

## **John Millington Synge**

**(1871-1909)**

John Millington Synge was born on April **16**, 1871 in Newton Billas, Rathfarnham, a suburb of Dublin. His father, John Hatch Synge, was a barrister and landowner, and a member of the Protestant Anglo-Irish class. After his father dies, he was raised by his mother, Kathleen Trail, who has a strong and narrow Evangelical views. Her father had been a rector in a Catholic village in the south of Ireland, and Synge's uncle had been a Protestant missionary to the Aran Islands, whose population was almost entirely Catholic.

In 1888, Synge entered Trinity college in Dublin, where he abandoned his religious beliefs, became interested in ancient [rich culture and language, and pursued his love of music and the violin. After graduate, he went to Germany, traveled in Italy and France, and began the study of French authors. Synge spent less than a year in Germany before he became convinced that **he** should give up music for a literary career.

On December 21, 1896, he met William Butler Yeats-the single most important event in his literary life-who advised him to make contact with the common **folk** in desolate Aran Islands **off** the Atlantic coast **of** Ireland. In the autumn of 1897, Synge experienced the first signs of Hodgkin's disease. Having Yeats's advice, Synge spent a month in the islands in the late spring of 1898 and

returned each summer for the next four years. These trips were to have a great effect on his plays, especially in an imaginativejournalistic account entitled The Aran Islands (1907).

Synge's play The Shadow of The Glen which was produced in 1903 aroused the anger of the Nationalsts because it was denounced as a libel on Irish womanhood. In 1904, he produced Riders To The Sea that was more succesful. The other play was The Tinker's Wedding that was written in 1903 and produced in 1909was considered too inflammatory. In February 1905, he produced The Well of The Saints. In January 1907, his The Playboy of The Western World provoked riot at some of the performances in Dublin and in the United States. Nevertheless, from the very start this play was recognized as a dramatic masterpiece.

At this time, Synge's health was steadily declining. He found the time and strength to draft (but not complete) Deirdre of The Sorrow and to make short trips to the Continent. On February 2, 1909, he entered Elpis Nursing Home in Dublin, where he died soon after, on March 24, 1909.

## Synopsis

Christy Mahon is a young man who comes from a distant county in the south-west and arrives in a country public-house on the west coast of Ireland. He is afraid of the police and exhausts by his long journey. The questions of the villagers makes him confesses that he has just killed his father with the blow of a loy (a long thin spade used for cutting turf or sod). Instead of condemnation and hostility, he accepts the praise of men for his courage and bravery, and the admiration of the women, especially Pegeen Mike and Widow Quin.

Christy realizes that the story of his 'murder' has made him becomes the object of admiration and it make him becomes proud of himself. Unsuspectedly, his father, Old Mahon, comes, with a bandaged head, but very much alive, and wants to take a revenge on his son. Although Widow Quin tries to help Christy to avoid his father, Old Mahon finally meets his son just after Christy has won the local sports and after Pegeen agrees to marry him, and beats him in front of the villagers. Christy feels the hostility **of** the villagers **and** Pegeen's reproaches. To recover his lost prestige and to get Pegeen's affection, he attacks his father back. But what was before a 'mythic' story, involving an unknown character in a distant place, has now become a ditty deed, involving someone they know. The villagers want to hand him to the police, but Old Mahon returns again and decides to **go** with his son. Now their roles are reversed, with Christy in charge, they appear to be reconciled at last.