

BIG SATIRE IN LITTLE IRELAND

VLT's *The Cripple of Inishmaan* is a fierce, fine thing

Irish playwright Martin McDonagh is a *fecking*, foul-mouthed *arsehole* with a *shite* attitude, but he sure is one hell of a writer. McDonagh's plays, the earliest of which take place in rural Ireland, tend toward high satire in low settings. His dialogue, laced with profanity and steeped in dialect, is whip-smart and viciously funny, and he has a keen eye for the absurd. Hypocrisy, dashed dreams, quashed desires and the way resentments calcify into long-standing feuds — these all-too-human failings are the ripest fodder for McDonagh's steely intelligence. He is a wicked flayer of false pride.

Very Little Theatre has taken a big risk putting on McDonagh's *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, a dark comedy set in 1934 that tells the story of how a small community in the Aran Islands is affected when Hollywood comes ashore to shoot a "fillum" at nearby Inishmore. The play is hilarious, but wickedly, nastily hilarious, in the manner of *Gulliver's Travels*: Like his countryman Jonathan Swift, McDonagh exhibits a repressed rage at the follies of humanity and at the ways subtle and not-so-subtle self-interest causes people to act like imbeciles and hurt others. And, like James Joyce before him, McDonagh tempers this very Irish anger with a sentimental streak that can find kindness in the most miserable of situations.

Directed by Michael Walker, VLT's *The Cripple of Inishmaan* is an excellent production. Unlike the company's last offering, the somewhat tepid *Come Back to the Five*



DAVID HARVEY, CHRISTINE HANKS, HOLLY BROOKS AND TREVOR EICHHORN

and *Dime*, *Jimmy Dean*, *Jimmy Dean*, this show leaps off the stage with an aggressive confidence, thanks in large part to the uniformly strong cast. As the "cripple" orphan Billy Claven who plots to flee his claustrophobic community for Hollywood, Trevor Eichhorn is just the right combination of mild and driven; he reveals Claven's humanity and smarts slowly.

And the rest of the small, talented ensemble is equally on pitch: Claven's adoptive aunts Kate Osbourne (Pamela Lehan-Siegel) and Eileen Osbourne (Christine Hanks); bighearted widower Babbybobby Bennet (Ben Buchanan); town gossip Jonnyateenmike (Michael P. Watkins) and his drunk mother Mammy O'Dougal (Diane Johnson); troublemaker Helen McCormick (Holly Brooks) and her cheerful brother Bartley (David Harvey); and the good Dr. McSharry (Dylan Skye Kennedy). Each of these fine actors contributes significantly to the play, creating a riotous stage work that is hard to resist ... though some

may feel the need to.

Unlike most of the work that gets produced by community theaters these days — work that tends to be mild, familiar and/or predictable — McDonagh's plays are distinctly modern and intellectually challenging. It's always easy for certain people to respond to things like vulgarity, using righteous indignation as a means of avoiding what they really find objectionable, which is new art that seeks different ways of getting at the truth of the human condition. It took Joyce years to get *Dubliners* published because it was deemed "dirty"; now it's considered a masterpiece. Very Little Theatre, in mounting a solid production of *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, has exhibited courage in the face of potential controversy, as well as faith in the endurance of good art. We, in turn, should fill those seats. ■

The Cripple of Inishmaan runs Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays through Aug. 10 at the Very Little Theatre; \$12-\$17.

EVENTS CALENDAR

August ART Workshops
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- Abstract Oil Painting
Evenings 6 pm to 9 pm : Friday Aug 2nd, Thursday Aug 8th, Wednesday Aug 28th & Saturday Aug 17th 9 am - noon
- Tile Mosaic Workshop
Sundays August 4th, 11th, 18th, & 25th - 1 pm to 4 pm
- The Creative Flow: Painting as a Process
Laura Stockford & Maureen
August 10th - 9am to 1pm
maureencampbellart.com

BENEFIT YARD SALE
At Eugene Zendo
2190 Garfield St.
Sat Aug 3rd 9am-4pm
Sun Aug 4th 9am-4pm

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EVENTS

PETS IN PAW-RADES at this year's Eugene Celebration Sunday Aug. 25, 9am Paw-Jama Party & registration, 10am Parade begins 8th & Oak. Vendors, music, celebrity judges, prizes & more.

PSYCHIC, CRAFTS, HOLISTIC HEALTH FAIR
Inside Yachats Commons. 17th Annual. 75 exhibitors, Aug 3 & 4, 10am. Practitioners, Products, Readers, Crafts, Crystals, Jewelry, Books, UFO Info, Seminars, Cafe. \$3 donation. Family Friendly 541-547-4664 chucklingcherubs.com

COMMUNITY YARD SALE Wide array of unusual items including a Burley bike trailer, kitchen items, electronics & more. Eugene Zendo Benefit, Aug 3 & 4, 9am to 4pm. 2190 Garfield St, Eugene.

AUGUST ART WORKSHOPS
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ABSTRACT OIL PAINTING 6-9pm, 8/2, 8/8, 8/28. 8/17 9am-Noon. **TILE MOSAIC WORKSHOP** 1-4pm, 8/4, 8/11, 8/18, 8/25. **THE CREATIVE FLOW: PAINTING AS A PROCESS** Laura Stockford & Maureen 9am-1pm 8/10.

FOR SALE

Antiques and Collectibles

SPECTACULAR TAG SALE OF ANTIQUES Living estate sale of Dorothy Chase Linder features hundreds of rare & authentic 19th & early 20th century items + 19th century walnut furniture. Details/pics at www.estatesales.net - hosted by Camden Estate Sales. August 2, 3, & 4. 9am-4pm (Sunday 1pm-4pm) 91157 N. Diamond Street, Coburg, OR

Garage Sales

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