

Souvenir Programme

ARMAGH THEATRE GROUP

presents

OUR TOWN

by

Thornton Wilder



Market Place Theatre

Armagh

on

17th, 18th & 19th

November 2016





If you are interested in getting involved with Armagh Theatre Group, or know someone who might, be it acting, set design / building, sound, costumes, whatever it is – please get in touch as you will be more than welcome:



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WWW.ARMAGHTHEATREGROUP.COM



ARMAGH THEATRE GROUP

OUR TOWN

A Three-Act Play
by Thornton Wilder



THERE WILL BE A 20 MINUTE INTERVAL BETWEEN ACTS 2 & 3

*The entire play takes place in Grover's Corner,
New Hampshire*

The Story of *Our Town**

In the first act the author genially outlines the history of the town and something of the character of its citizens. Then he carries you into the houses of the Gibbs and the Webb families, substantial homes containing substantial folks. You arrive at breakfast time and are carried through one entire day in the lives of these good people.

The second act concerns the love affair between young George Gibbs and Emily Webb, and thus culminates in a moving wedding scene, which contains all those elements of poignant sorrow and abundant happiness that make for solemnity and impressiveness.

In the third act we are led to the cemetery on the hill, where many of the townspeople we have come to know so well are patiently awaiting not "judgement" but greater understanding. Into their midst is led the bride, a little timid at first, a little wishful to go back to life, to live again with her memories. But she is shown how impossible, how futile, it is to return. The past cannot be relived. Living people, humans, preoccupied with their petty occupations and small thoughts, know little of true joy or happiness. Truth is to be found only in the future.



* Programme note from the production of *Our Town*, presented by Armagh Theatre Group, in association with Armagh Players, in Armagh City Hall in 1966

"GOD'S OWN GROUP"

Armagh Theatre Group – The Early Years

By James Lamb

Mary and I returned to Armagh in January to Armagh in January 1966 and our first encounter with the Group was as a member of the audience in 'Our Town', produced by Seamus Mallon. It is hard to convey the impression which this production made on us. Neither of us had been involved in drama since our schooldays and we had certainly not anticipated the standard of production that night. I'm not sure that we decided to become involved there and then but it was shortly afterwards that we did. We both attended a meeting in the City Hall Minor Hall when the decision was taken to form the Group and we were soon caught up in the production of "The Crucible".

Those were heady days but not without drama and excitement. The Group had no home, so rehearsals were held in people's homes, in the Charlemont Hotel or, when we could afford it, in the City Hall. The one luxury we had was the use of Tom McLaughlin's factory for the construction of the set.

One feature of those early days was the ambitious nature of our productions and the consequent crises which inevitably occurred during rehearsals. The sequence of plays, 'The Crucible' produced by Larry Ryan and 'The Lark' produced by Seamus Mallon was outstanding both as to the numbers of people involved and the standards achieved.

It is hard to convey a sense of the atmosphere or spirit within the Group at this time. It was a period of hope, of improving community relations and the group seemed to capture this spirit. There was a vitality and commitment to high standards that was infectious and I have no doubt that, had any of these early productions been presented on the festival circuit, they would have done outstandingly well.

In 1968 the Group leased premises at Jenny's Row and 'The Loft', as it came to be known, was adapted to form stories and a rehearsal room. It became the home of the Group and we were able to have readings, lectures, recitals, barbecues and above all parties in these unique surroundings. It is fascinating that we enjoyed performances from such well known personages as Seamus Heaney, Paul Muldoon, Tony McAuley, David Hammond and, of course, Armagh's own Jerry Hicks and our resident poet Tom Ferris.

'The Lark' was followed by 'Shadow and Substance', produced by Joyce Fitzgerald and 'Andorra' produced by Robert Agnew. My memories of what followed then are somewhat clouded but perhaps for unexpected reasons. 'Many Young Men of Twenty' produced by Mary Lamb, required the consumption of inordinate quantities of Guinness by the large cast and, of course, the stage crew were not to be denied their share. The reckoning with John Devlin afterwards made a severe dent in our receipts!

It was inevitable that the political unrest which arose during 1969 would affect the group ... and, indeed, it was out of the 'troubles' that perhaps our most exciting production was born. I remember discussing with Seamus Mallon the ideas he had for a new production which he and members of the Group would write and develop themselves. So was born 'Adam's Children'. This was first produced as part of a week long festival held in Jenny's Row in December 1969. It is difficult to describe the power of this production. I had the privilege of witnessing its impact on audiences all over Ireland and always thrilled to the experience.

My next memory is of 'The Evangelist' by Sam Thompson which was produced by Pat Shields. The large cast of over thirty five players was in contrast to

the next production of 'Lovers' by Brian Friel which had four players in each of two parts. There was an interval between 1971 and 1974, but we got going again with Pat Shields's production of 'The Playboy of the Western World', a play notable for the first appearance with the Group of such well known members as Una Boylan, Malcolm Dawson, Mick McCoy and Peter Kelly.

In 1976 we got the idea of a production which would try to capture the history and spirit of Armagh through music, poetry and drama. So was born 'God's Own City and the Devil's Own People' which was such a great success and which played to a huge and excited audience in The Ritz Cinema in May 1976. Huge and excited audiences were also a feature of pantomimes staged by the Group in The Ritz for Christmas in 1976 ('Puss in Boots'), 1977 ('Jack and the Beanstalk') and 1978 ('Cinderella').

Although the staging of the pantomimes used up a lot of our energy in those years, we did manage to continue with straight productions: 'Richard's Cork Leg' was presented in 1975, 'Home is the Hero' in 1977, 'Juno and the Paycock' in 1978 and 'The Loves of Cass McGuire' in 1979.

The next production, of 'Big Maggie' by Rosemary Reid, saw our return to the festival circuit and the winning of the Audience award at Carrickmore together with that for Best Actress, won by Una Boylan. This was the beginning of a very successful run since in 1981 we were fortunate enough to acquire the

services of Father Joe McCann as producer of our next two plays, 'The Sorcerer's Tale' and 'The Shadow Box'. The first of these was runner-up in the All-Ireland Finals in Claremorris, while the second reached the All-Ireland Finals in Athlone and the Ulster Finals in the Grand Opera House in Belfast.

Any drama group depends a lot on its producers and here we have been very fortunate. Apart from Seamus Mallon, Larry Ryan and Father Joe there are many others – Joyce Fitzgerald, Mary Lamb, Robert Agnew, Paul McAvinchey and, most notably, Rosemary Reid. But it would be unforgiveable not to mention here the two Jackies, as they were known - Jackie Connolly and Jackie Murphy – outstanding contributors to the group over many years: they have been involved in the set design and construction and lighting of nearly every production since 1967.

It is inevitable that the fortunes of any group such as ours will rise and fall. I believe, however, that there is in Armagh a commitment to drama and the arts which will ensure our existence for at best another twenty five years. I hope to contribute to and join in some of the fun.**

* This is an abridged version of an article which James wrote for 'Armagh – God's Own City', a Souvenir Publication in celebration of Armagh Theatre Group's 21st Anniversary.

** True to his word, James will be on stage in 'Our Town' [2016], as a member of the U3A Choir.



ARMAGH THEATRE GROUP

OUR TOWN

A Three-Act Play by Thornton Wilder

CAST

Stage Manager
Mrs Julia Gibbs
Doc Gibbs:
Mrs Myrtle Webb
Joe Crowell
Howie Newsome
George Gibbs
Rebecca Gibbs
Emily Webb
Dolly Webb
Prof Willard
Mr Charles Webb
Woman in balcony
Man in auditorium
Lady in a box
Mrs Forrest
Simon Stinson
Mrs Louella Soames
Martha
Irma
Constable Bill Warren
Mrs Warren
Mrs Newsome
Si Crowell
Louise
Ernestine
Joe Stoddard
Sam Craig
Mr Carter

Phelim Rafferty
Bridie Heaney
Peter Kelly
Wilma Campbell
Gareth Duffy
Malachi Kelly
John-Paul Coyle
Marie-Claire Guy
Monique Rennie
Emily-Jane Conway
Adam Trotter
Tim Hanna
Marcella Mc Bride
Gerry Mc Grath
Sandra Armstrong
Gillian Faulkner
Kevin McEaney
Hilary Good
Goretti Moore
Mary Mc Kenna
Malcolm Dawson
Aideen Conway
Carol Hanna
Rory Lamb
Liddy Bennett
Lily- Rose Conway
David O'Toole
Connell McBride
Gerry Mc Grath

CHOIR

U3A CHOIR

Deirdre Dorman
Angela Boylan
Breda Teahan
Sylvia Phillips
Daphne Weir
Margaret Marjoram
Fionnuala Watters
Peter Conway
Molly Conway,
John McDonald
Pat McAleavey
Anne McEaney
Eleanor Pierce
Eamonn Fleming
Aileen O'Kane
Michael Joyce
Rosaleen Walsh
Dermot Nugent
James Lamb
Margaret Meehan
Alan Turtle



IMAGE: CONOR GREENAN

OUR TOWN PRODUCTION TEAM

Director	Margery Quinn
Director of Mime	Mary McKenna
Director of Music	Kathleen Daly
Prompt	Madeleine Kelly
Stage Crew	Claire Brady Paddy Mohan Conor Greenan Gerry McGrath
Costume	Hilary Good Goretti Moore Fiona Hughes (R.I.P.)
Lighting and Sound	Market Place Theatre
Sound Effects	Gerry McGrath
Props	Titanic Productions
Art Work	Connell McBride, Aisling Kelly
Photography	Mary McKenna Conor Greenan Connell McBride
Video	Mary McKenna
Programme	Tim Hanna, James & Mary Lamb, Malachi Kelly, Madeleine Kelly, Paul McAvinchey

ARMAGH THEATRE GROUP WOULD LIKE TO THANK

Management and Staff, Market Place Theatre
Armagh Men's Shed
Mr T Daly, Battleford Furniture
Lila's Fashions
Amma Centre
Mr Jim McKeown for Sound Effects
St Catherine's College

ARMAGH THEATRE GROUP ARE VERY GRATEFUL FOR THE CONTINUED SUPPORT OF

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MEMORIES

Former members of ATG reflect on their time with us.



JOHN PAUL CONNOLLY

professional actor based in London

Armagh Theatre Group has always been part of my life. As a child I was aware of Dad [Jackie Connolly] designing and helping to build sets and mum making costumes for plays and pantomimes. One of my earliest memories is trailing behind dad as he touched up the set for *Juno* and the *Paycock* at the Ritz. This play particularly, the atmosphere of it, had an indelible effect on my impressionable mind and I was hooked on theatre from that moment on. As soon as I was old enough (14, I think), I joined the team and toured with our award winning production of *The Shadow Box*, and I haven't stopped touring since. Although I've been privileged to perform at Shakespeare's Globe, in many of London's West End theatres and even on Broadway, the nerves and excitement that I've felt are exactly the same as when I was with Malcolm, Pat, Una, Rosemary, Declan, Marjorie, Paddy, Phelim, Malachi and all the rest when we went out to do a show at The Music Centre or The Tech way back when....



MICHAEL HUGHES *novelist and professional actor (as Michael Colgan) based in London*

Thanks to Armagh Theatre Group, I still know every word of Bryan Adams's '(Everything I Do) I Do It For You', which I mimed along to as Cú Chulainn in the pantomime, *Bricriu's Feast*, a fair few years back, including playing the famous guitar solo on my sword. In fact, now I come to think of it, that was the last time I performed on stage in Armagh! Surely no co-incidence... . But I'm delighted to see the Theatre Group in such vigorous shape, and showing no signs of slowing down as it moves into its second half-century. It's an essential cornerstone of the cultural life of the city and the county, and I sincerely hope it continues to thrive for many decades to come.



VERONICA LEER

professional actress, based in Scotland

Even as the years roll by we never forget the significant experiences and influential people that help shape our lives. As a young teenager, harbouring the idea that maybe, just maybe I could actually be an actor, I was blessed to be introduced to Armagh Theatre Group. Still very unsure of my abilities and in awe of the natural talent that was and is the Armagh Theatre Group, I was given the role of Rosemary in *The Factory Girls* by Frank McGuinness, and I remember the fun of rehearsals, led deftly by James Lamb. You can imagine the amount of unforgettable, hilarious moments that this quiet girl from Keady enjoyed with Una Boylan, Margery Quinn, Malcom Dawson, Wilma Campbell and others all giving brilliantly funny performances and showing me how it's done! I am one of many people whose lives have been enriched by the Armagh Theatre Group and I want to take this opportunity to thank the Group for their belief in me, for that unforgettable and important experience and wish them so much success for the next 50 years!



COLIN MORGAN

professional actor, based in London

When I look back on my time with Armagh Theatre Group, I can think of nothing but positivity and excitement - whether it was being smothered in green face paint at the age of six or seven in preparation for the Christmas panto production of *Cinderella* or, in my early teens, being wrangled by Malachi and Angela in the production of *Our Day Out* or living the Dublin vibes with Malcolm Dawson in *The Hackney Office* or in venturing to Donegal with Frank McGuinness's *Dolly West's Kitchen!* All these productions I can never forget: they are imprinted on my mind in a way I think is true for all actors, and I feel so lucky and proud to have had the opportunity to feed the need to perform in my own home town and share the passion to perform with fellow Armagh 'Thesps'. And long may our tradition of story-telling continue through the Theatre Group: it's important and vital, and I wouldn't be where I am without it.



ADRIAN MOYNES

broadcaster and former Managing Director, RTE Radio

Thanks to Armagh Theatre Group. Thanks for the chance to play the fool (as the idiot hotel porter in *Andorra*). To chase Jack up the beanstalk (while dressed as the pantomime dame) on the fit-up satge in the Ritz. To be the gormless son of a crooked politician (in *Many Young Men of Twenty*). Thanks for the fun and the friendships. And thanks for the opportunities to imagine other lives, lived in times and places far from our own, but linked to us by our common humanity. We now have a strong tradition of drama in Armagh. Let's nourish it. Congratulations to the players on the painted stage. Think of these past fifty years as Act One - we've only started, and the best is yet to come.



GORDON ADAIR

broadcaster – Armagh Reporter for BBC Northern Ireland

As someone fast-approaching the same 50th landmark as ATG, I draw comfort from the assurance that, if you haven't grown up by 50, then you really don't have to! And it certainly seems ATG has no intention of slipping into a dull middle age. It clearly has all the vitality and sense of fun it had during my time there. I have SUCH fond memories of taking to the stage in Abbey Lane, playing the part of a hen-pecked husband in Alan Ayckbourn's lovely *Just Between Ourselves*. The set included an actual car (a yellow Fiat 126 if my memory serves me well) and I remember the growing excitement at rehearsals when, with opening night approaching, it replaced the two rickety chairs which had stood in as props up until that night. I will never forget the sheer joy of first hearing an audience laugh out loud in appreciation and will always be grateful to the group in general, and Malachi Kelly in particular, for giving me that experience. Enjoy your big day and here's to the next 50 years.



AISLING KELLY

winner of an Emmy Award for her work in the television industry

I was one of the first students at St Catherine's College to study Moving Image Arts and went on to graduate with a HND in Media from Belfast Met. I then worked on several Northern Ireland-based films and T.V. shows before being snapped up by HBO. And I have been associated with their Emmy Award-winning series, *Game of Thrones*, since its first season, working first on set with 100's of extras before progressing to the Production Department where I am now responsible for shipping to the various international filming locations. I will be forever grateful to Armagh Theatre Group for my interest in drama which began at 5 years old in our pantos at the Orchard Leisure Centre and progressed to parts in many productions, including *Tea in a China Cup*, *Dolly West's Kitchen* and, most recently, *Ladies' Day*.

OVER THE SHOULDER

A look at the last 25+ years for ATG

By Tim Hanna

The abridged version of James Lamb's personal history on the founding and development of ATG through its first 25 years can be found elsewhere in this programme and leaves me the opportunity to dwell a little bit on our second 25 years.

I have just looked at a list of all our productions from January 1998 until the present day and it is mind-blowing to see what the group has achieved. In that January of 1998 we performed the last of our "original" pantomimes (before the new Market Place Theatre took over the mantle of bringing panto to the kids of Armagh) – *Finn McCool and his Two Ugly Sisters* was written by the late and much missed Kim Kincade – it was a bonkers tribute to Mythical Ireland and a fitting end to our panto phase.

By the late 1990's we were running out of steam when it came to traipsing around the Festival circuit and the last concerted festival entry was Stewart Parker's *Pentecost* in 1998. But giving up on festivals did not stop a regular outflow of productions – *The Risen People* with a cast of "thousands" opened the brand spanking new Market Place Theatre in May 2000 – a great honour for ATG. *Love Letters* – a touching 2 hander played by James and Mary Lamb in early summer 1999 was a favourite of mine, with Pat Quinn serenading the audience with his unique rendition of "Send in the Clowns". I loved *Sylvia* – the play about the talking dog! And *The Hackney Office*, starring the teenage Colin Morgan, a play which Charlie Knipe saw in Galway where he persuaded the playwright to agree to an amateur production in Armagh!

There was a run of "classics" – *Death of a Salesman*, *An Inspector Calls* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*, all in the Market Place Theatre. Then in late 2008 Hilary Good produced the challenging all-female *Top Girls* and, not to be out done, Margaret Marjoram's production of the all-male cast in *12 Angry Men* reached the stage in early 2009. The talented Michelle Jordan arrived in 2010 with her own play *The Empress of Carrickinare* which she both wrote and produced in Abbey Lane to much praise. *The Weir* by Conor McPherson eventually came to fruition in 2011 after umpteen false starts and the memorable *Our Lady of Sligo* by Sebastian Barry played to full audiences in Abbey lane in 2014 before an international tour to Monaghan's Garage Theatre in 2015!

So you can see just a flavour of what has taken place on stage over the past 25 years, but in the meantime outside developments were at play and influencing the direction of the group. Our rehearsal space in Abbey lane, built in 1990 and known as "the premises", has morphed into the Abbey Lane Theatre – pretentious or what? The Market Place Theatre appeared in 2000 and has welcomed us with open arms ever since. Our membership regenerates as if on auto pilot but manages to turn up lots of talented and fun folk to participate in all things drama. We have branched out into Improv, all things poetry in Open Mic Nights, Music, visits from our friends in South Bank Playhouse and further afield. ATG is a busy place to be and thankful for its membership and to you, our supporters.....so here's to another 50 years!

ATG PRODUCTIONS

Jan 1998 – May 2016

Jan 1998 – Panto: **Finn McCool & His 2 Ugly Sisters**
(producer Sandra Armstrong) Orchard Leisure Centre

Mar 1998 – **Pentecost** by Stewart Parker
(producer Margaret Marjoram) Abbey Lane

Aug 1998 – **A Picture of Paradise** by Jimmy Murphy
(producer Malachi Kelly) Abbey Lane

Nov 1998 – **Stella By Starlight** by Bernard Farrell
(producer Wilma Campbell) Abbey Lane

May 1999 – **Love Letters** by JR Gurney
(producer Margery Quinn) Abbey Lane

Mar 2000 – **The Risen People** by James Plunkett
(producer Margery Quinn) Market Place

Dec 2000 – **The Shadow of the Glen** by JM Synge
Abbey Lane

May 2001 – **Sylvia** by AR Gurney
(producer Malachi Kelly) Abbey Lane

Nov 2001 – **The Silver Tassie** by Sean O'Casey
(producer Conor O'Malley) Studio Market Place

Mar 2002 – **All Expenses Paid** by David Belke
(producers Tim Hanna, James & Mary Lamb) Abbey Lane

Nov 2002 – **The Heart's a Wonder** adapted from JM Synge
(producer Conor O'Malley) Market Place

May 2003 – **The Hackney Office** by Michael Collins
(producer Charlie Knipe) Studio Market Place

Jan 2004 – **Dolly West's Kitchen** by Frank McGuinness
(producer Malcolm Dawson) Market Place

Nov 2004 – **Steel Magnolias** by Robert Harling
(producer Sandra Armstrong) Abbey Lane

Feb 2005 – **I do not like thee Dr Fell** by Bernard Farrell
(producer Peter Kelly) Studio Market Place

Jan 2006 – **Death of a Salesman** by Arthur Miller
(producer Malcolm Dawson) Market Place

Nov 2006 – **Tea in a China Cup** by Christina Reid
(producer Sandra Armstrong) Studio Market Place

Jan 2007 – **An Inspector Calls** by JB Priestley
(producer Peter Kelly) Market Place

Jan 2008 – **A Streetcar Named Desire** by Tennessee Williams
(producer Margaret Marjoram) Market Place

Oct 2008 – **Top Girls** by Caryl Churchill
(producer Hilary Good) Studio Market Place

Jan 2009 – **12 Angry Men** by Reginald Rose
(producer Margaret Marjoram) Market Place

Nov 2009 – **Lovers** by Brian Friel
(producer Michelle Jordan) Abbey Lane

Jan 2010 – **Happy Birthday Dear Alice** by Bernard Farrell
(producer Malcolm Dawson) Market Place

Nov 2010 – **Empress of Carrickinare** by Michelle Jordan
(producer Michelle Jordan) Abbey Lane

Jan 2011 – **The White Headed Boy** by Lennox Robinson
(producer Malcolm Dawson) Market Place

Nov 2011 – **The Weir** by Conor McPherson
(producer Margaret Marjoram) Abbey Lane

Jan 2012 – **The Weir** by Conor McPherson
(producer Margaret Marjoram) Studio Market Place

Nov 2012 – **Perfect Days** by Liz Lochhead
(producer Hilary Good) Abbey Lane

Apr 2013 – **44 Sycamore** by Bernard Farrell
(producer Malcolm Dawson) Market Place

Sept 2013 – **Two** by Jim Cartwright
(producer Kevin McEneaney) Abbey Lane

Jan 2014 – **Loot** by Joe Orton
(producer Felim Rafferty) Market Place

Mar 2014 – **All That Fall** by Samuel Beckett
(producer Hilary Good) Abbey Lane

Nov 2014 – **Our Lady of Sligo** by Sebastian Barry
(producer Kevin McEneaney) Abbey Lane

Mar 2015 – **God of Carnage** by Yasmina Reza
(producer Hilary Good) Abbey Lane

Nov 2015 – **Red Roses and Petrol** by Joseph O'Connor
(producer Malcolm Dawson) Studio Market Place

May 2016 – **Ladies' Day** by Amanda Whittington
(producer Hilary Good) Abbey Lane

