CHAPTER 2

The Internationalist Dramaturgy of Hilton Edwards and Micheál mac Liammóir

Joan FitzPatrick Dean and Radvan Markus

Unlike other Irish theatre practitioners, Edwards and mac Liammóir combined their apprenticeships in London's professional theatres with a unique breadth of knowledge of world theatre. They devoted themselves to building audiences, principally to attract people to their Gate Theatre productions but also to inspire amateur actors and playwrights. From the late 1920s, they wrote and spoke about not just their theatre, but *all* theatre in order to inform potential audiences of the alternatives, both thematic and dramaturgic, to the Abbey Theatre. Edwards and mac Liammóir preached what they practised, specifically the possibilities that lay beyond the security of realism.

J. F. Dean (✉)

University of Missouri–Kansas City, Kansas City, MO, USA

e-mail: DeanJ@umkc.edu

R. Markus

Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic

e-mail: radvan.markus@ff.cuni.cz

The present chapter starts with a detailed assessment of Hilton Edwards's dramatic commentary. The analysis reaches from his early articles on dramaturgy in *Motley* right up to his encounter with the Berliner Ensemble in 1956 that influenced Edwards's most elaborate statement on drama, *The Mantle of Harlequin* (1958). An important part of Edwards's vision was his cosmopolitanism, his refusal to view drama within a restricted national framework. Nationality, on the other hand, was more important for the self-styled Irishman Micheál mac Liammóir. Hence, his writings about theatre often focus specifically on Irish drama. On close inspection, however, we find that his outlook did not differ much from Edwards's. Mac Liammóir's main concern was for Irish drama to absorb elements from abroad, to escape the straitjacket of Abbey realism and to become distinctive in a global context. Interestingly, his dramatic commentary was often related to the Irish language, as exemplified by his important essay 'Drámaíocht Ghaeilge san Am atá le Teacht' [Irish-language Drama in the Future] (1940, repr. 1952). This chapter, then, aims at revealing some of the reasoning that lay behind Edwards's and mac Liammóir's wide-ranging contribution to both Irish and world theatre.

HILTON EDWARDS: THEATRICALIZING THE IRISH STAGE

Too often Hilton Edwards is depicted as if his greatest achievement was to realize his partner's visionary schemes. Archival sources confirm that Edwards certainly had immense talents for organizing even very large productions by meticulously setting down the lighting plots, production notes and precise blocking, but he was a less prolific writer than his partner, publishing only two monographs, *The Mantle of Harlequin* and a slim volume of poems, *Elephant in Flight* (1967), and occasional, sometimes unsigned, essays. From the time of the publication of *Enter Certain Players* in 1978, described by Peter Luke as a festschrift in honour of the fiftieth anniversary of the Gate and published only months after mac Liammóir's death, Edwards has receded while mac Liammóir has come to dominate theatrical lore as well as scholarship. Perhaps because he did not write plays and memoirs, as did his partner, because he was less flamboyant, quotable and flashy, Edwards's theatrical commentary deserves closer attention.

In a 1968 biographical note, Edwards described himself as ‘an Englishman who started his acting career with the Charles Doran Shakespearean Company in England, with which he also toured Ireland in 1921, and continued with five years in the Old Vic company and occasional excursions into Opera’ (1968, 740). Born in 1903, Edwards began his theatrical apprenticeship at seventeen as an assistant stage manager and bit player in Charles Doran’s touring company, whose itineraries brought Shakespeare to Belfast, Dublin and Cork (Luke 84). From 1922 to 1925, Edwards worked at the Old Vic in London. Before joining Anew McMaster’s touring company, he also toured South Africa with Ronald Frankau’s cabaret company. Pine and Cave argue that ‘the main influence on Edwards was his Old Vic Shakespeare director, Robert Atkins. [...] Atkins wanted to restore the original Shakespeare texts to the repertoire and favoured a form of staging as close as possible to the Elizabethan’ (21). Throughout his career, Edwards would advocate for a stage freed from the proscenium frame – not least through the inventive ways he created and manipulated stage spaces¹ – and asserted that the staging must suit (and was subordinate to) the text. Hence, the Gate did not have a single distinctive style, but would range across the theatrical spectrum. Atkins’s influence on Edwards also appears in the choice of two of the early Gate’s wildly ambitious productions, *Peer Gynt* (1928) and Goethe’s *Faust* (1930), both of which had been staged by Atkins at the Old Vic in 1922 and 1923 (Rowell 105).² In 1927, Edwards and mac Liammóir met and began their partnership in Anew McMaster’s touring company where they acquired the first-hand skills, some of it surely grunt work, as lighting technician, costume maker, set painter, etc. Through their career, these skills were indispensable in their three Dublin theatres, first the Peacock, then the Gate and the Gaiety, as well as on their many tours.

The range of Edwards’s theatrical experience – in prestigious London companies and in provincial touring companies alike, in comedy and tragedy, in the classics and Shakespeare as well as modern plays – was further broadened by his interest in continental innovations, especially German expressionism both on stage and in film. Not least because they competed for audiences, film and theatre were often juxtaposed in Edwards’s commentaries. Just as the Gate absorbed and processed continental stage influences, most notably Leon Bakst, Adolphe Appia and Gordon Craig,³ it also drew upon the cinematic style that after World

War II became known as film noir, perhaps via James Whale's early films such as *Journey's End* (1930) or *Waterloo Bridge* (1931).

Edwards's commentary on drama reaches back to the late 1920s, when he and mac Liammóir created publicity materials for the Dublin Gate Theatre. They routinely published catalogues of their productions to remind audiences of their established record and versatility. Bulmer Hobson's numbered-edition *The Gate Theatre*, complete with essays by Edwards and mac Liammóir and numerous plates documenting costume and stage design, chronicled Gate productions through 1934. Edwards and mac Liammóir of necessity became spokesmen for the Gate, advocates for state subsidy of their theatre, publicists and promoters. In the late 1920s, Edwards and mac Liammóir launched a crusade to open a professional theatre in Dublin as an alternative to the state-subsidized Abbey – a crusade that was no less ambitious than their early productions. Not only did they stage challenging, controversial and even banned plays such as Wilde's *Salomé* in their first season, they also barnstormed to bring their message and appeal for an international theatre to Ireland. They worked to build support in the wider public by educating and tantalizing wherever they imagined they might reach potential audiences: on the radio, at Rotary Club meetings, among university dramatic societies, with Irish-language enthusiasts, in the amateur theatricals. And, of course, their theatrical ventures were not limited to the Gate Theatre. At the urging of Liam Ó Briain, mac Liammóir became the first producer at An Taibhdhearc in Galway and wrote and starred in its celebrated first performance of *Diarmuid agus Gráinne*. In 1931, Edwards and mac Liammóir returned to An Taibhdhearc with *Gaisge agus Gaisgidheach*, mac Liammóir's Irish translation of Shaw's *Arms and the Man*. Edwards lent his technical expertise, particularly in lighting, to university drama societies for *Twelfth Night* in 1929 and *Epicene* in 1934. He sang at the concerts of the Gate Theatre orchestra. Both Edwards and mac Liammóir maintained a decades-long affiliation with provincial Irish amateur theatrics serving as adjudicators. They wrote, designed, acted and produced extravagant pageants for the 1929 Dublin Civic Week. In 1932, the Gate sponsored the first of its symposia. In what today would be called outreach to the community, they were as versatile and adaptable as they were ambitious. They were not only the producer and art director of the Gate Theatre as well as its leading actors, but they were also its principal

fund-raisers, its development officers and its audience builders. To fulfil all of these roles they were civic-minded, articulate and conspicuous. As two gay Englishmen openly living together in the Irish Free State, they counterintuitively sought not anonymity, but celebrity. And within five years they achieved it.

In 1929, for instance, Edwards and mac Liammóir lectured in Balbriggan, under the auspices of the County Dublin Libraries Committee. Edwards spoke first to contextualize the Gate and its goals by delivering ‘a comprehensive survey of the development of the drama through the ages’ (C.W.C.), a sweeping outline of theatre from the Greeks through the Renaissance to the bondage of realism in which theatre now languished that would become Edwards’s party piece. Mac Liammóir’s presentation in Balbriggan was expressly Irish in its orientation, detailing the Revival and the emergence of the Abbey, which ‘drew its inspiration from Ireland, was indeed, almost provincial in its nationalism, which had led it to debar all foreign dramatists from its boards and yet it was English in language’ (C.W.C.). As throughout their partnership, Edwards and mac Liammóir complemented one another in their presentation to the Balbriggan Rotarians. Much later in his career, in 1955, Edwards would say that when he founded the Gate he set out to create a theatrical conscience in Dublin (Ricorso).

With the founding of *Motley* under the editorship of Mary Manning in 1932, Edwards and mac Liammóir created another platform to advance the Gate, articulate its importance as an alternative to the Abbey Theatre and expand its audience base. *Motley*, which ran from March 1932 through May 1934, sought to garner publicity for the fledgling Gate but it was also educative – directed at a wide audience to cultivate a greater theatre literacy in the Irish public.

Edwards signed some of his essays, such as ‘Why the Dublin Gate Theatre’ and ‘The Theatre and the Plays’ in the first two issues. The November 1932 issue of *Motley* (1.6) contains another unsigned essay that is probably Edwards’s, ‘The Present Position of Irish Drama’, as well as ‘Hilton Edwards Replies to a Critic’ and the note ‘In future, Hilton Edwards will deal with any interesting points raised in the correspondence column of *Motley* in the form of conversations with the Editor.’ (12)

There seems little doubt but that Edwards was the anonymous author of some other important articles in *Motley* as well, especially in 1932 and 1933. The essay entitled ‘Realism’ in the December 1932 (1.7) issue, although unsigned, is most likely Edwards’s. The essay made plain the Gate’s view on realism: ‘we have presented comparatively few realistic plays, and have already avoided realism in production. We consider that realism has been badly overdone, and if the drama has a future that future will not be found to lie in a realistic direction’ (1932, 2). In it we hear Edwards’s voice, that of a twenty-nine-year-old who wrote with experience, authority and conviction: ‘Realism is not essential to drama [...] For the theatre is not life. No realistic trimmings will make it so.’ (2) (see, e.g., Figs. 2.1 and 2.2)

The newspaper advertisement for the November 1932 symposium at the Gate Theatre, ‘Should the Theatre Be International’, provocatively

Fig. 2.1 Shelah Richards’s directorial debut: G.K. Chesterton, *Magic*, Gate Theatre, 1935. Gate Theatre Archive, Northwestern University (Copyright of the Edwards – mac Liammóir Estate)

Fig. 2.2 James Elroy Flecker, *Don Juan*, Gate Theatre, directed by Hilton Edwards, Gate Theatre, 1933. Gate Theatre Archive, Northwestern University (Copyright of the Edwards – mac Liammóir Estate)

combines Edwards's desire to simultaneously engage the Irish public and advance a transnational or anti-nationalistic theatre agenda. The symposium was advertised as 'The First of a Series of Open Discussions on matters of Theatrical Interest at which the public are invited to attend and to speak' ('Gate Theatre'). Indeed, the headline in the *Irish Press* article on the symposium, which attracted several hundred people, makes another of Edwards's intentions explicit: 'Critics Sought in Audience'. He actively and successfully cultivated not only Rotarians, but theatre enthusiasts who were or became playwrights and theatre critics: Dorothy Macardle, who was a theatre critic for the *Irish Press* in the 1930s and as committed to the Gate as she was to the Irish Republic; David Sears, who reviewed for the *Irish Independent*; or the editor of *Motley* and Gate playwright Mary Manning. The larger pattern of Edwards's encouragement of women playwrights, practitioners and actors included Christine Longford, of whom John Cowell writes that Edwards 'recognised hers as a talent neglected, undisciplined, capable of infinitely greater heights' (204); Ria Mooney, whose adaptations of *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre* were staged at the Gate in 1934 and 1944; Shelah Richards, whose

first experience as a director occurred at the Gate when she was thirty-one with G.K. Chesterton's *Magic* in 1935 (Fig. 2.2); Molly McEwen, the Scotswoman who designed for the Gate; and Maura Laverty, who wrote two of the Gate's most successful and often revived plays, *Tolka Row* and *Liffey Lane* (both 1951). These women were often recruited by Edwards to write their own plays, to move from acting to directing, from critic or novelist to playwright. In *The Mantle of Harlequin*, Edwards would return to the need to have theatre critics who could appreciate the aim of opening the Gate:

We wanted a first-hand knowledge of the new methods of presentation discovered by the Continental experimental theatres. We wanted ourselves to discover new forms. We wanted to revive, or at least take advantage of, and learn from the best of discarded old traditions. And, not least, we wanted to put at the disposal of our audiences all the riches of the theatre, past, present and future culled from the theatres of all the world and irrespective of their nationality. A theatre limited only by the limits of the imagination. (1934, 21)

From first to last, Edwards scorned the notion that theatre should be a vehicle for Irish cultural nationalism. His obituary in the *New York Times* quotes what some in Ireland might have seen as heresy in someone who sought (and eventually received) funding from the Irish government: 'I don't care about nationalism. I care about theatre.' (Blau 28) At the November 1932 symposium, Edwards stated that he would 'prefer that Irish drama was incidentally national rather than consciously national' (qtd. in Leeney 127). He is reported as telling the audience at the Gate symposium about internationalism that 'the time had come when realism in the drama might be abandoned' ('Critics Sought in Audience'). Even while it actively sought state subvention, the Gate, Edwards argued, 'is not a national theatre. It is simply a theatre. Its policy is the exploitation of all forms of theatrical expression regardless of nationality' (1958, 3). Thirty-two years later, Edwards was even more insistent on this point. The issue of nationalism and theatre in Ireland was, even in 1964, a point of contention when Ernest Blythe, whom Edwards would soon describe as 'the dictator of Abbey policy' (1968, 738) from 1942 to 1968, defended his policies at the Abbey by insisting that 'the facts of Irish history and the national theatre [...] required the foundation of a specialist theatre to

turn from the English stage and concentrate mainly on Irish drama' (qtd. in 'Abbey Had to Put on "Long Run" Plays'). The Dublin Gate Theatre Archive at Northwestern University holds Edwards's typescript 'Nationalism in Theatre Today', which made its way into a symposium at the Dublin International Theatre Festival in September 1964, with Edwards squaring off against Blythe. Edwards's dogged resistance to subordinating theatre to any nationalism and his long campaign to nurture an informed, even cosmopolitan theatre-going audience followed logically from his unrelenting critique of limiting theatre to a single style, especially realism.

One of Edwards's most extensive written statements appeared in 1934 as his essay 'Production' in Hobson's book about the Gate. Twice in his opening paragraphs, Edwards positions the Gate as 'International'. That internationalism was intrinsic to the Gate's versatility not only in the nationalities of its playwrights but also, and more importantly, in the many non-realistic dramatic styles that were brought to Dublin. In 'Production', he offers an account of the Gate's first seven seasons emphasizing the use of design, music, choreography and scenography suited to the demands of the plays produced. He begins with the spaces, first the Peacock and then the Gate at Parnell Square, the limitations of those spaces and the inventive ways in which those limitations were overcome. By the end of its first season, the Gate 'had presented six programmes each by a different method of production' (28). Anticipating Erika Fischer-Lichte's phrase 'the re-theatricalization of theatre' (72 *et passim*), Edwards describes the Gate's larger objective as 'the task of discovering for ourselves how the "Theatre Theatrical" was to be re-established' (22). As throughout his theatrical commentaries, Edwards is descriptive rather than theoretical, specific rather than obscure, practical rather than abstract. Whereas many might tell this story in terms of dramatic themes, acting and actors, reception or finance, Edwards discusses more mundane, operational issues: the lack of fly space, the wattage of the lighting, the available dimensions.

After World War II, Edwards and his partner floated plans for a new theatre building, subsidized by the state, that in some iterations was to cost £50,000. In the late 1940s they prepared yet another summary of their work over the previous twenty years, perhaps in support of their bid for a new theatre, that concluded with a question from the partners: 'is it worth the country's while to make some endeavour to maintain these two men in the style of work they have produced in the past and are still producing at present or is it as well to allow them to seek, as

so many members of their profession have been forced to seek work in London or New York?’ (Edwards and mac Liammóir) At the very time that Edwards and mac Liammóir were appealing for government funding to subsidize a new theatre building in Dublin, mac Liammóir published an imagined dialogue between himself and Edwards, ‘Three Shakespeare Productions: A Conversation’, in the inaugural issue of *Shakespeare Survey* in 1948. Set on ‘a stone terrace in Sicily’, the urbane dialogue between the partners discussed the current state of Shakespearean productions with specific reference to the Gate’s recent Shakespeare productions (*Anthony and Cleopatra* [1943] *The Merchant of Venice* [1939], and two versions of *Hamlet* [1932 and, in modern dress, 1941; see Fig. 2.3]). Mac Liammóir has Edwards rail against realism and the proscenium. Edwards is heard to say that ‘a forgotten secret of Shakespeare’s magic’ is Elizabethan actors’ ‘direct contact with the audience’ and that the proscenium is ‘one of the

Fig. 2.3 Modern dress production of *Hamlet*, directed by Hilton Edwards, Gaiety Theatre, 1941. Gate Theatre Archive, Northwestern University (Copyright of the Edwards – mac Liammóir Estate)

first things that, if I were able to build the theatre I should like, I would abolish' (89). Edwards's last word is his vision of an ideal theatre space that returns to the audience and its relationship to the performer:

It would be a manner further removed from that of the cinema than any used by the stage since the end of the seventeenth century, for its first principle would be that contact of the player with his audience that is the most precious quality of the living theatre, and that survives to-day, ironically enough, only in the music-hall; and whenever an actor had objected to the direct address, the direct appeal, the calling of the public into his confidence and the sharing with them of his secret, which is a vital part of the soliloquy, I feel it in my bones that what prompts his objection is the framed-in isolation of the proscenium and the footlight stage that sets a barrier between itself and the auditorium, and that renders any attempt on the actor's part to break that barrier down a self-conscious and artificial process. (95)

His analysis is not without self-criticism, as elsewhere he admits that before 1940 the Gate productions 'perhaps over-stress[ed] the plastic and the visual in contrast to the Abbey's austerity' (1968, 741).

Throughout his life, Edwards travelled periodically to London, surely to see theatre, but in the mid-1950s also to 'climb the agents' staircases' to assess 'what possibilities remained for them outside of Ireland' (1957). In 1956, one of these trips to London brought Edwards to the Palace Theatre, where the Berliner Ensemble performed three of Brecht's plays: *Mother Courage*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *Drums and Trumpets* (Smith 315). At fifty-eight, Edwards was as experienced a theatre practitioner as might be found, yet he describes seeing the Berliner Ensemble's performance of Brecht as revelatory. For him, the Berliner Ensemble and Brecht 'reconcil[e] theatricality with realism, or at least with a form of realism' (1958, 68). From the mid-1950s, productions of Shaw's *Saint Joan* (1953), Anouilh's *The Lark* (1955), the modern dress *Julius Caesar* (1957; Fig. 2.4), *The Informer* (1958), Brecht's *Mother Courage* (1959), *Chimes at Midnight* (1960), Brecht's *St. Joan of the Stockyards* (1961), Sam Thompson's *The Evangelist* (1963), and of course, mac Liammóir's *The Importance of Being Oscar* (1961), *I Must be Talking to my Friends* (1963) and *Talking About Yeats* (1965) abandoned the painted canvas and wooden sets that Edwards had come to loathe. These amount to the majority of the new productions staged by Edwards – mac Liammóir productions over this twelve-year period. After seeing Brecht, Edwards

was far less willing for his company to pursue the pot-boilers, melodramas and crowd-pleasers that dot the Gate's repertory during the 1930s and 40s. Christopher Fitz-Simon writes that

Edwards had been seeking a simplified style of presentation for certain kinds of play which might be described for convenience as "epic", and had made use of his own ideas in this regard most tellingly in *Liffey Lane* and *St. Joan*. [...] [Edwards] sought to adapt [Brecht's theory of alienation] where and when appropriate, as in Sam Thompson's *The Evangelist* in 1959 and *St. Joan of the Stockyards* in 1961. (219)

Similarly, Edwards celebrated Thornton Wilder as one of the greatest living dramatists, in large measure because Wilder could create engaging theatre on what amounted to a bare stage (1958, 40).

Brecht's influence can also be seen in *The Mantle of Harlequin*, which grew out of two radio series by Edwards: 'My First Three Thousand Years in the Theatre' broadcast in August 1956 and then, in Spring 1957, 'Harlequinade', a series of six radio talks advertised as 'Advice to Amateurs'. Harlequinade was also the name given to the Gate's 1941 Christmas extravaganza. Harlequin was not only the figure depicted in the Gate logo but also the persona that Edwards would adopt in *The Mantle of Harlequin*. In May 1957, Patrick Sampson encouraged Edwards to produce a book based on the radio series (Sampson). Over the summer, Edwards did just that and initially entitled the book *Not in the Script*. Edwards may have seen publishing as a small source of badly-needed income. The manuscript was sent first to Longman in London and on 23 October 1957, John Guest, Longman's literary advisor, turned it down (Guest). It was published the next year by Progress House, which operated in Dublin between 1958 and 1968 and specialized in drama, publishing plays by John B. Keane, James Cheasty, M.J. Molloy and G.P. Gallivan as well as mac Liammóir's *All for Hecuba*. Although not lavishly produced, *The Mantle of Harlequin* was, for its day, lavishly pictorial. With a Prologue by mac Liammóir, the book ran to 127 pages and included plates and illustrations. It is hardly a theoretical analysis; in fact, Edwards candidly states, 'I have had little time for theories.' (1958, 8) Instead, he hopes to 'ease a few of the problems that beset my friends in the amateur theatre' (5).

Fig. 2.4 Micheál mac Liammóir in the modern dress production of *Julius Caesar A.D. 1957*, directed by Hilton Edwards, Gaiety Theatre, 1957. Gate Theatre Archive, Northwestern University (Copyright of the Edwards – mac Liammóir Estate)

The Mantle of Harlequin celebrates ‘the exploitation of all forms of theatrical expression regardless of nationality. It embraces, on occasion, that naturalistic play, but concern has always been with the whole gamut of the stage’ (3). Edwards begins by expressing disappointment with the state of theatre in general, measured not least by the loss of so many Irish stage actors to film and television: ‘at this moment, I can only think that, as history has a habit of repeating itself, a glance at what has gone before may hint to us how to re-construct to modern taste conditions under which great plays may again be written, great parts created and great actors made, and the living theatre retain its magic’ (10). With that he moves chronologically through twenty centuries of theatre history: Ancient Greek and Elizabethan theatre were unencumbered by elaborate stage mechanisms and the scenic demands of realism.

'When plays become too dependent upon spectacle or, at any rate, upon pictorial illustration', Edwards writes, 'they tend to be lethal to the stage' (16). Galloping through Greek, Roman, Spanish, Italian, French and English theatre across the ages, Edwards concludes that 'the finest plays of which we have record and the most memorable eras of great theatre and acting were all related to a stage of which the permanent setting was a feature and on which scenery played either a minor or, more often, no part at all' (19). In the nineteenth century, drama was crippled by 'dogma rather than belief [...] instead of a conflict between gods and men, the tragic play became a tussle between villains and virtuous maids' (26). Realism arose as 'a reaction against this noisy deluge of emotional platitudes [in] a movement [...] to banish theatricality from the theatre [...] and to supplant it by what was hoped to be reality' (27). His critique of realism is by now familiar but here further refined: he characterizes realism as a constriction of theatre because it offers no acknowledgement of the audience, no characters of monumental stature, and it imprisons theatre within the proscenium. The 'degree of realism with which the work will be performed [...] will control every detail of the production' (33), he argues. Realism is a 'cul-de-sac' (40) for Edwards; rigid adherence to it creates 'a stick-in-the-mud, playing-safe attitude [that] is artistic infanticide' (41). It 'spread[s] stagnation and death wherever it has established itself' (41). Discussing the twentieth century, Edwards turns to the dramatists in whom he places his hopes for theatre, including Bertolt Brecht, Thornton Wilder, Jean Anouilh and Denis Johnston. Edwards's telling of theatre history is as much concerned with staging and the conditions of performance and theatregoing as with the thematic preoccupations of the age. He argues that 'it is desirable to discover how *un*-realistically, how true to the theatre, a play can be treated and yet carry conviction and serve the author's intentions' (34). Edwards then assesses the role of the director, the actor, and, returning to his quest for insightful reviewers, the critic. Before the final section of *The Mantle of Harlequin*, 'Notebook', Edwards imagines conversations between Harlequin (Edwards's persona) and a curious, but inexperienced enthusiast. In six fanciful conversations, Harlequin first declines to collaborate directly, but then discusses the importance of space (stressing the ways in which the proscenium need not confine the production), of the director's 'pattern [that] will serve as a guide for every subsequent decision' (87), and of the actors' physical and vocal stamina.

In the mid-1960s, Edwards contributed several thousand words on 'The Irish Theatre' to a new edition of George Freedley and John A. Reeves's *A History of the Theatre*. From its first sentence, which describes the Abbey as 'succumbing to popular taste' (1968, 735) even in the lifetimes of Yeats and Lady Gregory, to its conclusion that 'Irish Theatre in 1966 is ill-defined in policy and faces problems which must be solved if it is not to suffer further diminution' (749), Edwards's essay offers an atypically immodest account of twentieth-century Irish theatre history *pas comme les autres*. Edwards writes that 'by now [1968] the pioneer work of the Abbey, the Anew McMaster Company, and the Dublin Gate Theatre Productions had borne such fruit that a mushroom growth of small companies, each with their own varying but considerable merit, had sprung up' (744). Edwards positions many of these companies as the inheritors of the Gate tradition, noting, for instance, that three of the original directors of Dun Laoghaire's Globe Theatre Company 'were ex-members of the Dublin Gate Theatre Productions' (744). By cataloguing the numerous Irish playwrights who premièred plays with Phyllis Ryan's Orion Productions and Gemini Productions, he documents what amounts to an indictment of the Abbey's failure to produce worthy new Irish plays.

Two of the most insightful assessments of Edwards's influence on Irish drama come from Thomas Kilroy, who in 1992 cited 'two productions which ushered in contemporary Irish drama, Hugh Leonard's adaptation of Joyce, *Stephen D* (1962) and Brian Friel's *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* (1964)' (136). The former premièred at the Gate as a Gemini production directed by Jim Fitzgerald; the latter at the Gate as an Edwards – mac Liammóir production directed by Edwards. In 2007, Kilroy was more explicit about Edwards's centrality, particularly in using Brechtian dramaturgy, in the 'liberat[ion] of the Irish stage in the second half of the twentieth century from the constrictions of naturalism' (2007, 605):

The Edwards-Mac Liammóir productions I did see included *St. Joan* (1953) with Siobhan McKenna, Mac Liammóir's *Henry IV* by Pirandello (1955), *Julius Caesar* in fascist dress (1957), and, perhaps most important from my point of view, Edwards's two Brecht productions, *Mother Courage* (1959) and *St. Joan of the Stockyards* (1961). Edwards had been greatly taken by the Berliner Ensemble on its visit to London in 1956. Lacking that privilege, I, like many another young playwright, derived my sense of Brechtian stage technique at second hand, through the work of directors

like Edwards, [Tomás] MacAnna, and George Devine at the Royal Court in London. (2007, 603)

Kilroy's insightful commentaries notwithstanding, time and scholarship has not been generous to Edwards, certainly not as generous as to mac Liammóir. Rarely are his Oscar nomination for *Return to Glennascaul* (as Best Short Subject in 1953) or many film roles remembered. Despite his Englishness, his life-long refusal to affect any Irish trait, and his thinly-veiled threats to leave Ireland, Edwards was named the first director of drama for Teilifís Éireann in 1961 and very widely praised for the job he did. Richard Pine believed that when compared with mac Liammóir, Edwards 'was the superior actor' (163). It is difficult to overstate his range as a theatre practitioner, perhaps most cogently summed up by mac Liammóir:

It was he who introduced to Dublin methods of production, decor, and lighting, handling of mass effects, experiments in choral speaking, in scenic continuity, in symphonic arrangements of incidental music, of mime and gesture, hitherto barely understood. It is impossible to see the work of any of the younger directors without tracing a great portion of its inspiration to him. (1958, xv)

MICHEÁL MAC LIAMMÓIR: INTERNATIONALIZING IRISH-LANGUAGE DRAMA

Micheál mac Liammóir's ideas about theatre developed in close alignment with those of his partner, Hilton Edwards. While Edwards's most comprehensive dramatic commentary can be found in *The Mantle of Harlequin*, the Irish-version of the same phrase, *Fallaing Arlaicin*, was used by mac Liammóir as the title of a 1945 essay in Irish which relates the early history of his engagement with the theatre (1952, 11-44). A more exact counterpart to *The Mantle of Harlequin*, however, is mac Liammóir's pamphlet *Theatre in Ireland*, first published in 1950 and subsequently in 1964 in an expanded edition, which is more than double the length. In terms of mutual influence, *The Mantle of Harlequin* and *Theatre in Ireland* seem to be closely intertwined – while the first edition of mac Liammóir's pamphlet preceded Edwards's book and might have inspired it to a certain extent, the second edition was published six years after it and, in direct imitation of *The Mantle of Harlequin*, includes a final

section of short notes on various topics, entitled 'Reflections' (1964, 74-83).

Among the many common points between mac Liammóir's and Edwards's text we may name the distrust of realism in drama, a keen sense for practical aspects of running a theatre, as well as a qualified admiration for W.B. Yeats and his theatrical experiments. The main difference lies in scope: while *The Mantle of Harlequin* takes a broad view of European theatre from Greek tragedy to Edwards's present, *Theatre in Ireland* focuses, as the title suggests, on the history of the Irish theatrical scene. This can be attributed to a more general difference between the two partners. In contrast to the outspoken internationalist Hilton Edwards, mac Liammóir's opinions about the theatre were often formed in relation to his assumed Irish identity. Mac Liammóir, however, was far from being an Irish chauvinist. At least since World War II, he shared Edwards's distrust of nationalism. In 1951, mac Liammóir frankly admitted that 'nationality is a miserable and unnecessary thing' (1952, 290).⁴ Nevertheless, he did not propose a complete elimination of nationality. Fearful that stronger nations might dominate and eclipse weaker ones, mac Liammóir sought to cultivate such cultural diversity that would discourage bigotry: 'none of them [the nations] needs to think that it is better than any other, or worthier, or more spiritual. There is difference among them: that's all.' (1952, 290)⁵

Just as in Douglas Hyde's *The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland* (1892), the principal mark of Ireland's distinctiveness for mac Liammóir was the Irish language. In *Theatre in Ireland*, he argues that if Irish were lost, Ireland would be reduced, in cultural terms, to a mere region within the Anglophone world (1964, 76-77). However, the cultivation of national specifics was meaningful for him only if they facilitated interaction with the rest of the globe. Thus, he could paradoxically sound as a committed cultural nationalist and a cosmopolitan at the same time. In the aforementioned 1929 Balbriggan lecture, he, in the same breath, condemned the Abbey Theatre for refusing to stage any foreign plays and argued that 'there could be no real Irish drama until playwrights and actors used Irish' (C.W.C.). This seems contradictory until we realize that for mac Liammóir the use of Irish actually implied a greater openness to new ideas, not the opposite. As he argued concerning Edward Martyn's relationship to the Irish language, 'his interest in it had its usual unexpected and not generally recognised effect of awakening a desire in his soul for two things: the expansion of Irish expression beyond the limits

of peasant life, and the linking up of Ireland with European tendencies other than English' (1964, 18). It was clear that for mac Liammóir, the use of the Irish language in drama was a way to become 'incidentally national' rather than consciously staging nationality, as Edwards argued already in 1932 (qtd. in Leeney 127). The use of Irish would enable Irish playwrights to remain Irish without emphasizing other, often superficial or quaint, features of Irishness. For instance, the effort to articulate national identity through English led, according to mac Liammóir, to the creation of the 'Abbey Stage Irishman', a revision of the earlier Boucicault model that the Abbey strove so much to suppress (1964, 48). While these new iterations of the Stage Irishman (in the work of John B. Keane, for example) may 'have done no harm to dramatic development', they may mean that 'the nation itself becomes too satisfied with the charms these characters parade before them' (49).

Mac Liammóir's commitment to Irish spanned the whole of his artistic career. Having acquired it in his late teens, he soon became a writer in the language, publishing numerous essays, travel diaries, plays, short stories, as well as prose poems. As was already mentioned, he also became a crucial figure in Irish-language theatre, serving as the first producer of Galway's *An Taibhdhearc* (1928-1929), a guest producer of Dublin's *An Comhar Drámaíochta* (1930-1934), as well as an adjudicator at theatre competitions (see Ó Siadhail 69-70, 97-103; mac Liammóir 1952, 135-51). It is therefore not surprising that his dramatic commentary, while sharing the international outlook of Hilton Edwards as well as many of his opinions, was often focused specifically on Irish-language theatre.

The mission statement of *An Taibhdhearc*, printed in the programme for the opening night of *Diarmuid agus Gráinne* on 27 August 1928, reveals mac Liammóir's opinions about the independence of drama (and art in general) from nationalism. He argues that it is not enough if people go to the theatre merely out of their interest in the language revival: 'There is no theatre in this world worth calling a theatre that people attend merely because its productions are in this or that language.'⁶ He complains that many people come to see Irish-language plays for patriotic reasons only and are not truly interested in the play, the acting, or the production. He expresses the hope that *An Taibhdhearc* would change attitudes of the public and audiences would attend 'because they simply want to go to the theatre and because it is natural in Galway to go to an Irish-language theatre just as it is natural in Seville to go to a Spanish one'.⁷ For mac Liammóir, a key purpose of theatre is neither to express

national identity nor to contribute to the revival of a language but ‘to teach the public about beauty and the world through drama’ (1928).⁸

Mac Liammóir’s most explicit statements about drama can be found in the essay ‘*Drámaíocht Ghaeilge san Am atá le Teach*’ [Irish-language Drama in the Future]. (1940, repr. 1952) As the date of the first publication reveals, the essay reflects mac Liammóir’s extensive experience with both Irish- and English-language productions, but looks to the future rather than the past. Remarkably, it combines an openness to international influences with a deep commitment to the revival of the Irish language and respect for the Irish indigenous traditions. The search for a synthesis of the ‘cosmopolitan’ and ‘revivalist’ strands of his thinking was a consistent feature of mac Liammóir’s work, palpable also in his travel writing, polemic essays, as well as a number of his plays.

‘*Drámaíocht Ghaeilge*’ is conceived as an evaluation of various modes or styles available to an Irish-language playwright or producer. The first style that mac Liammóir considers is that of realism, the predominant mode of Irish-language productions at the time. Very much in tune with Edwards’s opinions, he criticizes realism in general terms as an outmoded form in the European context, stating that ‘the area that it owns is too narrow and limited even for experienced world languages, French and English’ (1952, 231).⁹ In theoretical terms, mac Liammóir reveals realism as a mere technique, as a specific means of creating theatrical illusion, rather than a style that has some intrinsic connection to the outside reality (229). Just like Edwards, mac Liammóir also deliberately draws parallels with film, making an explicit connection between realism and the eye of the camera (229). The obvious conclusion is that realist theatre cannot compete with its ‘old enemy’ (‘*sean-námhaid*’), the cinema, in creating an illusion of verisimilitude (238) (Fig. 2.5).

Nevertheless, mac Liammóir does not limit himself to general considerations, but makes an argument why realism is distinctively impractical in the context of Irish-language drama. The whole essay starts with the following words: ‘Irish is not the usual language of cities in Ireland, but yet drama usually grows and develops in big cities.’ (227)¹⁰ The realist convention implies that the play has to ‘grow out of the real life of the people [...], out of their speech, their customs, manners, opinions and beliefs’ (227).¹¹ As Irish is the community language only of a few limited areas on the western seaboard, however, adherence to realism in Irish-language drama would necessarily imply that the settings of the plays could never ‘leave Connemara, Kerry or Donegal’ (227).¹² And not only

Fig. 2.5 Micheál mac Liammóir seen with expressionistic masks in *Yaboo* by Edward Longford, directed by Hilton Edwards, Gate Theatre, 1933. Gate Theatre Archive, Northwestern University (Copyright of the Edwards – mac Liammóir Estate)

that, dramatists would be severely encumbered in terms of topic. With a touch of sarcasm, mac Liammóir expresses his fear of endless repetition of plays that concern themselves ‘with country kitchens, discussions of the price of fish, land disputes, the burst of laughter about the ugly old spinster and the arranged marriage, the lamentation about the lonely aging mother and her brave son fighting for the old country’ (227-28).¹³ An Irish-language realist play about the life in an Irish city would not be credible as it would, in a sense, involve translation from English to Irish. In mac Liammóir’s words: ‘Thoughts translated from another language usually contain strange empty music, especially in the mouth of the actor, unless the play deals with life overseas and foreign customs.’ (230)¹⁴ Moreover, mac Liammóir implies that adopting realism by Irish-language playwrights would be a mere imitation of the established ‘Anglo-Irish

school of realist drama' that he traces, with some simplification, from Synge and Lady Gregory to Sean O'Casey and Lennox Robinson (228).

The debate concerning the absence of Irish in the cities and its consequences for Irish-language literature had been already going on since the beginning of the revival. Conservative members of the movement advocated precisely for what mac Liammóir ironized – the limiting of Irish-language prose and drama to Gaeltacht topics (see O'Leary 1994, 401-20). Mac Liammóir, however, belonged to the 'progressive' group that aimed to overcome this impasse. Accordingly, the rest of his essay is devoted to outlining the various ways in which this goal could be achieved. The discussion starts with pondering on the relative advantages and drawbacks of 'romanticism', defined very broadly as setting the play far away or long ago. Mac Liammóir sees much more freedom in this style than in realism and gives a number of international precedents including plays by Goethe, Shelley, Turgenev and Shakespeare. (1952, 231) In the Irish context, he mentions W.B. Yeats, who was a life-long influence on mac Liammóir – Yeats's essay 'Ireland and the Arts' (1901), after all, significantly contributed to mac Liammóir's decision to assume an Irish identity (1952, 28; Ó hAodha 23-24).

A definite advantage of the romantic mode in the Irish-language context is its independence of language – as mac Liammóir describes it, it does not matter how much difference there was between the Italian of the original Romeo and the English of Shakespeare's hero (1952, 232). Romantic plays set in distant countries or in the legendary past could be therefore plausibly staged in Irish. He clearly saw this as a possible path for Irish-language drama as he repeated this particular piece of advice in the second edition of *Theatre in Ireland* (1964, 65). It should also be mentioned that this broad notion of romanticism is an important part of mac Liammóir's own writing: his first play, *Diarmuid agus Gráinne*, is entirely based on an early Irish saga, and he mixed elements from Irish legends with realism and the comedy of manners in his English-language plays *Where Stars Walk* (1940) and *Ill Met by Moonlight* (1946). The 'romantic', Celticist style is also much apparent in his illustrations and stage designs. Nevertheless, in 'Drámaíocht Ghaeilge' he expresses his dissatisfaction with his first play and admits that romanticism in drama is definitely out of fashion in international terms. From a more practical point of view, he also mentions the costliness of the technique in terms of stage design and costumes as an important limiting factor (1952, 232-33).

After romanticism mac Liammóir briefly discusses German expressionism, praising its focus on deep human psychology as well as its ability to express abstract concepts, such as the class struggle and the mechanization of life. He notes that no attempt has yet been made to introduce this technique on the Irish-language stage and urges playwrights and producers to engage with it. Nevertheless, he does not recommend expressionism as an ideal form as international fashions are changeable, and he would also prefer Irish-language dramatists to draw on indigenous as well as foreign models (233-36). Instead, he proposes a wholly new type of theatre, suitable to the Irish situation. This mode, called 'drama of the imagination' ('dráma na samhlaíochta') would, in mac Liammóir's view, take advantage of local cultural resources, namely traditional storytelling and placename lore (237-38). He does not describe it in any great detail, nor mention any existing models apart from unspecified plays by Douglas Hyde and Patrick Pearse (238). Instead, mac Liammóir illustrates his idea by the following example: 'I would like to see an Irish-language play in which an actor would come out on an empty stage and say to the audience, just as a storyteller would tell the neighbours at the fire-side: This is the King's golden palace, these are the gates of paradise and of hell.' (237)¹⁵ Notably, this description matches important opinions expressed by Edwards. In *The Mantle of Harlequin*, Edwards praises the simplicity of the stage in Greek and Elizabethan drama (1958, 14, 18) and criticizes the overemphasis on the visual in realist productions (29). He also suggests that theatre should provoke imagination on the part of the audience (30). Despite the lack of concrete details, mac Liammóir's hopes for the new form were high: 'This Irish talent of imagination could create drama and a dramatic form in this country that could, maybe, if applied in the right way, influence world drama just as Greek drama influenced Europe a long time ago.' (237)¹⁶

However exaggerated this statement might sound, it is significant that mac Liammóir does not see, in the manner of more conservative revivalists, Irish-language literature as a means of protecting or even expressing the putative 'Gaelic soul' (O'Leary 1994, 19-38). Rather, he imagines it as something that could be potentially offered to the world. The inspiration for this idea might have come again from W.B. Yeats, who, in his essay 'The Celtic Element in Literature', writes about Irish literature as a possible source of enrichment for world culture (Yeats 293-95). The crucial difference between the two, however, is that while Yeats mentions only the literary tradition of the past, mac Liammóir talks about a *future*

dramatic movement. The concept of the drama of the imagination seems to be an answer to a more general question, posed by mac Liammóir in *Theatre in Ireland*: how to find a style that would escape the realistic trap, could compete with the cinema, and at the same time would ‘convey those qualities of clarity, sincerity, passion, humour, and warmth so often lacking in experimental dramatic writing’ (1964, 39). In national terms, he was looking for an expression that ‘apart from its Irishry’ would ‘have the intrinsic values of universal discovery’ (41).

In his considerations, mac Liammóir did not overly concern himself with the most pressing problem of Irish-language theatre of his time (or indeed of any time including the present): the difficulties of attracting a large enough audience. This was, after all, the main reason why An Taibhdhearc never quite fulfilled the bold hopes expressed in its mission statement and had to rely mainly on the enthusiasm of amateur actors and a meagre state subsidy. While many Galwegians certainly knew Irish, it was a second language for most of them and they lacked the high comprehension skills to truly enjoy an Irish-language play. When Walter Macken, one of mac Liammóir’s successors as producer of An Taibhdhearc, reminisced about a 1933 performance where he made his debut as actor, he noted that there were hardly more than twenty spectators and bluntly explained why: ‘The common people were not yet keen on any theatre, not to mind a theatre putting on plays in what to them was a foreign language.’ (Macken 115) But in 1940, mac Liammóir could still envision the scarcity of theatregoers as something that could be turned to advantage. With no established audiences, the playwrights and directors would not have to stoop to popular taste and would be able to educate whatever public there was according to their own wishes. In mac Liammóir’s own words:

Ireland is the only country in Europe today, I would say, with a language that its own people are so ignorant of that one does not need to kneel before them in order to produce a good play in it. The people? And their demands? We don’t have any audience as yet, as the word is understood in other countries. We are slowly building one. Let us start immediately to educate whatever audience there is to get interested in things we place hope in, in things that we believe that are good. (1952, 239-40)¹⁷

Mac Liammóir was perhaps overly optimistic about the future of Irish-language drama, which, due to the small size of audiences coupled

with the difficulty of recruiting actors with sufficient language skills, has to this day remained a minority genre even within the Irish-language context. This unfavourable situation undoubtedly influenced mac Liammóir himself – apart from *Diarmuid agus Gráinne* and two short, less significant early pieces, he actually never wrote another play in Irish.¹⁸ Traces of the drama of the imagination can be seen, however, in the most successful of his shows, *The Importance of Being Oscar* (1960). In the play, conceived as a monologue, mac Liammóir himself assumes the pose of the storyteller, works with a very limited set of props and depends much on the imagination of the audience. Arguably, a tentative link can be made between *The Importance of Being Oscar*, Brian Friel's *Faith Healer* (1979) and the boom of Irish monologic plays in the 1990s by authors such as Dermot Bolger and Conor McPherson. And indeed, numerous reviewers made a connection between these plays and the Irish tradition of storytelling (Wallace 45), which chimes with mac Liammóir's ideas about the drama of the imagination. Moreover, many of these monologic plays were successful internationally, which can be seen, from a certain angle, as a partial fulfilment of mac Liammóir's hopes.

Questions of audience aside, the ideas contained in the essay did have a definite impact on subsequent Irish-language theatre. Successful Irish-language productions have been rare, but it is remarkable how many of those that did enjoy success deliberately broke away from the rules of realism. This includes the most popular Irish-language play ever, Mairéad Ní Ghráda's *An Triail*, whose 1964 production under Tomás Mac Anna employed elements of the morality play and Brechtian theatre (O'Leary 2017, 64). The non-realist tradition has continued ever since, with major playwrights taking inspiration from European stages, including expressionism as advised by mac Liammóir, but also the theatre of the absurd and other styles (O'Leary 2017, 44, 52, 95, 284 *et passim*). Among the most recent non-realistic productions we may count Biddy Jenkinson's *Mise Subhó agus Maccó* (2001), which combines social commentary on the issue of homelessness with reference to a number of literary works, such as *Buile Suibhne*, Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* and Pearse's 'Mise Éire'. Another interesting example is Dave Duggan's sci-fi play *Makaronik* (2014), set in the distant future and combining lines in Irish, English and a number of other languages including an invented one, Empirish. As if in order to make a full circle back to mac Liammóir's first play, *Makaronik* uses echoes of the Diarmuid and Gráinne story in

a dystopic setting.¹⁹ Both plays were produced by the innovative Belfast theatre company Aisling Ghéar.

Turning to explicit dramatic commentaries, one may note that the above-mentioned director Tomás Mac Anna thought very much in the manner outlined by mac Liammóir. He argued that instead of relying on props, ‘imagination [should] rule the acting’.²⁰ He also deplored the fact ‘that drama in Irish was too influenced by the realistic style of the Abbey’ and suggested that it should rely ‘more on storytelling and verse-making and exaggeration’ (126).²¹ Even the wording here is surprisingly similar to mac Liammóir’s ‘Drámaíocht Ghaeilge’, which makes a direct connection between the drama of the imagination and traditional Irish verbal arts. And as Ian R. Walsh has shown, Mac Anna’s rejection of realism did not have impact only on the staging of Irish-language plays, but influenced the whole style of the Abbey Theatre when he became its artistic director in 1966 (2016, 448).

Similarly, one of the most original Irish-language playwrights (not to mention his achievements in poetry and prose), Eoghan Ó Tuairisc, advocated in 1964 the abandonment of the Abbey realistic style. He called it, quite sarcastically, ‘the Dresser Style’ (‘an Stíl Dhriosúrach’) and described it in similar terms as mac Liammóir before him:

We all have seen it. The curtain rising. Kitchen. A sigh from the audience, ‘Here we go again!’ A fire, every pot, every hook, and every sod of turf in proper order. Pictures, St. Patrick, my grandfather, the Sacred Heart and my aunt Eileen from Boston, Mass. And the dresser, and all the plates, the little jugs, the mugs, the dishes in order, every cup on its hook without a single cup out of place. (43)²²

Instead, Ó Tuairisc called for a thorough simplification of the stage. Just as in mac Liammóir’s essay, the key concept for Ó Tuairisc is imagination, which gets all but stifled by the realistic trappings, inherited from the Victorian era:

Drama relies on imagination. The director must awaken the imagination of the audience from the moment the curtain is raised. If that stirring of the imagination is not accomplished, the poor play will remain on the floor of the stage and the miracle of the theatre will not be effected in the hearts and heads of the audience. (42)²³

One may see from the above that mac Liammóir's ideas about the theatre resonated widely both in the context of Irish- and English-language drama. Perhaps his most remarkable achievement was that he absorbed the internationalist impulse from Hilton Edwards as well as from his own experience and applied it to the specific Irish situation. In this way, he showed that cosmopolitanism and revivalism, at least in the field of theatre, are not mutually exclusive and that their combination, if achieved in an inventive way, may be artistically successful.

CONCLUSION

Edwards and mac Liammóir aspired to see Irish audiences that embraced international theatre and international audiences that embraced Irish theatre. Their writings on theatre consistently reflect these ambitions, as do their many tours in Ireland and abroad. At the end of their lives, Edwards and mac Liammóir enjoyed their greatest, perhaps only, period of financial security with the international success of mac Liammóir's lucrative one-man show, *The Importance of Being Oscar*. Edwards directed it, as well as several of Brian Friel's early plays: *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*, *Crystal and Fox* (1968), and *Lovers* (1969).

Mac Liammóir died in 1978; Edwards, four years later. One measure of their legacy is that the internationalist dimension of their commentaries on theatre was realized in Irish productions that pursued 'the limits of the imagination' (Edwards 1934, 21). The year after Edwards's death, Patrick Mason staged the hugely inventive production of Tom MacIntyre's *The Great Hunger* (1983) for the Abbey. Two years later, Druid's landmark production of Tom Murphy's *Bailegangaire* was directed by Garry Hynes. Irish theatre in the 1990s was distinguished by productions such as Mason's direction of Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990), Hynes's direction of Vincent Woods's *At the Black Pig's Dyke* (1992) and Macnas's adaptation of the *Táin* (1992). Had Edwards and mac Liammóir lived into the 1990s and the twenty-first century, they surely would have been gratified to see Irish theatre represented on international stages by plays as various as those in Friel's oeuvre, Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats* (1998), or Enda Walsh's *Once* and *Misterman* (both 2011) and by the work of companies as imaginative as Macnas and Druid. Without any doubt, Edwards's and mac Liammóir's wide-ranging influence contributed to this remarkable international success.²⁴

NOTES

1. In his essay 'Hilton Edwards as Director', Ian R. Walsh provides an excellent summary of Edwards's hallmark directorial interventions: the deft and swift transitions between scenes, the creation of 'fluid stage space' and silhouette effects, massed choreography, choral speaking, the 'Ich performance' (2018, 40).
2. Both productions of *Faust* used the 'simplified' version by Graham and Tristan Rawson. Ian R. Walsh points to the influence of Peter Godfrey at the [London] Gate Theatre by noting a number of plays performed at both theatres. Walsh also writes that 'Edwards even went so far as to reproduce Godfrey's staging of Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* (1922) in 1929.' (2018, 31-32)
3. Mac Liammóir wrote in his autobiography: 'I determine[d] to break with acting [he had been a child actor] and to paint; I would design for the stage perhaps; I would become a Bakst, a Gordon Craig, and Adolphe Appia; I would save Irish theatre from a photographic realism.' (1947, 2) See Pine and Cave for Craig's influence on Edwards.
4. 'gur bocht neamhriachtanach an rud an náisiúntacht'. All translations from Irish in this chapter, unless noted otherwise, are by Radvan Markus.
5. 'nach gá d'aon cheann orthu cheapadh go bhfuil sé níos fearr ná an ceann eile, ná níos fiúntaí, ná níos spioradálta. Tá difríocht eatarthu: sin an méid'.
6. 'Níl taibhdhearc sa domhan seo ar b'fhiú taibhdhearc thabhairt uirri a mbíonn daoine ag dul chuici ar an ábhar gur sa teangain seo nó sa teangain úd bhíos a cuid dramaí d'á léiriú'.
7. 'gur mian leo dhul chuig an taibhdhearc, agus i ngeall ar gur rud nádúrtha an rud é, i nGaillimh, bheith ag dul chuig an taibhdhearc sa nGaedhilge, díreach mar is nádúrtha, i Sebhilla, dhul chuici sa Spáinnis'.
8. 'eolas ar an áilneacht is ar an saol thabhairt don phobal thríd an dráma'.
9. 'An dúthaigh atá aige tá sí ró-chúng ró-theoranta fiú amháin do theangacha oilte an domhain mhóir, an Fhraincis nó an Béarla'.
10. 'Ní hí an Ghaeilge gnáth-theanga na gcathrach mór in Éirinn, agus mar sin féin is sna cathracha móra de ghnáth thig fás agus borradh i saothrú na drámaíochta.'
11. 'Ní mór don dráma [...] fás as fíorshaol an phobail. Ní mór dhó fás as caint an phobail sin, as nósa an phobail sin, as a gcuid béas is tuairimí is creideamh'.
12. 'gan dul amach as Conamara go deo, nó as Ciarraí, nó as Tír Chonaill'.
13. 'leis an gcistinigh faoin tuaith, le comhrá faoi phraghas an éisc, le clampar faoin talamh; an scairt gháire faoin tsean-mhaighdin ghránna agus an cleamhnas, an racht goil faoin máthair aosta uaignigh agus a mac calma ag troid ar son na sean-tíre'.
14. 'bíonn ceol aisteach folamh ag baint le smaointe haistríodh ó theangain eile de ghnáth, mórmhór i mbéal an aisteora, sé sin mura mbíonn an

dráma ag baint le saol thar lear agus le béasa eachtrannacha'. The quote does not imply that mac Liammóir was against translation as such – he translated his debut play *Diarmuid agus Gráinne* into English and while engaged in *An Taibhdhearc*, translated two plays into Irish (Bateman). He also promoted translation as a means of enriching Irish-language literature (1917, 1922).

15. 'Ba mhaith liomsa aon dráma Gaeilge amháin fheiceáil ina mbeadh aisteoir ag teacht amach ar an stáitse folamh agus ag rá leis an lucht éiste, faoi mar a déarfadh seanchaí leis na comharsain cois na tine: Seo é pálás órtha an Rí, nó, Seo iad geataí Pharrthais agus Ifrinn'.
16. 'D'fhéadfadh an cháilíocht seo na samhlaíochta in Éirinn dráma agus foirm dhrámaíochta chumadh sa tír seo a d'fhágfadh a rian, b'fhéidir, ar dhrámaíocht an domhain iomláin dá bhfostófaí i gceart í, faoi mar a d'fhág drámaíocht na Gréige a rian ar an Eoraip fadó'.
17. 'Sí Éire an t-aon tír san Eoraip inniu, déarfainn, a bhfuil teanga aici a bhfuil a muintir féin chomh aineolach uirthi nach gá di dul ar a dhá glúin rompu más mian léi dráma maith léiriú sa teangain sin. An pobal an ea? Agus an Rud Theastaíos ón bPobal? Níl aon phobal againn go fóill, mar tuigtear an focal i dtíortha eile. Táimid go mall ag iarraidh ceann dhéanamh dúinn féin. Féachaimis chuige mar sin go dtosnóimid láithreach ag oiliúint a bhfuil againn cheana chun spéis agus suim chur sna rudaí a bhfuil dóchas againn féin astu, sna rudaí a chreidimid bheith go maith'. Similar opinions are expressed also in the essay 'An Litríocht Nua agus an Pobul' (1922, 28-29).
18. The plays in question are the unpublished one-act comedy *Lúlú* (1929) and the children's play *Oidhche Bhealtaine* (1932).
19. The script for the play was later converted into a novel, published in 2018.
20. 'an tsamhlaíocht a bheith mar mháistir ar an stáitsíocht'.
21. 'go raibh an drámaíocht Ghaeilge rómhór faoi stíl réadúil sin an Abbey'; 'níos mó ar an scéalaíocht agus an rannaireacht agus ar an áiféis'. Translation from O'Leary 2017, 38.
22. 'Chonacamar go léir é. An Brat ag éirí. Cistin. Osna ón lucht éisteachta, *'Here we go again!'*. Tine, gach pota, gach crúca agus gach fód móna i gcaoi agus i gceart. Pictiúir, Naomh Pádraig, mo sheanathair, an Croí Rónaofa, agus m'aintín Eibhlín ó Bhoston, Mass. Agus an driosúr, na plátaí, na crúiscíní, na mugaí, na miasa go léir in eagar, gach cupán ar a chrúca, gan bun cupáin amach ná barr cupáin isteach'. Translation of the passage from 'Tine' onwards is from O'Leary 2017, 123.
23. 'Braitheann an drámaíocht ar an tsamhlaíocht. Ní mór don léiritheoir samhlaíocht an lucht éisteachta a mhúscailt ón nóiméad a ardaítear an brat. Mura ndéantar an bíogadh samhlaíochta sin, fanfaidh an dráma bocht ar urlár an ardáin agus ní chuirfear míorúilt na hamharclainne i bhfeidhm ar chroí agus ar cheann an lucht éisteachta'. Translation from O'Leary

2017, 123. Also the playwright Críostóir Ó Floinn, in the preface to the published play *Cad d'Imigh ar Fheidhlimidh*, explicitly evokes the connection between imagination and traditional storytelling, postulated by mac Liammóir (O'Leary 2017, 267).

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