

From the Aisle Seat

By Dan Wolfe

Poetry & gentle despair in Irish Theatre play

Friday evening in FlynnSpace, the FlynnCenter's black box, a group called The Irish Theatre Company presented a play by Martin McDonagh, *The Cripple of Inishmaan*. This is indeed an Irish play, filled with gentle despair and incantatory prose that edges toward full-fledged poetry.

The story turns around one Cripple Billy - not everyone calls him that, or, if they do, inflects it pejoratively. It can sound either like Homeric epithet or angry put-down. Billy decides to go to the site where a movie is being made in the hopes of being noticed and becoming a star. He does indeed get to Hollywood, but he can't even get a job as a cripple in a film. Hopes dashed, he returns home.

The opening scene had the feeling of music so long as Kelly Jane Thomas (Eileen) and Catherine Symans (Kate) could keep the volley going, but when a line was lost, the magic evaporated. Thomas and Ruth Wallman (Mammy) kept the brogue in place throughout, but

the other members of the cast weren't so lucky, with their American speech leaking into their Irish dialects regularly. But they tried

The level of acting was high, Thomas and Wallman leading the cast. The Johnnypateen of Paul Schnabel was excellent for the most part, as was John Alexander as Babby Bobby and Dr. McSharry. Helen is a handful and with a mouth full of four-letter words. Arthur Adams was an intentionally annoying Bartley, who plays a wonderful scene with Thomas over the purchase of some candy.

As the Cripple Billy, Joshua Crouch fell precipitously out of dialect in the later scenes, and he didn't quite bring off the character's almost madly visionary character throughout.

This company and its director, Joanne Farrell, have a future. In the interim between now and the next production, I hope they will work on dialect in depth, so that the entire cast can, in the future, have that security that several cast members demonstrated. The lyricism of the dialogue demands that degree of freedom and security to run free.