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# The Celtic Theatre Company: A Stronghold of Irish Culture in New Jersey

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## **The Celtic Theatre Company: A Stronghold of Irish Culture in New Jersey**

From the 1980s through the early 2000s, Irish theatre had a unique outlet in The Celtic Theatre Company (CTC), housed at Seton Hall University in South Orange, N.J., and spearheaded by Professor (now Emeritus) of Communication James P. McGlone, Ph.D. McGlone's work with the CTC was unique and innovative in more than one way: in his bringing the remarkable plays of lesser-known Irish Catholic dramatists to the American stage, thereby truly internationalizing theatre in the region and giving voice to the Irish cultural and Catholic spiritual sensibilities of the Irish and Irish American community; and in allowing American actors from the local area to work side-by-side with well-known Irish actors and playwrights.

Following are reflections on the CTC from two perspectives. First, we have an appreciation by Jim Moore, reminiscing about his experiences as an actor and playwright for the CTC, and most specifically about McGlone's mentorship of him and others involved in the CTC. Second, we have an abridged version of an interview that Henry McMillan LaGue conducted with McGlone in November 2011, in which McGlone explored what he believed to be the most significant contributions of the CTC to the arts in the local area.

The personal touch in both Moore's piece and LaGue's interview with McGlone are testaments to the deep personal commitment to and effects of the cultural work the CTC has done in Northern New Jersey. Yet, as we see in both parts of this chapter, the CTC has made its mark not only in our local area but also in the Irish theatre.

## **The Celtic Theatre Company: An exceptionally condensed history**

By Jim Moore

**Way back in the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

During my junior or senior year at Seton Hall, in a Jim McGlone class, I remember McGlone speaking of his nostalgia for Christendom and how the Catholicity of Irish theatre helped to satisfy his longing for a time when Christians were united in faith and practice.

Wait a minute...was that a McGlone class from the early '80s or the Fulton Sheen rerun I saw on EWTN last week? It's hard to tell sometimes.

No. I'm pretty sure it was McGlone. I'm picturing a necktie and sweater, not a cassock and cape.

In recalling that instance, it strikes me that the roots of the Celtic Theatre Company (CTC) are very much tied to McGlone's fondness for Christendom, and that they can be traced, fittingly, to a long-ago emigrant journey.

Somewhere around the year 400, the man we now know as St. Patrick emigrated unwillingly to Ireland, courtesy of marauders who brought him there as a slave. He would eventually rise from the rank of slave to that of bishop, planting and cultivating the seeds of Christianity in Ireland, setting it on its way to becoming "the land of saints and scholars"—the homeland of writers whose work was both uniquely Irish and uniquely Catholic.

It was that union of Catholic and Celtic that drew Dr. James P. McGlone to the Irish stage, where he found a sensibility that spoke to both the heritage in his blood and the faith in his

soul, a worldview given voice in the plays of kindred theatrical spirits the like of John B. Keane<sup>1</sup> and M.J. Molloy<sup>2</sup>.

McGlone's fascination eventually led to a 1978 conversation with the Irish American Cultural Institute (IACI), during which he offered a proposal that would prove culturally significant for New Jersey theatre. He remembers, "Tom Duff and I were working with the IACI on an event called 'The Irish Fortnight.' An Abbey Theatre veteran named Michael Duffy had come over for it, and I was keeping him company backstage while he was waiting to go on. As we talked, Duffy noticed a poster in the dressing room for my student production of *Sharon's Grave* by John B. Keane. Impressed that we here in America had even heard of Keane, he told me more about the man's work and suggested I think about staging *The Field*—another powerful rural drama. He also mentioned that he had always wanted to play the leading role of Bull McCabe. I brought the idea to John Walsh and Bob Davis of the IACI; they signed on, signed Duffy to play Bull McCabe, and we were off and running."

It proved a successful outing for all involved. Michael Duffy did indeed return to the unlikely Irish theatre capital of South Orange, New Jersey, to play Bull McCabe. Seton Hall University students and alumni—all trained by McGlone—were cast in the supporting roles.

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<sup>1</sup> Keane (1928-2002) was a playwright, essayist, and novelist from County Kerry. His plays, performed more often in Ireland than in the US, reflect the Catholic sensibilities of the Ireland in which Keane lived. Perhaps Keane's best-known play, internationally, is his *The Field*, which gained greater exposure through the 1990 film of the same title, directed by Jim Sheridan.

<sup>2</sup> Molloy (1917-1994) lived most of his life in Milltown, County Galway, with a brief time away while he studied for the priesthood. After illness changed his plans, he began writing plays, which enjoyed considerable appreciation in Ireland, but only one was produced by the prestigious Abbey Theatre.

Of course, no theatrical reminiscence would be worth its salt without an amusing anecdote, and McGlone's memories of *The Field* do not disappoint. "We had to delay our opening due to a snowstorm," McGlone recalls, "during which poor Michael Duffy got snowed in at the apartment IACI had arranged for him. It was only supposed to be a place to wash, dress and sleep, so he had no food in the place. Tom Duff and John Sweeney got some provisions together for him and had to enlist the help of the police in getting through the snow to deliver them!"

After *The Field*, McGlone and IACI pushed forward with another John B. Keane play. Michael Duffy's performance as Bull McCabe was followed by a star-turn from of a grand lady of the Irish stage, Marie Kean<sup>3</sup>, who came to McGlone's attention through diplomatic circles, no less. "My old friend Bernie Ransil," McGlone recalls, "was godfather to one of the Irish Consul General's children and had been invited by the Consul General to a dinner where he met Marie Kean. Bernie told her about our Irish theatre work at Seton Hall, and that's how we got in touch with her about performing with us."

Miss Kean starred in the title role of John B. Keane's *Big Maggie*—a performance which earned her the title of Best Actress in the State of New Jersey from Bette Spero of the *Newark Star Ledger*.

Fast-forward a few years to 1982 and one finds the Celtic Theatre Company being established as an independent troupe; its first production was *W.B. Yeats and that Terrible Beauty*—an exploration of the poet's relationship with the rebellious beauty, Maude Gonne. Thus were the beginnings of a theatrical effort that would touch four decades and two centuries; much of that time dedicated to exploring the work of playwright John B. Keane.

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<sup>3</sup> Kean (1918-2003) was an Irish stage, radio, and film actress.

## **James P. and John B.**

McGlone speaks of a fellow he once met while abroad, “John B. Keane first came to my attention through a young guy I met in Ireland, who told me I simply had to read Keane’s work. I took the advice and started looking for copies of Keane’s plays. Among the qualities that impressed me was a sense of manliness in his work. Masculinity was not watered down, as seemed the case with a lot of contemporary drama. Keane even wrote a play about an athlete, *The Man from Clare*. Nobody was writing about athletes at the time.”

In addition to making no apologies for masculinity, John B. Keane brought a sense of blunt honesty to his characters that made for great theatre. “In a Keane play,” says McGlone, “you will find no weak-kneed writing. He cuts to the emotional bone. The scene in *Big Maggie*, for instance, where Maggie dresses down her family is some of the most intense material I’ve ever directed, as is the internal struggle faced by Bull McCabe in *The Field*.”

McGlone’s affinity for the plays of John B. Keane led to quite a professional connection between the two men; and that sense of admiration became mutual. Keane even visited the Celtic Theatre Company for the performance of his play, *The Crazy Wall*, using the opportunity to publicly compliment Jim McGlone’s understanding of his work and to thank him for bringing his plays to the attention of American audiences.

In fact, so highly did Keane think of McGlone that he allowed the company to premier a work that had long languished unperformed. The play, *Pishogue*, deals with superstition, curses, and the influence wielded by local practitioners of *pishogue* (an Irish word for sorcery or black magic). The central character of the play was actually based on just such a practitioner from the

Listowel area, where Keane made his home; that choice of influence was the reason for the play's unperformed status.

Apparently, while he was doing some rewrites on *Pishogue*, requested by his comrades at The Southern Theatre (Cork, Ireland), a grim reality caught Keane's attention—the woman upon whom he had based his sorceress character was still among the living, and not known for her mild temper. The thought of supernatural repercussions being rained down on him over the performance of a play brought a moment's pause to the playwright's heart. That moment lasted until a day many years later, when he gave McGlone a copy of the play and told him he could stage it in America, as long as no word of it got back to Listowel. John B. was taking no chances. He didn't even want a copy of the program sent to him. And he insisted that whatever royalty he earned be given to a charity of McGlone's choosing. Who's to say? One man's superstition is another man's caution.

### **James P. and James N.**

The company which would have performed *Pishogue* in Ireland, The Southern Theatre, was the home stage of an actor by the name of James N. Healy. Over the years, "James N." would appear with the Celtic Theatre Company in three Keane plays—*The Year of the Hiker*, *Many Young Men of Twenty*, and *Sive* (Keane's first play); in each production, Healy reprised a role he had originated.

McGlone remembers James N. Healy with much fondness, "Healy was a special man. John B. Keane gave me his telephone number and I called him out of the blue about the possibility of working with us. He became a great friend and taught me a lot about the way theatre worked from both the artistic and business perspectives in Ireland, and about the often

tempestuous relationship between Dublin's Abbey and rest of the Irish theatrical community. It was an interesting education." In James N. Healy, McGlone says he met "the last of the true actor/managers who starred in plays that had his own money on the line, in which he was performer, producer and chief bookkeeper."

During his visits to America, James N. also treated audiences to one-man shows featuring the songs of Percy French, famed Irish balladeer of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. James N. and James P. shared many hours of conversation and camaraderie on the road as the American James drove the Irish James to Percy French bookings throughout the northeast.

Indeed, Healy became a dear friend to CTC's entire company of players. Such was his place in our hearts that, on the day we received news of his death, several of us met unplanned at Cryan's pub in South Orange, each drawn there by a desire to be somewhere we had been with James N. in life.

### **From importer to exporter**

CTC brought many fine actors to the United States who might otherwise have remained wholly unknown to an American audience. The company had the opportunity to showcase some internationally recognized names, as well.

Among the most notable talents to appear with CTC are Anna Manahan and Ray McAnally. Mr. McAnally, who appeared with us in *The Passing Day* by George Shiels, is best known to American audiences as Christy's father in *My Left Foot* and the Cardinal in *The Mission*.

Anna Manahan, of Dublin's Gate Theatre, who remained a dear friend of McGlone's until her death in 2009, played the title role in CTC's production of John B. Keane's *Moll*. Miss



Manahan had made her Broadway debut in 1968, starring opposite Art Carney in *Lovers* by Brian Friel. She returned to Broadway in April of 1998 in the cast of Martin McDonagh's *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, winning a Tony Award for Best Supporting Actress. But, according to McGlone, winning that award didn't change her affection for her less famous theatre friends. "Not long after winning her Tony," he says, "Anna came to a backyard party at our home in Boonton. Many of our CTC friends were on hand as were friends from other areas in our life. Anna graciously held court from a chair on our patio, chatting delightfully with everyone who wanted a moment of her time."

Of course, all of the imported talent mentioned above is not to say that our own shores contributed nothing to the Celtic cavalcade of stars. One exceptionally memorable guest was New York television legend "Captain" Jack McCarthy<sup>4</sup>, who served as narrator for a signature CTC musical revue called *The Emigrant Journey*. Many of us who rushed home from grade school to hear Captain Jack call out, "Six bells and all is well!" before introducing a half-hour's worth of *Popeye* cartoons on WPIX Channel 11 were enthralled by his presence.

While working with top-notch pros was quite the accomplishment, McGlone's greatest triumph in the CTC may very well be the training of homegrown actors and actresses who took on the daunting task of playing supporting roles next to legends of the Irish stage. That troupe of troupers, and one upstart scribbler of dialogue, eventually matured to a point where McGlone felt comfortable bringing them to Ireland to perform for the people whose own actors and playwrights had taught them so much.

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<sup>4</sup> McCarthy (1915-1996) was known as a personality on *Cap'n Jack and Popeye* on WPIX from 1963-1972, and as the anchor of the WPIX coverage of the New York St. Patrick's Day Parade for more than four decades.

The year was 1993. The play was my own *Acts & Contrition*, which had premiered successfully on the Celtic Theatre Company's home stage two years earlier. The production enjoyed a well-received four-city tour of Ireland, coordinated by CTC founding member Barbara Marino in America (a task taken on in addition to an already demanding role in the play), and in Ireland by CTC's dear friend James N. Healy. It was the experience of a lifetime for all of us. John B. Keane himself even turned out for a performance, as did his fellow playwright, M.J. Molloy.

On a bittersweet note, that visit to Ireland marked the last time any of us would see James N. Healy in this life. He wasn't well during our engagement in his hometown of Cork, but he rallied to be there for us, playing the host grandly.

As we celebrated our Cork performance in the pub area of the theatrical society at which we appeared, James N. announced to our disappointment that he had to take his leave. Before going, he added one more song to the night's festivities—a simple, heartfelt, and never-to-be-forgotten rendition of *Come Back, Paddy Reilly* by Percy French. It was a song he had taught to us many years before, and the perfect note on which to bid us goodbye.

*Acts & Contrition* is one of many original CTC productions; the others include a handful of light comedies by yours truly, *Trespases* by award-winning playwright and CTC founding member Jane Waterhouse, and several revues such as tenor Timothy Liam Smith's one-man show on the life and music of John McCormack<sup>5</sup> and *An Irish American Son*, featuring the reminiscences and musical memories of CTC favorite Mark Fallon.

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<sup>5</sup> McCormack (1884-1945), a papal count and Irish tenor, was famous around the world for his performances of operatic and popular music.

## Those were the days...

Have you ever wondered what all those years of the Celtic Theatre Company meant to McGlone? Well, here's his answer to the question: "In one sense, the Celtic Theatre Company helped to save academic life for me. I was so sick of what was happening in the theatre of the 1970s. Discovering the neglected work of playwrights like John B. Keane, M.J. Molloy, Louis Dalton<sup>6</sup>, Walter Macken<sup>7</sup> and George Shiels<sup>8</sup> opened up a whole new chapter for me. In addition to giving me great plays to explore and stage, my exploration of Irish theatre history eventually led to my book on the life of actress Ria Mooney<sup>9</sup>."

That's the professional side of it all. On the personal side, he says, there are the people: "When I was a kid and people would ask me what I wanted to do when I grew up, I would always say that whatever it was, it'd be a job where I got to talk with people. Things couldn't have turned out more the way I wanted them to. I've always been surrounded by interesting, talented, energetic, selfless people—people who reflected those qualities both in and out of the classroom, both on and off the stage."

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<sup>6</sup> Dalton (1900-1951), a civil servant with a penchant for the theatre, had several plays produced by the Abbey Theatre, both during his lifetime and after his death.

<sup>7</sup> Macken (1915-1967) was an actor, novelist, and playwright from County Galway.

<sup>8</sup> Shiels (1881-1949) was a native of County Antrim, and after living in the US for a short time, returned to Antrim to stay. His plays were produced by the Ulster Literary Theatre and the Abbey Theatre. He is known for his adroitness in penning both comedies and tragedies.

<sup>9</sup> Mooney (1903-1973) was an actress and the resident producer at the Abbey Theatre, and her career at the Abbey spanned several decades in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The most thorough examination of Mooney's work with the Abbey is in: McGlone, James P. *Ria Mooney: The Life and Times of the Artistic Director of the Abbey Theatre, 1948-1963*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., Inc., Publishers, 2002.

Through the 1980s, 1990s, and the early portion of the 2000s, CTC presented some 114 productions. Along the way, there were moments of triumph, such as a newly written play or revue. There were also moments of heroism, such as the time when—well into rehearsals for our production of *Shadow and Substance* by Paul Vincent Carroll<sup>10</sup>—an Irish star fell prey to some personal demons and had to leave the show; our own Bill Timoney stepped in to learn a demanding role in record time, turning in an excellent performance, as well.

And, as with every company of players, there were moments of abject horror. Neither Mark Roger nor I will ever hear the words, “I think I hear the tinkers coming!” without cringing about a widely-missed entrance that stranded comrades, including James N. Healy, mid-scene during our production of John B. Keane’s *Sive*.

Fortunately for Mark and me, you don’t hear people announcing the arrival of tinkers very often.

Now, I am well aware that this brief series of reminiscences hardly counts as a “history.” And that’s all right. They are something much more important than history, anyway. They are memories of the most cherished sort.

But in order to provide some perspective beyond my affectionate and wholly biased point of view regarding McGlone and CTC, let’s hear from playwright M.J. Molloy, who wrote, “My own play *The King of Friday’s Men* was the only McGlone production I have seen. In dramatic power & efficiency, in sympathy & romantic imagination it was surpassed only by the play’s 1st Abbey production, with an all star cast.”

That’s not all. It gets better. Remember what I mentioned about Christendom earlier?

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<sup>10</sup> Carroll (1900-1968) was an Irish dramatist whose plays were produced at the Abbey. He also taught and became involved in the theatre scene in Glasgow, and wrote movie and television scripts.

Molloy continues: “Belloc wrote, ‘It is characteristic of Catholic cultures to persecute the Catholic religion; and it is characteristic of Protestant cultures to tolerate the catholic religion.’ In recent centuries the bittersweet persecutions of the Catholic Church & Catholic authors have taken place in Catholic lands. Catholic plays have been, and are, unofficially but efficiently banned. Socrates on trial for his life said, ‘God has given me a station.’ Maybe God has given Jim McGlone and his Celtic Theatre Company an Alamo to defend until the Holy Spirit again sends down His tongues of fire on a world grown cold.”

McGlone has always appreciated those words, because they show that his intention in forming the Celtic Theatre Company was clear: “We had a lot of fun, but we took what we were doing very seriously—staging excellent plays that provided a reflection of Christian culture, something that had been left out of the modern theater.”

Through his work with the CTC, McGlone invited countless others to join him in what M.J. Molloy might very well have termed, “the Lord’s work.”

**An Interview with Dr. James P. McGlone  
Conducted by Henry McMillan LaGue in November 2011  
On the subject of the Celtic Theatre Company**

HML: So, today we’re talking about the CTC. And you, being the founder thereof, want to talk about all there is to do with the CTC. From beginning to now, to especially what it means to be Celtic, what it means to be Irish-American. What is the CTC?

JPM: We started with Michael Duffy. He did a one-man show here for the IACI. That institute was in Minnesota, so they asked if he could tour and play here. So they asked Tom Duff (he was in the English Department, he taught Shakespeare, good friend of mine). They asked us if we would arrange it: get the building and stuff. He was one of a fortnight. There were 14 or 15 nights of lectures. One guy lectured on the Irish language, you know, that kind of stuff. So, I met Duffy, he was going to do it here, in the Round [Seton Hall University’s Theatre in the Round], and he was backstage and we were working on “Irish Time” so they hadn’t started on time. I felt bad for the actor sitting back there by himself, so I went back there and said hello to him. And we got talking about Irish plays, and I said, “I like John B. Keane.” And he went off the wall. He didn’t think any American had ever heard of John B. Keane. And he said he loved

the play called *The Field*. I said I did, too. And he said, "Well, you've got a group of people to do it, I'd come over and do it." And that's how it started.

HML: It was just that easy?

JPM: That easy. So, I went to the people who ran the Institute, John Walsh and Bob Davis. I said, "This guy'll come over. All you need to do is pay his way over and give him a thousand bucks while he's here, put him up, and I'll take care of the rest." I got the building. I got the actors. I got everything, the scenery (Owen MacInroy was here then). So that's what we did, *The Field*, and that started it. Just like that.

HML: That seems like an ad hoc show. That it was people just kind of getting together who just wanted to do *The Field*.

JPM: They were all students of mine. They were all kids I'd worked with in the theatre. They were all serious. They all wanted to do something. And I said, "We'll do this in January, nobody's doing anything anyway." So we did.

It Snowed! We had to postpone one weekend and play a second weekend. It was really wild. But from that, everyone said "Let's do it again, Let's do it again!" So we did. We started doing it again. And we did it for 4 years with the IACI. Maybe 5 years. And then they lost interest. It was too much trouble. And they didn't do anything except raise the money and come the night of the show, you know. So, about 5 or 6 people working with me, serious people: Mark Roger, Jane Waterhouse, people like that who'd worked in the plays and said, "Why don't we start our own?" So we decided to start a thing. And then somebody said "Let's call it *The CTC*" because we didn't know then where we were going in the sense of: Would we stay with just Irish? or would we do anything that was [different]: George Bernard Shaw, or James Matthew Barrie<sup>11</sup>, kind of Celtic. But we started out that way, and then we got some help from some lawyers, and we incorporated ourselves as a non-profit organization and that's how it started.

HML: You kind of touched on it, but why did it stay as a CTC and not deciding, "Well, we've got all this theatrical interest, why not making a differently oriented semi-professional theatre company to go along with Seton Hall University?"

JPM: Well, you know I've always had a problem with the "professional" thing. I don't know if that defines talent or not. There are a lot of people who don't work professionally in the theatre who are very talented. There are a lot of serious people who I've worked with who wanted to continue to work together seriously but they didn't want to travel; they didn't want to live like "the actor's life". A couple of them did, but I never bothered about it. And it got so I had 25, 35, 45, 50 people who were on and off able to do it. Sometimes you'd call someone and they couldn't do it; you went to another person. But what happened was that they loved the Theatre-in-the-Round, they'd worked a lot in it, they knew the space. We were very quick at the space. We had developed, through the IACI, an audience and a mailing list. These are people who didn't know these plays because we were doing plays that never got here, mostly because of their

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<sup>11</sup> Barrie (1860-1937) was a Scottish author, best known as the creator of Peter Pan.

Catholic background. The prejudice against anything Catholic...If you look at Irish Studies even in this country, it's almost all Anglo-Irish. It's almost all Yeats and Lady Gregory and John Millington Synge<sup>12</sup>, and if it isn't that it's James Joyce, who was a fallen-away Catholic or a heretic (if you prefer), and Samuel Beckett who thinks the world is absurd.

So my thought was, "Everyone knows those people. What are we doing them for? Let's do stuff they never heard of, that the Irish themselves like. George Shiels, Walter Macken, Louis Dalton, John B Keane. And after we got started, of course, we did some of the plays of Brian Friel<sup>13</sup> and Hugh Leonard<sup>14</sup> that had never got' done here either.

So essentially, what happened was I had a company of people that liked these kinds of plays and empathized. We had a space that fit the "Irish Talk", the way Irish like to talk. We had an audience that was interested. And nobody bothered us. They weren't terribly much in favor of us, but they didn't even know we were here a lot of the time. I used to say, "I'm better known Dublin than I am in South Orange." And that's how it started.

And it just kept going.

HML: And so was the motivation to do plays that weren't getting done in America?

JPM: Yes

HML: And that's why you don't choose say more "Classical Irish Playwrights" or "Irish-American" playwrights? Was there ever a thought about doing American-Irish?

JPM: We thought about doing Eugene O'Neill and first of all, I decided that I had done an O'Neill with the students and decided that it would probably kill me. I mean they're really not foolin' around. When you get to the Irish ones. When you get to *Long Day's Journey into Night*, which is four hours, I just didn't think we could do them.

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<sup>12</sup> Yeats, Gregory, and Synge were members of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy class in Ireland, and although they did not share in the cultural and spiritual heritage of the Catholic masses, are often considered the voice of the Irish Literary Revival of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>13</sup> Friel, born in 1929, is arguably the greatest living Irish playwright. He is the director of the Field Day Theatre Company, and his works, many of which explore postcolonial themes in an Irish context, are appreciated around the world and have been translated into various languages.

<sup>14</sup> Leonard (1926-2009) was an Irish novelist, screenplay writer, and playwright, whose work enjoyed notable popularity during his lifetime. Three of his plays, the best known of which is *Da*, were produced on Broadway.

HML: And so that along with others?

JPM: Well we did *Playboy of the Western World*<sup>15</sup> because everyone wanted us to do it. We did Sean O'Casey. We did two of the three "Dublin plays." And then we did *Philadelphia, Here I Come*<sup>16</sup>, which is fairly well known. Eventually, we did *Da* which I wanted to stay away from because everybody was doing it. But finally no one was doing it, and so we did it.

Anyway, yeah, the answer is I learned a lot about Irish theatre by bringing over Irish actors. We brought over...James N Healy, who was a Cork actor, who was very famous in Ireland for having done all of John B Keane's early work. He introduced me to John B Keane. I met Bryan MacMahon<sup>17</sup>, another poet and playwright. We did a play called *Moll* by Keane.... I got to know Marie Kean, who had been with the Royal Shakespeare Company. So, I learned so much about what was going on in the Irish Theatre when I'd go over there.

I started going over there every other year and going to one section of Ireland just to get the background: What was there? Who was there? Why did they write this way? What were the references? And so it just sort of happened.

HML: Do you find that that kind of person-to-person development is something that's indicative of the Irish, Irish-Americans, theatre or just what happened to be your particular development?

JPM: Well, I think mine was serendipitous. All of the above really. Healy became like a member of the company. He came over three times. Actually he came over more, I got him bookings to do his one-man show... He just liked South Orange. He liked the company, he liked the kids. Anna Manahan did a road show and she took one of my actors with her and I worked on the scenes with them. She was very nice about it. She rehearsed with us. And when I went to Ireland, Michael Duffy was doing a play in Belfast in a burnt-out...old Anglican Church. And I went there and met the actors.... I went to Dublin and Ray McAnally<sup>18</sup> crawled me all over the Abbey Theatre. He introduced me to all kinds of people. So, it got to the point where I was just being introduced to something...It was like having a course being given to me without even asking.

HML: How do you feel the development of the theatre company would have been different if it weren't Celtic and had some other cultural identity?

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<sup>15</sup> By Synge.

<sup>16</sup> By Friel.

<sup>17</sup> MacMahon (1909-1998) hailed from County Kerry. His plays were produced by the Abbey Theatre, and he is also known for his children's stories. He translated Peig Sayers' autobiography, making it accessible to English speakers.

<sup>18</sup> McAnally (1926-1989) was an actor who spoke and performed on stage at the Abbey in both Irish and English. He was also a television and film actor.



JPM: Well, if the French spoke English, we would be more sympathetic to their theatre. Americans aren't terribly sympathetic to French theatre. There's a lot of French theatre that I like, that I did with the students....The Irish are very loquacious people. They're not...Because of the nature of (this is the theory of mine), the 'Nature of the Island' is that if you don't like the weather.... And you get mist, you get snow, you get sun, you get rain. And if you're in the hillsides, especially in the west of Ireland, you can see fairies. You know, you can see why there are hallucinations and things. And it brings out the poetry in them. Whereas if you go to Italy, it's so bright and so clear and so colorful, you almost want to get a paintbrush, you know. So I think that the Irish are good at playwriting for two reasons. They're story tellers. They're very oral, they're not descriptive, they're oral. And so they're very good playwrights. And so the first half of the twentieth century—up until 1960—I would say the Irish produced more playwrights per population than any English-speaking country in the world.

I wrote a book on Ria Mooney, because every time I directed the play, I saw her name in the thing. She directed the play. So I said, "Well who is this lady?" Well, she ran the Abbey Theatre from 1948 to 1963. You know how many new plays she directed in that time? Not revivals, she did those too. You know how many *new* plays she directed? 75! 75 plays. I just came away with an admiration for the fecundity of her imagination. And there's this myth that all these plays that were written in the Ireland, you hear this from the Irishmen, that all these plays take place in the kitchen. That's garbage! I mean, I had just done *Big Maggie*. It starts in a graveyard. What are they talking about? And that got me a little annoyed, you know, that they were ignoring something. And then as a result of that, I discovered that things when she left the theatre in '63 (The Irish Abbey Theatre had burnt down in 1951. They said it was going to take them two years to rebuild it. It took them until 1963/64 to rebuild it.) And when they got in it, a bunch of new young Turks took over, and they were disgusted with Irish theatre. They thought it was too parochial. And since then I think they've murdered the Irish playwriting scene.

Up until then, I think that the English-speaking theatre could be divided three ways: You could say the British theatre was an actor's theatre. They had great actor training. You only have to go through the history of English actors that we've seen on film to realize [it]. It's still true. They guy that plays House is an English actor. Secondly, the Americans were a director's theatre. You had all these people like Elia Kazan.... It was all this Actor's Studio stuff, you know. And the Irish Theatre was a playwright's theatre. Essentially, the Irish went to the theatre because they liked the playwright. And they gave that away. They tried to become British and American and I think they have failed. I don't think there's a good, really good, Irish playwright. Well, there's this guy Conor McPherson who wrote *The Weir*.... He's good, but every third word is a dirty word. They're trying to be New York....

So what I think the truth of the matter is, they had developed a wonderful acting company at *The Abbey* and they had developed a way of doing a lot of new plays. And if the play didn't sell, they put in one of the old plays until they could get a new one up. And it didn't cost a lot of money, they didn't spend a ton of money on scenery. It was all on the word, the spoken word.

HML: So as far as the Celtic Theatre, which pretty much followed that burst of playwriting, you felt there was a lot of new stuff that wasn't getting done,

JPM: Anywhere.

HML: And that's where the CTC came from.

JPM: Not even in Ireland. I mean, when I found the plays of Louis Dalton, I asked an Irish actor, he said, "I don't know of anyone that's ever read Louis Dalton." The guy was only dead for 15-20 years. They didn't even know where he was. Finally, I found an actor that said, "You know, there's a costumer near the Trinity College in a store front. Go there, there's an old guy there that is a fan of him, maybe he has some plays." So I walked and knocked on the door, open it and this creaky guy looked like he was from Dickens came out and said, "What'ya want?!" [gruff voice]. (Ha ha) Cause I was obviously a Yank, ya know. And I said, "Well somebody told me you might have some copies of plays of Louis Dalton." And he said, "Really? Really? Wait a minute." [in a gruff, but now eager voice] and he went off and came back about ten minutes later with 6 copies of plays I couldn't find. I couldn't find them. He'd kept them. They were Duffy and Company plays. Duffy was already out of business for 20 years. He'd kept these copies. And that's tragic.

...we did three of these plays. We did *The Devil a Saint Would Be* which is a really clever play. Another play called *Cafflin' Johnny*: the guy who fools people tricks people and has charm, real charm. And the third one we did was *They Got What They Wanted*: a family that didn't like their father because he didn't make a lot of money, so he made a lot of money and they didn't like the change it made in him. Funny plays: literate, clever, great parts for actors. They don't know them. They don't know them now.

HML: When these plays did start to be produced by the CTC what was the reaction from different groups of people: The University, the students, the surrounding community, the Irish-American community, the actors who were doing them?

JPM: We had a mixed kind of thing. We had a loyal audience that liked what we were doing, liked the stories we were doing, was amazed at these plays they'd never heard of. We had some critics from *The Star Ledger* who thought that we got better and better until we were getting reviews—we were being compared to other companies in the state of New Jersey like the Papermill Playhouse that had budgets of millions of dollars. I think what really hurt us was finally (and I won't go into the whole political thing) someone figured out how little money we were working with and then they didn't take us seriously any more. I think in one of those things I gave you there are some quotes from some critics of the Star Ledger that are really quite rave. We used to get nominated regularly every year for a best actor, a best director, best new play. Marie Kean, when she did *Big Maggie*, was nominated and won the Best Actress of the Year in the State of New Jersey by the critic from the Star Ledger.

HML: Because of the production here?

JPM: Because of the production of *Big Maggie*

HML: A company that doesn't have a lot of money yet is successful has to be doing something from the reactions from those groups of people. What were their reactions that made it so sustainable?

JPM: Well, the first thing to remember is that every company needs money. Where do you get it from? When Yeats got the Irish Dáil in 1925 to give the Abbey Theatre money, up until that time the Abbey Theatre had no money at all. How do you operate? Well you don't pay the actors very much, or anything at all, right? See in America, we think that if you don't have an equity card and you don't make a certain amount of money then you don't have any talent. I think that's a mistake, but what are you gonna do? I don't think money speaks to talent. People have to live. And most of the guys that work for the CTC make more money by far than anybody in the theatre.... The other thing that happens is: What do you do for scenery? Well, most of the time you don't need a lot of scenery so you can keep that cost down. I don't need a lot of clothing because these are all peasants and things like that. We kept the production costs to a thousand dollars or two thousand dollars. After we brought over an actor we got the money for that from someone else. The actors that I had, that have always been around, have done maybe 25 shows with me, 30 shows with me....

So when you walk into the theatre, you don't have to ask: what do I mean, where do I go? And you know as soon as you walk out on stage with the people that are there that they know it too because they've all been doing it. And if there's one that's kind of new you can help 'em out. We didn't make a big deal. We didn't rewrite the plays we did. We did them the way they were written. I cut some of it because it was too long or some of the references were too Irish that nobody would get. And finally, I think the answer is I worked for nothing. I did it out of love. Now, people offered me money to do certain kinds of plays. I said, "No, I don't like that play. And I don't want to do that." So, if you're going to do that, you have to have a subsidy. The subsidy was the actors and building. And the parking lot and the air-conditioning and the heat, you see what I mean. We paid these playwrights like you pay out of Samuel French, which is a pittance if you count it. So I think the answer to that is we had an unusual situation. We had a lot of intelligent, trained people who liked working in this space, who were willing to give a lot of their time to it for nothing. That's a BIG subsidy.

HML: Do you think that unusual situation came about because it's more unique, these individuals in this particular time. Or does it speak to a different type of theatre that really does exist other places or at different times that came back now, or does it speak to the Irish nature of it, or is it just unique?

JPM: You know, I think one of the things was the American theatre had been changing. By 1975, I'd lost interest—and I love theatre. I go to theatre all the time at the drop of a hat. I said, "Gee, I've got another 20 years to go, what am I going to do?" and I did this play that I found in this play book by John B Keane about an Irish myth I can't remember the name of it. I did this play with the students.... That's how I got to do *The Field* by Keane. And then people discovered that they liked these plays. They were eloquent, they told good stories, they weren't dirty, they were nice people. You know, I don't know about you, but when I read a novel if I don't like anybody in the novel by the fiftieth page I quit reading it. They liked the people. And then I have actors. I have Glenn Jones for example, who doesn't like Glenn Jones on the stage?

And you give Glenn Jones the part of a charmer like Cafflin' and people fell in love with him. And people would say, "Where did that come from?" I would have people say, "Where'd you find that play?" Even Irish people that had never seen it in Ireland... You know, after a while it begins to be part of your nature. You like doing it, you like the people you're doing it with. I LOVED the people I was doing it with. They were like a family. I went to more weddings, and funerals, and baptisms. You know because we'd all worked together all the time. And I like that, too. Do you know what I mean? I love the theatre, but I like to work with people I like, and I don't like to do things I think are bad. I'm Irish Catholic—my father said, "You're in Church or you're dead"—but I would never do a play that I didn't think was craftsman—that was well written. You know you read a play you think it's good, it may not be when you do it. So you can lay eggs if you...

HML: So you're talking about the various relationships of the Company with the various parties (actors, audience, playwrights). How did it evolve over time throughout the various decades?

JPM: I think that, looking back on it, I didn't notice it at the time, I think when we went on the road in '92, we did a play by one of our own, Jim Moore—a play called *Acts and Contrition*. A play about a young Irish-American priest from a city like Jersey City who's assigned to a parish where the girl friend that he'd had lived and this temptation comes up. And he's with this irascible old Irish pastor. It's a very funny play, not a great play but a very good play, especially for a first play. I was very pleased with that, and we did it, we got a lot of laughs, and a lot of people really loved it. We said, "Why don't we take it to Ireland and see what the Irish think of it?" and everybody said, "Yeah." So people took vacations, for two weeks, paid for their own fare to get there. We raised enough money to pay for all the travel expenses once we were there. And we played in five cities, five places. And we got the kind of review I wanted in Cork and said that this was an Irish Catholic, Irish-American Catholic play, that has a lot of resonances among Irish people. Now we didn't play to big crowds, but MJ Malloy, one of my favorite Irish playwrights...came all the way from Milltown in Galway to come see us.... John B Keane came down from Listowel to see us in Kerry. That was the last time I saw James N Healy. He died the next year. He came out of the hospital to see the play. Very touching moment because he taught me. We went on the road together up to Massachusetts, and he taught me some of the music of Percy French, *Come Back Paddy Reilly*. So the last night we played in Cork he came and he was obviously very sick. He said he wanted to sing that song for me. We were in the little pub there, and it was very touching. It has a great deal of friendship attached to it. I really don't feel after a while that these are just actors. These are my friends. Everybody loved James N, and everybody loves Glenn Jones, Mark Fallon, Mark Roger. These are guys...how could you not like them?

HML: None. So this was both the first original play, and the first Irish-American play. This was about 15 years after the founding of the company. Looking at it retrospectively, did that push the CTC further up, was it a pinnacle in terms of production, writing and traveling? Where does it fall in terms of that?

JPM: I think that that, in one sense, we hit a plateau, and we stayed there from a production point of view. But from an organizational and monetary point of view, we couldn't get any better because we didn't have the money or the inclination to get the money. What you need to

do at a certain stage is hire a full time manager. And that's, we're talking 60-70,000 dollars. And then you're out raising money. And I just said, "No, I'm not going to do it" It's my fault. I mean a lot of people would've loved to have done it. And still people... I meet people in malls, my students, and people who were connected to the company. You meet people who say, "What happened to the CTC? You're not there anymore." I feel bad about that, but it's my fault. I didn't. I don't have the interest or the organizational skills to take it to the next level.

HML: In looking at someone who comes up to you in the mall and says, "You know, I really miss the CTC. What's going on with it?" Do you think their desire see it is because they became really accustomed to seeing good story telling? Or how much of it has to do with them wanting to see something that's specifically Irish?

JPM: I think it was both.... We had people come who were Polish and Slovak. It wasn't just Irish, but you never know if there's an Irish connection somewhere. I think people came because they liked the stories. 1) They knew there would be a story. And 2) They knew there wouldn't be anything that they couldn't bring their kids to go see—that we didn't resort to dirty jokes and dirty language and realistic stuff on stage just to be realistic. And I think also, in the end, an audience culturally comes to the theatre (and I think this is why the Broadway theatre is suffering: it's a museum now)—an audience doesn't come to see new plays unless they believe that the cultural background of that play will reflect what they believe. You know and there's an analogy going on now that I think proves my point. It's the Tea Party in this country. The Tea Party in this country is not made up of people who are not politicians, who are from all walks of life, and who just don't like what's going on in this country morally. Now they don't think of it morally, they think of it culturally. Now what happens when that happens? You have a natural uprising of people who put themselves out at great discomfort to themselves to say what they think. You can watch a movie at home by plugging it into your machine, but to come to the theatre, you have to make a date.... It's an effort. People aren't going to do that if they constantly go and get offended. And I don't mean they were offended because they say it's not Catholic. I don't think it works that way.

I had an Irish-American friend who came sporadically. He was very liberal. He went to go see *Glenn Gary Glenn Ross* in New York. He was a great man for the culture of New York. He came back to me and he said, "Jim, I would have left at the end of the first act, but it would have made a fuss." I said, "What happened, George?" He said, "If they cut the dirty language out of that play, it'd be a one act play" He was offended. He never went back....

HML: So if someone's looking for something just because it's Irish, they won't necessarily keep going because of a number of reasons.

JPM: And I think it's the same in New York, incidentally. You know the reverse of that's true. Much of the audience in New York. Secular New York, enlightened people. So they don't have any of the values, the cultural background that I had, right. I went to see *Dancing at Lughnasa*, and the middle of the third act they do a dance, a jig, with the radio that doesn't work. In this it's a wild moment, it's a tragic moment. It is so sad because it's desperation that causes it. The audience laughed and clapped. They didn't get it. Now, what are you going to do with that, then? You tell someone a joke, they don't get the joke.

HML: So looking at the progression of the CTC decade to decade, is there an audience for it now?

JPM: If we were starting out, we would do better than we did when we started

HML: Why?

JPM: I think the country has decided its Judeo-Christian heritage is the way we ought to live and the background of these plays is Judeo-Christian. I don't say that it's Catholic or Jewish or Protestant. I say that the values of good and evil, true and false, right and wrong are pretty evident [in these plays]. In *The Field*, a guy kills somebody by accident because he wants to buy his field. The guy comes from a lot of money. This guy has built the field by himself. This guy can't buy it because he can't raise enough money. So what happens? They try to prosecute; they try to figure out who did it. And nobody, nobody will tell. And the bishop comes, and he gives a speech, "What does it profit a man who gains the whole world who loses his mortal soul?" They still won't do it. But at the end of the play, this guy gives an eloquent speech about the unfairness of the priest and the people that run the country and the police. He says, "When this guy's been buried for two years, his wife will marry someone else, and he'll be forgotten." And then he says, "Forgotten by everyone...but me." His guilt. When he hits the guy and he falls down dying, he kneels down and says an act of contrition. He believes. When you believe something, then you're guilty. You're guilty of murder. You may not get caught by the law. Maybe the Church doesn't get you now, but they got you because *you believe it*. I think that's what people want. I really do.

Look, O'Neill is that way. *Long Day's Journey Into Night* is one big Irish Catholic guilt-trip. *A Moon for the Misbegotten* is the same way. I could go through those O'Neill plays and show you exactly how they mirror what I'm saying.

HML: Perhaps on a different interview session. We started talking about how the Irish Theatre is a Playwright's theatre. You talked a little bit about your relationship with Keane. Can you go into some of the different playwrights? Especially if you feel for a particular playwright it wasn't just their plays but their personality, personal interaction with you that helped develop the CTC?

JPM: Yeah, I have a letter on my wall from MJ Malloy saying that we did the third act of his play *The King of Friday* better than they did it anywhere but the original play at the Abbey. Lovely man. I sat in his house. I'll describe it for you one day. You wouldn't believe it. An old cottage in the west of Ireland. And he had one limp leg, one sure leg. He was as charming a man as you'd ever want to meet. Soft and nice. He came over here to see our production of *Wood of the Whispering*, and he saw it three times. On the closing night, we had a party.... There were maybe 30 people. He was a very timid man; lovely man. He had all his plays done at the Abbey up until 1948, and then they got "too smart" for him after that. Then he said, "Can I say something?" I said, "Are you serious? Of course!" He gave the loveliest speech about what we had done to a play that nobody would do anymore in Ireland. And what a gift it was to the Irish Theatre that these Americans were doing it. I mean, people were ready to cry. And we

didn't even have a piece of recording. We don't have it. You want to kill yourself. This guy had a tremendous effect on me....

HML: So the majority of the plays were filling a vacuum. They weren't getting done in America. Did you see any plays, because of the CTC, or just because of time, develop a new identity later on that they didn't have before?

JPM: Well I think Keane, for example, was [gives thumbs down\*] when I started doing it in the 70's, he was mocked pretty much. By 1989 he was keeping The Abbey afloat. Whenever they did one of his plays, it sold out. He was being done all over Ireland professionally. I don't know if I had anything to do with that, but a lot of the people that came over here came over here to do his plays.

You know we had a guy come over. He was, and I didn't know this when we hired him, a drunk. A week before we opened in a play by Paul Vincent Carroll, I had to replace him with an actor, Bill Timoney. Bill can memorize, he's got a mind like a blotter. So he did it. We weren't very good. He was too young for the part, but he was otherwise very accomplished. I went to Ireland three weeks later. I'm walkin' on one of the main streets in Dublin, and somebody comes up to me. He was an Irish actor. He said, "You know, I heard what you did with Paddy Bedford, and I want to tell you we really appreciate how nice you were to him. You could have been cruel. You could have been mean. You were very careful the way you handled him." Three weeks later they knew this? It's a very small world, and they tell each other....Can you imagine? We're three thousand miles away, and they knew it like that (\*snap\*). So I think we had—they knew who we were.

....

HML: Did you see their [the Irish] reaction, or how they use theatre change over time?

JPM: Oh yeah, oh yeah. Big time! You know about the Celtic Tiger. Since they joined the European Union, they have become as materialist as America. They're in deep trouble now. They're out of money. They don't even have rule of their own. They became very materialist. They became, in a sense, like us. And as soon as they became like us, they lost interest, we lost interest....So the Abbey theatre is essentially out of business. Essentially, they're £3 million, or so, in debt. They want to replace their theatre....So they're going to leave Abbey Street which is where they get their name. They've lost their way. It's sad.

....

HML: Looking at the management structure of the CTC in a lot of the pamphlets to talk about emeritus managers of the CTC what has been the relationship with those individuals and then those people who actually are running it?

JPM: Well, a lot of the people who did that did that because they didn't want to be in the plays at the time or whatever, but they wanted to keep it going. Eileen Fallon was Mark Fallon's wife who was Eileen O'Boyle. He met her through the CTC and they got married, and she did a lot of

work with us, and a lot of newsletter stuff, box office stuff. Barbara Marino: he was an actress with us for a long time; she was manager with us for a long time. She was very organized. Stuff that people take for granted: programs, tickets. We didn't advertise [much], we mailed all of our advertising, and we had a line with an answering machine that we took those orders. So we had people. Bob Davis, who had been with me when I did the first five years with the IACI, he decided that he wanted to help us out so for about eight years he worked with us. He helped plan our trip to Ireland; he and Barbara Marino. So we had people volunteer, come and go, you know. We had a meeting about four or five times a year of the company. The board would get together just to make sure everybody knew who is going to do what from where. But I picked all the plays. I cast all of the plays. I picked all the people who directed the plays if I didn't. So there was no management from that side. I did that. I got the theater; I got the plays; I got the actors. Most of the actors had their own clothes, so there were no costumes; when we had to, we bought them. Scenery: I got the designers. Usually a guy who designed here [at Seton Hall] would do it, but often others. So we really were barebones. Talk about skin of your teeth, you know.

HML: Did that ever fluctuate? Were there times to become a more formalized structure?

JPM: Oh yes, when Bob Davis ran it and Barbara did. He lined the whole hallway up with pictures of past productions. He had a big posters made that were there. He had people selling stuff in intermission. He had connections with certain Irish papers and he'd get them to write stories about us. Really, we relied on one small ad in the *Star Ledger* about us and the review they would do about us if they did one. Out of the thirty years we did it, we probably got reviews for twenty years or ten years on and off (we didn't get it sometimes because the critic changed). So that's what we depended on. That and word of mouth.

....

HML: So overall, what do you think of the overall the greatest impact of the CTC on the various communities: Seton Hall, the local Irish community, the theater community, and then even Irish theater?

JPM: I don't know. I don't know how to measure that. I would say the biggest impact it had was on people like me people who really love the material, loved doing it with the people I did it with. The fact that I have people at your age (25) who are willing to talk to me at my age, it's pretty good, pretty good life. The Irish-American community in this area had a high regard for what we did. They didn't always come but I would say we probably affected over thirty years maybe at the outside 20,000 people—at different times, with different plays, for different reasons... I would say northern New Jersey knew us very well because of the *Star Ledger*. I would say Seton Hall: I don't think they care, and that's alright: they didn't stop me from doing what I wanted to do. You know, we are a very materialistic culture. People are so busy raising money for things we forgot that talking to your friend is a good idea. I love that line from Yeats' play, "I must be talking to my friends." They don't feel any compulsion—that they have no time to talk, and I think that's sad. And I think that's what we did, and as a result, I think people thought what we were doing was pretty good. They felt personally invested. They knew the actors; they would come and see them over and over and over again over a period of years. They



would say, “Oh, he was good in that.” They felt invested. I had a guy come with his wife who couldn't hear. And he would always write me a note two weeks before the play saying would I send him a copy of the play. And she would read it, and then she would come. He could hear; he was fine, but he wanted her to come and see it. He wasn't Irish or Catholic.

....

HML: Looking more broadly, where do you think theater falls in terms of expressing cultural identity: in general, for the Irish, and Irish Americans? Where does theatre fall in the spectrum of cultural experience?

JPM: I think everybody likes to be told a story. I don't know anybody who doesn't like to be told a story. Little children love to be told a story. We all love stories. You can't live without that. That's a part of who we are as human beings. That's who we are, we like stories: beginnings, middle and end. We like to laugh. I think we enjoy a good cry. That's why we go to the theater. We don't go to learn something. We go to be emotionally moved. And I think the way you're moved is through what you think is right and what you think is wrong, what you think is good what you think is evil. You want the guy to get the girl because you want the guy and girl to be happy together. If the guy's a dirt-bag you don't want him to get the girl. You want the guy who's the killer to be punished. So, first you gotta find out who he is, and then you punish him. I don't think anything like that is terribly sophisticated. So any culture that gets away from that, any society that gets away from its founding culture loses its place. And if it loses its place, it has to find it again.

Europe has lost its place. It's not even reproducing itself. It's mixed up all over the place with different growing nationalities that are not European and their theater is a dead end. It's instructive. It's teaching not to be a bigot, not to be a homophobe, not to whatever but that's not why people go to the theater. My thought is there is a deep sense of unease in the society we live in; of people your age (25) who have a look at what the people before them did in the seventies and sixties and decide you don't want to do that, but where do you go from? Here, this is all you've seen. Well, I think for thirty years we gave you an alternative. There is some good stuff out there that you don't even know about that will be new to you. Listen to it. See what you think. Maybe you have the ability to write maybe you can do it. And I think we engender that. Now, we didn't produce much. I mean accidentally. But our one playwright got married happily and moved to Kansas City. And happy marriages don't make for a good playwright so we lost that. But I think we proved one thing anyway, and that is “what you do for love,” if I'm to paraphrase that awful play, “is what you really do that's creative.” If you do something because you really believe in it and like it, it doesn't matter how many people come or how much you get paid if it. If a thing is worth doing, [G.K.] Chesterton says, it's worth doing poorly.

**Afterword:** The *Saints and Sleuths* productions have succeeded the traditional Irish two-act and three-act plays as the CTC's modus operandi since 2007. The annual productions consist of a few staged readings over the course of one or (usually) two weekends. Produced over the years in association with Seton Hall University's Servant Leadership Program, GK Chesterton Institute for Faith and Culture, Center for Catholic Studies and a host of other organizations, they continue the tradition of story-telling. As the name would suggest, the stories include mysteries,

biopics, epic poems, ghost stories and thrillers with religion, saints or apologists/theologians as either subject or original author. A favorite are the stories of GK Chesterton, often his amiable *Fr. Brown* mysteries. They range from adapted novels, poems, short stories and plays. Many of the works are adapted by McGlone himself, and some completely original, including a trilogy on John Henry Newman. As long as there are stories to tell and an audience who wants to be told them in person, one can find it hard to imagine McGlone and the CTC not filling that role. And it is not because they have to or because they get paid for it, but because they could not imagine not taking advantage of the opportunity to share in storytelling.