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BRIAN FRIEL ON THE FRENCH STAGE: FROM LAURENT TERZIEFF TO WOMEN DIRECTORS OF *DANCING AT LUGHNASA*

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Abstract

The success of Brian Friel's drama on stage in the English-speaking world is beyond dispute. Many of his plays have also been widely translated leading to numerous productions worldwide. My concern in this article is with French-language productions. The focus in this article will be, first, on the association between Brian Friel and the late great French actor and director Laurent Terzieff, who introduced French theatre professionals and audiences to Friel; and secondly on *Dancing at Lughnasa*, the play that has been most often performed on French stages, with specific reference to productions twenty years apart by two women directors, Irina Brook (1999) and Gaëlle Bourgeois (2019).

Keywords: Brian Friel; Laurent Terzieff; Irina Brook; Gaëlle Bourgeois; *Dancing at Lughnasa*

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The success of Brian Friel's drama on stage in the English-speaking world is beyond dispute. Ever since *Philadelphia Here I Come!* became the hit of the 1964 Dublin Theatre Festival, most of his works have been performed not only in Dublin and throughout Ireland but also in London, the United States and further afield. Many plays have also been widely translated into a whole range of languages, leading to numerous productions worldwide. My concern in this article is with French-language productions and audiences. This research is part of a larger project on the translation, adaptation and reception of Brian Friel in France. Its aim is to progressively document the history of productions of plays by Friel in France, to identify what draws French directors to them and see what French critics and audiences make of them. My focus in this article will be, first, on the association between Brian Friel and the late great French actor and director Laurent Terzieff, who introduced French theatre professionals and audiences to Friel; and secondly on *Dancing at Lughnasa*, the play that has been most often performed on French stages, with specific reference to productions twenty years apart by two women directors, Irina Brook (1999) and Gaëlle Bourgeois (2019).

The emergence of Brian Friel's work in France is closely linked to Laurent Terzieff, a major figure of French theatre, universally respected and admired by the profession. In June 2009, the Irish Cultural Centre in Paris hosted an event entitled "A Feast of Friel," in partnership with the McGill Summer School, which had organized a tribute to the playwright in June 2008 in Glenties, the real-world model for his fictional Ballybeg. The 80-year old playwright attended both occasions.[1] In Paris, the tribute coincided with the launch of the translations into French by Alain Delahaye of seven of the playwright's works by publisher *L'avant-scène theatre*.[2] On 4 June, the proceedings were launched by Laurent Terzieff himself. When approached to open the event, Terzieff had immediately agreed and said he deemed it an honour to be able to express publicly his admiration for the Irish playwright with whom he shared a passion for Anton Chekhov. On that night, the conversation between the two men, as well as the heartfelt tribute Terzieff paid Friel before reading an extract from *Molly Sweeney,* demonstrated eloquently the close personal, aesthetic and spiritual bond between two men whose dedication to the art of the theatre was absolute and quasi-mystical.[3]

Laurent Terzieff (1935-2010), who died only a few months later in July 2010,[4] occupies a place apart in French theatre. The tributes paid when he passed away all talked of one of the last *monstres sacrés*, not only a talented man of the theatre but also a man who had come to embody for professionals and audiences alike the very idea of the theatre.[5] Of Russian origin, born to a family of artists, he enjoyed a remarkable career in cinema, starring in films by Marcel Carné, Roberto Rossellini, Claude Autant-Lara and Pier Paolo Pasolini. Despite his success on screen, his real love was the theatre and most of his time and attention went to acting and directing for the stage and running the Paris-based company he had set up in 1961. With the help and support of Pascale de Boysson, his wife and partner of forty years and a much respected and successful actress, Terzieff

dedicated his life to discovering and bringing to French audiences texts and authors from all around the world.[6] De Boysson read English fluently and she translated and adapted a number of English-language plays, which their company then produced. It is in this manner that Terzieff discovered Brian Friel in the early 1980s and he immediately recognized firstly a writer–and this to him was moot as theatre, in his view, provided audiences with an ever renewed experience first and foremost through language; he also recognized the Chekhovian connection and the deep humanity that pervades all of Friel's work. He staged *Faith Healer* in 1986, adapted under the title "Témoignages sur Ballybeg," in a specially commissioned translation by Pol Quentin[7]; in 2005 he directed *Molly (Molly Sweeney)* in a translation by Alain Delahaye. In both productions, he directed and performed a leading role (Frank Hardy, the faith healer, in the former and Dr Rice, the ophthalmologist, in the latter). The choice of these two plays by Terzieff is particularly relevant: *Faith Healer*, after a disappointing initial reception in 1980-81 in the United States and London, has now been widely hailed as one of the key plays in the Friel canon and indeed one of the best contemporary plays in the English language. *Molly Sweeney*, based on a case study by neurologist Oliver Sacks, was warmly received from its première in 1994, and revisits the monologue form of *Faith Healer*. In *Molly Sweeney,* all three actors are simultaneously on stage though locked in their own worlds, while *Faith Healer* is structured around consecutive monologues with only one character on stage at a time. *Faith Healer*'s combination of great emotional power, formal austerity as well as linguistic and acting virtuosity proved irresistible to Terzieff. By all accounts, he made a great Frank Hardy, combining extraordinary strength and vulnerability, light and darkness, arrogance and despair. His tall, thin body, his angular, expressive face that could so easily register and convey the subtlest nuances and the strongest emotions, his unique deep voice, made him a fantastic Frank Hardy, and Brian Friel saw and acknowledged gratefully an amazing performance and beautiful production which attracted much critical and popular acclaim. Asked in a TV interview at the time[8] about Brian Friel, Terzieff immediately said the playwright was the embodiment of Ireland and that his work, though virtually unknown in France at the time,[9] was truly exceptional.

Terzieff's 2005 production of *Molly* had "star quality" since, apart from Terzieff himself, it also featured Fabrice Luchini, an already famous and very popular French stage and screen actor, with a love of literature and a remarkably idiosyncratic delivery and presence. It is worth noting that there had been an earlier French version of the play (CADO–Centre Dramatique d'Orléans and Théâtre de la Colline) directed by Jorge Lavelli in 1997, also with an exceptionally strong cast, including Michel Duchaussoy and Patrick Chesnais and using the same translation by Alain Delahaye who in the meantime had become Friel's much valued and exclusive translator into French. Caroline Sihol–the actress who had first brought the play to Laurent Terzieff's attention and had convinced Jorge Lavelli to produce it–played most convincingly the part of Molly in both productions. The Lavelli version, under the slightly altered title of *Molly S.*, was

well received by the critics and the public, and Terzieff decided to give his own version, *Molly,* in 2005, also a success and a stunning piece of theatre.[10]

Friel thus has had a formidable champion in France; Laurent Terzieff provided as it were a guarantee of the excellence of the work, thanks to his talent for discovering and staging contemporary authors and texts that had not yet been widely recognized by the profession. The actor/director acknowledged that *Faith Healer* spoke to him very personally: "The playwright's ghosts echo my ghosts and those of the audience. They are both very specific and universal; it is a play that is poetic and nostalgic and goes beyond the memory of the land of Ireland" (Terzieff, qtd. in Toula-Breysse 1986, 43).[11] What drew him to Friel's universe was its poetic quality, Chekhovian humanism, spiritual quest, sense of responsibility. With Friel, and in particular with the two plays he chose to produce, he felt he had what he expected theatre should be: "the place where the visible world meets the invisible world, where my ghosts hope to meet those of the audience" (Terzieff 2010, 189). [12]

In between those two productions by Laurent Terzieff, a promising young French director with exceptional theatre credentials, Irina Brook, was to give French audiences in 1999 a defining production of Friel's most successful play worldwide. In April 1990, the Abbey had indeed welcomed the première of a new Friel play, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, in an elegant and sophisticated production by Patrick Mason and a visually stunning set by Joe Vanek. It brought Brian Friel global success as well as a heightened international stature thanks to the many awards the play won in both the UK and the US. It is a very subtle memory play, as Michael, the narrator and an exact contemporary of Friel's, calls to life his–not necessarily reliable–recollections of the Mundy household in the summer of 1936, when he was seven years old.[13] His mother Chris, her four sisters, their priest brother and Michael's absent father, Gerry, are brought to life on stage, ghosts called up by Michael's words and memory, framing a personal vision of a personal and collective past that may never have been exactly what we see and respond to in the here and now of the theatre. Michael warns in his final narration that what he is conjuring up in his mind's eye and for our benefit "owes nothing to fact" (Friel 1990, 71). The play keeps challenging the construction of memory, whether individual (harking back to *Living Quarters*, *Faith Healer* and anticipating *Molly Sweeney*) or collective, in this case De Valera's idyll of a rural and Catholic Ireland, with its attendant poverty, emigration, repression of sexuality and lack of equality for women. Back in 1990, *Dancing at Lughnasa* powerfully and almost preternaturally captured the moment Ireland reinvented itself as the Celtic Tiger, challenging the hegemony of the Church, opening its borders to the world through immigration as well as economic globalisation, and initiating a movement towards the recognition of the equal rights of women. It is as much about Ireland in the 1980s as about Ireland in the 1930s. It chronicles change, dislocation, a necessarily ambivalent future, a "modernity" that is as welcome as it is threatening.

Dancing at Lughnasa enjoyed a film adaptation in 1998 by Pat O'Connor with a screenplay by fellow playwright Frank McGuinness, and Merryl Streep

in the leading role. The film came out in France that same year under the title "Les Moissons d'Irlande" (*Irish harvests*) with little success or visibility. It was perfectly understandable, as the play had not yet been performed on the French stage, though a translation by Jean-Marie Besset was available. It had come out in 1996 as part of a cultural festival supported by both the French and the Irish governments at the highest levels, *L'Imaginaire irlandais*, with a view to encouraging cross-cultural exchanges and promoting Irish culture, including Irish theatre, in France. In Paris, at the Théâtre de l'Odéon, the Abbey Theatre performed Patrick Mason's productions of Frank McGuinness's *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme*, and J.M. Synge's *The Well of the Saints*. Six plays by contemporary Irish playwrights were translated for the occasion, given readings at the Comédie Française and published by Editions Théâtrales,[14] including Besset's *Danser à Lughnasa*. Yet, French audiences had to wait until 1999 to discover the play on stage, which, by then, had become iconic of Ireland and Irish theatre in many parts of the world and was drawing much critical attention in academic circles.

Danser à Lughnasa had its French première in 1999, under the direction of Irina Brook, in a co-production between MC93 Bobigny and Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne (Switzerland) and has since enjoyed several professional noteworthy productions, notably by Guy Freixe in 2004, Didier Long at le Théâtre de l'Atelier in 2015, and most recently by Gaëlle Bourgeois at Théâtre 13 in Paris.[15] Anna McMullan's excellent 2014 article in *Theatre and Performance,* entitled "Dancing in translation: Irina Brook's *mise en scène* of *Danser à Lughnasa*, Jean-Marie Besset's translation of Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*" analyses Brook's production and contends, rightly and convincingly, that it played a major part in raising awareness of Brian Friel's work in France and that its hallmarks were cross-culturality and *ensemble* work.

In what follows, I would like to return to Brook's *mise en scène* and seek to place it in a comparative perspective, thanks to the recent production of the same play by Gaëlle Bourgeois. At a relatively early stage in their careers, both women directors were drawn to *Dancing at Lughnasa*, and I would like to focus on how they have translated this play for their respective French audiences, almost a generation apart. My contention is that the motivations and energies behind the two productions, though different and personal in several respects, also coalesce around some key features, and that the Irishness of the play, though acknowledged, respected and occasionally foregrounded in the publicity material, is not really moot. French audiences, however sympathetic to all things Irish they may be as a result of history and cultural affinities, do not really clamour to have more Irish plays performed on French stages, and French directors rarely look to Ireland for inspiration. Both Irina Brook and Gaëlle Bourgeois willingly admitted to having no, or very little, knowledge of Ireland, Irish theatre and literature, or of Friel's *oeuvre* before staging *Dancing at Lughnasa.*[16] It appealed to Brook and Bourgeois not as a play about Ireland but rather as a powerful play about and for women, a play that is universal in

its appeal and, quite importantly for Bourgeois, a play that resists some of the codes of contemporary (French) theatre.

Irina Brook directed *Danser à Lughnasa* at an early stage in her career when she was in her mid-thirties. She used Jean-Marie Besset's textual translation, the only one available at the time. It is clearly a translation, not an adaptation, in that it retains all the Irish names and references and an Irish setting. In her note to the play, Brook explains that for her *Dancing at Lughnasa* addresses the age-old question of life lived in the shadow of death: "though the story of this family is set in Ireland in 1936, we can all share in their passions, their grief, their hopes and their despair; and above all, sense the frailty of our existence" (Flyer)[17] Her highly energetic, vibrant yet nuanced production proved quite successful and toured France extensively. I have a very fond memory of seeing the production at the Centre Dramatique Régional de Tours in October 1999, with a large number of young people in attendance. Hearing their applause and comments at the end confirmed that the staging had struck a chord with those French teenagers; they had been moved by the plight of the "five brave Glenties women" and awed by the mixture of energy and sensibility that Brook had combined in her direction and that the actors had conjured up in performance. Irina Brook is the daughter of actress Natasha Parry and of English-born, Paris-based and much admired director Peter Brook (1925-). She has had a very cosmopolitan childhood and has constantly engaged with other cultures. It is therefore not surprising that, as Anna McMullan argues, she should have "incorporated a cast and creative team particularly characterized by diverse cultural experiences, contexts and identities" (216), with the five Mundy sisters being played by Syrian, Armenian, Jewish, French and Belgian actresses. Anna McMullan explains that members of the creative team, in particular the designer, Roswitha Gerlitz, visited Donegal to take pictures, and that they "picked up original objects for the set and costume from local antique shops. . . . The women wore aprons, dresses and boots that looked historically accurate and suggested the sense of rural Irish women on a small working cottage farm" (218). The authentic details of the design did not however limit the director. The tension between a putative authentic Irishness and Brook's imagined meta-theatrical space worked powerfully, as did the choreographed dance scene, always a key moment in any performance of this play, with the actresses making full use of their physical training to create a moment full of passion, a release of pent-up frustrations, which the audience can feel. Reviewers saluted the extraordinary power of the play, its emotional strength and Chekhovian influence, the performances of the cast, often focusing on the direction.[18]

The next professional production of *Dancing at Lughnasa* in France was that of Guy Freixe, formerly associated with Ariane Mnouchkine and her Théâtre du Soleil, in 2003-04 for Le Théâtre du Frêne. In a lengthy production note, he gave a thoughtful assessment of the play, again stressing its universal appeal: "*Danser à Lughnasa* is a story of loss; the loss of childhood which echoes the deprivation of a given historic period. The play moves between tragedy and comedy. Its main

strength resides in the reality and warmth of the characters."[19] Freixe had already directed a version of Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* (1989-91), and he found in *Dancing at Lughnasa* "an Irish dramaturgy full of passion and exaltation, of a poetry that creates an elsewhere that mixes the real and the imaginary".[20] Reviewers of his production saluted the performances of the cast and applauded a show that offered popular theatre of the highest quality[21] and hailed it as "a perfect antidote to the current depression and a great lesson in courage".[22]

Gaëlle Bourgeois is a French actress and director in her mid-thirties. She has seen none of the previous French productions of *Lughnasa* and is equally unfamiliar with the film adaptation. However, her discovery of the play and her subsequent work on it suggest some connections with Irina Brook's version.[23] She discovered *Dancing at Lughnasa* as part of a drama school exercise, and the text had been brought by Emilie Chesnais, the daughter of Patrick Chesnais–who played Frank in Lavelli's *Molly S.*–and of Josiane Stoléru–who played Kate Mundy under Irina Brook's direction. Gaëlle Bourgeois was drawn to the play immediately and decided that she would stage it as soon as she could. It took her seventeen years to turn her dream into reality at the Théâtre 13 in Paris in September 2019, and Emilie Chesnais was part of the cast as Maggie. Her interest in the play never wavered, and she saw *Dancing at Lughnasa* as a play about women, a play about memory and childhood, and a play that eschews the spectacular and foregrounds what Peter Brook has ceaselessly investigated in his theatre, the notion of the empty space.[24] The attraction of directing a play that offered such significant and complex roles for women had also been a key element in Irina Brook's decision to stage the play, though the production material and the critical reactions at the time did not necessarily stress this point (Brook, qtd. in Féral 2007, 104).

When Bourgeois first asked Friel's French agent, the rights to the play had been given to Didier Long. She read other Friel plays but decided to wait, as it really was *Dancing at Lughnasa* she wanted to direct and stage. Didier Long's version opened at the Théâtre de l'Atelier in September 2015 with a strong cast including Lou de Laage, Claire Neubout and Bruno Wolkowich, all very popular actors on the stage and (small) screen. However, the production was not well received critically and had to close before the end of the planned run, also a victim of the tragic terrorist attacks in Paris, which emptied the capital's streets and theatres after November 13. Bourgeois was thus finally able to start work on her own version in 2016 and used Alain Delahaye's 2009 translation,[25] deeming it, rightly in my view, less literary and more faithful to the English original than Jean-Marie Besset's. The programme and poster for the Théâtre 13 production describe the play as "an Irish family chronicle" (*Une chronique familale irlandaise*), but there was no effort to create a typical Irish space, except through the text and the music. An Irish cottage kitchen will never speak to a French audience in the way it taps on a deep conscious and unconscious heritage for an Irish or Irish diaspora audience. Thus, Bourgeois decided to draw on the wider symbol of the circle; the set suggested the magic circle in which religious and pagan rituals, whether Irish or African, can be practiced; it is dominated by the totem-like presence of

Marconi, the erratic, unreliable radio that literally calls the tune and brings the magic of music and the thrill of dance to the sister's isolated cottage.

The set also works on presenting the circle as an enclosed space that prevents the sisters from breaking free and wandering out into the changing world that surrounds them. The men may cross that invisible border and venture outside, gaining and demonstrating their independence, while the women remain bound to the domestic sphere, reflecting the conservative, patriarchal society of their time. To help her young actors grasp some of the characteristics of de Valera's Ireland, and of codes and rules that would be quite alien to the contemporary generation, Bourgeois pointed to films with which they had a measure of familiarity, like *The Magdalene Sisters* and *Philomena*. The tragic stories those films tell, of women ostracised because they had had children outside of wedlock brings into sharp relief the courage and generosity of the Mundy sisters who all support Chris and bring up Michael, sparing him the stigma of being an illegitimate child.

The set for Bourgeois's production features an inside and an outside, with a circular space materialising the bare wooden floor of the kitchen, surrounded by beaten earth, indicating the outside. Earth and wood speak the universal language of nature and rurality, thus opening interpretation for all audiences well beyond the Irish context. Bourgeois retained only the props and minimal furniture needed for the action, so as to have an uncluttered, if not really empty, playing space. This allowed the actors to move more easily on the small stage of Théâtre 13, and balanced realism in the acting and a stripping bare of the set that became symbolic of the material deprivation of the Mundy household and of the power of the theatre to conjure up images out of nothing but words and the imagination of the audience.

In keeping with her decision not to highlight the Irish dimension, Gaëlle Bourgeois chose to increase the visibility of references to African culture. France has a long history of colonisation in Africa, so Father Jack's work as a missionary and the descriptions and re-enactments of African rituals on stage find an echo that is different but probably as strong, if not stronger, in contemporary France than in the original Dublin production. In Bourgeois's *mise en scène*, the play opens with Chris singing an Irish-language lullaby; deliberately, the rhythm sounds almost African to a non-Irish ear. Father Jack accompanies his recollection of the Ryangan rituals with African percussions, and when he exchanges his hat with Gerry's boater, he wears not the military uniform indicated in Friel's stage directions but a long and brightly coloured African robe. A French audience could not understand the complex political implications of Father Jack having been associated with the British Army around the time Ireland was achieving her independence. Instead, Bourgeois chose to foreground Father Jack's otherness, his inability to fit into Catholic Ballybeg and his contagious pleasure in being able to reconnect with the pagan spirituality he had discovered in Ryanga.

Bourgeois took one major liberty with the original play. The script indicates that "no dialogue with the BOY MICHAEL must ever be addressed directly to adult MICHAEL, the narrator. . . . MICHAEL responds. . . in his ordinary

narrator's voice" (Friel 7). This convention creates a distance between what we see enacted on stage and what is supposed to have happened. There is an empty space where the child should be, and this theatrical device forces the audience to keep in mind that what they are seeing is the projection of a memory recreated for our benefit by an adult, not the truth of what happened on that day in August 1936 in Ballybeg. Gaëlle Bourgeois found that this did not work for her and for the actor playing Michael. She felt that the distance it created worked against the emotions she wanted the audience to experience and decided to have the adult Michael play in the scenes with the child, but without seeking to "play the child." The actor was very comfortable with this direction and only spectators familiar with the author's stage directions could notice that alteration from the original. The reception of the staging has been positive, though the production did not attract many reviews from the main media. Those who came and reviewed the production have hailed the subtle direction, the talented actors and the strength of the play itself.[26]

For both Irina Brook and Gaëlle Bourgeois, some twenty years apart, the appeal of the play and the challenges of staging *Dancing at Lughnasa* had less to do with offering authentic or striking images of Irishness, than with portraying strong, highly individualised female characters that could speak to contemporary French audiences. They worked on finding the right rhythm and energy for their productions, and on translating with their own theatrical vocabulary and personal sensibilities the universality of the experiences, ideas and emotions that Friel located in 1936 Ballybeg. Another major challenge for the two young directors was to enable their respective casts to find and express what lies hidden between the lines, what cannot be said or shown directly but must nonetheless be experienced by the audience. In *Lughnasa*, a major challenge is, to return to Terzieff's image, to make the invisible visible. Gaëlle Bourgeois's note of intent concludes with the recognition that "the poetic power of the play resides in this uncertainty; it is the last breath before an implosion; the precarious and miraculous equilibrium that is kept for a fragile moment."[27] She saw that the actors were struggling with the Chekhovian heart of *Dancing at Lughnasa*; the lack of action puzzled and hampered them, and she worked hard to find the rhythm of the play, to choreograph the scenes as if they were all dance scenes, so that the actors could strike the right notes individually and as an ensemble. Héloïse Martin, another young woman director whose company has been based in the city of La Rochelle since 2014, workshopped *Danser à la Lughnasa* with amateur actors in 2019. As with Bourgeois, a key factor for her decision to work on *Lughnasa* was that it was "a play for and about women" (Personal correspondence),[28] but she also wanted her students to work on a piece that went against some current theatrical codes. A large part of contemporary French theatre has moved away from texts and favours performance, mixed media, the intensely visual and the spectacular. Independently and with no prompting on my part, Bourgeois and Martin identified Friel's Chekhovian mode as both the strength and the main difficulty in working on *Dancing at Lughnasa*: it is a play in which there is very

little, if any, action, in which everything happens between the lines, under the surface. It is tragic and funny but not spectacular. Gaëlle Bourgeois felt that such a play was "both difficult and a necessity today" (Personal correspondence).[29] Héloïse Martin also stressed the need for her students to engage with such a play and to "experiment what is at stake when there is no proper action, so to speak, and the path to the character and the emotion is through an inner evolution and a slowing down of the action" (Personal correspondence). The actors overcame an initial reticence and soon "they discovered the liveliness, joy, emotion, dramatic tension, the possibilities you can reveal if you keep to a bare sketch, to simple, everyday matters. Everything that is hidden when you never speak about yourself, when you never show what matters most, until it overflows, as in Chekhov!" (Personal correspondence).[30] Putting this Friel play on the French stage may therefore not only testify to the appeal of its beautifully crafted female protagonists but also be a way for actors to master new techniques as well as introducing audiences to plays attuned to a different, slower and subtler aesthetic than some of what they may be familiar with.

To conclude, though Brian Friel's work has not yet found on French stages the place it so fully deserves, three of his best-known plays have enjoyed a number of strong productions over the years. Friel's name in France, when it is known and recognised, remains linked to that of Laurent Terzieff and deservedly so. However, it is genuinely heartening to see how two young women directors, twenty years apart, have been drawn to *Dancing at Lughnasa* and have directed this play with great talent and sensitivity. Keeping in mind that it was Pascale de Boysson who brought Friel to Terzieff's attention, that it was Caroline Silhol who convinced both Lavelli and Terzieff to produce *Molly Sweeney,* and if we add that Julie Brochen has also contributed recently a very personal and daring musical adaptation that same play,[31] we may well claim that several highly talented women have also played and will keep on playing a major role in enabling French audiences to discover the power, universality and sensibility of Brian Friel's dramatic world.

Notes

1. https://www.centreculturelirlandais.com/agenda/a-feast-of-friel; accessed 10 November 2019; https://www.superannrte.ie/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=547:Macgill-Summer-School-2008-Full-Programme-547&catid=10&Itemid=115 accessed 10 November 2019.
2. Alain Delahaye has translated most of Brian Friel's plays into French and over the years became the playwright's official and exclusive translator for France. Twelve of his translations have been published so far.
3. https://entretiens.ina.fr/en-scenes/Terzieff/laurent-terzieff/sommaire. Accessed 23 February 2020.
4. Terzieff's last role was as Philoctète, in the eponymous play after Sophocles by the poet Jean-Pierre Simeon; the figure of the wounded Greek warrior had also inspired poet Seamus Heaney, a close lifelong friend of Friel's, who wrote *The Cure at Troy* for Field Day in 1990. See: https://www.tnp-villeurbanne.com/cms/wp-

content/uploads/2011/10/le-cahier-du-tnp-philoctete-mise-en-scene-christian-schiaretti.pdf. Accessed 23 February 2020.

5. The trailer for a forthcoming documentary film on Terzieff may be a good introduction to his life and work: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=krxUWf6Y5BY. Accessed 23 February 2020.
6. To understand Terzieff's views and reflections on the theatre, see in particular *Seul avec tous*, a collection of texts by Terzieff, Paris, Presses de la Renaissance, 2010. The preface by Fabrice Luchini begins with a reference to their work on *Molly*.
7. Text published in *L'avant-scène théâtre*, n°785, March 1986.
8. http://www.ina.fr/art-et-culture/arts-du-spectacle/video/CAB86003005/plateau-laurent-terzieff-et-pascale-de-boysson.fr.html Journal d'Antenne 2, 3 February 1986. Accessed 9 November 2019.
9. At that time, only *Translations* had received a professional production in France, by Jean-Claude Amyl, under the title *La Dernière Classe*, at the Théâtre des Mathurins in 1984. The text of the play, an adaptation by Pierre Laville, was published in *L'avant-scène théâtre*, n°756, October 1984.
10. Alain Delahaye, in conversation with the author.
11. "Les fantômes de l'auteur rejoignent mes fantômes et ceux du public. Ils sont à la fois très particuliers et pourtant universels." Terzieff quoted in Jean-Luc Toula Breysse, *Témoignages sur Ballybeg*. *L'avant-scène théâtre*, 1986, 43. All English translations of quotes originally in French are my own.
12. " Pour moi, le théâtre est avant tout le lieu où se rencontrent le monde visible et le monde invisible, le lieu où mes fantômes espèrent bien rencontrer ceux du public. "
13. Friel has acknowledged that there are some autobiographical elements in the play.
14. Marina Carr's *The Mai*, Stewart Parker's *Pentecost*, Frank McGuinness's *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me*, Tom Murphy's *Bailegangaire* and Sebastian Barry's *The Steward of Christendom* were the other plays translated and published on that occasion.
15. For images of the play in rehearsal and elements of the production history, see the company's website : https://quiportequoi.wixsite.com/quiportequoi/derniere-creation.
16. "Envie de Créer": Irina Brook in conversation with Mariam Diop', *Bonjour Bobigny*, 2 December 1999.
17. " A chaque moment nous sommes entourés par la mort, mais malgré tout nous vivons comme si nous étions immortels… Avec une infinie tendresse, humanité et humour, *Danser à Lughnasa* semble poser, à sa façon, cette question éternelle. Et bien que l'histoire de cette famille se déroule en 1936 en Irlande, nous pouvons tous partager leurs passions, leurs peines, leurs espoirs et désespoirs. Et par-dessus tout ce sentiment de la fragilité de notre existence. "
18. See programme notes for MC93 Bobigny production.
19. " *Danser à Lughnasa* est une histoire de perte ; la perte de l'enfance qui rejoint les privations d'un moment historique particulier. L'œuvre évolue entre tragédie et comédie. Sa force principale tient dans la consistance, la réalité et la chaleur des personnages. " https://www.theatreonline.com/Spectacle/Danser-a-Lughnasa/7013. Accessed 9 November 2019.
20. " Avec *Danser à Lughnasa* de Brian Friel, j'ai eu le désir de retrouver la dramaturgie irlandaise, ses passions et son exaltation, sa poétique d'un ailleurs entrelaçant réel et imaginaire. " *Ibid.*

21. " Du théâtre grand public d'une qualité exceptionnelle ", *Télérama*, *Ibid.*

22. " Apparaît comme un excellent antidote au marasme ambiant et une belle leçon de courage. " *Ibid.*

23. See the video where Bourgeois explains how she found one of the necessary props, the stove, courtesy of Peter Brook's former costume designer : https://www.theatre13.com/saison/spectacle/danser-a-la-lughnasa.

24. I wish to thank Gaëlle Bourgeois for agreeing to discuss her production with me and answer my questions, as well as for agreeing to let me use this material.

25. Alain Delahaye, *Danser à la Lughnasa*, Paris, L'avant-scène théâtre, 2009.

26. See the reviews on the theatre's website : https://www.theatre13.com/saison/spectacle/danser-a-la-lughnasa.

27. "Il faut jouer avec ce rythme, en avoir conscience et le mettre en scène. Nous devons travailler les scènes comme des danses, les chorégraphier. " " La puissance poétique de la pièce est bien dans cette incertitude, ce dernier souffle avant l'implosion, cet équilibre précaire qui tient encore miraculeusement pour un temps fragile. " https://quiportequoi.wixsite.com/quiportequoi/derniere-creation.

28. "Une pièce de femmes" Personal correspondence with the author, October 2019. I wish to thank Héloïse Martin for answering my questions and agreeing to let me use this material.

29. Gaëlle Bourgeois, " Saisir, jouer et faire sentir ce qui se passe entre les lignes. Du sensible, pas de l'action ou du spectaculaire. Nécessaire aujourd'hui même si difficile. " In correspondance with the author.

30. Héloïse Martin : " Je voulais leur faire expérimenter ce qui se joue quand il n'y a pas forcément d'action à proprement parler, et que le chemin du personnage et l'accès à son émotion peut passer par une intériorité et une lenteur dans l'action. (…) Au début les acteurs étaient réticents mais assez vite ils y ont découvert la vie, la joie, l'émotion, la tension dramatique, le potentiel dans l'épure, la simplicité, le quotidien, et tout ce qui était contenu dans le fait de ne jamais parler de soi, en tout cas de jamais révéler l'essentiel… jusqu'à ce que ça déborde. (Comme Tchékhov !)"

31. Molly S., directed by Julie Brochen, premiered December 2016 at Théâtre Trevise, Paris; toured extensively, including the Avignon festival in July 2017. http://lescompagnonsdejeu.fr/molly-s-et-le-testament-de-vanda-au-festival-davignon-off-2017/, accessed 23 February 2020.

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