

'Cripple of Inishmaan' to grace Alfred University stage

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The wickedly funny story of a quirky, young, love-hungry Irishman, whose chief occupation is to stare at cows, and the lives of others who live with him on the barren, isolated island of Inishmaan, off the western coast of Ireland -- "The Cripple of Inishmaan" -- will grace the stage of the C.D. Smith III Theatre, Miller Performing Arts Center at Alfred University for four nights, Oct. 4-7. The curtain rises at 8 p.m. each evening. The production is sponsored by the Division of Performing Arts. Tickets are required and may be purchased by calling 607.871.2828 or 871.2562, or visiting the online box office at <http://las.alfred.edu/per...>. General admission is \$5; tickets are \$3 for non-AU students and senior citizens and \$1 for children under age 12 and AU students. Directed by J. Stephen Crosby, professor of theater at Alfred University, "The Cripple of Inishmaan" was written by Tony Award-winning playwright Martin McDonagh. The play is simultaneously uproariously funny and bleak as it portrays the cramped lives of those who live on the rocky, desolate island. Set in 1934, the people of Inishmaan learn that Hollywood director Robert Flaherty is coming to a neighboring island to film his documentary "Man of Aran." No one is more excited than Cripple Billy, a disabled and ridiculed orphan boy whose chief occupation has been gazing at cows and yearning for a girl who wants no part of him. Billy is determined to escape the isolated, hemmed-in life he is trapped by, and seizes his chance when the American film crew arrives. As news of his audacity ripples through the rumor-starved community, and the story of the play unfolds, the audience is absorbed into the harsh yet sympathetic, cruel yet hilarious world of the poverty-stricken residents of this barren island. McDonagh demonstrates a quality of writing that doesn't come along very often and goes far beyond "Irishness." He uses assumptions about Irishness, the Irish storytelling tradition, and the Irish playwrighting tradition to make us think one thing one thing is going on and then flips that completely, and in a very modern way, reveals truth through comedy. The Division of Performing Arts at Alfred University is pleased to share McDonagh's work for the first time in this area. " 'The Cripple of Inishmaan' culminates a series of events which began over a year ago when the Study Abroad director and I talked about a possible theater tour of Ireland," relates Crosby. "Those early conversations led to the offering of a special topics class during the spring '06 semester - 'I am of Ireland: Twentieth Century Irish Drama,' team-taught by Dr. Benjamin Howard and me. This was followed by an exhilarating, 10-day trip to Ireland (including the island of Inishmaan) and now this presentation of Martin McDonagh's ingeniously funny, satirical and moving play. It has been a wonderful journey. It has also served as a great model of one way to blend academics, study abroad and theatrical art. For the cast and crew, four of whom have been involved in the entire process (course, trip, play), this has been a wonderful journey to the world of Inishmaan." The cast of characters (in order of appearance) includes Eileen (Jamie Pinkham), Kate (Helen Mills), Johnnypateenmike (Matt Mingle), Cripple Billy (Phil Dickerson), Bartley (Phil Feichtner), Helen (Sharee Allen), Babbybobby (Bryan Farthing), Doctor McSharry (Walter Bettin), and Mammy (Amanda Holland). The production team includes Caitlin Gallagher, stage manager; Kayla Gelinas, assistant stage manager; and Michelle Courter, director's assistant.