PHILADELPHIA, HERE I COME!

BY BRIAN FRIEL

Study Guide

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## Contents

### Section 1  Cast and Creative Team

### Section 2  An introduction to Brian Friel and his work
- The Young Brian Friel
- PHILADELPHIA, HERE I COME!

### Section 3  Inside the rehearsal room
- Rehearsal diary by Assistant Director, Hannah Price
- Pre-production work
- Table work
- Rehearsal notes
- An interview with Paul Reid and Rory Keenan, playing Gar in Public and Gar in Private
- An interview with Lyndsey Turner, Director

### Section 4  PHILADELPHIA, HERE I COME! in performance
- Practical exercises based on an extract from the play
- Questions on the production and further practical work

### Section 5  Ideas for further study
- Reading and research
- Bibliography
- Endnotes
## Cast (in order of speaking)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valerie Lilley</td>
<td>Madge, ‘The housekeeper… She is a woman in her sixties. She walks as if her feet were precious.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paul Reid</td>
<td>Gar in Public, ‘Public Gar is the Gar that people see, talk to, talk about.’ Mid-twenties.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rory Keenan</td>
<td>Gar in Private, ‘Private Gar is the unseen man, the man within, the conscience, the alter ego, the secret thoughts, the id.’</td>
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<td>James Hayes</td>
<td>S.B. O’Donnell, ‘He is in his late sixties… A responsible, respectable citizen.’ A shopkeeper and Gar’s father.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laura Donnelly</td>
<td>Kate Doogan, Gar’s age, his ex-girlfriend.</td>
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<td>Ruairi Conaghan</td>
<td>Senator Doogan, Kate’s father.</td>
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<td>Master Boyle, ‘He is handsome, defiant… His eyes, head, hands, arms are constantly moving… His eyes roam around the room but see nothing.’ Gar’s former teacher.</td>
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<td>Con Sweeney, ‘In the fifty-five to sixty region… Irish-American… A quiet, patient man.’ Gar’s uncle.</td>
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<td>Character</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Julia Swift</td>
<td>Lizzie Sweeney, <em>In the fifty-five to sixty region... Irish-American... She is an energetic woman, heavily made-up, impulsive... Garrulous... She has the habit of putting her arm around, or catching the elbow of, the person she is addressing.</em> Con’s wife and Gar’s aunt.</td>
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| Benny Young       | Ben Burton, *In the fifty-five to sixty region... American.* Con and Lizzie’s friend.  
                                | Canon Mick O’Byrne, *A lean, white man with alert eyes and a thin mouth.* A similar age to S.B. |
| Killan Burke      | Ned, *The leader of the group* and rival to Gar for The Boys’ attention.     |
| Dylan Kennedy     | Joe, *The youngest of the trio, and not yet fully committed to the boys’ way of life, is torn between fealty to Ned and Tom and a spontaneous and simple loneliness over Gar’s departure... His loyalty is divided. He is patently gauche, innocent and obvious.* |
| Conor Macneil     | Tom, Ned’s ‘feed-man, subserviently watching for every cue’.                  |
Creative Team

Lyndsey Turner Director

Lyndsey is Associate Director at Sheffield Theatres.


Rob Howell Designer

For the Donmar: *Proof, How I Learned to Drive, The Fix, Habeas Corpus, The Glass Menagerie, True West* (also New York).


Opera: includes *Carmen* (New York), *Sophie’s Choice* (Royal Opera House), *The Turn of the Screw* (Welsh National Opera).
Tim Lutkin  Lighting Designer

Trained:  Guildhall School of Music & Drama.

For the Donmar:  as Assistant Lighting Designer The Late Middle Classes.

Theatre: includes The Dark at the Top of the Stairs (Coventry Belgrade), Our Brother David (Watford Palace), The Wondershow! (Roundhouse), The Go Between (West Yorkshire Playhouse/ Theatre Royal, Northampton), Calendar Girls (UK tour), Brontë (Shared Experience), The Rime of the Ancient Mariner (Southbank Centre), Megan Mullally & Supreme Music Program, Alan Cumming: I Bought a Blue Car Today (Vaudeville), Party (Arts), My Dad’s a Birdman (Sheffield Crucible), That Face (Tron), Restoration (Salisbury Playhouse), Fuchsia (White Bear), Lucky You (Assembly Rooms).

As Associate to Hugh Vanstone includes Matilda (RSC/ Cambridge), Ghost (New York/Piccadilly), The Wizard of Oz (Palladium), La Bête (Comedy), Deathtrap (Noël Coward), God of Carnage (Gielgud/UK tour), Boeing-Boeing (UK tour), The Real Thing (Old Vic).

Opera: includes The Calling of Maisy Day (Welsh National Opera).

Christopher Shutt  Sound Designer

For the Donmar:  The Prince of Homburg, Piaf, Hecuba, The Man Who Had All the Luck.

Theatre: includes Timon of Athens, The Last of the Haussmans, The Comedy of Errors, War Horse – Tony Award (also Broadway), Emperor and Galilean, The White Guard, Burnt by the Sun, Every Good Boy Deserves Favour, Philistines, Happy Days, Coram Boy (also Broadway), A Dream Play, The PowerBook, Humble Boy, Play Without Words, Albert Speer, Not About Nightingales – Drama Desk Award, Machinal (NT), A Disappearing Number, Elephant Vanishes, A Minute Too Late, Mnemonic – Drama Desk Award, The Street of Crocodiles, The Three Lives of Lucie Cabrol, The Caucasian Chalk Circle (Complicité), The Tempest, The Comedy of Errors, Twelfth Night, King Lear, Much Ado About Nothing, King John, Romeo and Juliet (RSC), The Playboy of the Western World, All About My Mother (Old Vic), A Moon for the Misbegotten (Old Vic/ New York), The School for Scandal, All My Sons, The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui (New York), Julius Caesar (Barbican), Judgement Day (Almeida), Kin, Aunt Dan and Lemon, Serious Money, Road (Royal Court), The Caretaker (Sheffield Crucible), Nocturnal (Gate), Far Away (Bristol Old Vic), The Bacchae, Little Otik (National Theatre of Scotland).
Michael Bruce Composer

Michael is Composer in Residence at the Donmar. He was previously Resident Composer at the Bush Theatre and the recipient of the Notes for the Stage Prize for song writing.

For the Donmar: The Physicists, The Recruiting Officer.

Theatre: includes Events While Guarding the Bofors Gun (Finborough), Blue Heart Afternoon (Hampstead), Noises Off (Old Vic/Novello), 24 Hour Plays (Old Vic), Sixty-Six Books (Bush), The Pied Piper and Musicians of Bremen (Roundhouse), Much Ado About Nothing (Wyndham’s), Men Should Weep (NT), Ed: The Musical (Edinburgh Fringe/Trafalgar Studios), Michael Bruce at the Apollo (Apollo), The Great British Country Fete (UK tour/ Latitude Festival/Bush), Christmas in New York (Lyric/Prince of Wales).

Orchestrations and arrangements: include Friday Night Is Music Night (BBC Radio 2), Ruthie Henshall in Concert (Guildhall), Helena Blackman: The Sound of Rodgers and Hammerstein.

Ann Yee Movement Director

For the Donmar: The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, Novecento (Trafalgar Studios).

Theatre: includes Torch Song Trilogy (Menier Chocolate Factory), The Duchess of Malfi (Old Vic), After Miss Julie (Young Vic), She Stoops to Conquer, The Comedy of Errors (NT), A Soldier in Every Son (RSC), God of Soho (Globe), Orpheus & Eurydice (NTY/Old Vic Tunnels), American Trade, Silence (RSC/ Hampstead), King Lear (RSC/ Roundhouse/New York), The Secret Garden, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (Birmingham Rep/West Yorkshire Playhouse), Ingerland (Operashots/Royal Opera House), Salome (Headlong/UK tour), Pericles, Much Ado About Nothing (Regent’s Park), Piranha Heights, Shraddha, This Isn’t Romance (Soho), Dance Radio, Mates (Latitude Festival/Drywrite), Eric’s (Liverpool Everyman), Romeo and Juliet (Middle Temple Hall), Oxford Street (Royal Court), Bad Girls the Musical (Garrick), Angels in America (Lyric Hammersmith/UK tour), Bent (Trafalgar Studios), Hair, Big Love (Gate), Woyzeck (New York/Gate), The Odyssey (Lyric Hammersmith/Bristol Old Vic), The Magic Carpet (Lyric Hammersmith), Food (Traverse/UK tour), Sex, Chips & Rock ‘n’ Roll (Manchester Royal Exchange).
An introduction to Brian Friel and his work

The young Brian Friel

Brian Friel is an Irish writer, generally considered to be the greatest living English-language dramatist and often described as an ‘Irish Chekhov’, after the celebrated Russian playwright Anton Chekhov (1860–1904). He has written more than thirty plays in a career spanning six decades, the most celebrated of which include Philadelphia, Here I Come! (1964), Faith Healer (1979), Translations (1980) and Dancing at Lughnasa (1990).

Friel’s plays have premiered in Dublin, London and New York and been seen by audiences around the world. Some have subsequently been adapted into films, notably 1998’s Dancing at Lughnasa starring Meryl Streep. He has won numerous awards, including Tony, New York Drama Critics Circle and Laurence Olivier awards in the ‘Best Play’ category. In 2006 Friel was elected Saoi – ‘Wise One’ – of Aosdána, the highest honour of this exclusive association of Irish artists.

Born on 9th January, 1929 in Killyclogher, near the town of Omagh in County Tyrone – in the then recently established Northern Ireland – Brian Patrick Friel was the only son of Patrick and Mary Friel, a primary school headteacher and postmistress respectively. Friel was born into an extended family of aunts – six in total – who had a strong influence on the boy, and later writer, as evidenced by plays such as Dancing at Lughnasa.
The Friels were Catholics in the predominantly Protestant Northern Ireland, placing them on the margins of society. The Catholic community was largely excluded, or otherwise held in extreme suspicion. ‘There were certain areas one didn’t go,’ Friel recollects of his childhood. ‘This was a terrifying experience, because if the Protestant boys caught you in this kind of no-man’s land, they’d kill you… That sort of thing leaves scars for the rest of one’s life.’ The sectarian atmosphere encouraged the Catholic community’s tendency towards nationalism and an allegiance to the Republic of Ireland in the south, then the ‘Free State’. Friel’s father was a member of the Nationalist Party and a councillor for the Catholic districts of Derry City, known to the Protestant Northern Irish as ‘Londonderry’. All of Friel’s grandparents were Irish-speakers, many of whom couldn’t read, which meant the writer was more closely connected to an older, pre-literate culture than many of his contemporaries; what Tony Coult describes as a ‘peasant’ culture. Friel attended his father’s school, Culmore Primary, recalling his headteacher-father’s frustration with his struggles to understand algebra. (Ironically, Friel would later become a maths teacher.) He then moved to St Columb’s College, where near-contemporaries included prominent Nationalist politician John Hume and fellow writer Seamus Heaney, ten years his junior. Friel and Heaney have remained lifelong friends.

In a talk given in 1972, entitled Self-Portrait, Friel reflected on his education: ‘For about fifteen years I was taught by a succession of men who force-fed me with information, who cajoled me, beat me, threatened me, coaxed me to swallow their puny little pies of knowledge and attitudes.’
A clear indication of the ‘absolute centrality’ of Catholic religion to Irish culture, argues Tony Coult, is the fact that so many men of Friel’s generation trained for the priesthood. In 1945, aged 16, Friel enrolled at St Patrick’s College in Maynooth, near Dublin. He later described his time there as ‘an awful experience’, refusing to speak about it publicly. Coult counterpoints the austere all-male environment of the seminary with the caring female companionship of Friel’s aunts back home, and suggests that the young student’s enquiring mind would have struggled in a regime of unquestioning faith. ‘It nearly drove me cracked,’ Friel admitted. ‘I don’t know if one ever recovers totally from an immense experience of this nature.’

His education continued with a one-year course at St Joseph’s and St Mary’s Teacher Training College, graduating in 1950 and following his father into the teaching profession. Friel’s career began in schools run by the Christian Brothers, a traditional religious order established to educate intelligent boys from deprived backgrounds. In his Self-Portrait, Friel reflects with regret on his time as a teacher: ‘What I was doing was putting boys in for maths exams and getting them through. In fact I fancied myself as a teacher because I worked hard at teaching the tricks and the poodle dogs became excellent performers.’ He subsequently taught in primary schools, again like his father, an environment that he felt suited him better.

For the next ten years, from 1950 until 1960, Friel made his living as a teacher while finding a creative outlet through the writing of short stories. From 1952 he was under contract to the New Yorker magazine in America, thus supplementing his modest income from teaching. Those stories that weren’t accepted by this publication, Friel was able to sell to its rival the Saturday Evening Post. Thirty years later, in 1982, the writer recalled his reasons for stopping writing short stories: ‘It was at the point when I recognised how difficult they were. It would have meant a whole reappraisal… That maybe there was a need for a discovery of a voice and that I was just echoing someone else.’

Friel turned his attention to drama instead. His early plays were written predominantly for radio; a medium, suggests Coult, close to the short story in providing direct access to a character’s ‘interior world’. In this, Friel followed a similar route to his English contemporaries Harold Pinter and Tom Stoppard. ‘Many playwrights who grew up listening to the radio in the 1950s found it a resource of great technical and imaginative freedom,’ Coult explains, linking this directly to Friel’s development as a playwright: ‘If you can hear a person’s inner thought spoken, you can hear the distance between that thought and what he or she says in public. You are thus well set up to explore the distance between Private and Public, the very heart technically and emotionally of Friel’s breakthrough play Philadelphia, Here I Come!’

Between 1958 and 1962 BBC Northern Ireland produced four of Friel’s radio plays and, along with his short stories, the writer had experienced what he described as ‘pale’ success by the beginning of the 1960s, when he gave up teaching to pursue writing full-time. This was a decision with considerable risk; the writer was also a husband and father with a family to support. Friel had married Anne Morrison in 1954 and by this time they had two young children. The couple, who remain married to this day, would go on to have a total of four daughters and one son. Throughout this period the struggling writer earned extra money by writing articles for the Dublin-based Irish Press; an eclectic mix of short stories, memoirs, travelogues and commentaries on life in Northern Ireland.
It was Tyrone Guthrie, the Anglo-Irish director and radio drama pioneer, who transformed Friel's fortunes, helping him become an internationally recognised playwright. Friel had written two plays for the stage – *A Doubtful Paradise* at the Ulster Group Theatre (1959) and *The Blind Mice* at the Eblana Theatre in Dublin (1963) – before *The Enemy Within* at the prestigious Abbey Theatre in Dublin in 1962, the earliest play that Friel will acknowledge, brought him to the attention of Guthrie. Impressed by the emerging writer's work, the impresario invited him to come and observe the work at his new Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1963.

Taking his wife and children with him, Friel spent six months in the mid-western state of America, totally immersed in the art and craft of theatre. Friel describes himself as ‘skulking about in the gloom of the back seats’, looking and learning, finding an identity that fitted his perception of himself as an artist when an actor described him simply as ‘an observer’. ‘That fortuitous christening,’ Friel later commented, ‘gave me not only an identity but a dignity.’

‘“Observer” was the happiest word the actor could have chosen,’ observe Richard Eyre and Nicholas Wright. ‘It conveys Friel’s reticence, his coolness and the x-ray quality of his writing: there’s no fact so solid but it will, if studied hard, dissolve to reveal a tissue of possible fact beneath.’

At the Guthrie Theatre Friel observed rehearsals for *Hamlet*, Molière’s *The Miser* and *The Three Sisters* by Anton Chekhov. It was essentially a practical education in the ‘iron discipline’ of theatre. ‘I discovered a dedication and a nobility and a selflessness that one associates with a theoretical priesthood,’ explains Friel. He learnt about ‘the mechanics of playwriting and play production’, of which, by his own admission, he had previously been ignorant.

‘I learned, in Guthrie’s own words, that theatre is an attempt to create something which will, if only for a brief moment, transport a few fellow travellers on our strange, amusing, perilous journey… I learned that the playwright’s first function is to entertain, to have audiences enjoy themselves, to move them emotionally, to make them laugh and cry and gasp and hold their breath and sit on the edge of their seats.’

The country itself had an equally significant effect on the young writer. ‘The old relationship between Ireland and America, with all its overtones of escape and liberation, now became concrete in Friel’s life,’ explains Coult. Friel later assessed the trip’s impact on him: ‘Those months in America gave me a sense of liberation – remember, this was my first parole from inbred claustrophobic Ireland – and that sense of liberation conferred on me a valuable self-confidence and a necessary perspective.’

On his return to Ireland, Friel soon completed the play that was to establish his reputation as a leading contemporary dramatist.
PHILADELPHIA, HERE I COME!

*Philadelphia, Here I Come!* premiered at the Gaiety Theatre in Dublin in 1964 as part of the Dublin Theatre Festival and was soon proclaimed a hit by critics and audiences alike. Another production was staged the following year, leading to the play’s enormous success on Broadway in 1966. Friel was recognised and applauded in Dublin, London and New York.

The play is set on the eve of Gar O’Donnell’s departure for America. The young man is leaving the Ireland of his childhood in pursuit of a dream, the American Dream – of Coca-Colas, Cadillacs and girls. He’s leaving his family and friends, everything known and familiar, swapping the stultifying Ballybeg – Friel’s fictitious ‘Small Town’ – for the freedom of ‘The City of Brotherly Love’. On Gar’s last night at home a series of visitations, both real and imagined, force the young man to confront the choices he’s made, as he looks towards the promise of the future and a new beginning while searching for the strength to say goodbye.

‘This is a play about exile,’ states Tony Coult, ‘that quintessential Irish experience.’ As others have asserted, this is a recurring theme for the playwright. ‘Emigration was the starting-point for Friel,’ comment Richard Eyre and Nicholas Wright.

Colm Tóibín expounds on this: The secret history of Ireland over the last one hundred and fifty years is exile and emigration. No matter what changed, each generation lost people they loved. Often they went when they were young and returned seldom or not at all. Any reckoning within Ireland, any dramatisation of its emotional contours, has to include that idea.
Emigrants sought new lives near and far, from England to Australia, but America remained ‘the land of dreams’. By the time Friel wrote *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* in the early 1960s popular culture, via the mass media, had raised the profile of the American Dream among many young people around the world. It was especially potent to the Irish. ‘American movies, TV, pop songs, car design, fast food all stood for a vigorous, exciting modernity, embracing materialist pleasure,’ explains Coult, ‘the very opposite of the deep-rooted culture of rural Ireland, with its history of dark and bloody struggles, its religious culture founded in guilt and redemption, and its people’s reassuring identification with the landscape.’

‘In America, your descendants can become President, as an audience would have been vividly aware in 1964 when the play was first produced,’ adds Tóibín. ‘In Britain, on the other hand, there is no chance that anyone belonging to you can become King or Queen. In Britain, the Irish worked in factories or digging tunnels. In America, they did this too, but the myth was that they could become a millionaire, a figure of power and glamour.’

‘You’re doing the right thing, of course. You’ll never regret it,’ reassures Gar’s old teacher, Master Boyle, the night before the young man’s departure. ‘I gather it’s a vast restless place that doesn’t give a curse about the past; and that’s the way things should be. Impermanence and anonymity – it offers great attractions.’ He counsels his former pupil to fully embrace his new homeland: ‘I suggest that you strike out on your own as soon as you find your feet out there. Don’t keep looking back over your shoulder. Be one hundred per cent American.’

Later Gar echoes these words in an emotional outburst, full of confused longing and regret, aimed at his lost love, Kate. ‘All this sentimental rubbish about “homeland” and “birthplace” – yap! Bloody yap! Impermanence – anonymity – that’s what I’m looking for; a vast restless place that doesn’t give a damn about the past. To hell with Ballybeg, that’s what I say!’

If *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* is ultimately about exile, suggests Coult, ‘It is also a play about the different worlds that Gar is exiled from.’ These include his native Ireland, the prospective America – with its lure and inaccessibility – and his own past, in particular childhood memories of his father. ‘The power of fathers’ is another recurring theme in the playwright’s work, according to Richard Eyre and Nicholas Wright. ‘Mothers are usually a background presence.’ In *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* Gar’s mother is dead before the play begins, having died a few days after his birth. Her death, says Tóibín, ‘haunts’ the play.

Coult corroborates Eyre and Wright’s perspective: ‘Friel’s drama is peopled with father figures who have problematic relationships with sons.’ In the last scene of the play, Gar tries desperately to connect with his father, a remote and taciturn man, recalling a day out together years before:

‘Do you remember – it was an afternoon in May – oh, fifteen years ago – I don’t remember every detail but some things are as vivid as can be: the boat was blue and the paint was peeling... and you had given me your hat and had put your jacket round my shoulders because there had been a shower of rain... and maybe we had been chatting – I don’t remember – it doesn’t matter – but between us at that moment there was this embracing happiness, this rich content – you must have felt it too – although nothing was being said – just the two of us fishing on a lake on a showery day – and young as I was I felt, I knew, that this was a precious day.’
But the young man discovers that memory is subject to the vagaries of time. ‘A yawning gap opens up between Gar’s happy certainty, warmed by the nostalgia of childhood, and his father’s indifferent and ineffective memory of the fishing trip,’ explains Coult. ‘In the uncertainty of what the past contains, all kinds of other anxieties about the present and future flood in.’

Friel conceived a clever conceit to depict Gar’s inner struggle, a theatrical device so effective in its seeming simplicity it’s easy to overlook how innovative it was at the time: two actors play his ‘Public’ and ‘Private’ selves. ‘Friel’s plays are rich in mirror-images,’ comment Eyre and Wright. ‘In all his work Brian Friel has been fascinated by the theatrical possibilities of the double,’ adds Tóibín, ‘the figure in exile from self, or community, or family… A powerful private self, a secret double, filled with locked feelings.’

While his earlier play The Enemy Within (1962) contained no such formal experiments, it did centre on a character trying to reconcile ‘the demands of the public man with his private needs’ observes Coult. However, it’s in Philadelphia, Here I Come! that Friel invents ‘the remarkable formal device… to allow us access to the theatricalised inner life of the character’.

Coult considers the device’s origins, as well as placing it in the context of contemporary – early 1960s – psychology: ‘It is a device of the theatre, and in one sense is at least as old as the good and evil angels of the medieval mystery plays. On the other hand, it is a modernist ploy in that it embraces and gives form to the idea of the inner mind as a separate entity, operating by itself and able to comment on the actions of the “outer” being that is the social and physical manifestation of personality.’ This formal experiment was only possible following the work of Sigmund Freud at the turn of the twentieth century, a fact alluded to in Friel’s own notes at the beginning of the play:

‘The two Gars, Public Gar and Private Gar, are two views of the one man. Public Gar is the Gar that people see, talk to, talk about. Private Gar is the unseen man, the man within, the conscience, the alter ego, the secret thoughts,'
the id. Private Gar, the spirit, is invisible to everybody, always. Nobody except Public Gar hears him talk. But even Public Gar, although he talks to Private Gar occasionally, never sees him and never looks at him. One cannot look at one’s alter ego.

Tóibín suggests of all the playwright’s characters, ‘Gar Public is the most innocent’. He draws a parallel between the young man and possibly Shakespeare’s most famous protagonist: ‘Just as in the court of Denmark where Hamlet is forced to double himself, to put an antic disposition on all the more to feel alienation and grief, Gar’s using a public and private self seems less a theatrical device than a necessary strategy. Just as Hamlet is maimed by his father’s death, the death of Gar’s mother haunts Friel’s play. To be a single self in this world of palpable absences is to have lost everything. Either you are double or you are nothing.’

Philadelphia, Here I Come! retains its status as a major turning point in Irish drama, marking a transition from the ‘peasant plays’ of Friel’s predecessors to work addressing the concerns of a younger generation, in keeping with other developments in English-language theatre, especially at the Royal Court Theatre in London. ‘Finally, the play works because it transcends the parochialism of Irish society,’ suggests Coult, ‘and speaks for all adolescents who yearn to escape from a dull, authoritarian historical legacy to find their freedom, at the same time as fearing to lose contact with roots, with security, with locality.’
Week one of rehearsals for *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* is nearly at a close. I sit here on Saturday morning finishing this report in a movement session led by Ann Yee. This morning I have already hugged various cast members for what felt like an inordinately long time – with my eyes closed, working out where our bodies touched. This was mildly less alarming than Wednesday’s session, in which Ann, Paul Reid (Gar in Public), Rory Keenan (Gar in Private) and I participated in ‘intense’ or ‘unconventional hugging’. I have learnt that ‘intense hugging’ breaks barriers. More of that later.

The title of the play ends with an exclamation mark. It announces itself! It bursts out of the page! And this week our rehearsals can be announced with a bang! They can be exclaimed! What a week!

Day one and the ‘Meet and Greet’ over Lyndsey takes us straight into the action. We record the first episode onto computer and play back the soundtrack. Each actor is asked to listen to themselves and hear their own emotional narrative. They must move with the emotional content: forward towards another character, away from them, or stay where they are. Immediately we see connections, impulses, instincts. The characters of Public and Private are illuminated intensely. What Public wants but cannot follow, Private can take. What Public pretends, Private reveals. Throughout the week we continue this process.

Our week has also been structured by discovery. We’ve been working through the play page-by-page. We read it aloud, the cast taking it in turns to read each line and stage direction – each person reading whatever line appears next, not waiting for their own. At the end of the page we work through what we have discovered. What are the facts we’ve learnt? What are the questions we have? Each page throws up more questions. By the end of the week, we have a list of facts and unanswered questions for each episode. By combing through the play in this way we are able to create a comprehensive view of the world we are in, and are safe that we have more knowledge to come. We have created a spider’s web of information that sits beneath us like a cradle – we have spun a net that already informs all of our decisions.

To supplement our facts and questions we have also shared our research with each other. Lyndsey and I disseminated what we had learnt, and the actors took tasks of their own. We now know all about Philadelphia in 1963 and 1964; what a housekeeper’s life was like in Ireland in the early 1960s; what a Canon is; how the ‘Mysteries’ work; what the economic and educational situation was like in Ireland at this time; and much, much more.
We have also had some extraordinary visitors. Ann Yee bounded into the room and created an extraordinary physical connection between Public and Private. Tim Charrington has started us on a journey to perfecting our ‘Donegalese’. Michael Bruce and Tim Lutkin opened our ears as well as our minds, bringing music into the space.

So here I sit, and in front of me I can see our younger cast members gelling together – becoming a generation of young people who have known each other all their lives. And it all started with a hug... An intense hug.

This week has been extraordinary. It has announced itself with a bang! So I will say it – we are at the end of week one!
There’s a word in the play that is said over and over again – forty-two times in total. It is the word ‘time’. Within the play time is an element that is both ever-present and completely elusive. Sometimes fully-formed, it props the characters up, moving them towards their destination. At other times, it folds in on itself and thrusts memory to the fore. This week we have seen how building our world has also built our sense of time. As we collect and finalise our facts list and further construct our building, each room gets a clock and each clock is starting to be set.

We start the week with a session from Ann Yee. The two Gars are becoming more and more interconnected and are moving on from their monikers of ‘Public’ and ‘Private’ to a level of performance where they are not halves of the same man, but both wholly and simultaneously Gareth O’Donnell. Both boys are Gar and both sets of needs and wants are what Gar needs and wants. Like anyone, Gar can feel, want, need and think two different things at the same time, and like anyone, our Gar is a complex mix of several needs at the same time.

By the end of the week we are in a position to draw up a list of what Gar in Private can and cannot do, a list that we can refine and build on as rehearsals continue. Gar in Private cannot see anything Gar in Public can’t see; Gar in Private can be sent ahead but cannot know ahead; Gar in Private can go anywhere – through walls, up walls, over anything; Gar in Private can become anything Public wants him to become; Gar in Private can be angry, frustrated, annoyed and upset by Gar in Public; Gar in Private doesn’t always lead. These rules will help us move through the coming weeks as the play is put on its feet.

The rules and increased sense of interconnectedness take us to a new level of our ‘Record-and-Move’ exercise. We re-record the episodes and play them back to the cast, this time allowing more physical action between the Gars. The result is phenomenal and inspiring. They wrap themselves around each other, move from protecting each other to wanting to push each other away, they curl up in a ball of despair. And yet each moment is a reflexive moment, mirrored, developed, understood or shared with the other.
We are lucky enough to have another visit from Michael Bruce. Michael works through the play, musical reference by musical reference, literally helping the boys to find their voice. The musicality of the play is revealed and the hyper self-awareness that accompanies singing in public is reduced. The two Gars hum, whistle, liit, croon, sing, swing and waltz their way through the play. By arming them with their musical references early, these references become the ‘ear worms’ that are in the script – second nature, spontaneous, easy to bring to mind, and a part of the overall action rather than an accompaniment to it.

The rest of the week is taken up with splitting the script into beats separated by events; an event in which everyone in the room is affected. These events can be as simple as someone entering the room, or as complicated as an unexpected comment that splits the soul. By marking the events of the play and how they affect the characters, the passage of time is revealed. The play has a fatalistic elegance that is refracted through Gar’s inner life. As we mark the events in the play we see how time marches inexorably on.
Philadelphia, Here I Come! is a play in which much of what is thought or felt isn’t given voice. Throughout the piece thwarted desires are left silent. The play develops with the same dynamic as a piece about unrequited love; only in this instance, it is the feelings of a father and a son for one another and for their troubled past, which remain unuttered.

This week we’ve been working on what is left unsaid, or what is actually meant by what is voiced in the play. This has developed directly from our work so far. Last week we used our discoveries about back-story, shared history and the world to help us segment the play into events, events which affect all those on stage at that time. This week has seen us comb through this structure, discovering each character’s intention within each event. This has brought an extraordinary clarity to the more oblique moments, allowing us to access the piece from the bottom up.

Outlining intentions has created an extraordinary density. Working with ‘The Boys’ – Killian Burke (Ned), Conor MacNeill (Tom) and Dylan Kennedy (Joe) – gives us a great example of this. As Ned and Tom finish relating a well-told story – a yarn that only vaguely resembles the events it is based upon – the boys fall into silence, punctuated for the audience by Private’s version of what actually happened that day. By working so closely on intentions, the silence is coloured with what each boy is thinking. And they are very clearly all thinking the same thing, a thought that no one voices.
As we complete the work on intentions we stand the play up. This proves an exceptionally easy transition. The actors have already been immersed in the world of the play and have an extremely strong sense of what their characters are doing at any given moment and what they are trying to achieve. Translating this into a physical action feels safe. Getting to our feet happens naturally, so we almost don’t notice we’ve done it. Lyndsey encourages the cast to ‘have a go’.

They run something – at first, anything. We then go back, going over the section with adjustments, suggestions, new thoughts and ideas. Each element we run starts to gain a shape, a momentum of its own, imbued with the history we have created, resting fully on the structure of events and intentions we have found. Each section is examined with ‘What ifs?’ and are checked against a sense of what is possible. Finding Private and Public’s moments in particular rests on the idea of the possible. Who is leading whom and when? Can we see that event more clearly? If your intention is to X, then what Y might you use to achieve that?

The play is underscored with meaning and enlivened with thought. Like a score, using events and intentions allows the cast to access the rhythms that run through the play and bring it to life.

This week has seen the play take palpable shape. Our concentration has been on standing the piece up, running sections over and over and working through them. We work methodically and we work closely, but with freedom. Each event is revisited and the intentions within that event enlivened. We work directly from our previously created structure. Each new piece of blocking is rooted firmly in the work on intentions, which rests on events, which rely on the back-story work.

The play is being constructed like a building and in the final production the foundations will be as important as the top line. This sense of security allows the cast to play, to find shapes through trying things out. We talk of ‘proposals’ and ‘solutions’. We follow proposals to logical conclusions and then set our shapes. We then put them aside for further scrutiny.

Our work with the two Gars has also continued, using the intentions but also following impulses within the piece. The Gars are labelled ‘Public’ and ‘Private’ and their relationship is as complicated as this suggests. Who leads whom? Does a stimuli that affects the body inspire the brain? Or does the brain always lead the body? Where does instinct exist in this? Is there room for impulsive behaviour in a world where our inner thoughts are laid out?

The public and private sides of Gar are not always linear. Public isn’t just a body led literally by the nose. Private doesn’t know more than Public or represent unconscious desires. Exactly like anyone’s inner thoughts, the Gars bounce off each other. Sometimes Public Gar’s vocalizations are ahead of Private’s summations, revealing how we often surprise ourselves. Private is sometimes the mocking voice we want to get rid of. Sometimes a worry and sometimes a calming influence, telling us to breathe.

Lyndsey sets up a premise for each action the Gar’s make – it must be led by something clear. We work through the first part of the play, following these impulses, working out what is leading the action. As the boys get into this idea,
amazing things start to happen. A fantasy about a military presence is created from an accidental marching action; packing some smart shoes brings out a daydream about becoming a senator; an unwelcome thought leads to both Gars jerking suddenly upright, shaking the thought away; a discovery of a letter sees Public Gar pray and Private Gar peel away a second version of the newspaper to file away as memory.

The shapes of the play are being set. As we work through the play we are seeing the production emerge. Week five will crystallise this.
Week Five is at a close. I am writing this on Monday of Week Six – ‘Tech Week’. We have finished our rehearsals and are preparing to move into the theatre.

As with all rehearsal periods, the last week is focused on assembling, putting the show together, running it and working through sections of the play that need refining. The week starts with three days close work on each ‘Episode’: Tuesday for Episode One, Wednesday for Two and Thursday for Three. For us, our interval comes in the middle of Episode Two. This means that the split we’ll see in the theatre is not where the interval was originally intended. Originally there were two intervals, one at the end of each Episode. Running the Episodes as the script suggests allows us to keep the energy of the sections up, high and complete. When we go on to run the entire show, this work is clear to see. The through lines of each episode are satisfying and clear.

On Friday we run the whole play for the first time. Lyndsey is very clear that this is a run designed to flush out problems: to show where a move doesn’t quite work, or is over complicated; to reveal where intentions and events have been lost or don’t work in the thrust of the piece. It is an extraordinary thing to see. The play is deeply moving and very funny. Paul Reid (Gar in Public) and Rory Keenan (Gar in Private) are wonderful to watch. Moments of complete theatrical satisfaction come when we see that Rory is saying what Paul is thinking. It also becomes clear how little actually happens: an evening in a house with some visitors. This is essentially what we see. What is extraordinary about this house and this man, however, is our access to his innermost thoughts.

There are also some wobbles. The nerves of a first run knock some off their lines a little. But what is crucial is that the play is whole and complete in the best possible way. What we have seen is an extraordinary production slowly being born.

On Saturday we run through notes from Friday and it’s fascinating to watch how these are received and processed. As with all companies, this one has its own specific tone. Here is it open and sharing with a strong sense of thoughtfulness. The cast listen to and take on each other’s notes. We can see them growing together and understanding how to grow their own performances in the overall arch of the production.

Saturday afternoon sees another run and the change is fantastic: tighter, more specific and less nervy. Saturday’s run illuminates a completely different set of ideas. Here we can see more clearly where a narrative push is tailing off, or where a relationship between two characters is sitting.

Today we were back in our lovely bright rehearsal room for the last time. This morning we continued out work with Ann Yee, tightening transitions. We then ran notes and did another run. This last run in the rehearsal room was a revelation: tight, light, specific. We can see the production clearly. I can’t wait to get into tech, add that last wonderful layer that the creatives have been working on as we rehearsed, and see this brilliant show onto the stage.
Pre-production work

As Assistant Director, part of Hannah Price’s pre-production work – in consultation with director Lyndsey Turner – was the preparation of a ‘Research’ pack; a 37-page document attempting to answer any question about the play that might be asked in rehearsal. These ranged from ‘What documents would you need to emigrate to the US?’, through ‘What is plug tobacco?’ to ‘What was the economic situation of Ireland in the 1960s?’

Below are two further examples. The first relates to the title of the play and a lyric which Gar sings throughout: ‘Philadelphia, here I come, right back where I started from…’

Where is the line ‘Philadelphia, here I come, right back where I started from’ from?

This appears to be a play on the famous tune, ‘California, Here I Come’ written for the 1921 Broadway musical Bombo, starring Al Jolson. The song was written by Buddy DeSylva and Joseph Meyer, with Jolson listed as co-author. Jolson recorded the song in 1924. It is often called the unofficial state song of California. A gramophone recording of this song can be found at this link.

The second, longer example addresses a more puzzling phrase, repeated by both Public and Private at regular intervals throughout the play: ‘It was now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the Queen of France, then the Dauphiness, at Versailles!’

**Edmund Burke: On the Death of Marie Antoinette (1793)**

In October 1793, Marie Antoinette, the downfallen Queen of France, was beheaded amid the violent aftermath of the French Revolution. By that time, Irish statesman and orator Edmund Burke (1729-1797) had become an outspoken critic of the Revolutionaries’ ongoing reign of terror. Persons of Royal ancestry in France were subject to arbitrary imprisonment and execution, along with anyone accused of siding or sympathising with them. In this speech, Burke laments the death of the Queen and the passing of an era:

‘It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the Queen of France, then the Dauphiness, at Versailles; and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she had just begun to move in, glittering like the morning star full of life and splendor and joy. Oh, what a revolution! and what a heart must I have, to contemplate without emotion that elevation and that fall! Little did I dream, when she added titles of veneration to those of enthusiastic, distant, respectful love, that she should ever be obliged to carry the sharp antidote against disgrace concealed in that bosom; little did I dream that I should have lived to see such disasters fallen upon her, in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of men of honor, and of cavaliers! I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards, to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult.

‘But the age of chivalry is gone; that of sophisters, economists, and calculators has succeeded, and the glory of Europe is extinguished forever. Never, never more, shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the
heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom! The unbought grace of life, the cheap defense of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprise is gone. It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honor, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness.'

Director Lyndsey Turner consulted Brian Friel as to why Gar regularly repeats the beginning of this speech throughout the play:

‘Brian told me that the quotation “attacks the mind” at moments when Gar is trying to calm himself or is in situations of stress. I imagine that he had to learn this speech at school and it now springs back into the mind because of the pressure he’s feeling on his last night in town.’
Table work

The early stages of many rehearsals consist mainly of ‘table work’, where the director and actors literally sit around a table reading through the play and discussing it. This results in many questions being asked of the piece, in terms of its story and characters. These questions might range from asking when particular events happened, to the meaning of specific references within the play, and the motivations behind the actions of the characters.

Working with director Lyndsey Turner, Assistant Director Hannah Price compiled these questions, and the attempts at answering them, into a 49-page ‘Facts’ document – i.e. those things known about the characters and the world of the play. Below are examples of some of the facts that were compiled – about the world of the play in general, and about a specific scene in Episode Two.

The World of the Play

Bailtefree is separated from Ballybeg by mountains
We have a hotel: McLoughlins
The village has around 500 people in it
It is in South West Donegal, around the area of Glenties
The lake is half an hour drive inland
The Clarion is a weekly local paper which covers South West Donegal
There are local dances in the parish hall, but slightly fancier show band dances in a purpose built dance hall outside the village
A dirty big swing is a dance step (usually you’d need two people to achieve it)
Joe the Post is a man in his 30s, he drives like a maniac, he’ll give you a lift somewhere for a small amount of money, or for free if you’re a mate
The Canon lives in the parochial house, around 10 minutes walk away
The hotel isn’t massive, it’s fairly busy during the fishing season, but somewhat quieter at this time of year
Fresh food is bought at the butchers, or is brought in on a van
It takes about a week to get a letter from Ireland to America
Sean Horgan has a beautiful singing voice (tenor), he’s an ex altar boy, but he’s also a total rascal: it was rumoured that he was getting a record deal but it never quite worked out for him, but he does sing at the odd function
Not that many people go to drink in the hotel, the atmosphere is somewhat stuffy
Charlie Bonner has at least two grown up sons
The crooners of the day were Perry Como, Bing and Matt Monroe
Jimmy Hoffa is the boss of the Teamsters’ Union
There have been a fair few young people leaving Ballybeg over the past few years
There is a phone in the post office, and this is where messages are left
Facts before Episode Two

Gar is getting picked up at the airport
They've spoken about America before in this memory
The lads have fags
The lads have stout
This coming Sunday the local team will play a game
It is an away match
At some point in the Episode it is 20.10
The lads seem to know the house
Stout makes Ned burp
They go to last mass on Sunday
Ned thinks he saw a blonde woman

There are two women sitting near the box. These are English women staying at the hotel, and one of them is blonde. Also in the church is Annie McFadden, a red head, daughter of Neil McFadden, from beyond the quarry. She may have a squint.

Annie doesn't live here.
Last year at the Carnival the lads didn't get laid
Jimmy Crerand might have gone to Philadelphia
The night happened as described on page 59
Jimmy was short
Jimmy is a goalie- and a short goalie, so a big character
Rehearsal Notes

On my first visit to rehearsals, director Lyndsey Turner is working on a scene from ‘Episode Two’ with Gar Public and Private and ‘The Boys’ – Ned, Tom and Joe. Also present is Madge, the housekeeper.

It’s just after nine o’clock in the evening and Gar’s childhood friends are making an impromptu visit to his house, to say goodbye to him before his departure the next day for America. The stage directions read:

‘The silence is suddenly shattered by the boisterous arrival of the boys and Gar. We hear their exaggerated laughter and talk outside before they burst in.’

Looking at the positioning of the actors on stage, sitting around the table, Lyndsey comments, ‘This looks incredibly bourgeois. We’re not our mums and dads – you’re men!’ She encourages the Boys to take control of the space: ‘I don’t care that it’s not your house.’ The stage directions give a clear indication of the prevailing attitude: ‘When they enter they take over the kitchen, sprawling on chairs, hunting for tumblers for stout.’ Lyndsey considers this: ‘We’re going to have to make a big physical change in the room.’
She wonders who enters first, suggesting it might be Ned, the supposed leader of the group and a rival to Gar for the others’ attention. ‘What’s the impulse to get glasses?’ asks Lyndsey, before recommending the Boys ‘up the stout impulse – wanting a beer.’ She focuses on the detail of the scene and the moment-by-moment interaction of the characters, referring to the ‘eye ballet’ between them. ‘Who’s having that idea about getting the glasses?’

Watching the scene again, Lyndsey still feels there’s ‘a journey to go on with the drinking’. She looks at her notes: ‘Let’s just walk back… There are a couple of things I can do there. Can we just get the impulse to get the glasses clearer? It’s slightly muddy.’ Often she’ll talk about adding a ‘prod’ to a scene. She turns to Killan Burke, playing Ned: ‘There’s something we can build into that, in terms of the status. Why don’t you demand the glasses?’

This goes to the heart of the scene. ‘It’s about performing being a bloke in here,’ observes Lyndsey. ‘We are the young bucks of Ballybeg.’ Later, she focuses on Joe’s backtracking on comments made earlier about women with squints, including the object of Ned’s current sexual fantasy: ‘You fold in the poker of masculinity. It’s too big a bluff to play, in case you get called out’ – thereby revealing Joe’s lack of experience with women. Similarly, Lyndsey thinks it important to note the physical risk Gar takes in standing up to Ned, when he challenges him regarding the truth about his alleged conquests.

She discusses the characters’ various intentions, clarifying them with the actors before they run a scene. At one point she comments, ‘Load a bit of intention into it, the idea being that the staging falls in without becoming too pointy, pointy.’ After watching a runthrough she might comment on one actor’s playing of a specific objective, ‘I wonder whether that wasn’t quite helpful… On that intention.’
Lyndsey talks of ‘events’ in scenes and the need to ‘find a fluidity from there to there’. She experiments with different ways of playing a scene: ‘Just walk me through a version of that to explore the storytelling.’ Having worked an event she moves on. ‘The next part of the story we need to look at…’ In this scene this is Tom’s allusion to the ‘Carnival’ the following week, an attempt to diffuse the tension between Gar and Ned. ‘Nothing can go wrong if we’re talking about the Carnival,’ suggests Lyndsey. ‘We’re going to suck this up like Vacuum Busters! It’s like landing on one of your favourite Trivial Pursuit colours.’

The whole scene is run again, Lyndsey re-examining the blocking to see what spaces have opened up. She warns the Boys against allowing the action to drift too far stage right, ‘leaving a Madge-shaped hole’ for the housekeeper’s entrance. ‘It’s much more dangerous if she walks into a full room.’ She encourages the actors to play the scene ‘on the long’, thereby opening up the distances between them on stage, and to maintain ‘the dance of the eye-contact’. Afterwards, Lyndsey observes, ‘There’s all sorts of business to find in there. I’m hoping we’ll find some density and subtext.’

I return to rehearsals the following week. In the Production Office a member of Stage Management is busy cutting and sticking replica period packaging together – the boxes of cough sweets, etc. that will line the shelves of Gar’s father’s shop. In the rehearsal room Lyndsey is working on Episode Three, Part Two – the last scene of the play – with Gar Public and Private, his father SB and Madge. It is ‘the small hours of the morning’ and SB, unable to sleep, is having a cup of tea in the kitchen, he is soon joined by an equally awake Gar.

‘There’s a definite universe in which the play ends,’ observes Lyndsey. ‘This scene has the flavour of an 11-page coda. It’s not a three-page scene, it’s eleven.’ She suggests it’s about 2.30am, adding that the actors have to ‘fight the two-thirtiness of it, otherwise it’ll create too flat a landscape for the scene’. To help, Lyndsey proposes the actors do an exercise she learnt from fellow director Paul Miller: an ‘Italian Run’. The scene is run without pausing or stopping, very fast and pacy – ‘Words, words, words’. ‘It prevents the temptation for too much longueur,’ explains Lyndsey. ‘What are the bits we need and don’t need?’ If there’s too much pausing when the actors do the run, Lyndsey says she’ll call out, ‘ITALIAN!’ She reassures them: ‘If it gets daft, it gets daft.’

Afterwards she notes, ‘There were sections there that really came to life as a result. Take anything from it that was useful and we’ll put that into our landscape.’ Lyndsey emphasises the importance of the scene: ‘All roads lead to it. This is the scene where people take risks, having been quite timid for the rest of the play.’ She gives the example of Gar asking his father about the fishing trip. ‘The writer’s given us a psychological thriller – will Gar and SB connect?’ For both characters the landscape of this scene is uncharted territory. ‘They do “tea”. They know the script of “tea”,’ says Lyndsey. ‘But this is new – you’ll all have to improvise.’

She wants to ‘jump-start’ the scene by registering SB’s shock at the unexpected entrance of Gar. Focusing on the dynamics of the scene, the build of tension within it, Lyndsey suggests, ‘It has to begin at the mail-van [mundane talk about Gar’s journey to the airport the next day] and ramp up, up, up…’ She pushes the characters’ objectives, addressing Paul Reid, who plays Gar Public: ‘Take away some of the sensitivity, Paul. You need to know this from your dad. In another universe these lines could be played like this, but don’t go too much into your private memory bubble.’ Lyndsey acknowledges the risk the characters are taking:
‘When you’ve wanted something to happen for a long time, when it does it’s frightening – the newness.’

After Gar and SB’s failed attempt to connect, Lyndsey wants to slightly delay Madge’s entrance to allow SB, left alone on stage, to have a ‘relationship’ with the door that Gar has just exited through. Finally she looks at the closing moments of the scene between Gar and Madge, noting that before Gar’s entrance, ‘The likelihood of him going to Philadelphia on this side of the door is maybe 100%, but it slowly ebbs away on the other – 90, 85… 60%.’ Lyndsey then asks the actors to re-run the whole scene to make sure they capture its ‘thrill’.
An interview with Paul Reid and Rory Keenan, playing Gar in Public and Gar in Private

Can you tell me a little about your character and the journey he goes on through the play?

Rory We arrive at the story when Gar, who’s 25-years-old, is a day away from departing for America forever. There’s a very complex domestic situation with his ex-girlfriend and his father, so there’s all sorts of factors he has to tidy up before he goes away. And that’s probably where Private comes in as his alter-ego. He unearths a lot of the stuff he has to think about before he leaves, which the audience has privileged access to – whereas normally you wouldn’t, because one person would play one character. So that’s kind of the set-up at the beginning of the play.

Paul, where does Gar end up by the end of the piece?

Paul Throughout the whole play the alter-ego is giving him alternatives for both going to America and staying. They’re both the same person, which is the strange thing about it. It’s not like I have to make a decision and not listen to him, because he is me – we are one. So we both come to the end where, I think, we’re going, but it’s left, ‘I don’t know… I don’t know why I’m going.’
Watching a runthrough of a scene just now, I wasn’t entirely sure whether Private isn’t sometimes a malevolent force.

Rory As Paul was saying, the thing we’ve been returning to most times in rehearsals is that it’s one person. It’s not a case of split-personality. It’s one person and any decision that’s made, both of us are on board. We have to be because we are one. What Friel is highlighting is that even the plainest individual can be very complex. There are possibilities for weighing up options at any point down the road, but at the end of the day if Public is going, Private is going. It’s just a side of ourselves that’s always there, the side that other people aren’t privy to. And it could be as simple as if I was to pick up that bottle of water and wonder, ‘Is that the brand I like?’ I’d do all that in my head over a period of seconds, but if I had a Private, they’d go, ‘Well, remember that time you had Volvic and you didn’t really like it, so then you went into the shop and bought Evian…’ All that’s playing in your head, it’s just someone gives voice to it. So it’s not necessarily a split thing, it’s just the way you arrive at certain decisions.

Is it less that you’re a malevolent force and more playing devil’s advocate? All those doubts we have in any decision we make, you’re giving voice to that?

Rory Yeah, it’s that voice in everyone’s head. It’s self-doubt – he embodies that. He can also be a very supportive figure. He can buffer up your ego.

Paul He can encourage as well, to make decisions and act on them. In the final scene, he gives me the courage to talk to my father. But then he’s also going, ‘hold on a sec. Jesus! What if? What if…?’ And then I have to say it. So it’s really strange playing it.

Rory It is strange. During rehearsals, for a lot of the time, we sat around the table discussing the play and it got to a point where we were becoming really aware of when to speak and when not to. For example, I kind of half-felt like I wanted to say to Paul, ‘Will you tell these other people that I don’t really agree with that, because this happens in this episode, and such and such…’ I kind of felt invisible.

Paul I felt he was invisible too. I was sitting beside him. Wherever we were at the table, I would always think no one else could see him. So I was talking for Gar in the real world.

Rory But what’s great as well is that any decisions, about not only the character, but the place we were living in, our back stories, where we were going, we made them together as a group and they were all documented very concisely. So if a question was asked about Gar’s history – let’s say with Katy, his ex-girlfriend – you’d be forgiven for thinking that just Paul was going to make the decision because he’s the public face of Gar. But I was as much a part of that process as he was, which is strange because even though he might be more involved in the scene – I take a back seat – again we are one person.

Paul We have to make the decision.

Does that mean you have to agree on every aspect of that interpretation?

Paul Yes, but most of it’s a no-brainer. You both agree on things because it’s there. But you do have to agree on everything. It’s weird because you can’t even say ‘your’ character.
Rory Because it’s ours – it’s ‘us’. It is very odd. But what was great about that time, sitting around the table talking, was that we did so much work on back story we were under no illusions when we got to our feet that this was the direction this person’s going in. This is a solid fact, this is an indisputable fact about them. So you didn’t have to go back and iron over anything. All it was about then was playing the self-doubts in the moments of the play, like people do in life in their heads. They play it out in their heads.

You’ve worked together before. Was that helpful to this process?

Rory I think knowing each other socially has helped more. We’ve known each other for quite a while. In the process of blocking something we could just whisper it to each other. There’s a shorthand. ‘If you move there, I’ll move here and mirror you there… if you do that, I’ll wait for this line.’ So it does help.

It’s still a strange thing, having your internal character on stage. In Shakespeare, for example, the characters speak their thoughts aloud through soliloquies. Even though Rory’s a constant presence, that doesn’t mean you don’t go on an internal journey, does it, Paul?

Paul Well, that’s the thing. For me, my thoughts are spoken out loud so I’ve got to react to what’s being said, and what the audience can hear, but which none of the other characters in the scene can hear. So if I’m talking about SB, I’m looking over at SB. If I’m talking about Tom and the lads, I look at each lad. It’s quite strange that, I don’t have an internal monologue in the scene because it’s already been played out.
But you still have to respond to that?

Rory I have to respond to that, yeah. Naturally, though.

It must present a challenge to the other actors as well, because there’s literally a pause while we hear your thoughts, so they have to fill that moment and make it feel real.

Rory It’s also hard not to acknowledge someone’s presence in a room, particularly if they’re standing right in front of you. It’s hard to turn your back on someone. So it does take getting used to. For other members of the cast you can see how difficult it must be, because as actors you generally feed off each other and when there’s someone present that isn’t supposed to be it’s very strange.

Paul Because you’re always watching me and everyone else, but I’ve never seen you in this play. It’s all on the periphery. As an actor I don’t see him at all. Obviously as Gar, seeing him floating around, I have to know when he’s taking a step here or there, but it’s all done on the periphery.

And has that been developed in the rehearsals?

Rory Friel is very explicit in the opening stage directions that while your ‘id’ can see everyone, can react off them, you can’t acknowledge your own alter-ego. You can’t meet his eyes.

What are some of the other challenges that this play in particular presents?

Rory It’s so beautifully written and the sentiment is so pure that I suppose sometimes it’s hard to play against it, which you kind of have to do. When you think about it, nothing much actually happens in the play.

Paul That’s the thing.

Rory It’s just a guy who packs his bag and then that’s it. He goes to bed and wakes up in the middle of the night, and that’s about it. But within that there’s such an incredible emotional journey.

Paul It’s so beautiful.

Rory It is, yeah.

Paul The way it’s written, the words. But you do have to play against that.

You have to resist the lyricism of the language and make it something that’s real?

Rory Exactly. Just let it happen.

What about the play do you think will appeal to a younger audience, in their late teens and early twenties?

Paul Well, it was the first play I ever saw. I was fifteen or sixteen. So it was the first thing I ever saw and what blew my mind was the two guys playing the one character.

Was this a professional production?

Paul No, it was a school production with friends. The two guys playing Gar really blew my mind. I was going, ‘How is this possible?’ And then I was thinking, ‘Am I
the only one can see Private?’ I vividly remember thinking, ‘Is anyone else seeing him at all?’ Also it was the first play I’d ever seen, and all the stuff that goes with a production, I was just blown away. But the best thing was Private. Loving the fact that you could see Private and hear his inner thoughts. Loving the fact that you could almost read someone’s mind.

**Rory** A 16-year-old has a really vibrant internal monologue – at home when their parents are annoying them and they want to listen to music in their room or whatever. And even though Gar is slightly older, he does have that sense of being a surly teenager about him. I think people coming along will get a kick out of being able to see what their own internal monologue would be like if their parents were annoying them, or if someone tells them to turn their music down. It’s a unique way of presenting it and I think young audiences will get a kick out of that.
An interview with director, Lyndsey Turner

How did you first get involved with this production of *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* at the Donmar?

I’ve admired Brian’s work for years, but it was Josie Rourke’s initiative to say this is a play that feels right for this summer – an Olympic summer where so many people will be away from home and in a capital city where the number of people who are non-Londoners outnumber the people who are. And rather than it being just an Irish play, which of course it is, it’s also a play for anybody who’s ever left home and for anybody who’s ever had a family. So I think it was she who realised that it could be a wonderful gesture to capture a mood this summer.

And when Josie approached you to direct it did you know the play?

A little, yes. But I went straight back to it and completely fell head over heels in love with it. I suppose I’m a small town girl as well – I’m from Bournemouth – and I remember the leap of leaving. I remember the tug of counting off all the reasons to stay on my fingers and all the reasons to go. And like a lot of us returning home, for birthdays or family events or Christmas, you have to confront the life you left behind and what that means. So I found an affinity with it that way, I think. But it’s also just a brilliant, bold, brave, clever piece of writing. There doesn’t seem to be a single lie in it and the conceit of having one man played by two actors, the private self and the public self, seems to feel effortless rather than arch.

Brian’s one of the most significant theatre artists writing in the English language. He marries the poetic, the personal and the political beautifully. And to be directing what is after all a young man’s play – he was so young when he wrote it – is exciting. As I say, there’s an effortless quality about the writing. He commented in a letter to me that he wrote it in, ‘A breathless rush’. I love the breathlessness of it and the fact that it all happens over the course of one evening. It’s a psychological thriller really. It’s a ‘Will-he-won’t-he leave? And will he or won’t he find a moment of reconciliation with his dad after all these years?’ So I’m really interested in the play to the extent that everything in it is propelled so accurately by all the moods you’d go through on the night before you left somewhere forever.

That was something Paul and Rory commented on, that there’s not much action in the play. It’s set over one night and the most significant journey, Gar’s, is an internal one.

That’s right. Some people visit, some people say goodbye – some people don’t say goodbye – some memories happen. But there’s no plot about somebody trying to break into a casino. Nobody needs to blow up the Houses of Parliament, there’s no wrestling for the custody of a child… It’s absolutely psychological drama about the voices in your head, and the different signals and messages they give you.

You mentioned a letter from Brian Friel. Has that been the extent of the contact between you? Obviously he’s much older now, 83 years of age.

Yes, he is. And he lives in Donegal and doesn’t have a computer or a mobile phone. So we’ve evolved a natty system whereby he types out a letter, faxes it to the Donmar, they scan it and e-mail it to me. And then I respond by e-mail, which they then fax to him. And we’ve had a really healthy and fruitful correspondence about the play. We also speak every week on the phone about how the rehearsals...
are going. He’s phenomenally supportive and really helpful in terms of overall notes for different actors: ‘Watch out for this, careful that that scene doesn’t become too that…’ So I think he’s as invested in this as he is in any of his productions. I didn’t think I’d have any access to him at all.

So he’s a very pragmatic practitioner, in terms of giving advice about the interpretation of characters, etc.?

Yes, just really handy advice about casting. And he’s also made some textual changes since the play was published in the ‘Collected Works’. So he was good enough to send over a book with all his handwritten changes, which we then put into the master document. It was just him revisiting the play many, many years later, saying, ‘You don’t need this line, you don’t need that’. So we’re working with a slightly leaner, meaner Philadelphia, Here I Come! than the one in the ‘Collected Works’.

Having now spent a considerable amount of time with the play what are some of the discoveries you’ve made?

I suppose I’m in awe, day-by-day, of the psychological accuracy of the writing. When you first read it you look at the bigger gestures – the set pieces, the big bold sweeps, the wonderful characterisation, the bravery of the form. But working
into the nitty-gritty of everything, you realise that absolutely every moment is underpinned by something that would go through your mind on that particular day. Behind every one of the fantasies that he writes is a truth as well. It’s no coincidence that Public and Private go on a fantasy about being able to score loads of hot women in America at the same moment that they realise that the ex-girlfriend is gone forever.

I think there’s a psychological acuity to the writing that’s very sustaining for actors and is just good food for rehearsals. I’ve never been in a situation yet where I’ve thought, ‘Oh, God! We’re going to have to make this section work.’ It just does. I never feel like we have to do a patch job, tell a lie or do a cheat. And I think as well as being a fantastic political writer and theatre poet, he’s also completely a man of the theatre. He understands that it’s not television and it’s not film. It can do something much more immediate, much more delicate.

**What are some of the challenges the piece has presented?**

I thought one of the challenges was going to be finding a way to access Donegal in 1963, but we’ve got a phenomenal company with many members who have their own experience of Ireland in the 1960s and vivid memories of leaving. So having access to these actors has been having access to a complete treasure trove of memories. We’ve had Valerie Lilley, playing Madge, and James Hayes, playing SB, propping away. We’re able to show them pictures of things we’ve found that might be period and immediately they’d point and say, ‘That’s the one, that’s the tray’. Or ‘That’s the bottle’ or ‘That’s the brand’. Or ‘Yes, that’s what they’re going to use for hair cream’ or ‘That’s what a tumbler looks like.’

And I think with any psychological drama the challenge is tonal. How you can keep the tone moving throughout the evening, allowing the dark bits to be dark and the funny bits to be funny while still existing in the same world the whole time. Creating the vividness of different groups of characters – the Americans come in Act Two and so do the local lads. And how does each one of those worlds feel utterly like itself but still have a connection to Ballybeg?

And then the great challenge of rehearsals, but also the great joy, is working with two actors playing one character. And finding out that if they are open and generous and humane and intelligent and talented, like Paul and Rory are, it’s not a matter of refereeing between them, but a matter of noticing what is best in each of their impulses and finding a way to combine that to serve the play.

**Rory told me that in the early stages of rehearsals he felt he needed to communicate with the rest of the team via Paul.**

Yes, there was a faze in which Rory thought he was invisible, which he’s moving out of now. Because we did quite a lot of table work to create the world of the play and imagine ourselves into it we haven’t had much by way of chats about interpretation. We’re just trying to play the logic of the world we’ve observed. Paul and Rory are both extremely generous with one another and have found a working relationship that I think really serves Gar.

The only thing we have to remind ourselves, about five times a day, is, ‘You’re the same person, you’re the same person, you’re the same person…’ And that’s unusual for an actor, in that usually you ask, ‘What’s my life goal?’ or ‘What’s my objective here?’ And the actor might say, ‘Well, my take on it is that I don’t want to go to Philadelphia’ and another character might say, ‘Well, my take on it is I do...'
want to go.’ But if you’re playing two parts of the same person, the perspective
shifts moment-by-moment. So Brian’s been really clever and really subtle. It’s not
like they’re playing the bit of Gar that wants to go and the bit of Gar that wants to
stay – they can change any second. And quite often they both want exactly the
same thing, other times they’re trying to tear each other apart. So there’s an awful
lot of nuance in the writing. It defies simplicity and blanket observations. You’ve
got to work for it.

I asked Paul and Rory what they thought about the play would appeal to a
younger audience – what do you think?

I think it’s one of the greatest plays ever written about parents – what it’s like to
have once been close to a parent and more recently found that there’s not much in
common. I think it’s one of the greatest plays written about generational conflict,
so subtle. The notion of being smothered by an older generation and needing to be
free.

I also think there’s an immense amount of empathy that Brian writes in the older
generation. When I first started working on the play my heart was well and truly
with the 25-year-old lads, but having gone on a journey with it, the bit of Brian
that’s Chekhovian, the bit of Brian that doesn’t judge anybody at all, that just gives
everybody their own circumstances and their own truth and doesn’t do goodies
and baddies, I’ve found a remarkable amount of empathy with the father, the
housekeeper and the Canon. They’re all just attempting to live their lives. So I
think there’s something about the complexity of what it means to be a son or a
daughter in there.

And I also think it’s just the youthful exuberance of the fantasy life. I wouldn’t be
surprised if a lot of young people coming to see it found that they do exactly the
same thing that Gar does – singing to yourself while you’re packing, having a little
bit of a dance in your room when you think nobody’s looking… Everybody does
that. I think the great joy and vigour in the writing is extremely attractive. That’s
how I think it might appeal.

And also, it might be Donegal, it might be 1963, people might have strangish
accents, but they’re exactly like us. I think the play absolutely could be written
now. It doesn’t remotely feel like a period piece to me.
PHILADELPHIA, HERE I COME! in performance

Practical exercises based on an extract from the play

The following extract is taken from ‘Episode Two’ of the play. It’s just after nine o’clock in the evening and Gar’s childhood friends, Ned, Tom and Joe, have made an impromptu visit to his house, to say goodbye to Gar over a drink before his departure the next day for America. Their loud, excitable talk about a forthcoming football match has just been interrupted by Madge, the housekeeper, who warns them to clear up after themselves.
Friel’s opening stage directions clearly outline both the dynamics of the scene and the characters’ relationships:

The silence is suddenly shattered by the boisterous arrival of the boys and Gar. We hear their exaggerated laughter and talk outside before they burst in. When they enter they take over the kitchen, sprawling on chairs, hunting for tumblers for stout they produce from their pockets, taking long, deep pulls on their cigarettes, giving the impression that they are busy, purposeful randy gents about to embark on some exciting adventure. But their bluster is not altogether convincing. There is something false about it. Tranquillity is their enemy: they fight it valiantly. At the beginning of this scene Gar is flattered that the boys have come to him. When they consistently refuse to acknowledge his leaving – or perhaps because he is already spiritually gone from them – his good humour deserts him. He becomes apart from the others. Ned is the leader of the group. Tom is his feed-man, subserviently watching for every cue. Joe, the youngest of the trio, and not yet fully committed to the boys’ way of life, is torn between fealty to Ned and Tom and a spontaneous and simple loneliness over Gar’s departure. Nothing would suit him better than a grand loud send-off party. But he cannot manage this, and his loyalty is divided. He is patently gauche, innocent, obvious.

Working as a group read through the extract, exploring all the nuances of the scene. As a director what atmosphere do you want to create? Think carefully about tone and emphasis. You’ll also need to consider how you’d direct the actors playing Gar and ‘The Boys’ in order to establish their relationships? (See director Lyndsey Turner’s comments on this scene in ‘Rehearsal notes’ in Section 3. It might also be useful to consult the notes in ‘Table work’.) Pay particular attention to the interaction between Public and Private Gar and what the other characters on stage are doing while Private talks about them. You may want to remind yourself about the relationship between Public and Private Gar by looking at the notes on the play in Section 2 and by reading the interview with Paul Reid and Rory Keenan in Section 3.

Think also about the following: How will you ensure the scene achieves maximum impact upon the audience? How does that affect your approach to pacing? You should take into account the other elements of production as well. For example, what should the lighting be like? Is any specific sound required?

Once you’ve seen the Donmar’s production of Philadelphia, Here I Come! consider how their staging of this scene compares with your own.

PUBLIC {raising glass} Well, boys, when you’re lining out on the pitch, you can think of me, because I’ll be thinking of you.

JOE Lucky bloody man, Gar. God, I wish I was in your –

NED {quickly} By the way, lads, who’s the blondie thing I seen at the last Mass on Sunday?

TOM A big red-head?

NED Are you bloody-well deaf? A blondie! She wouldn’t be Maggie Hanna’s niece, would she?

TOM There was two of them, sitting over near the box?

NED I seen one.

TOM ‘Cos they’re English. Staying at the hotel. But the big red thing – she’s one of Neil McFadden’s girls.

NED Annie? Is Annie home?

JOE Aye, she is. So I heard the mammy saying.
NED  Bloody great! That’s me fixed up for the next two weeks! Were any of youse ever on that job?
JOE  No, I wasn’t, Ned.
TOM  For God’s sake, she wouldn’t spit on you!
NED  Game as they’re going, big Annie. But you need the constitution of a horse. I had her for the fortnight she was home last year and she damned near killed me.
PUBLIC  Big Annie from up beyond the quarry?
JOE  You know, Gar – the one with the squint.
NED  (with dignity) Annie McFadden has no squint.
PUBLIC  Away and take a running race to yourself, Ned.
NED  (with quiet threat) What do you mean?
PUBLIC  You were never out with big Annie McFadden in your puff, man.
NED  Are you calling me a liar?
PRIVATE  (wearily) What’s the point.
TOM  Oh, by God, Ned was there, Gar, manys and manys the time. Weren’t you, Ned?
PUBLIC  Have it your own way.
JOE  (nervously) And maybe she got the squint straightened out since I saw her last. All the women get the squints straightened out nowadays. Damnit, you could walk from here to Cork nowadays and you wouldn’t see a woman with a –
NED  I just don’t like fellas getting snottery with me, that’s all.
There follows an uneasy silence during which Private surveys the group.
PRIVATE  The boys... They weren’t always like this, were they? There was a hell of a lot of crack, wasn’t there? There was a hell of a lot of laughing, wasn’t there?
TOM  (briskly) Bit of life about the place next week, lads – the Carnival. Too bad you’ll miss it, Gar. By God it was a holy fright last year, night after night. (to Ned) Remember?
NED  (sulkily) Bloody cows, the whole bloody lot of them!
TOM  Mind the night with the two wee Greenock pieces?
NED  (thawing) Aw, stop, stop!
TOM  Talk about hot things!
NED  Liveliest wee tramps I ever laid!
TOM  And the fat one from Dublin you picked up at the dance that night – the one that hauled you down into the ditch!
NED  I was never the same since.
TOM  (to Public) Whatever it is about him, if there’s a fast woman in the country, she’ll go for Ned first thing. Lucky bugger! (Pause.) Aye, lucky bugger!
Another brief silence. These silences occur like regular cadences. To defeat them someone always introduces a fresh theme.
PUBLIC  I’m for off tomorrow, boys.
NED  (indifferently) Aye, so, so...
TOM  Brooklyn, isn’t it?
PUBLIC  Philadelphia.
TOM  Philadelphia. That’s where Jimmy Crerand went to, isn’t it? Philadelphia...
NED  Mind the night Jimmy and us went down to the caves with them Dublin skivvies that was working up at the Lodge? (to Public) Were you? – No, you weren’t with us that night.
JOE            Was I there, Ned?
NED            You mind the size of Jimmy? — five foot nothing and scared of his shadow.
PUBLIC        Best goalie we ever had.
NED            One of the women was Gladys and the other was Emmy or something —
TOM            Gladys and Emmy — that was it, Ned!
NED            Anyhow the rest of us went in for a swim —
TOM            In the bloody pelt!
NED            — and your man Jimmy was left in the cave with the women; and what the hell do
              they do but whip the trousers off him!
JOE            No, I wasn’t there that night.
NED            And the next thing we see is wee Jimmy coming shouting across the White
              Strand and the two Dublin cows haring after him.
TOM            Not a stab on him!
NED            — and him squealing at the top of his voice, ‘Save me, boys, save me!’
TOM            Never drew breath till he reached home!
NED            You missed that night.
TOM            ‘Save me, boys, save me!’
NED            I don’t think we went to bed that night at all.
TOM            You may be sure we didn’t.
NED            Powerful.

Another silence descends. After a few seconds Private speaks.
PRIVATE        We were all there that night, Ned. And the girls’ names were Gladys and Susan.
              And they sat on the rocks dangling their feet in the water. And we sat in the
              cave, peeping out at them. And then Jimmy Crerand suggested that we go in for
              a swim; and we all ran to the far end of the shore; and we splashed about like
              schoolboys. Then we came back to the cave, and wrestled with one another. And
              then out of sheer boredom, Tom, you suggested that we take the trousers off
              Crerand — just to prove how manly we all were. But when Ned started towards
              Jimmy — five foot nothing, remember? — wee Jimmy squared up and defied not
              only the brave Ned but the whole lot of us. So we straggled back home, one
              behind the other, and left the girls dangling their feet in the water. And that was
              that night.
Questions on the production and further practical work

You may wish to work individually on answering the questions below, or they may form the basis for a group discussion following your visit to the Donmar to see the production of Philadelphia, Here I Come!

Questions

1. Consider the following, asking yourself why a Creative Team makes certain choices and how these impact upon an audience’s interpretation of a play.

2. What do you see and hear on the stage and in the auditorium while you are waiting for the performance to begin?

3. What is your first impression of the set?

4. What shapes, levels, textures and colours are being used?

5. How does the design establish the world of the piece, in terms of its location and atmosphere?

6. How do the actors use the set? How does it hide or reveal them?

7. What shapes, colours and textures are used in the costumes?

8. What do they tell us about the characters, in terms of their personalities and background?

9. Compare the costumes of different characters. What stories do they tell?

10. How does the lighting show where we are?

11. Describe two contrasting locations. What colours and shades of colour are being used to create time of day, location or mood? What levels of brightness are being used and why?

12. Think about angles of light. Who is well lit and who is in shadow?

13. When do the lights change? What does this signify?

14. What atmosphere and emotions are suggested by the lighting?

15. What transformations take place within the main characters through the journey of the play? How do the actors embody these changes?

16. Once you’ve seen the production you could improvise new scenes exploring the background to the play, taking the material within this Study Guide as a starting point. What discoveries do you make? How do such improvisations inform your ideas about the story and characters?
Reading and research

You may find it useful to read Brian Friel’s other plays, all published by Faber and Faber:

**Brian Friel: Plays 1**
(Contains: *Philadelphia, Here I Come!, The Freedom of the City, Living Quarters, Aristocrats, Faith Healer* and *Translation*)

**Brian Friel: Plays 2**
(Contains: *Dancing at Lughnasa, Fathers and Sons, Making History, Wonderful Tennessee* and *Molly Sweeney*)

There have been many books written about Friel, including those listed in the bibliography below. Some other useful studies include:

*The Diviner – The Art of Brian Friel* by Richard Pine (University College Dublin Press, 1999)


See also: [www.gatefriel.com](http://www.gatefriel.com)

‘A Celebration of the Work of Brian Friel – In celebration of his 80th year and to mark his forty-five year relationship with the Gate Theatre.’

Bibliography

*About Friel – The Playwright and the Work* by Tony Coult (Faber and Faber, 2003)

*Changing Stages – A View of British Theatre in the Twentieth Century* by Richard Eyre and Nicholas Wright (Bloomsbury, 2000)

*Philadelphia, Here I Come!* Programme (Donmar Warehouse, 2012)

Endnotes

(Endnotes)

1. *About Friel – The Playwright and the Work* by Tony Coult, Chapter Two – ‘Friel’s Life and Work’, p. 18 (Faber and Faber, 2003)
2. Ibid., p. 17
3. Ibid., p. 19
4. Ibid., p. 20
5. Ibid., p. 21
6. Ibid., p. 24
7. Ibid., pp. 25-26
9  About Friel – The Playwright and the Work by Tony Coult, Chapter Two – ‘Friel’s Life and Work’, p. 30 (Faber and Faber, 2003)
10 Ibid., p. 29
11 Ibid., p. 32
12 Changing Stages – A View of British Theatre in the Twentieth Century by Richard Eyre and Nicholas Wright, Chapter 11 – ‘Ireland a Republic’, p. 271 (Bloomsbury, 2000)
13 Philadelphia, Here I Come! Programme (Donmar Warehouse, 2012)
14 About Friel – The Playwright and the Work by Tony Coult, Chapter Two – ‘Friel’s Life and Work’, p. 33 (Faber and Faber, 2003)
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The Donmar Warehouse is an intimate not-for-profit 251-seat theatre located in the heart of London’s West End. Since 1992, under the Artistic Direction of Sam Mendes, Michael Grandage, and now Josie Rourke, the theatre has presented some of London’s most memorable theatrical experiences and has garnered critical acclaim at home and abroad. With a diverse artistic policy that includes new writing, contemporary reappraising of European classics, British and American drama and musical theatre, the Donmar has created a reputation for artistic excellence over the last 19 years and has won 43 Olivier Awards, 26 Critics’ Circle Awards, 25 Evening Standard Awards, two South Bank Awards and 20 Tony Awards from ten Broadway productions. Alongside the Donmar’s productions, we offer a programme of Education events, which includes subsidised tickets, introductory workshops and post show discussions, as well as special projects which give young people an opportunity to involve themselves more closely in the work of the theatre.

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