



The Playboy Of The Western World

JM Synge

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In 1896 JM Synge met W. B. Yeats, who encouraged Synge to live for a while in the Aran Islands and then return to Dublin and devote himself to creative work. In 1897 Synge suffered his first attack of Hodgkin's disease, a form of untreatable cancer at the time, and also had an enlarged gland removed from his neck. In 1898, he spent his first summer on the Aran Islands and then continued for the next five collecting stories and folklore and perfecting his Irish but continued to live in Paris for the rest of the year. During this period, Synge wrote his first play, *When The Moon Has Set*. In 1903, Synge left Paris and moved to London. He had written two one-act plays, *Riders to the Sea* and *The Shadow of the Glen* the previous year. *The Shadow of the Glen* was performed at the Molesworth Hall in October 1903. *Riders to the Sea* was performed at the same venue in February the following year. The play widely regarded as his masterpiece, *The Playboy of the Western World*, was first performed in the Abbey on 26 January 1907. The comedy attracted a hostile reaction from the Irish public and thereafter a riot ensued. Described as "an unmitigated, protracted libel upon Irish peasant men, and worse still upon Irish girlhood". Yeats returned from Scotland to address the crowd on the second night, and decided to call in the police. Press opinion soon turned against the rioters and the protests petered out. Synge died of Hodgkin's disease just weeks short of his 38th birthday on March 24th 1909 trying to complete his last play, *Deirdre Of The Sorrows*. He was buried in Mount Jerome Graveyard, Dublin.

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