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The Cambridge Companion to Brian Friel

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).

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EDITED BY
ANTHONY ROCHE
University College Dublin

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PATRICK BURKE teaches in the Department of English at St. Patrick's College, Dublin City University, where he is also Director of the MA in Theatre Studies. He has published widely on Friel, the subject of his Ph.D., as well as on Tom Murphy, T. C. Murray, Shakespeare on film, and on Irish education generally. He has directed plays by Shakespeare, Friel, Murphy, Ibsen and McGuinness. In 1996 he was awarded a scholarship to a world conference on theatre at Salzburg, where he worked with Arthur Miller, Ariel Dorfman and André Brink.

RICHARD ALLEN CAVE is Professor of Drama and Theatre Arts at Royal Holloway, University of London. He has published extensively on aspects of Irish theatre (particularly on Yeats, Wilde, Beckett, Friel, McGuinness); on Renaissance, nineteenth-century and recent English drama; on stage design and theatre history. His special research interest is on dance-drama, physical theatre and the body as a medium of expression. For Penguin Classics, he has edited the plays of W. B. Yeats (1997) and of Oscar Wilde (2000); for Colin Smythe, the plays of T. C. Murray (1998); and for Cornell University Press, the manuscripts of Yeats's *The King of the Great Clock Tower* and *A Full Moon in March* (forthcoming).

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NICHOLAS GRENE is Professor of English Literature at Trinity College, Dublin. His books include *Synge: A Critical Study of the Plays* (1975); *Shakespeare, Jonson, Molière: The Comic Contract* (1980); *Bernard Shaw: A Critical View* (1984); *Shakespeare's Tragic Imagination* (1992); *The Politics of Irish Drama* (1999); *Interpreting Synge* (editor, 2000); *Shakespeare's Serial History Plays* (2002). He was the founder Director of the Synge Summer School 1991–2000, and is currently chair of the Irish Theatrical Diaspora project, for which he co-edited *Irish Theatre on Tour* (2005) with Chris Morash.

THOMAS KILROY has written fourteen stage plays. They include *The Death and Resurrection of Mr. Roche*, *Talbot's Box*, *Double Cross* and *The Secret Fall of Constance Wilde*. His novel *The Big Chapel* was shortlisted for the Booker Prize and awarded the Guardian Fiction Prize. At *The Irish Times*/ESB [Electricity Supply Board] Theatre Awards in 2004, he was given a Special Tribute award for his contribution to theatre. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and Professor Emeritus of Modern English, National University of Ireland – Galway.

HELEN LOJEK is Professor of English at Boise State University, Idaho. She is the author of *Contexts for Frank McGuinness's Drama* (2004) and the editor of *Frank McGuinness: Stages of Mutability* (2002). She has written extensively about Brian Friel, the Charabanc Theatre Company and Northern Irish drama.

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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Made" (2003) and with Brian Singleton *Performing Ireland* (*Australasian Journal of Drama Studies*, 2003).

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.

ANTHONY ROCHE is Senior Lecturer in English and Drama at University College Dublin and Director of the Synge Summer School. He has published widely on the plays of Yeats, Synge and Gregory. His main research interest is in the field of contemporary Irish drama and theatre, where his publications include *Contemporary Irish Drama: From Beckett to McGuinness* (1994) and the chapter on "Contemporary Irish Drama: 1940–2000" in *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature*, edited by Margaret Kelleher and Philip O'Leary. From 1997 to 2002 he was the editor of the *Irish University Review*.

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.

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NOTE ON THE TEXT

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.

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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, postmistress, 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.

1958 First radio play *A Sort of Freedom* is produced by the BBC Radio Northern Ireland Home Service (16 January). Another radio play, *To This Hard House*, produced by them on 24 April 1958.

1959 Short story, "The Skelper," appears in the *New Yorker*.

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.

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

1966 *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* receives American premiere at the Helen Hayes Theater and runs for nine months on Broadway. *The Loves of Cass McGuire* premieres at the Helen Hayes Theater (6 October) and closes after twenty performances. Second collection of short stories, *The Gold in the Sea*, published.

1967 Irish premiere of *The Loves of Cass McGuire* at the Abbey Theatre, running from 10 April to 29 July and from 28 September to 7 October. British premiere of *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* at the Lyric Theatre, London (20 September–4 November). *Lovers* premiered at the Gate Theatre (18 July–30 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* premieres at Gaiety Theatre, Dublin (12 November–6 December).

1969 Moves to live in Muff, County Donegal. British premiere of *Lovers* at the Fortune Theatre, London (25 August–20 September). *The Mundy Scheme* rejected by the Abbey Theatre. Premieres at the Olympia Theatre, Dublin (10 June–28 July) and the Royale Theatre, New York (11 December), where it closes after two performances.

1970 Visiting writer in Magee College, Derry.

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

1973 *The Freedom of the City* jointly premieres at Dublin's Abbey Theatre and London's Royal Court Theatre in late February. First meeting with Stephen Rea, who plays Skinner in the Royal Court production. Play produced later in the year at the Goodman Theatre, Chicago (9 October–11 November).

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.

1975 Elected as a member of the Irish Academy of Letters. *Volunteers* premiered at the Abbey Theatre (5 March–5 April).

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

1977 *Living Quarters* premiered at the Abbey Theatre (24 March–23 April; and 12 September–5 October during the Dublin Theatre Festival).

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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.

1980 Irish premiere of *Faith Healer* at the Abbey Theatre (28 August–27 September). Founds Field Day Theatre Company with Stephen Rea. First production, *Translations*, premieres at Derry's Guildhall (23 September 1980) before touring Ireland, North and South. Subsequently produced worldwide. One-act play, *American Welcome*, premiered by Actors' Theatre of Louisville, Kentucky.

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.

1982 *The Communication Cord* premieres in Derry on 21 September and then tours. Moves to Greencastle, County Donegal. Elected member of Aosdána (Academy of Irish Artists).

1983 British premiere of *The Communication Cord* at the Hampstead Theatre Club, London (7 May–11 June). RTÉ (Radio Telefis Éireann) TV documentary on Friel and Field Day.

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.

1987 Appointed to the Irish Senate (until 1989). Adaptation of Turgenev's novel *Fathers and Sons*, premiered in London at the National Theatre at the Lyttelton (9 July); runs in rep until February 1988.

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

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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 Turgenev'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* premieres 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!* premieres 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* premieres 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 of *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.

2000 Hour-long TV documentary, *Brian Friel*, produced by Ferndale Films, written by Thomas Kilroy, includes participation by Friel.

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2001 National Library of Ireland acquires Friel Archive; one-act *The Yalta Game* premieres 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).

2003 *Performances* premieres at Dublin's Gate Theatre (30 September–25 October).

2005 *The Home Place* premieres 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).

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