



*“There’s no dark like a winter
night in the country...”*

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE FOR

THE WEIR

BY CONOR McPHERSON

NATIONAL TOUR - JUNE/JULY

DECADENT



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WINNER OF THE EVENING STANDARD, CRITICS' CIRCLE AND OLIVIER AWARDS FOR BEST NEW PLAY

BEFORE SEEING THE PERFORMANCE...

The Experience

In the theatre we share stories that differ from TV, DVD, film, books, magazines, podcasts and other media. In the theatre, stories are told by real people, in real time before a real and live audience. Each performance of a play is different to any other as it is dependent upon the time, the actors, the technical equipment and, very importantly, the audience. You can't re-read a live theatre performance or copy it to see again and again. Each performance exists only once. The performance you will see of *The Weir* will differ from the one performed before and the one performed after, which makes it special and unique. Your role as an audience ensures its uniqueness. As students of theatre, you are advised to carefully prepare to see the production so that you can capture that unique, one-off experience and be able to reflect on it in detail and consider how it comments on a contemporary world.

About *The Weir*

Theatre's power as an arena for storytelling meets the great Irish tradition of the bar room tale in Conor McPherson's brilliant play about loss and the consolations of connection. In a small rural pub in the northwest of Ireland, the regulars and their host fall into swapping ghost stories, the sort of local legends and anecdotes that over the years get stretched in the telling. It's not their usual entertainment for a weeknight. They're just showing off, throwing around a little blarney for the benefit of an attractive stranger in their midst. And Valerie, who has just moved from Dublin into town seems to be enjoying the stories. What's the harm in it? Who could know how deeply these stories strike home and that the most powerful story is waiting to be told? There's nothing more revealing than the tales we choose to tell.

Setting: Sligo (Irish: *Sligeach*, meaning "abounding in shells")

The play was first performed in 1997 at the Royal Court Theatre, London. It is set in an Irish country pub known as The Weir in a northwest rural part of Ireland, County Sligo, in the present day. In the play, the smaller local town is called Carrick, a fictional place but one that could indeed exist.

Cast and Characters

Nadine Garner Valerie, 30's, a Dublin woman

Peter Kowitz Jack, 50s, a mechanic and garage owner

Ian Meadows Brendan Byrne, 30s, the owner of the pub in which the play is set

Robert Menzies Jim, late 40s, the local handyman

Greg Stone Finbar Mack, late 40s, a local businessman

TWO IRELANDS: THE REPUBLIC AND THE NORTH

The Irish Free State was created in 1922 as a result of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. It effectively became a republic, the Republic of Ireland, with an elected president, under the constitution of 1937, in which it was named "Ireland". It was officially declared a republic in 1949. Ireland became a member of the United Nations in December 1955. It joined the European Economic Community (EEC), predecessor of the European Union, in 1973.

The state had no formal relations with Northern Ireland for most of the twentieth century, but during the 1980s and 1990s the British and Irish governments worked with the Northern Ireland parties towards a resolution to the "Troubles". Since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, the Irish government and Northern Ireland executive have co-operated on a number of policy areas under the North-South Ministerial Council created by the Agreement. *The Weir* is set in the Republic of Ireland, not far from the borders of Northern Ireland.

The Troubles refers to a violent thirty-year conflict framed by a civil rights march in Londonderry on 5 October 1968 and the Good Friday Agreement on 10 April 1998. At the heart of the conflict lay the constitutional status of Northern Ireland.

The goal of the unionist and overwhelmingly Protestant majority was to remain part of the United Kingdom. The goal of the nationalist and republican, almost exclusively Catholic, minority was to become part of the Republic of Ireland.

This was a territorial conflict, not a religious one. At its heart lay two mutually exclusive visions of national identity and national belonging. The principal difference between 1968 and 1998 is that the people and organisations pursuing these rival futures eventually resolved to do so through peaceful and democratic means. This ascendancy of politics over violence was not easily achieved.

During the Troubles, the scale of the killings perpetrated by all sides - republican and loyalist paramilitaries and the security forces - eventually exceeded 3,600. As many as 50,000 people were physically maimed or injured, with countless others psychologically damaged by the conflict, a legacy that continues to shape the post-1998 period.

IRISH FOLKLORE AND "FAERIE"

Folklore of Sligo, the region where the play is set:
<http://www.paranormaldatabase.com/ireland/sligo.php>

Irish Folkloric Tales

THE DULLAHAN: The dullahan is one of the most spectacular creatures in the Irish fairy realm and one which is particularly active in the more remote parts of counties Sligo and Down. Around midnight on certain Irish festivals or feast days, this wild and black-robed horseman may be observed riding a dark and snorting steed across the countryside.

CHANGELINGS: It appears that fairy women all over Ireland find birth a difficult experience. Many fairy children die before birth and those that do survive are often stunted or deformed creatures. The adult fairies, who are aesthetic beings, are repelled by these infants and have no wish to keep them. They will try to swap them with healthy children who they steal from the mortal world. The wizened, ill-tempered creature left in place of the human child is generally known as a changeling and possesses the power to work evil in a household. Any child who is not baptised or who is overly admired is especially at risk of being exchanged.

THE BANSHEE: The bean-sidhe (woman of the fairy) may be an ancestral spirit appointed to forewarn members of certain ancient Irish families of their time of death. According to tradition, the banshee can only cry for five major Irish families: the O' Neills, the O' Briens, the O' Connors, the O' Gradys and the Kavanaghs. Whatever her origins, the banshee chiefly appears in one of three guises: a young woman, a stately matron or a raddled old hag. These represent the triple aspects of the Celtic goddess of war and death, namely Badhbh, Macha and Mor-Rioghain. She usually wears either a grey, hooded cloak or the winding sheet or grave robe of the unshriven dead. She may also appear as a washer-woman, and is seen apparently washing the blood stained clothes of those who are about to die. In this guise she is known as the bean-nighe (washing woman).

THEATRICAL TRADITIONS AND THEATRICAL STYLES

Realism and Naturalism in the Theatre

French novelist and literary theoretician, Emile Zola's term for naturalism is *la nouvelle formule*. The three primary principles of naturalism (*faire vrai*, *faire grand* and *faire simple*) are first, that the play should be realistic, and the result of a careful study of human behaviour and psychology. The characters should be flesh and blood; their motivations and actions should be grounded in their heredity and environment. The presentation of a naturalistic play, in terms of the setting and performances, should be realistic and not flamboyant or theatrical. The single setting of *Miss Julie*, for example, is a kitchen. Second, the conflicts in the play should be issues of meaningful, life-altering significance — not small or petty. And third, the play should be simple — not cluttered with complicated sub-plots or lengthy exposition.

Hyper reality is the world that most people seem to think we inhabit – the world perpetuated by film and theatre. It is over saturated, over emotional, incredibly dramatic and gorgeous to look at. There are so many things, so many conventions that people seem to think is 'real life' and yet never happen in reality.

DISCUSS

Read the two descriptions above of naturalism and realism in the theatre. Your research may uncover other descriptions about these traditions. One way of considering these two terms – and this is contestable – is that naturalism is aligned with the interpretation of character and the acting style, and

realism is the hyper reality of the world that is created on stage. But, as previously stated, this is only one view.

- Analyse and discuss the following terms: naturalism, realism, hyper-realism
- Which aspects of the descriptions above do you agree with?
- After seeing the performance compare these descriptions to the production. Was there evidence in the performed work of naturalism, realism, hyper-realism?

Irish Theatre Traditions and Theatrical Styles

As a play, *The Weir* sits within the modern Irish classical style. It uses long-form story telling replete with ghostly tales and the presence of traditional faerie folk to locate its 'Irishness'. The following links and excerpts are offered as background information about the playwright and the theatrical traditions and styles *The Weir* draws on as a performed play.

Excerpt - *The Methuen Drama Guide to Contemporary Irish Playwrights*

In their tales, McPherson's ambivalent storytellers lay claim to no monumental significance, mythic references or universal applicability...in each play realism is constructed in a discursive manner privileging linguistic over physical elements. It is, as McPherson himself puts it, the words that are to do the work rather than the spectacle of the stage design or the characters' actions...Undoubtedly, his monologue plays disrupt the pretense of a naturalistic theatre of illusion, but crucially other fundamentally naturalistic elements remain firmly in place – language never spirals off into modernist or postmodernist free fall...

Excerpt - *Supernaturalism: Femininity and form in Conor McPherson's Paranormal Plays*

Patrick Lonergan argues in *Theatre and Globalization: Irish Drama in the Celtic Tiger Era* that during the 1990s and early 2000s, "mobility" was a necessary criterion for an Irish play's success in a globalized marketplace which was characterized first and foremost by the speed with which commodities circulate across national and continental borders. According to Lonergan's formula for international success, the key to a play's "mobility," apart from its being cheap to produce and easy to transfer from theater to theater, is what Lonergan calls its "reflexive quality"—the ease with which spectators in the world outside Ireland can "relate [the] experience" of the play "to their own preoccupations."

Excerpt - *The structural elegance of Conor McPherson's The Weir*

McPherson himself claimed to be baffled by all the fanfare. "It was just people talking," he said, "so it shouldn't have worked—it should have been boring." At one level, his point is correct: *The Weir*

includes little physical action, and its major events occur in the past, being recalled by the characters. But the same observation would apply to great Greek tragedies. And like those tragedies, *The Weir* observes the unities of time and place—unfolding without intermission in real time, about one hundred minutes, within the frame of a simple set: a small pub in the West of Ireland that becomes a site of both conflict and bonding. This compression is only one of the basic principles of dramatic construction in *The Weir*. McPherson's script also balances six other structural principles of drama—climactic order, reversal, synthesis, cause and effect, internalised action, and circularity—and the deft handling of these elements helps to explain why the play has been acclaimed so widely and so quickly as a modern classic.

These elemental plot premises generate strong emotions while conveying a subtle and compassionate sense of human life. Each element can be traced back to masterworks of Western drama, from the Greeks to Shakespeare to the modern realists. But they are also prominent in such major Irish plays as *The Playboy of the Western World*, *Endgame*, *Translations*, and *Pentecost*. In this respect, the "classic" design of *The Weir* also highlights distinctly Irish features of drama, and, most especially, the integration of tragedy and comedy.

The Weir's structural elegance rests upon a unique rhythm of action, alternating between casual bar talk and a series of stories told by four of the five characters. McPherson began his theatrical career by scripting monologues—first for university and fringe groups in Dublin, and later for the Bush Theatre in London. He achieved early recognition for dramas of dissipation, especially *Rum and Vodka* (1994) and *St. Nicholas* (1997), in which a single character delivers a long confessional narrative. Even as each tale becomes more convoluted, the telling remains simple: instead of trying to act out the episodes or to assume the voices of other characters, McPherson's narrator tells a story. When McPherson was commissioned to write a play for the Royal Court Theatre in 1997, the artistic director, Stephen Daldry, attached a condition: the new drama could not be another monologue. Scott T. Cummings describes the resulting script as "McPherson's characteristically cheeky response to the call for him to write characters who talk to each other instead of the audience. He has them tell stories."

Excerpt: Conor McPherson's *The Weir* - New master of Irish storytelling

Irish folklore, which is full of versatile, witty and inventive stories, provides great resources for McPherson's plays. He makes use of monologues and storytelling technique in his plays, which have mostly linear narratives. One needs to bear in mind that, on one hand, the contemporary Irish playwrights are fostered by Celtic folk tales and are nourished by the values and stories of the old days; on the other hand, they have inherited a very different Ireland from their predecessors.

The Weir makes a lively case for the spirit of that tradition and for the important value of telling stories. In this respect, this study will begin with 'storytelling', which is an inseparable part of McPherson's writing presented in the form of monologues and uninterrupted speeches. Then *The Weir* will be interpreted in the light of storytelling, dramatic monologue and the "pub play" genre.

Storytelling and monologue have a significant status in narratology. Narratology deals with uninterrupted speech mostly in the form of monologues. In reality-based drama, monologue may theatricalise what Doritt Cohn has described as the “transparent mind, allowing audiences entry into the characters’ consciousness; their motivations, history, or point of view” (Cohn, 1978: p.5).

McPherson’s plays are based on narratology. In this respect, his monologues reveal his characters’ consciousness and their moments of epiphany powerfully especially when sharpened by lighting and staging effects.

Many critics have explored McPherson’s “magical” fantastic world of theatre, featuring storytelling and demons in his plays. Rawson accounts that storytelling is the only therapy Ireland believes in as it helps to deal with the demons (Rawson, 2009). Likewise for Machray, the audiences, like the characters, are slowly drawn into the world of the afterlife in this land of storytellers (Machray, 2011)...The supernatural stories have a close affiliation with drinking, which is another notable characteristic of Irish culture...*The Weir*, in which the inner lives of five characters in a country pub setting are exposed... McPherson embodies accurately the human condition, especially of men who are trapped and secluded in their inner lives. This sense of privacy and entrapment actually has been designating Irish literature for many years. The playwright has spoken with certainty about what distinguishes Irish drama from other English-speaking drama. He believes that Irish playwrights, hurt by poverty, pessimism and Catholic guilt, get “stuck in an inner life”, hardly ever moving their dramas outside one room, while Brits put the world on stage (Clapp, 2004).

The characters’ casual bar joking and friendly local talk and gossip, in fact reveal the characters’ isolation. Soon it is clear that the characters are seekers of refuge from the bluster of the outside world. As they familiarise Valerie to the area, we learn that the place is unsheltered with harsh winds. It is a grand spot all along for going for a walk all down the cliffs with amazing views. We learn about the “country ways” and that this town land used to be quite important back a few hundred years ago. It was like the capital of the county. Finbar tells Valerie not to mind these “country fellas”. He says: “They’re only jealous Valerie because I went to town to seek my fortune. And they all stayed out here on the bog picking their holes” (*The Weir*, p. 13).

DISCUSS:

What insights do these excerpts offer you re the theatrical styles present in *The Weir*?

What do these excerpts offer you with regard to the greater world of the play?

What are some key words, phrases or descriptions used that you are curious about?

What are you imagining you will see, hear and feel when you experience this play?

THE WEIR: STORYTELLING THAT TRANSFORMS



In this confusing age of definitive facts and expert opinions, *The Weir's* profoundly affecting use of age old storytelling techniques helps create a unique space of trust, sharing, mutual regard, and engagement within the most unlikely of environments (a rural pub) and participants (4 middle aged introvert men and 1 introvert woman). Through the acts of telling stories and listening to others' stories, the characters in *The Weir* become known both to others and to themselves. The effect of which is both sustaining and transformative.

We live in story, we act in story, and we remember in story; storytelling echoes our humanness. Story is a fundamental way in which we order our experiences. We tell a story of what happened recently or long ago. We retell and embellish another's story. In some cases, our story is meant to unburden us, to explain concepts or to discharge emotions. And story can also serve to promote intimacy, as when two people exchange personal histories at the first stages of a developing relationship.

The Weir's theme centres on the power of story to bring about a transformation, not only in the teller but also in the listener and in the space between them. Through each respective telling, its characters exemplify this power of story to transform, as well as to empower others similarly to tell their stories and so to find understanding and acceptance. The effect of the stories within *The Weir* are known to transfix and spellbind the audience. As one reviewer wrote:

"Some years ago, while in Dublin, I found myself in possession of a ticket to the Gate Theatre to see the first production in Ireland of *The Weir*. I sat entranced by the play and by the events that unfolded. As the curtain closed, I knew that I had witnessed the colossal power of story. It was breathtaking."

The Weir teaches us a valuable lesson: a story untold is a life un-lived. The more un-storied existence we can transform into experience, that is, and the more untold experience we are able to express, then the more powerfully and profoundly can our self-creation proceed: the more authority we have over the storying and re-storying of our own lives.

Without an informing idea, the details of real life are clutter, noise, chaos. We need an idea given form for things to make sense. And that's what stories are: ideas given form, ideas given breath.

The Weir is a play of stories, and for this reason it is unique – for it is through stories that humans best understand what means to be human. Story, first plied from the lips of our parents and later lifted from the written page and from sacred stages, touches our emotions and engages our memory throughout our life. *The Weir* shows that stories have the force to burst through the dam of resistance and open us up to learning and understanding, even such that might transform and heal the soul.

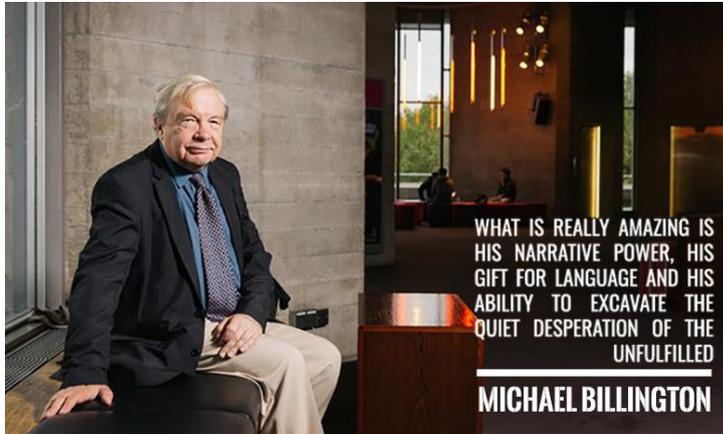
5 QUOTES FROM 5 CHIEF THEATRE CRITICS ABOUT THE WEIR



When it comes to assessing a play's worth, it can be best to leave it to the experts...

Plays like [The Weir](#) are very rare. Why so? Well, [The Weir](#) is a modern favourite of the critics. Not only is it seen as a vital constituent to the Anglo-Irish canon of theatre but also as one of the great English plays of the modern era. You'll see why this is the case after you read the responses of some of the world's greatest theatre critics to Conor McPherson's masterpiece, [The Weir](#).

Michael Billington (Former Chief Theatre Critic of The Guardian), *The 101 Greatest Plays: From Antiquity to the Present*



*“Nothing had quite prepared us for *The Weir*, a play that seems to consist of little except people telling ghost stories in a rural bar but which is filled with McPherson’s Chekhovian gift for the minute particular and his understanding of the Ireland that lies beyond Dublin’s affluent swagger... What is really amazing is his narrative power, his gift for language and his*

ability to excavate the quiet desperation of the unfulfilled.”

Fintan O’Toole (Former Chief Theatre Critic of The Irish Times), *Critical Moments: Fintan O’Toole on Modern Irish Theatre*

CRITICS LIKE TO USE THE WORD ‘HAUNTING’ TO DESCRIBE PLAYS WHOSE IMAGES LINGER LONG IN THE MIND LONG AFTER THE STAGE LIGHTS GO OUT. THE WEIR CERTAINLY DESERVES THAT DESCRIPTION.

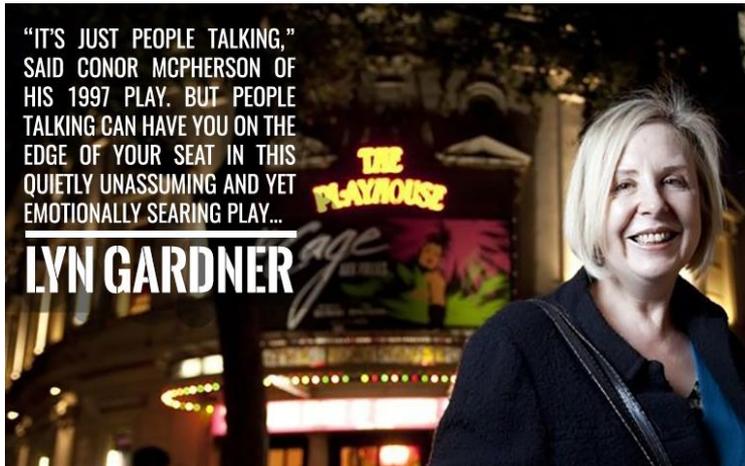
FINTAN O’TOOLE



*“About 50 years ago, a journalist asked an old woman in the West of Ireland if she believed in fairies. ‘I do not, sir,’ she replied, ‘but they’re there.’ Conor McPherson’s *The Weir* which opened last night in the Walter Kerr Theatre after arriving from London’s West End loaded with awards, is about that kind of uncertainty.*

*The characters don’t really believe in fairies or ghosts or the afterlife. But they can’t shake off the feeling that there’s something there. Critics like to use the word ‘haunting’ to describe plays whose images linger long in the mind long after the stage lights go out. *The Weir* certainly deserves that description. But it is haunting in a more literal sense. The plays is a series of ghost stories that shade gradually from mere spookiness to awful, heart-rending grief.”*

Lyn Gardner, Chief Theatre Critic of The Guardian



“It’s just people talking,” said Conor McPherson of his 1997 play. But people talking can have you on the edge of your seat in this quietly unassuming and yet emotionally searing play set in a rural Irish pub where a group of lonely male souls gather most nights. But tonight is different, there is an incomer – a Dublin woman, Valerie, who asks for white wine.

When the stories are spun from the men’s lives, they have a competitive edge – but Valerie has a story that can top them all. As Jack, the grumpy, melancholic garage owner, proves in the dying embers of the evening, we are all haunted by different kinds of ghosts.

This is a slow burn of a play, full of toasty banter and tiny moments when the characters unwittingly reveal the depth of their dolefulness. The unexpected presence of a woman highlights the absence of female interaction in these men’s lives. The isolated barman, Brendan, is emotionally estranged from his sisters; the dim handyman, Jim, has a mother who has been fading fast for ever; and although the flash, resented Finbar is married, his wife is yet another ghost in the play.”

Ben Brantley, Chief Theatre Critic of the New York Times

“If a story is told well enough, you’ll follow it anywhere, even when it’s leading you to places you never intended to go. Take the plain-spoken, utterly alluring tales unfolded by the denizens of the rural Irish bar in “The Weir,” Conor McPherson’s beautiful and devious new play at the Walter Kerr Theater. At first, they seem to beckon like comfortingly well-worn paths into realms of folklore both exotic and familiar, Gaelic variations on the sorts of campfire ghost stories you recall from childhood.



IF A STORY IS TOLD WELL ENOUGH, YOU’LL FOLLOW IT ANYWHERE, EVEN WHEN IT’S LEADING YOU TO PLACES YOU NEVER INTENDED TO GO. TAKE THE PLAIN-SPOKEN, UTTERLY ALLURING TALES UNFOLDED BY THE DENIZENS OF THE RURAL IRISH BAR IN “THE WEIR,” CONOR MCPHERSON’S BEAUTIFUL AND DEVIIOUS NEW PLAY

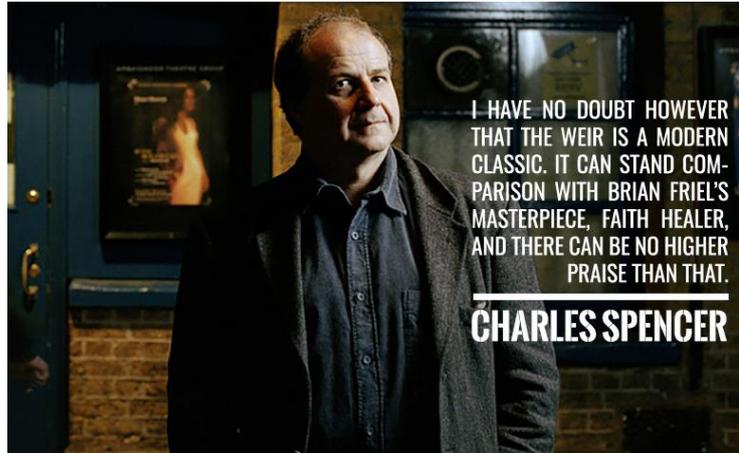
BEN BRANTLEY

Then a moment arrives, and it’s hard to say exactly when because you’ve shed all sense of time, when you realize that you have strayed into territory that scrapes the soul. Suddenly, the subject isn’t just things that go bump in the night, but the loss and loneliness that eventually haunt every life. There’s

a new chill abroad, evoking something more serious than goose flesh, but there is also the thrilling warmth that accompanies the flash of insight.”

Charles Spencer, Former Chief Theatre Critic of The Telegraph

*“Conor McPherson’s *The Weir* seems the most unassuming of plays, just four blokes and a woman telling ghost stories in a lonely pub deep in the Irish countryside. I have no doubt however that *The Weir* is a modern classic. It can stand comparison with Brian Friel’s masterpiece, *Faith Healer*, and there can be no higher praise than that.*



Though much of the play consists of banter and craic, there is also a sense of the numinous about it, and not just in the ghost stories. You apprehend the sad, thwarted lives of the characters that lurk behind their largely good-natured joshing, and there are sudden glimpses of compassion and grace that are all the more moving for being so understated.

McPherson moves seamlessly from the inconsequential to the profound, and there are two passages towards the end of the play that are among the most beautiful and haunting in modern drama. The first occurs when the female visitor to the area tells her own ghost story which is so upsetting and personal that it has haunted me ever since I first saw the play 15 years ago.

The second describes a simple act of kindness received by one of the characters when he was at his lowest ebb and realised that his chance of happiness had probably been lost forever. As the boozy old Irishman recounts it to the grieving woman it becomes a moment of astonishing dramatic grace and generosity.”

The Weir: Awards, More Awards and Nominations



The heightened position of *The Weir* within critical circles has led to a hefty amount of award nominations and wins

Conor McPherson's play *The Weir* (1997) achieved critical and popular success at three world-renowned theatres in the late 1990s: the Royal Court in London, the Gate in Dublin, and the Walter Kerr in New York. In London, it won the Lawrence Olivier Award, George Devine Award and Evening Standard Award as the Best New Play of 1997–98. *The Weir* received acclaim in the USA too, receiving the Critics' Circle Award for Best New Play.

In New York, where *The Weir* ran for eight months on Broadway, the New York Times's Ben Brantly described the play as "beautiful and devious" and hailed the playwright, only twenty-seven at the time, as "a first-rate story-teller" and "quite possibly the finest playwright of this generation." The original production, directed by Tony award-winning Ian Rickson, went on to further triumphs in Toronto and Belfast, and *The Weir* has been staged, almost always to fine reviews, by troupes in Boston, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Los Angeles and Melbourne. Of particular note were productions of *The Weir* by the Steppenwolf Company in Chicago and the Round House Theatre in Washington.

More recently, *The Weir*, due to premier status as a "play of plays" (Michael Billington, chief theatre critic of The Guardian), has been presented in 3 powerhouses of the UK/Irish theatre scene, namely 7 years ago in The Gate (Dublin), The Donmar Warehouse (London) in 2013 and The Lyceum (Edinburgh) this year. As you will see that *The Weir* live up to its name from the reviews for The Donmar Warehouse's production:

DONMAR WAREHOUSE (2013) (Olivier Award Nominated)

"Truly marvellous and thought-provoking." ★★★★★ The Sunday Times

“A treat for newcomers to the play and a chance for those who know it to savour its emotional profundities afresh.” ★★★★★ Daily Express

“A masterpiece.” ★★★★★ Daily Mail

“Pitch-perfect, I have no doubt that *The Weir* is a modern classic.” ★★★★★ Daily Telegraph

“Golden comic moments, flashes of poetry... delicate and haunting” ★★★★★ Evening Standard

“Enthralling.” ★★★★★ Metro

“I sat compelled throughout.” ★★★★★ Financial Times

“Magnificent.” ★★★★★ The Guardian

“Takes your breath away... Truly haunting.” ★★★★★ Independent

“Wonderfully humorous and heartbreaking.” ★★★★★ Independent on Sunday

“Enthralling... The entire beauty and sadness of humanity flower before us.” ★★★★★ The Times

“A contemporary classic.” ★★★★★ Mail on Sunday

“A mesmerising and haunting night.” ★★★★★ The Stage

Actor Nominations



Actors within productions of *The Weir* have been nominated for a slew of awards too. Most recently, Ardal O'Hanlon A.K.A Father Dougal was nominated in the 2014 Olivier Awards for Best Supporting Actor for his performance in *The Weir*.

While Brendan Coyle, known for his performances in *Downton Abbey*, won the Olivier Award for Best Performance in a Supporting Role for *The Weir* in 1999. The depth of McPherson's characters have routinely caught the eyes of the upper echelon of critical circles.