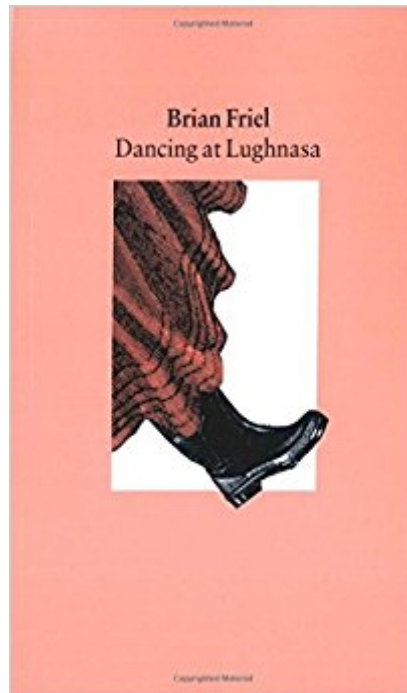




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# Dancing At Lughnasa: A Play



## Synopsis

It is 1936 and harvest time in County Donegal. In a house just outside the village of Ballybeg live the five Mundy sisters, barely making ends meet, their ages ranging from twenty-six up to forty. The two male members of the household are brother Jack, a missionary priest, repatriated from Africa by his superiors after twenty-five years, and the seven-year-old child of the youngest sister. In depicting two days in the life of this menage, Brian Friel evokes not simply the interior landscape of a group of human beings trapped in their domestic situation, but the wider landscape, interior and exterior, Christian and pagan, of which they are nonetheless a part.

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## Customer Reviews

• There is no doubting we are in the thrall of as masterly a dramatist as the theatre possesses. •  
• The Times

It is 1936 and harvest time in County Donegal. In a house just outside of the village of Ballybeg live the five Mundy sister, barely making ends meet, their ages ranging from twenty-six to forty. Braian Friel evokes not simply the interior landscape of a group of human beings trapped in their domestic situation, but the wider landscape, interior and exterior, Christian and pagan, of which they are nonetheless a part.

GautamiPutra Satakarni

What follows is an adapted version of the liner notes I wrote in the production program of *Dancing At Lughnasa* which I recently directed. The production closed on May 18 2002. "Careful, if you breathe, it breaks." Laura "The play is memory, and being a memory play, it is sentimental, it is dimly lit, it is not realistic." both quotes from *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams "I'd always heard that your entire life flashes in front of you the second before you die. First off, that second isn't a second at all. It stretches on forever like an ocean of time . . . you have no idea what I'm talking about, I'm sure. But don't worry . . . you will." Lester from *American Beauty* written by Alan Ball Brian Friel's gentle and poetic narrative seeks to capture the fragile and imperceptible line standing between nostalgia and history. "*Dancing At Lughnasa*" does not seek to be a documentary. It is not based so much on harsh reality as say McCourt's "*Angela's Ashes*". The six adult siblings as viewed through the retrospective eyes of the adult narrator Micheal all share the common bond of blood, time and space. Their collective sense of love, compassion and interdependence makes them, I believe true heroes. In every family, there comes a time when the unit must break apart and each member must find their own independent way. the struggle against inevitable change, while it may appear foolish to some, I find admirable in the poetic sense. This struggle appears to provide the family with a history, a sense of place and purpose. Ultimately they find thier identity within the bird's nest ( in Friel's play, the hen house). The family also serves as the proving found. It defines, strengthens and completes its members. Perhaps in history before the radio of Marconi, the family found itself able to sustain and even thrive in one place. Friel appears to use *Dancing At Lughnasa* as a vehicle for freezing in memory the final time before a family splinters off. Memory often proves a decietful beast. Frequently we all remember things as we wish them to exist. This almost always contrasts with the factual. Micheal (Friel's alter ego) desires to hold this specific moment in time the way he wants to remember it, as an idealized image forever frozen in glass. Who really can blame us (and Micheal) for favoring nostalgia over fact? For like some sort of cruel trick, we amost never realize our key life events until long after they have played out. The play's earthy philosopher Maggie even states, "just one quick glimpse-that's all you ever get. And if you miss that . . ." *Dancing At Lughnasa* serves as Friel's quick glimpse at a moment long gone. *Lughnasa* is not a play of simple entertainment. It is a complex work of art, filled with personal revelations, symbols and ideas that work together to reveal universe. It is a great play because it holds up to close reading and scrutiny. Enjoy and savor.

This play is as satisfying to read as to see on stage - and more satisfying than to watch the worthy

but not outstanding movie version. If you can't get to see it live, buy the script rather than the movie DVD.

Very Emotional play. Rollercoaster of emotion. Recommended read, recommended watch. great play when done well.

Reminded me of Achebe's "Things Fall Apart". Makes you think of the circular nature of life.

Had to read this in my high school english class. It's a decent play just not my favorite.

An incredible play by a dynamic and genius playwright.

This Play was for one of my college classes. But I found it to be well written and wonderful. If you like Irish plays you should read it.

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