

# A Bloody Riot: New Rep's 'The Lieutenant of Inishmore'

**By R. J. DONOVAN**  
Special to the BIR  
Playwright Martin McDonagh has a dark, disturbing comedic style that often makes theatergoers shift uncomfortably in their seats. Shocking audiences one minute, he sends them into fits of uncontrollable laughter the next.

Born in London to Irish parents, the award-winning writer is best known for such plays as "The Beauty Queen of Leenane," "A Skull in Connemara," and "The Pillowman." Provocative and controversial, he has been nomi-

nated for four "Best Play" Tony Awards, picked up an Oscar for the Irish comedy short, "The Six Shooter," and earlier this year wrote and directed the film, "In Bruges," starring Colin Farrell and Ralph Fiennes.

Locally, several of his plays have found a home at New Repertory Theatre in Watertown. His black comedy, "The Lieutenant of Inishmore," opens there on Oct. 16 with a cast featuring Colin Hamell, Rory James Kelly, and Karl Baker Olson.

First produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 2001, "The Lieu-

tenant" is the middle-third of what's become known as McDonagh's Aran Islands Trilogy of plays set off the west coast of Ireland.

Commenting on the upcoming production, Rick Lombardo, New Rep's Producing Artistic Director, said, "I love Martin McDonagh's writing and I've been very proud that New Rep has been the theater that has done more of his work and introduced him more to the Boston area than any other local theater."

The unapologetic farce offers a gruesome look at the actions of Padraic, the demented leader of a militant terrorist splinter group who trots through life casually attacking people and lobbing explosives with a cavalier "all in a day's work" attitude. However, when someone dares harm his best friend in the world, a little cat by the name of Wee Thomas, all hell breaks loose. Was the cat's mutilation an accident or an execution? Either way, Padraic comes completely unglued at the senseless brutality of the tabby's downfall.

Lombardo explained, "[McDonagh] is dabbling in the same kind of medium as say, Quentin Tarantino... taking violence to this kind of uber-degree in order to make us somehow laugh at the absurdity of it -- the insanity of violence as a solution to any problem, which it's not. I

find him to be a very sharp observer." Lombardo adds that McDonagh looks at life through "a very, clearly focused comedic lens. He's a comic playwright. That's the thing that I think people have to remember."

During the Broadway run (which reportedly used six gallons of fake blood for every performance), The New York Times advised audiences to "turn off your political correctness monitor along with your cell phone." David R. Gammons, who's directing the play at New Rep, said, "What draws people to it as an exciting piece of theater is the tension between just how violent the play is -- gory, horrific even -- and how hilarious [people] find the situations." "The play owes a lot to the absurd. Capital 'A' absurd."

Lombardo agrees. "McDonagh's not doing some kind of kitchen sink realism where he's trying to depict life as it is. He always looks at a situation and takes it to the absurd extreme to mine the comic value within it." Contrasting McDonagh's work with that of award-winning playwright Conor McPherson, Lombardo said, "Conor is much more interested in real people, and exploring real people in much more realistic situations. McDonagh is not about that at all. He

lies as much in the stream of Samuel Becket as in the stream of Irish playwright J. M. Synge, for example (co-founder of the Abbey Theater and author of 'Playboy of the Western World')."

To avoid any misunderstanding, Gammons cautions, "The play is not in any way a documentary about the troubles in Ireland. It's a comedy and a satire... the terrorism (is) a sort of jumping off place. It reflects on the absurdity and the ridiculousness of violence in a larger way. It resonates whether you're thinking about Ireland in particular or what's going on in Darfur or Palestine or wherever you want to point your finger [at] political unrest and strife and struggle among humans."

While past audiences at New Rep will already be familiar with McDonagh's trademark style, Gammons hopes that "Inishmore" will cast a wide net and draw in a host of new theatergoers. "It's wonderful to do this play in the Boston area," he said, because, "there's such a vital and vibrant Irish community within the Boston scene."

The bottom line is that Gammons very clearly understands his role in guiding the play. "It's not my job as a director to decide how the audience will respond," he said. "I do the play, and the audience



**Rick Lombardo**

gets to choose what they think about it, and what they feel about it, and what they take away from it." That said, he's been quietly amused at people's reactions when he describes the bloody premise of the story. He said audiences are more than accepting when characters die at the end of a Shakespearean tragedy or a Jacobean revenge play. "I've done a lot of plays where everybody dies at the end," he laughed. However, he said, if you tell people that a cat dies in the play, "They're all up in arms." "What McDonagh is doing, and I think brilliantly, is pointing out that our sympathy as an audience is aroused exponentially for the cat but not necessarily for the humans. I love the audacity of that."

"The Lieutenant of Inishmore," October 26 - November 16 at the Arsenal Center for the Arts, 321 Arsenal Street, Watertown. For information, call 617-923-8487.



## Celtic Music Monday: Mixed Musical Pairs, And a Band's Debut

A column of news and updates of the Boston Celtic Music Fest (BCM Fest), which celebrates the Boston area's rich heritage of Irish, Scottish, and Cape Breton music and dance with a grassroots, musician-run, winter music festival and other events during the year.

—SEAN SMITH

**Dynamic Double Date, and a Dazzling Debut** -- Celtic Music Monday, BCM Fest's monthly series at Club Passim in Harvard Square, will offer a little twist for its Oct. 13 edition. The concert will feature two of the Greater Boston's most noteworthy Celtic music couples, Matt and Shannon Heaton, and Liz Simmons and Flynn Cohen (who also are part of the alt-trad band Annalivia).

But here's the twist: The husbands will pair up with each other for the first part of the evening, while in the second half the wives unveil a brand new musical collaboration. Cohen and Matt Heaton, both regarded far and wide as top-drawer guitarists -- Heaton also excels on bouzouki and bodhran, Cohen on mandolin -- caused a buzz at BCM Fest earlier this year when they recreated the classic 1977 album by Andy Irvine and Paul Brady, considered a milestone in the modern Irish music revival. In addition to some Irvine-Brady selections, their Celtic Music Monday set will showcase some of their more recent repertoire of songs and tunes.

Simmons and Shannon Heaton, meanwhile, will join forces with former Gaelic Storm member Ellery Klein for the debut of their band Long Time Courting. In addition to their individual instrumental prowess -- Heaton on flute and whistle, Simmons on guitar and piano and Klein on fiddle -- all are first-rate vocalists, and the Oct. 13 show will see them demonstrate those talents and more.

The Celtic Music Monday event will be a welcome one for fans of Klein, who left Gaelic Storm in the spring of 2007 to give birth to her son, Lincoln. And Klein is more than a little pleased herself about this new partnership. "We've been having a lot of fun putting the act together these past several months," says Klein. "I love playing the tunes, but I'm really excited about the three-part harmony in the songs we do. It's nice to be doing something a little different."

Although they do plan to play occasionally around New England, Long Time Courting won't be a regular gig, says Klein -- and that's part of its appeal for the trio. "It's not only about the music," she explains. "The three of us are in similar stages of life: We're all married, we have homes, Liz and I are both moms -- face it, we're grown-ups. It means we're pretty much all on the same page, and we have other things to think about than jumping into a tour van. That means it may take longer to develop the band, but we think we have the patience to hopefully put together something really good."

Celtic Music Monday begins at 8 p.m. Club Passim is located at 47 Palmer St. in the heart of Harvard Square. Admission is only \$12, \$6 for members of Passim, WGBH or WUMB. To reserve tickets or for other information, see [clubpassim.org](http://clubpassim.org) or call 617-492-7679.

**New Venue for Boston Urban Ceilidh** -- The Boston Urban Ceilidh -- Boston's recurring Celtic dance party -- has always been a movable feast, having taken place at the Canadian-American Club in Watertown, Springstep in Medford, Boston College and, most recently, the ICONS Festival. On Nov. 1, the "BUC" will touch down in a brand new venue: Club Passim. That's right. Harvard Square's most famous folk/acoustic music coffeehouse will be the setting for exciting Irish, Scottish, and Cape Breton music and dance, featuring Laura Cortese and the Boston Urban Ceilidh band and other hot Celtic musicians from the Boston area. Details at [clubpassim.org](http://clubpassim.org) or at [myspace.com/bostonurbanceilidh](http://myspace.com/bostonurbanceilidh).

## BIR Music Calendar

- Oct. 1, 7-9 p.m.** -- Groton Session Workshop w/Tony DeMarco (Irish Fiddle Workshop) For those who play traditional Irish instruments - Stagecoach Inn & Tavern, 128 Main St. Groton, MA. 877-782-4346, 978-448-5614. Info, registration: [ashling@verizon.net](mailto:ashling@verizon.net), TheGrotonSession.com.
- Oct. 2, 6:30-8:30 p.m.** -- Kimberley Fraser (fiddle, piano) Scottish-influenced trad. music of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. Free. Connolly House, Boston College Campus, 300 Hammond St, Chestnut Hill. 617-552-3938, [irish@bc.edu](mailto:irish@bc.edu), [kimberleyfraser.com](mailto:kimberleyfraser.com).
- Oct. 4, 8 p.m.** -- Joyce Andersen (trad. classic, and contemporary songs, fiddle tunes), \$15. Beal House, 222 Main St. Kingston, MA. Tx & info: 781-871-1052, [steph.milt@verizon.net](mailto:steph.milt@verizon.net), [htsfmc.org](http://htsfmc.org).
- Oct. 5, 4 p.m.** -- Robbie O'Connell with The Clancy
- Oct. 1, 7-9 p.m.** -- Groton Session Workshop w/Tony DeMarco (Irish Fiddle Workshop) For those who play traditional Irish instruments - Stagecoach Inn & Tavern, 128 Main St. Groton, MA. 877-782-4346, 978-448-5614. Info, registration: [ashling@verizon.net](mailto:ashling@verizon.net), TheGrotonSession.com.
- Oct. 5, 2-7 p.m.** -- Boston Scottish Fiddle Club w/Anne Hooper, workshops & performance. Pleasant St. Congregational Church, 75 Pleasant St. Arlington. 617-33-TUNES, [bsfc.org](mailto:bsfc.org), 7:30 p.m.
- Kevin Burke & Cal Scott. \$15, \$12 members, children, seniors discounts. Woods Hole Folk Music Society, W.H. Community Hall, Water Street, Woods Hole. 508-540-0320, [whfms.folk@verizon.net](mailto:whfms.folk@verizon.net)
- Oct. 6, 8 p.m.** -- Celtic Thunder (all male quintet) \$57.50, \$47.50, \$37.50. The Agganis Arena, 925 Commonwealth Ave, Boston. 617-931-2000.
- Oct. 9, 7:30 p.m.** -- Malinky - A Music For Robin Concert, Emerson Umbrella, 40 Stow St, Concord, MA. 781-862-7837. Music-For-Robin.org, Malinky.com. 6:30-8:30 p.m.

- Irish uilleann pipes, with a concert, multimedia exhibit, audience invited to try pipes. Presented by Na'Pobair' Uilleann from Dublin. Free. Connolly House, Boston College Campus, 300 Hammond St, Chestnut Hill. 617-552-3938, [irish@bc.edu](mailto:irish@bc.edu)
- Oct. 10-13** -- Taunton River Folk Festival, Taunton River Watershed Alliance, 15 School St, Taunton. 508-292-5632. Info@Tauntonfest.org, Tauntonfest.org.
- Oct. 11, 8 p.m.** -- Echoes of Erin Concert. \$18. Waltham HS Auditorium, 617 Lexington St, Waltham. Irish Trad. Music, Song, Dance. 781-899-0911 or 508-947-8638, [ceeboston@verizon.net](mailto:ceeboston@verizon.net), [ceeboston.org](http://ceeboston.org).
- Oct. 13, 8 p.m.** -- Double Date w/Matt Heaton & Flynn Cohen. Long Time Courting (Shannon Heaton, Liz Simmons, Ellery Klein) \$12. Passim, WGBH, WUMB members: \$6 - BCM Fest Celtic

- Music Monday ([bcmfest.com](http://bcmfest.com)), Club Passim, 47 Palmer St, Cambridge. 617-492-7679, [clubpassim.org](http://clubpassim.org).
  - Oct. 18, 7 p.m.** -- Atwater-Donnelly Duo. \$10 - Pingree's Coffeehouse, First Congregational Church, 100 Winter St., Norwood. [pingrees.org](http://pingrees.org).
  - Oct. 22, 6:30-8 p.m.** -- McNulty Family career and recordings, Irish tradition accordion exhibit, in demand 1920s - 1950s. Free. Connolly House, Boston College Campus, 300 Hammond St, Chestnut Hill. 617-552-3938, [irish@bc.edu](mailto:irish@bc.edu), [tedmcgraw.com](http://tedmcgraw.com).
  - Oct. 24, 8 p.m.** -- Roy Johnstone & Steve Sharratt (Prince Edward Island, fiddle, banjo, viola, mandocello, guitar, dulcimer and mandolin) Adv: \$20; Door: \$25. Worcester Hibernian Cultural Centre, 19 Temple St, Worcester.
- Thanks to [musicforrobin.org](mailto:musicforrobin.org) for much of this calendar information.

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