

BWW Review: *Shanley's Irrepressible OUTSIDE MULLINGAR Debuts at Peninsula Players*

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A tiny village named Killucan set in contemporary Ireland ignites family feuds and past ghosts in an irrepressible production titled *Outside Mullingar* at Peninsula Players Theatre. John Patrick Shanley's 2014 play flames the deep fires of hearth and hearth burning in his four Irish characters: Tony Reilly, and his son, Anthony, and then their next door neighbors, Aoife Muldoon, and her daughter, Rosemary.

The award winning playwright Shanley produced the romantic *Moonstruck* and mysterious *Doubt*, among other dramatic gems during his successful career. His recent play *Outside Mullingar* presents an Irish twist combining drama, humor and romance centered on the legacy of the land, father-son relationships, and how time, life, and love can be found in short supply and as he writes to his audiences, "Wake up and live!"

A stellar cast directed by Artistic Director Greg Vinkler captures every nuance in Shanley's intimate and funny drama with these quirky characters representing two generations. Tony and Aoife lost their life-long spouses, and pragmatically know their time on this earth remains limited. William J. Norris and Peggy Roeder sit in the Reilly's kitchen and imbue this older generation with sparkle and spunk discerned through an impeccable Irish Brogue. Who do they wish their land to transfer to when neither their son or daughter are married, and would there be anyone to inherit the land in the future, for another generation?

Jay Whittaker and Maggie Kettering steal the scenes as Tony and Aoife's children, Anthony, an unhappy man who believes he's a bee in his own mind, alongside the determined, feisty Rosemary, who Anthony ascertains is a beautiful flower. Their performances kindle chemistry and the Irish heritage born in their blood that engages the audience. Where a unique friendship flourishes between the two parents' children through hate and love of each other since Anthony accidentally pushed Rosemary down when she was six years old. The tiny strip of land between the two properties, the Reilly's and the Muldoon's, where this childhood incident occurred, bought and sold for 200 pounds, reveals an emotional, surprise twist near the end of the play..

Throughout the 90-minute, no intermission performance, Shanley's story on family forgiveness and love reflects his quick paced, modern storytelling. The absurd beliefs family members and individuals cling to without apparent reason resonate amid Scenic Designer Jack Magaw's two Irish kitchens that also hold a human heart's longings, disappointments and losses to decide these characters' fates. Shanley and the PPT production consider that love might be worth dying for, fighting for, and waiting years, since you were six years old, for. The production perhaps begs the question: How many days do we [each individual] have when the sun shines? When does the pleasure of love, whether familial or romantic, overcome the pain of love? A place Rosemary explains when she cries, "I'm half dying living for you."

Be sure to take this wonderful opportunity to catch Shanley's latest endeavor while in Door County before Peninsula Players outstanding summer theater season ends. Whittaker and Kettering brilliantly illustrate the possibilities and answers to these questions Shanley's explores in his deeply evocative and funny *Outside Mullingar*. A play that appears to prove love and joy, life and death, can be discovered at any age, any time, in the seemingly smallest of places, even in the rural villages just a few miles outside the town of Mullingar.



From left Jay Whittaker and Maggie Kettering in "*Outside Mullingar*" on stage at Peninsula Players through September 6. *Peninsula Players Theatre* presents John Patrick Shanley's *Outside Mullingar* in Fish Creek through September 6, and then closes their 2015 season with the musical *Nunsense* beginning on September 9. For information, special programming or tickets, please call 920.868.3287 or www.peninsulaplayers.com