Dublin (30 November–18 December).


1974 American premiere of The Freedom of the City in Washington, DC, at the Eisenhower Theatre, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (23 January–9 February) and in New York at the Alvin Theatre, where it closes after nine performances.


1976 TV plays Farewell to Ardstraw and The Next Parish screened on BBC TV (Northern Ireland).

1977 Living Quarters premiers at the Abbey Theatre (24 March–23 April; and 12 September–5 October during the Dublin Theatre Festival).
1979  *Aristocrats* premiered at the Abbey Theatre (8–31 March; 23 July–25 August). *Faith Healer* premiered in New York at the Longacre Theatre (5 April), where it closes after twenty performances.


1981  British premiere of *Faith Healer* at the Royal Court. US premiere of *Translations* in New York at Manhattan Theatre Club (14 April–17 May) and British premiere in London at Hampstead Theatre Club (12 May–13 June); latter transfers to the National Theatre at the Lyttelton, where it runs in rep (with seventy-two performances) between August and December. Friel’s translation of Chekhov’s *Three Sisters*, the year’s Field Day production, premieres in Derry on 8 September and then tours.


1986  Edits and introduces Charles McGlinchey’s *The Last of the Name*, the life-narrative of a Donegal weaver, published in Belfast by the Blackstaff Press.


1988  British premiere of *Aristocrats* runs at Hampstead Theatre and subsequently wins *Evening Standard* Drama Award for Best Play. US premiere of *Fathers and Sons* at the Long Wharf Theatre in New Haven (March–April) and Irish premiere at the Gate Theatre (June–July). *Making History* is premiered by Field Day (Friel’s last play for them) at Derry’s Guildhall on 20 September and then tours.

1989  BBC Radio 3 devotes a six-play season to Friel, the first living playwright to be so honored. US premiere of *Aristocrats* in New York at Manhattan Theatre Club; goes on to win New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award for Best New Foreign Play.

1990  *Dancing at Lughnasa* premieres at the Abbey Theatre (24 April). Transfers to the Royal National Theatre, London, at the Lyttelton in
October and goes on to win an Olivier Award for Play of the Year, *Evening Standard* Drama Award and a Writers’ Guild Award.

1991 US premiere of *Dancing at Lughnasa* at the Plymouth Theatre, New York, where it runs for a year. The three-volume *Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* launched in Dublin in December by Taoiseach Charles J. Haughey; Friel attends and makes a rare speech.

1992 Version of Charles Macklin’s *The London Vertigo* premiered by the Gate at Andrew’s Lane Theatre, Dublin (January). Version of Turgeney’s *A Month in the Country* is produced in Dublin at the Gate (4 August). *Dancing at Lughnasa* is nominated for eight Tony Awards in New York and wins three (including Best Play); also wins New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award for Best Play.

1993 *Wonderful Tennessee* premiers at the Abbey Theatre (30 June). Production transfers to the Plymouth Theatre, New York, on 24 October and closes after twenty previews and nine performances.

1994 Friel resigns from Field Day. *Molly Sweeney* produced at the Gate Theatre (9 August) and transfers to the Almeida Theatre, London (3 November).

1996 New York premiere of *Molly Sweeney* at the Roundabout Theatre (7 January); goes on to win the Lucille Lortel Award, Outer Critics’ Circle Award and the Drama Critics’ Circle Award.

1997 *Give Me Your Answer, Do!* premiers at the Abbey Theatre (12 March).

1998 Film version of *Dancing at Lughnasa*, with screenplay by Frank McGuinness. UK premiere of *Give Me Your Answer, Do!* in London at the Hampstead Theatre Club (26 March). Version of Chekhov’s *Uncle Vanya* premiers in Dublin at the Gate Theatre.

1999 Seventieth birthday celebrated by a Friel Festival in Dublin, with productions of *Dancing at Lughnasa* and *The Freedom of the City* at the Abbey, *Living Quarters* and *Making History* at the Peacock, *Aristocrats* at the Gate and a visiting RSC production of *A Month in the Country*; talks at the Abbey and a one-day conference at University College Dublin; a special issue of the *Irish University Review* on Friel; and an exhibition at the National Library of Ireland. The Abbey’s production of *The Freedom of the City* and the Gate’s *Aristocrats* and *Uncle Vanya* appear as part of the Lincoln Center Festival in New York. US premiere of *Give Me Your Answer, Do!* at the Roundabout Theatre, New York.

chronology

2001 National Library of Ireland acquires Friel Archive; one-act The Yalta Game premiers at the Gate for the Dublin Theatre Festival (2 October–17 November).

2002 Premiere of The Bear and Afterplay as double bill (entitled Two Plays After) at Dublin’s Gate Theatre (5 March–20 April); plays in the US at the Spoleto Festival, South Carolina (23 May–9 June); UK premiere of Afterplay at London’s Gielgud Theatre (10 September–1 December). UK premiere of his version of Uncle Vanya at London’s Donmar Warehouse (September).


2005 The Home Place premiers at Dublin’s Gate Theatre (1 February–2 April); transfers to the Comedy Theatre in London (7 May–13 August); wins the Evening Standard Best Play of 2005 Award (30 November).

2006 Elected to the position of Saoi (Wise One), its highest honor, by Aosdána; presented by President Mary McAleese at Dublin’s Arts Council (22 February).