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IRISH THEATRE INSTITUTE

creating opportunities abroad **strengthening** resources at home

findings report of the
irish playography
1904-2006

irish playography

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introduction

The wonder of theatre and its essential cruelty have one and the same source: evanescence. In an age where everything seems capable of being infinitely reproduced, theatre is precious because it is never the same. Even a single production can change radically from night to night, making each moment as unique as it is fleeting. But this wonder is also painful. The art leaves no tangible traces: a text is not a piece of theatre and neither is a recording. Oblivion haunts even the greatest performances. This cannot be helped, but it can be counter-balanced. Theatre can be documented. The bones of a tradition can be preserved, and, if necessary, exhumed. But Irish theatre has long been remarkably careless of this possibility. For all its self-consciousness as an established tradition, Irish theatre has tended to define itself narrowly and neglect the notion of a repertoire that is constantly re-examined and re-invented.

The Irish Playography is by far the most important antidote to this amnesia, and its extension back to 1904 makes it far more potent. As it has grown, it has become less of an aide-memoire and more a framework for exploration. Its technology allows the user to make surprising connections, to turn half-remembered notions into hard facts, to stumble upon unexpected discoveries. It is creating, for the first time, a memory-bank of the Irish repertoire, a canon of works that is not rigid and narrow but free-flowing and open-ended. I have no doubt that in its new form it will be increasingly inspirational, not just to researchers and theatre historians, but to practitioners who will be stimulated to dig out long-forgotten texts and bring some of them back from oblivion and out again, for some more brief and fleeting moments, into the light of performance.

Fintan O'Toole, July 2006

irishplayography

a definition

The Irish Playography 1904 - 2006

www.irishplayography.com is a comprehensive on-line, searchable catalogue of all new plays produced professionally in Ireland, North and South, since 1904.

Over 2,197 plays are included, each containing a synopsis, cast list, crew list and details of where and when the first production took place.

Nearly 800 playwrights are represented, in most cases with biographical information and rights contact details for their work.

4,000 performers are included. A simple search will display all new Irish plays in which an actor has performed.

The contribution of over 11,800 theatre practitioners to this new work, including directors, designers, lighting designers, stage managers, scenic artists and many others, is acknowledged and documented.

For all published plays in the database and published translations, irishplayography.com offers full bibliographical information, and in addition offers many unpublished plays as downloadable scripts (PDFs).

irishplayography.com not only defines the Irish theatrical repertoire for the first time, but also aims to revitalise that repertoire by reintroducing many lost scripts and provide a gateway for locating and clearing rights for all existing plays.

Please note that at present, the Irish Playography only includes new plays written in English. The Irish Theatre Institute will research and document the repertoire of Irish language plays, in conjunction with our partners on this project, Foras Na Gaeilge, to be completed and online by 2007.

The first phase (1975-2003) of the Playography project was launched in December 2003, following two and half years of extensive research. The second phase 1950 - 1974 was launched in April 2005. This findings report marks the launch of the third and final phase of research (1904-1949).

The Irish Playography database is updated on an ongoing basis. Irish Theatre Institute will publish an annual Findings Report with details of new plays and analysis of the repertoire. Please see the back page of this report for the research parameters, a list of sources and details of those who have contributed to this research.

Caroline Williams
Research Director
Irish Theatre Institute

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key companies 1904-1949

The Abbey Theatre, Dublin (326 new plays in the period)

The Abbey Theatre held its first performances, *On Baile's Strand* and *Kathleen Ni Houlihan* by WB Yeats and *Spreading the News* by Lady Gregory, on 27th December 1904. The Irish National Theatre Society was founded on the 1st February 1903, with WB Yeats as President, Vice Presidents were Maud Gonne, Douglas Hyde and George Russell (AE), Stage Manager was WG Fay and secretary Fred Ryan. Prior to their opening performances at Abbey Street, the company performed at a small hall at 34 Camden Street, which barely held 50 people and also at The Molesworth Hall, which seated 300 people. The company was an amalgamation of two previous companies Frank and WG Fay's National Dramatic Society, founded in 1901 and The Irish Literary Theatre founded in 1899 by Yeats, Edward Martyn and Lady Gregory. In this new playography research period, 1904-1949, the Abbey Theatre produced over 70% of all new Irish plays.

The Ulster Literary Theatre, Belfast (48 new plays)

The Ulster Literary Theatre was formed in 1902 by David Parkhill (who wrote plays under the pen-name Lewis Purcell) and Bulmer Hobson, a Quaker who was active in the Irish Nationalist Movement. The company produced plays by writers such as Lynn Doyle, Helen Waddell, and Gerald MacNamara (the pseudonym of Harry C. Morrow), the latter was also a prominent actor with the company. While many of its productions were performed in Belfast, the company also toured throughout Ireland, and

elsewhere. The company's dissolution in 1934 was caused in part by the company being unable to procure an appropriate premises.

Edwards-MacLiammóir Gate Theatre Productions, Dublin (39 new plays in the period)

Hilton Edwards (1903-1982) and Micheál MacLiammóir (1899-1978) co-founded the Gate Theatre, Dublin in 1928. The company's first production, *Peer Gynt*, was presented at the Peacock Theatre on October 19th, 1928, where they staged work prior to the acquisition of the Gate Theatre building on Cavendish Row. In addition to new plays the company offered Dublin audiences an introduction to European and American avant garde theatre as well as vibrant productions from the classic Irish repertoire. During the 1930s, following the formation of Longford Productions, who shared the building, the company's name was changed to Edwards-MacLiammóir Dublin Gate Theatre Productions.

Longford Productions, Dublin (30 new plays in the period)

Longford Productions was founded in 1936 by Edward and Christine, the sixth Earl and Countess of Longford. When the two-year-old Gate Theatre, founded by Micheál MacLiammóir and Hilton Edwards, ran into financial difficulties in 1931, Lord Longford offered to buy the outstanding shares. The arrangement lasted until 1936, when, following disagreements, the company was divided in two, Edwards-MacLiammóir Productions and Longford Productions. Each company had six months in the theatre and

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key companies 1904-1949

six months touring. Longford Productions produced 151 plays at The Gate Theatre, during their 24 years of existence. They toured nationally and to London and enjoyed much success with plays by Denis Johnston, Bernard Shaw, and European dramatists such as Pirandello, and Ibsen. Both Christine and Edward Longford also wrote and adapted plays for the theatre, 24 and 12 respectively.

The Group Theatre, Belfast (21 new plays in the period)

Ulster Group Theatre was founded in September 1940, and produced work for some 20 years. The Minor Hall venue at Bedford Street rapidly became known as the Group Theatre, and this tiny space became Northern Ireland's home of new writing in the mid-twentieth century, its programme combining new work with classics and international drama. Writers strongly associated with the company included St. John Ervine, George Shiels, and Joseph Tomelty, while the Group also premiered work by Louis MacNeice, John Murphy, and Brian Friel. The company was praised for its naturalistic acting style, and some of its performers went on to become well-known figures in Northern Ireland and beyond. Sir Tyrone Guthrie directed for the company in the late 1950s, prior to emigrating and founding the famous Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis in 1963.

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the irish repertoire 1904-1954

New plays and/or adaptations by year

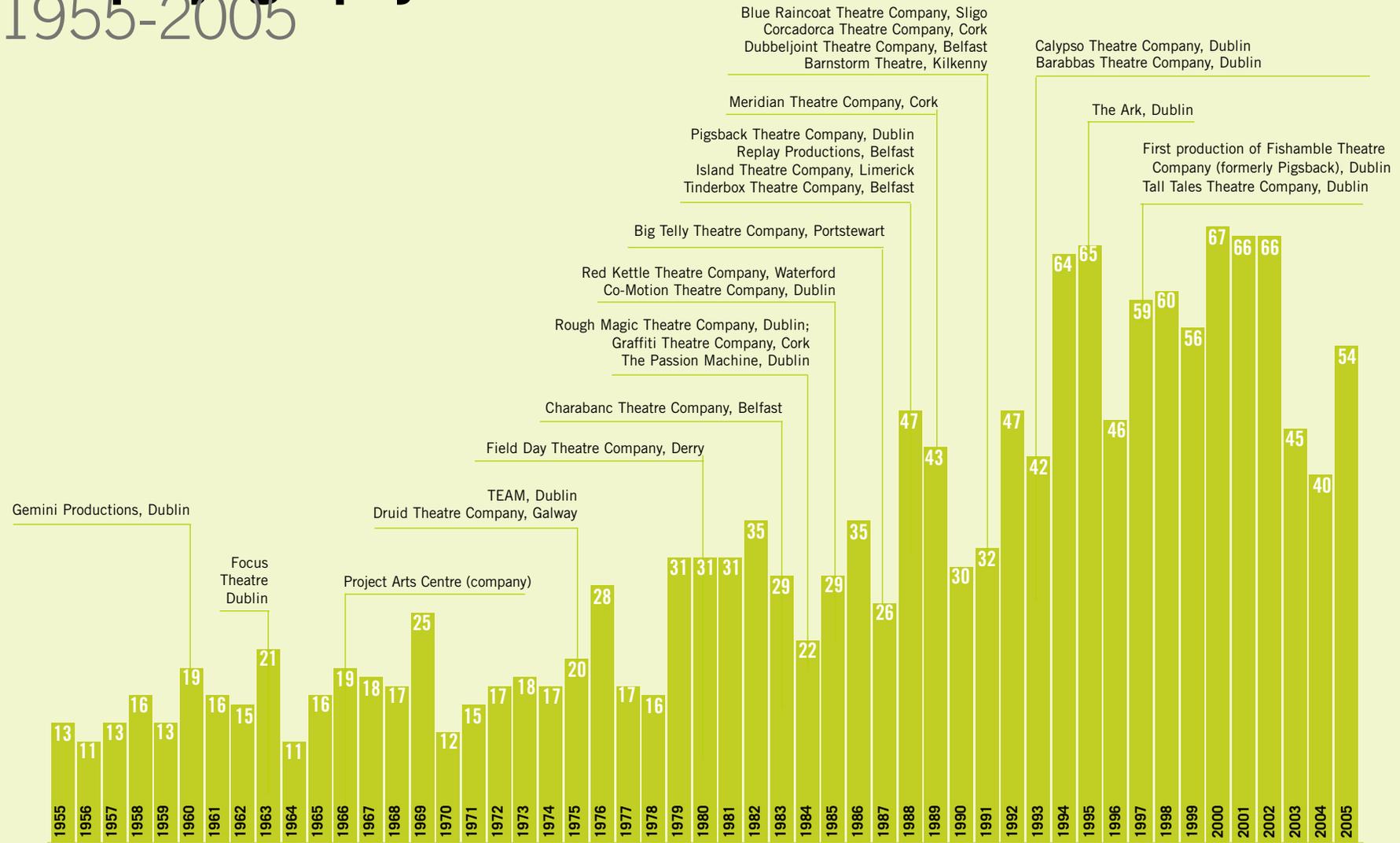
Theatre companies with 10 or more new plays shown with foundation year

First productions at the Abbey Theatre, 27th December
 First productions of Ulster (Literary) Theatre, Belfast



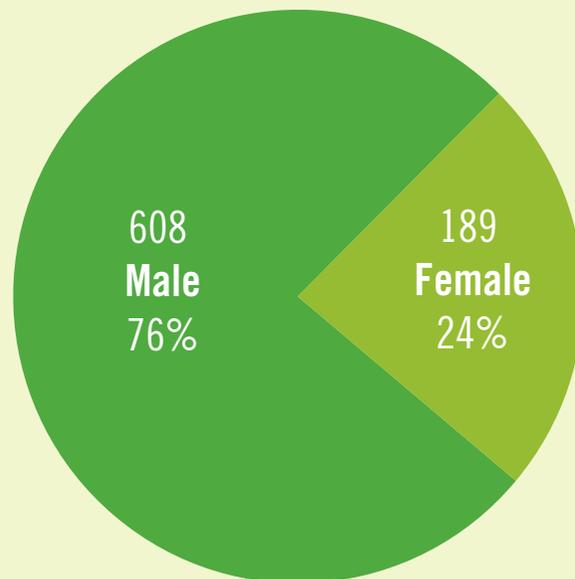
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1955-2005

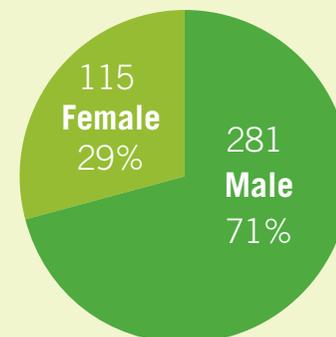


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playwrights by gender 1904-2006



1904-2006



2000-2005

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playwrights 1904-2006

49 Irish Playwrights with 10 or more new plays and/or adaptations professionally produced:

Lady Gregory (1852 - 1932)	36	John B. Keane (1928-2002)	17	John Boyd (1912-2002)	12
Frank McGuinness	33	William Butler Yeats* (1865-1939)	16	Lord Longford (1902-1961)	12
Hugh Leonard	33	Michael West	16	Owen McCafferty	12
Brian Friel	30	Donal O'Kelly	15	Rutherford Mayne (1878 - 1967)	11
George Shiels (1881 - 1949)	27	St. John Greer Ervine (1883-1971)	14	John McDonnell	11
Tom Murphy	26	GB Shaw * (1856 - 1950)	13	Thomas Kilroy	11
Lennox Robinson (1886 - 1958)	25	Paul Mercier	13	Maeve Ingoldsby	11
Marie Jones	24	Peter Sheridan	13	Sebastian Barry	11
Christine Longford (1900 - 1980)	24	T.C. Murray (1873-1959)	13	Michael Harding	11
Mary Elizabeth Burke-Kennedy	22	Conor McPherson	13	Jennifer Johnston	11
Samuel Beckett (1906 - 1989)	19	Gary Mitchell	13	Joe O'Donnell	11
Bernard Farrell	19	Sam Cree (1928-1980)	13	Marina Carr	10
Micheál MacLiammóir (1899-1978)	19	Joe O'Byrne	13	Stewart Parker (1941-1988)	10
Sean O'Casey (1880-1964)	18	Neil Donnelly	12	Declan Hughes	10
Tom MacIntyre	17	Fergus Linehan	12	Dermot Bolger	10
Johnny Hanrahan	17	Jim Nolan	12	Enda Walsh	10

(*also had plays produced pre-1904)

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theatre companies 1904-2006

18 Irish Theatre Companies with 20 or more new plays and/or adaptations produced between 1904-2006:

The Abbey Theatre	686
Edwards-MacLiammóir Gate Theatre Productions	71
Lyric Theatre	62
Team Educational Theatre Company	53
Ulster Group Theatre	51
The Gate Theatre	49
Ulster (Literary) Theatre	48
*Project Arts Centre	48
Gemini Productions	41
Longford Productions	37
Focus Theatre	32
The Passion Machine	31
Replay Productions	28
Graffiti Theatre Company	26
Druid Theatre Company	23
Red Kettle Theatre Company	23
Rough Magic Theatre Company	22
Fishamble Theatre Company	20

*includes co-productions

Total number of plays in the Irish Playography (June 2006)

2,197

Total number of theatre companies documented

155

The most recent play added to the database is Marina Carr's **Woman and Scarecrow** which opened on 21st June 2006, produced by The Royal Court Theatre London. The Royal Court have produced/co-produced 26 plays in the Irish Playography.

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where were new irish plays first staged?

Venue	No. of Plays	Most recent premiere
*The Abbey Theatre, Dublin	679	The Bacchae of Baghdad adapted by Conal Morrison, March 2006
The Gate Theatre, Dublin	177	The Home Place by Brian Friel, February 2005
The Project Arts Centre, Dublin	132	The Gist of it by Rodney Lee, Fishamble Theatre Company, February 2006
The Lyric Theatre, Belfast	66	1974 by Damian Gorman, January 2006
The Group Theatre, Belfast	64	Family Fever by Sam Cree, December 1968
Olympia Theatre, Dublin	50	The Crock of Gold adapted by Fiona Buffini, Storytellers, March 2006
Gaiety Theatre, Dublin	45	The Wiremen by Shay Healy, May 2005
Focus Theatre, Dublin	33	Stop the Tempo, Gianina Carunariu adapted by Paul Meade, September 2005

*Includes the plays presented at The Queens Theatre and on the Peacock Stage

irish playography

adaptations and translations 1904-2006

13.2 % of all new Irish plays are adaptations or translations

The Irish Playography contains 289 adaptations and translations, this category encompasses a wide variety of plays including versions of European plays or classic Greek drama, adaptations of novels and short stories. The most frequently adapted writer is Molière of which there are 18 versions by Irish writers as varied as Lady Gregory (4), Lord Longford (3), Derek Mahon (2), Jim Sheridan, Bernard Farrell, Harriet O'Carroll, Declan Hughes and Michael West. The most frequent adaptations are as follows:

The House of Bernarda Alba, from the play by Lorca – 4 versions

Aidan Matthews, The Gate Theatre 1989

Frank McGuinness, The Lyric Theatre 1991

Lynne Parker, Charabanc Theatre Company 1993

Sebastian Barry, The Abbey Theatre, 2003

Wuthering Heights, from the novel of Emily Bronte - 4 versions

Ria Mooney and Donald Stauffer, The Abbey Theatre 1934

John Boyd, Lyric Theatre 1988

Mary Elizabeth Burke-Kennedy, Storytellers Theatre Company 1996

Michael McCaffery, City Theatre Dublin 2006

The Picture of Dorian Gray, from the novel of Oscar Wilde – 4 versions

Micheál MacLiammóir, The Gate Theatre 1956

Sam McCready, Theatre Ulster 1989

Gavin Kostick, The Gate Theatre 1995

Zoe Seaton, Big Telly Theatre Company 2006

The most recent adaptation in the database is Eugene Onegin: the Roadshow adapted by Martin Murphy from the novel by Alexander Pushkin at the Mermaid Arts Centre, May 2006

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theatre artists production credits 1904-2006

Directors no. of new plays

Lennox Robinson	95
Hilton Edwards	69
Frank Dermody	55
Ria Mooney	55
Patrick Mason	39
Barry Cassin	35
Tomás MacAnna	28
Hugh Hunt	28
Jim Culleton	27
Caroline FitzGerald	26
Pam Brighton	26
Emelie FitzGibbon	26

Designers no. of new plays

Tomás MacAnna	47
Micheál MacLiammóir	40
Bronwen Casson	35
Robert Heade	31
Dan Fitzpatrick	29
Blaithín Sheerin	28
Wendy Shea	27
Joe Vaněk	25
Tanya Moiseiwitsch	24
Barbara Bradshaw	22
Monica Frawley	22
Carol Betera	22
Brian Collins	22
Robert Ballagh	21
Frank Conway	21

Most frequently appearing actors, female:

Eileen Crowe*
 May Craig
 Joan O'Hara
 Sara Allgood
 Kathleen Barrington
 Maureen Toal
 Angela Newman
 Shelah Richards
 Máire Ní Dhomhnaill
 Maureen Delaney

Most frequently appearing actors, male:

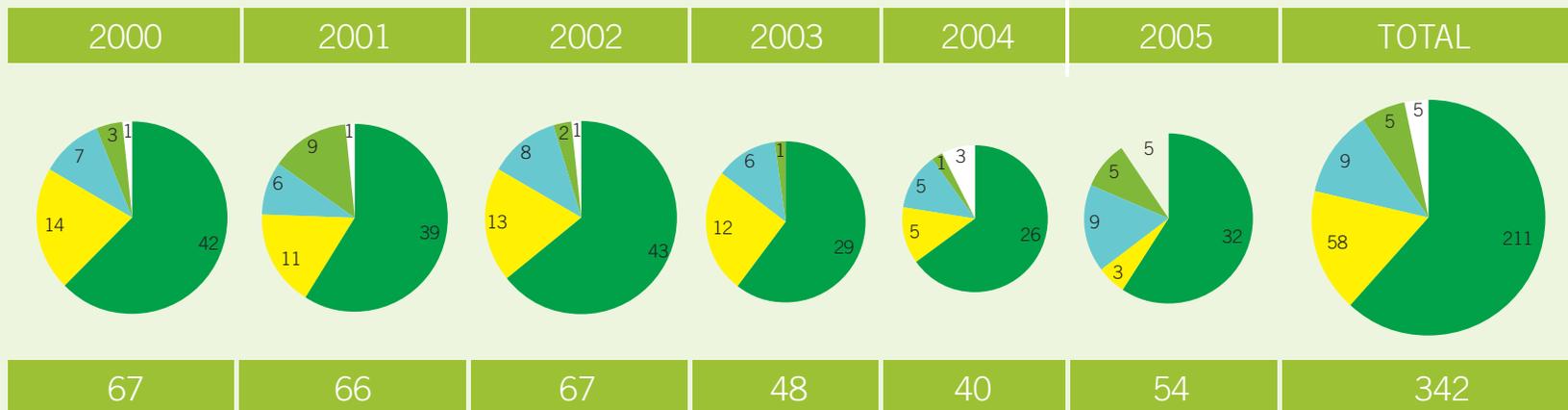
Michael J. Dolan*
 Des Cave
 Peadar Lamb
 Harry Brogan
 Edward Golden
 Geoff Golden
 Micheal O'Briain
 Micheál O hAonghusa
 F J McCormick
 Arthur Shields

* appeared in
 more than 100
 new Irish plays

Although many of the 20 actors listed above have worked with a variety of Irish theatre companies, all worked consistently as part of the Abbey Theatre company, showing the significance in terms of actor employment of the repertory company system.

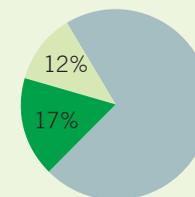
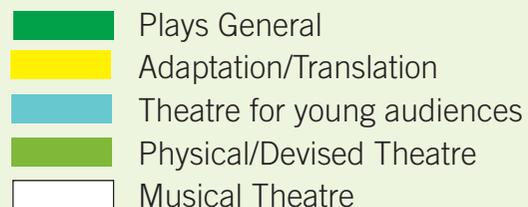
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snapshot of the present, new plays 2000-2005



PLAY TYPE*

* Please note that a play is classified as ONE of this list, so as not to misrepresent the total number of plays- though it is possible that a musical would also be devised for children, and just classified as 'musical theatre'.



12% of all new Irish plays (2000-2005) are plays for young audiences

17% of all new Irish plays (2000-2005) are translations

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snapshot of the present, new plays 2000-2005

Playwrights with three or more new plays and/or adaptations professionally produced

Owen McCafferty	7	Paul McEaney	4	Michael James Ford	3
Deirdre Kinehan	6	Tom Murphy	4	Malcolm Hamilton	3
Brian Friel	5	Joe O'Byrne	4	Nicholas Kelly	3
Gary Mitchell	5	Donal O'Kelly	3	Elizabeth Kuti	3
Mary-Elizabeth Burke-Kennedy	5	Ursula Rani Sarma	3	Gavin Kostick	3
Marie Jones	5	Arthur Riordan	3	Jimmy Murphy	3
Paul Boyd	5	Brian Moore	3	Alan Stanford	3
Raymond Scannell	5	Frank McGuinness	3	Gerard Stembridge	3
Zoe Seaton	5	Dermot Bolger	3	Paul Walker	3
Tom Swift	5	Marina Carr	3	Enda Walsh	3
Michael West	5	Darragh Carville	3		
Johnny Hanrahan	4	Jocelyn Clarke	3	42 writers	159
Sebastian Barry	4	Michael Collins	3		
Gavin Quinn	4	Roddy Doyle	3		
Brian Campbell	4	Stella Feehily	3		
Conor McPherson	4	Sarah FitzGibbon	3		

42 playwrights wrote 159 plays (46.5% of all plays produced in the period 2000-2005).

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snapshot of the present, new plays 2000-2005

The long and the short of it...

Character Numbers

Average number of characters in a new Irish play produced between 2000 - 2005 is **6.8**

10 plays with greatest number of characters

The Green Fool adapted by Declan Gorman, Upstate Theatre Company	73
Bruen's Twist by Eamonn Sweeney, Corcadorca Theatre Company	43
Cyrano de Bergerac adapted by Derek Mahon, Royal National Theatre London	39
HURL by Charlie O'Neill, Barabbas	32
Jane Eyre adapted by Alan Stanford, The Gate Theatre	31
Barbaric Comedies adapted by Frank McGuinness, The Abbey Theatre	31
Shorts (various writers), Fishamble Theatre Company	30
Lonely Hearts by Charles Richards, Observatory Lane Productions	28
The Yokohama Delegation by Tom Swift, The Performance Corporation	28
Oliver Twist adapted by Alan Stanford, The Gate Theatre	28

Number of Monologues

2000	11
2001	12
2002	4
2003	5
2004	3
2005	4
Total	39

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background to the project

The Research Parameters:

The Irish Playography provides detailed information on each new play produced in Ireland, North and South, by professional theatre companies, venues, festivals, and commercial producers from 1904 to the present day. It also contains plays produced by fringe companies and by semi-professional organisations, where the work is deemed to be of particular significance to the Irish repertoire. The Irish Playography also includes the work of key Irish playwrights whose work has been premiered abroad. The Irish Playography includes full-length plays, one-act plays, Theatre-in-Education plays, plays for young audiences, musical theatres, adaptations, translations, improvised and devised works.

Information Sources:

The information contained in www.irishplayography.com is drawn from various sources. The bulk of the information is taken from original programmes, flyers and press releases as supplied by the theatre companies and archives. Secondary sources include libraries, contemporary press cuttings, interviews with writers and other key personnel, published scripts, catalogues, magazines and academic research. Where possible, we have included a 'source of information statement' for each play, to allow users to corroborate the information, if necessary.

Irish Theatre Institute has taken great care in collating information for the Irish Playography and for this findings report, however errors or omissions may occur. We invite readers to contact us with additional information in this regard. We are particularly interested to hear from writers or other rights holders whom we have not yet tracked.

The Irish Playography project has taken five years to complete, produced by Irish Theatre Institute (formerly known as Theatre Shop)

Playography Producers 2000-2006

Siobhán Bourke and Jane Daly

Playography Director 2004-2006 Caroline Williams

Playography Director 2000-2003 Loughlin Deegan

Researchers for Phase Three were:

Patrick Leech, Ophelia Byrne, Ted Sheehy and Nick McGinley

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Ben Barnes

Phelim Donlon

Christopher Fitz-Simon

John Fairleigh

Garry Hynes

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Producers: Siobhán Bourke and Jane Daly
Research Director: Caroline Williams
Information and Events Manager: Jen Coppinger

Board: Catriona Crowe (Acting Chair), Siobhán Bourke, Loughlin Deegan,
Eugene Downes, Ali FitzGibbon, Mary Swords

Irish Theatre Institute, 7 South Great George's Street, Dublin 2
Tel + 353 1 670 4906 Fax + 353 1 670 4908
Email: admin@irishtheatreinstitute.ie
www.irishtheatreinstitute.ie

