



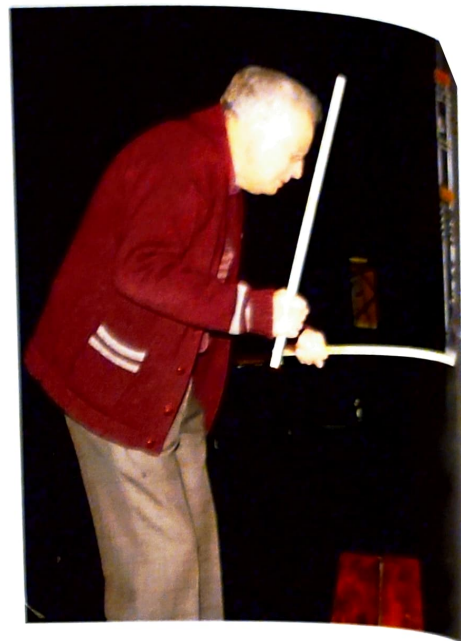
Dancing at Lughnasa
by Brian Friel

Directed by Tom Kobolak

CAST

MICHAEL
CHRIS
MAGGIE
AGNES
ROSE
KATE
FATHER JACK
GERRY

Gordon Walls
Robin Guy
Barbara Kobolak
Erin Ryan
Clare Flockton
Bev Brooks
Jim Holmes
Paul Behncke



Father Jack dancing



Father Jack tells a story

boy in Baker's clothes included novelist Somerset Maugham and filmmaker Alexander Korda. It's being sold by a European collector who bought it in

cial service.

To win Tanguy's *Les Dern.* for its Monday Surrealist sale after the Impressionist auction, Christie's also

THEATRE REVIEW

Strong Kanata cast brings playwright's words to life

Dancing at Lughnasa performance makes for an enjoyable evening

BY BRUCE DEACHMAN

In an early scene in *Dancing at Lughnasa*, which opened this week at Kanata Theatre, a woman stops ironing long enough to hold a purple garment to her face, peer with a longing romanticism at her reflection in a grubby, cracked mirror, and wonder aloud if she should start wearing lipstick. In the background, a new, if somewhat unreliable, wireless Marconi radio carries popular music into the home.

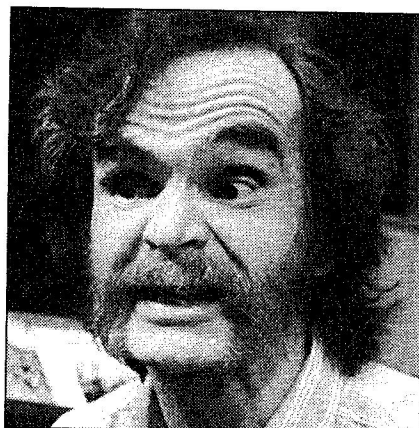
The woman's name is Christina Mundy, and she lives with her eight-year-old son, Michael, and four older sisters in a small home outside the Irish village of Ballybeg. It is August 1936.

In small, symbolic motifs, this scene neatly encapsulates Brian Friel's emotionally sprawling memory play about a defining summer in one Irish Catholic family's disintegration, as the Mundys attempt to come to grips with a larger world order.

It is the eve of Lughnasa, a pagan ceremony to the harvest deity Lugh, god of music and light. Being Catholic, the mostly middle-aged Mundy sisters don't, of course, take part. But there's a longing on their parts to attend, to dance. The music, the lipstick, one sister's penchant for cigarettes — even the belief that the only way to avoid a broken mirror's seven years of bad luck is to continue using it — all point to a slight ungodliness.

The purple garment that the ironically named Christina says would make a fine dress is actually her brother Jack's surplus. Brother — or rather Father — Jack has just returned from dark Africa, where he spent 25 years converting heathens and caring for lepers. We believe that malaria and dementia are the reasons behind his unexpected arrival, but, as with everything else in *Dancing at Lughnasa*, time will bear out different answers.

Although Kanata's production, com-



WAYNE HIEBERT, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Under Tom Kobolak's fine direction, Kanata Theatre has assembled perhaps its most dynamic ensemble cast in memory. The play continues tonight.

ing in at about 2½ hours, is at times a tad lengthy for a show with little movement and only one set, Friel's sharply written dialogue and uncertain tensions win the day.

Under Tom Kobolak's fine direction, Kanata Theatre has assembled perhaps its strongest ensemble cast in memory. Gordon Walls serves as narrator — the unseen love child Michael — with a pleasant ease, bringing to life playwright Friel's wonderful sense of language.

Robin Guy, Erin Ryan, Beverly Brooks, Clare Flockton and Barbara Kobolak all neatly find their idiosyncratic sisters' voices and bring these characters to life. Each holds a key piece of the family dynamic, and their interactions, whether mundane, dramatic, loving or vitriolic, are fascinating dances on their own.

Jim Holmes adds the necessary warmth to the role of Jack, whose "conversion" in Uganda is central to the story's tension and momentum, while Paul Behncke's turn as the Welsh drifter Gerry — Michael's usually absent father — is a charming mixture of dreamy hope and outright lies, intended and otherwise.

Dancing at Lughnasa continues tonight at Kanata Theatre and again from Feb. 8-12. Tickets & times, 831-4435.

AN AN
BEETHOVEN
FEBRUARY

Pinchas Zukerman
Yuja Wang, pianist
with the NAC

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*Yuja Wang steps in
to cancel his NAC O

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10, 11, 12 et

“It is as h
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Passionate, di
**Louise
Lecavalier**

World Premiere c
an NAC co-prod
Cobalt Re

February 1
NAC Theatre 20



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