

Stones in His Pockets: Digital Dramaturgy

Stones in His Pockets
By **Marie Jones**
Directed by **Derek Goldman**

Jan 15–Feb 23

When a big Hollywood film crew takes over a small Irish town, the locals line up to earn their “40-quid-a-day” as extras—and maybe pursue some dreams of their own. Charlie wants to write a blockbuster screenplay, while Jake would settle for a date with the lovely leading lady. Where they and their neighbors end up ultimately surprises them all. An “uproarious, joyful evening” (*New York Daily News*) with two actors playing more than a dozen characters, *Stones* is an acting tour de force both rollicking and poignant.

Research compiled by Catherine María Rodríguez, Production Dramaturg

1. The World of Stones in His Pockets

On Location: Where in Ireland?

With special thanks to Northlight Theatre and Yale Rep dramaturg Sarah Krasnow.

Ballycastle

The small town that Charlie Conlon is from. Located at the northernmost mainland boundary of county Antrim, Ballycastle boasts a view across the sea to Scotland.

According to the 2001 census, there were 5,089 people living in Ballycastle and of these:

- 25.3% were aged under 16 years and 18.7% were aged 60 and over
- 46.8% of the population were male and 53.2% were female
- 77.7% were from a Catholic background and 20.5% were from a Protestant background.
- 6.5% of people aged 16–74 were unemployed.

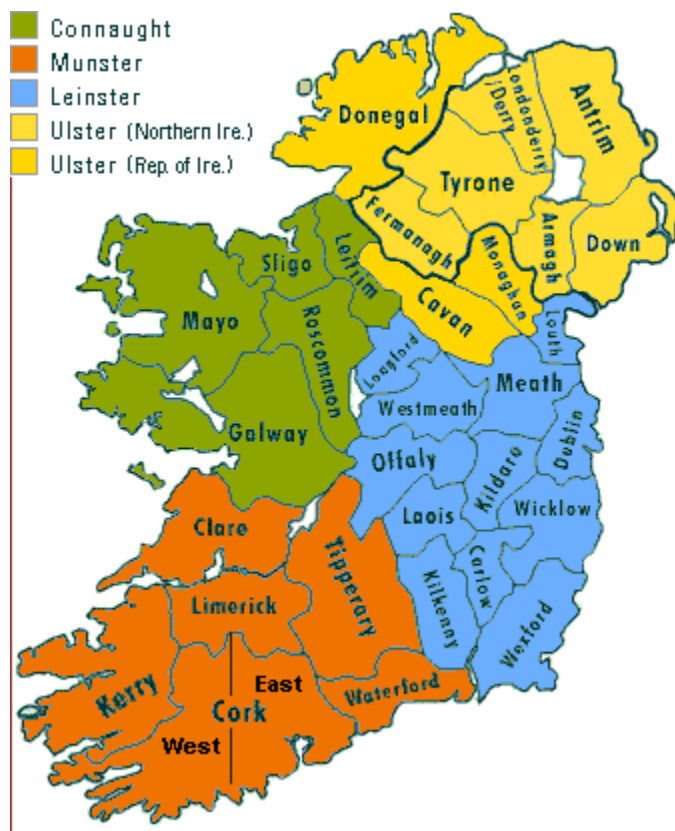
Belfast

The capitol of Northern Ireland, where Marie Jones lives. By population, it is the fourteenth largest city in the United Kingdom and second largest on the island of Ireland. It is the seat of the devolved government and legislative Northern Ireland Assembly. Historically, Belfast has been a center for the Irish linen industry (earning the nickname “Linenopolis”), tobacco production, rope-making and shipbuilding. Belfast played a key role in the Industrial Revolution, establishing its place as a global industrial center until the latter half of the 20th century. Today, Belfast remains a center for industry, as well as the arts, higher education and business, a legal center, and is the economic engine of Northern Ireland. The city suffered greatly during the period of conflict called the Troubles, but latterly has undergone a sustained period of calm, free from the intense political violence of former years, and substantial economic and commercial growth. The city center has undergone considerable expansion and regeneration in recent years.

Blasket Islands

Famously beautiful islands off the coast of County Kerry. The Blasket Islands used to be inhabited by a community of writers and artists who worked almost entirely in the Irish language, and who claimed to be inspired by the rugged landscape. These writers are responsible for some of the modern Irish language classics. After the town’s population dwindled to only 22 inhabitants, the government forced these remaining few to leave in 1953 because they claimed it dangerous for only a few people to live in an area that might be inaccessible from the mainland for weeks at a time during the stormy winter. Many of the descendants resettled on the Dingle Peninsula, within sight of their former home. The Islands can still be visited via Ferry during the summer months.

County Kerry



The setting of *Stones in His Pockets*. County Kerry is a beautiful, primarily rural area. With its mountains, lakes and Atlantic coastline, Kerry is among the most scenic areas in Ireland and is among the most significant tourist destinations in Ireland. Killarney is the center of the tourism industry there, a significant element of the local economy. It is named after the pre-Gaelic tribe who lived in part of the present county. The population of the county is 145,502 according to the 2011 census.

Discoverthetrip.com says: Kerry is as close as you'll get to the mythical Ireland: that Celtic kingdom of misty mountains promised by glossy brochures, Hollywood and our daydreams. Between the county's snow-capped summits are medieval ruins, glacial lakes, coastal peninsulas, blustery beaches, deserted archipelagos, secluded hamlets, and larger towns where live music sparks up every night.

Most visitors touch down in Killarney. The townsfolk know how to run a mean hotel and serve an Atlantic catch or a rack of Kerry lamb. Instead of municipal gardens there's a 10,000-hectare national park, which can be explored by 'jaunting car' (pony and trap) and a boat across the lakes. In the nearby Gap of Dunloe, the road winds crazily beneath the Macgillycuddy's Reeks range, which includes nine of Ireland's 10 highest peaks. Tourists often arrive at the coast with the idea that the iconic Ring of Kerry is a 'place' they can visit. In fact, it's a 179km circuit of the Iveragh Peninsula, where the mountains-meet-ocean beauty makes for one of the world's great road trips. To paraphrase one pub sign, you'll enjoy Ireland's best-known views... fog permitting. Across a dolphin-inhabited bay, the Dingle Peninsula is home to one of the country's highest concentrations of ancient sites and Mt Brandon, Ireland's eighth highest peak.

Such magnificent scenery is, of course, a magnet for buses, but the hordes can be escaped by using back roads and mountain passes. As for the local folk, Kerry men are famous throughout Ireland for their proud provincialism and country cunning. Just listen to the outrageous yarns told by the 'jarveys' who drive Killarney's jaunting cars.

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County Kerry Statistical Profile

Crime: The reported crime rate of 11.46 per thousand population in Kerry is much lower than the national average which is 25.79 per thousand population.

Education/Training: There are 147 primary schools, 29 post primary schools and 1 third level college in the County. There are 11,684 pupils attending secondary school and 14,697 pupils attending primary school in the County. 1,032 students are in receipt of a higher education grant from Kerry County Council while 1,068 students received third level and post-leaving certificate grants from the Kerry Education Service (VEC) in 2000/2001.

Suicide rates, especially in young males are also higher than average in Kerry.

Employment: In 1996, 19% of the workforce were working in agriculture and mining, 7.2% in construction, 1.1% in electricity and gas, 18.2% in commerce, 4% in transport, 4.3% in public administration, 16% in professional service, 14.9% in manufacturing and 15.3% in other occupations. (Source: Census, 1996)

Health: Injuries and deaths resulting from accidents are higher in Kerry than the national average. Suicide rates, especially in young males are also higher than average in Kerry. The standardised mortality rate (SMR) for cancer in Kerry has been at a lower level than the national rate for at least the past ten years.

Heritage: There is a wealth of archaeological heritage spread throughout Kerry. The County has the largest area of native wood cover in Ireland. Oakwoods in Killarney lie alongside one of the only three yew woods in Europe.

Income: The relative disposable income per capita for Kerry was 85.1% of the state average

Irish Language: Kerry has two Gaeltacht areas located on the Dingle and Iveragh Peninsulas. In 1996, 57,204 people over the age of three years claimed that they could speak Irish while 15,763 claimed to speak Irish on a daily basis.

Tourism: County Kerry ranks third in overseas visitors (2000) in the Country, behind Dublin and Cork. However, the County ranks fourth in revenue with County Galway earning the third highest in revenue. The total revenue (overseas plus domestic) generated from tourists in the County is approximately £300 million per annum. 80 - 85% of overseas tourists to the County arrive via the East Coast while 15 - 20% arrive via the South and Western Coast. The percentage of overseas visitors to Kerry in proportion to the overall national figure decreased by some 7% between 1996 and 1999.

Unemployment: The live register figure decreased from 7,203 in 1996 to 5,860 in February 2000 with a further decrease to 4874 in May 2001. In December 2001 the numbers on the live register

increased to 6162.



What's with the cow on the poster?

Kerry Cattle are a rare, native Irish breed, and one of the oldest in Europe. The cattle have an almost all-black coat and are said to be particularly hardy. The milk from Kerry cows contains “smaller globules of butterfat” and is therefore easier for humans to digest. Kerry is known for its dairy products, though Kerrygold butter was actually launched in the UK, and not currently produced in County Kerry. The name is simply meant to evoke the image of southern Ireland.

Dublin 4

Simon, the First AD, is named an “Ambitious Dublin 4-type.” Dublin 4 is a postal district of Ireland that includes the RTE network and several southern suburbs of Dublin, the capitol of the Republic of Ireland. ‘Dublin 4’ or its abbreviation, ‘D4’, is sometimes used as a pejorative adjective to describe an Irish upper-middle class attitude, based on the perceived opinions and characteristics of some residents of this area. In this sense it is sometimes contrasted with “the plain people of Ireland” by Irish commentators such as Desmond Fennell. D-4 is associated with aspirational upper- and upper-middle class people. The area boasts its own accent—distinct from any other regional Irish accent—and is the subject of ridicule. During the 1990s, the term changed to refer more to the alleged wealth and posh life-style of residents. (*See Glossary entry*)

The Social Dimensions of the Crisis: The Evidence and its Implications

by National Economic & Social Council, 14 May 2013

The greatest social impact of the economic crisis in Ireland since the crash in 2008 has been the large and sustained increase in unemployment, and in particular, an increase in the number of households where no-one has a job. This is the conclusion of a National Economic and Social Council (NESC) report published today on The Social Dimensions of the Crisis: The Evidence

and its Implications.

Gathering together a wide range of evidence, NESC show that most people have been impacted, at least to some extent, by the crisis. Overall, the majority of households in Ireland have experienced a drop in wealth and/or income since the economic crash in 2008.

Helen Johnston, one of the authors of the report, points out, however, that some groups in particular have been seriously impacted: “those who have lost jobs, had business failures, seen large falls in income or wealth, or who carry a large debt burden have experienced significant social impacts.” She further outlines that “those who were least well-off prior to the economic crisis, especially people who are unemployed, lone parents and people who are ill or disabled, continue to be most at risk of poverty.”

The report also outlines the other ways in which people have been impacted in terms of their physical health, family relationships and mental health. In addition, the report highlights the importance of public services, such as education and health, especially for people who are vulnerable. There has been an increased demand for public services as a result of the crisis, while at the same time public expenditure on service provision has been reduced.

In terms of responses, Helen Johnston states that “policies and institutions do matter. For example, Ireland’s social welfare system has been reasonably successful in protecting some people (including older people) from the worst effects of the economic crisis.”

Unemployment

- Unemployment has increased from 5% in 2007 to 14% in 2012
- Young people have especially high unemployment rates – 33% for 15-19 year olds
- 6 out of 10 people who are unemployed are now unemployed for more than one year, with 40% of these men aged 25 to 44
- 22% of all households are now jobless

Income, Consumption and Debt

- Lone parents, people who are unemployed, and people with an illness or disability have the lowest incomes
- In 38% of households, expenditure exceeds disposable income. Households with lower incomes are much more likely to have spending that exceeds income
- In 2010, 23% of all households were in arrears with at least one bill or loan, with more than half (52%) of households in consistent poverty in such arrears
- Income shocks, such as income reductions which arise from becoming unemployed, ill and unable to work, and/or relationship break up, are an important trigger for becoming over-indebted. This is particularly the case for poorer households, who are less likely to have the resources to cope with such an income shock

Poverty

- The proportion of those in consistent poverty, that is living on a low income and deprived of basic necessities, increased from 4% in 2008 to 7% in 2011
- The proportion of the population who are deprived (lacking at least 2 basic necessities) increased from 12% in 2007 to 24% in 2011

Public Services

- There has been an increased demand for public services as a result of the economic crisis, while at the same time public expenditure on service provision, in terms of budgets, staffing and programmes, has been reduced
- The overall impact on public services, such as education and health, has been mixed with reductions in some areas of service and increases in others, with the increases tending to be mainly in demand-led services, such as medical cards

Society and Community

- The areas most affected by the economic downturn are the outer reaches of the Dublin “commuter belt,” but areas deprived prior to the crisis remain deprived
- The community and voluntary sector, which has been active in implementing pilot projects, complementing public service provision and advocacy, has been severely impacted by the economic crisis
- The economic crisis and subsequent fiscal adjustments have affected some people’s psychological and physical health
- Yet, 86% of the population are satisfied with their life, although this has declined since the onset of the crisis

2. Negotiating Irish Identity

Heaney's "Exposure"

The poem that Jake claims to have written is really "Exposure" by Seamus Heaney, which appears in a volume of poetry called *North*, first published in 1975:

It is December in Wicklow:
Alders dripping, birches
Inheriting the last light,
The ash tree cold to look at.

A comet that was lost
Should be visible at sunset,
Those million tons of light
Like a glimmer of haws and rose-hips,

And I sometimes see a falling star.
If I could come on meteorite!
Instead I walk through damp leaves,
Husks, the spent flukes of autumn,

Imagining a hero
On some muddy compound,
His gift like a slingstone
Whirled for the desperate.

How did I end up like this?
I often think of my friends'
Beautiful prismatic counselling
And the anvil brains of some who hate me

As I sit weighing and weighing
My responsible tristia.
For what? For the ear? For the people?
For what is said behind-backs?

Rain comes down through the alders,
Its low conductive voices
Mutter about let-downs and erosions
And yet each drop recalls

The diamond absolutes.
I am neither internee nor informer;
An inner émigré, grown long-haired
And thoughtful; a wood-kerne

Escaped from the massacre,
Taking protective colouring
From bole and bark, feeling
Every wind that blows;

Who, blowing up these sparks
For their meagre heat, have missed
The once-in-a-lifetime portent,
The comet's pulsing rose.

In Seamus Heaney: The Crisis of Identity, Floyd Collins addresses Heaney's "self-exile" from Northern Ireland to Dublin. The poet has left home, but not Ireland, paradoxically leaving him with feeling of foreignness in his own land, and realizing that the soul cannot deal in the "neat addition" of straddling two different cultures and devoting half of itself to each. In Collins's interpretation, instead of looking outward for a portent in the comet, having lost an outer homeland, the poet must look inward to find his identity. In addition, he must come to terms with the man-made violence that prompted his exile. Is the exile a refusal to be absorbed in the crises that colonialism has caused – in which case, is the opposite of absorption into a colonized culture sacrifice of one's cultural identity?

Irish culture has faced and continues to face cultural changes, often involving division and adaptation. In his book *Transitions: Narratives of Modern Irish Culture*, Richard Kearney addresses Irish cultural crises as instances of discontinuity, including "the absence of a coherent identity, the breakdown of inherited ideologies and beliefs, and the insecurities of fragmentation." Reconciling traditional identity with the changing/modernizing world contributes to this discontinuity.

3. A Survey of Ireland in Film

Stones in His Pockets pokes fun at one of the enduring legacies of Irish film: the many manufactured representations of Ireland, ranging from bucolic reveries to gritty docudrama. As scholar Sean Ryder notes, "the question of how to distinguish the romantic from the real in one's perception of Ireland has been central to debates about Irish cinema from its beginnings, just as it has been central to debates about Irish literature since the nineteenth century. How 'real' is the Ireland we see on screen?" From the first-ever Hollywood movie filmed on location to recent animated flicks, the small island has provided fertile ground for those who reimagine its landscapes and its people. One of these classics lurks behind the action of *Stones*, but a set of recurring themes and concerns runs through many of them.



The Lad from Old Ireland (1910)

- Available via [YouTube](#) (00:12:16)
- The first American movie studio production filmed on location outside of the States.
- The Kalem Company traveled to Queenstown, County Cork, in 1910 to make the fiction film set in Ireland. They fell in love with the country and its people, returning to visit many times. Eventually, they became known as the O'Kalems.

- Shot and set in Ireland, the one-reel movie tells the story of a boy who emigrated to America to escape the desperate poverty of Ireland. After becoming successful in his adopted country he returns to retrieve his sweetheart just as her destitute family is being forced off their land.
- When it was re-released in November 2010 it was billed as *Kalem's Great Trans-Atlantic Drama*.
- IMDB lists the filming locations of *A Lad from Old Ireland* as Beaufort, County Kerry and New York, USA

***Man of Aran* (1934)**

- Available via [YouTube](#) and Netflix DVD (1:13:39)



- A work of ethnofiction, this renowned film used non-professional locals to chronicle the daily routines of a fictional family living in premodern conditions.
- The film dramatizes “the grim and ceaseless struggles of primitive beings to preserve their lives against the crushing assaults of their environment.” (*New York Times*)
- The Aran Islands, [the film] tells us in his foreword, are three naked wastes of rock off the western coast of Ireland. Empty of trees or soil or any natural gifts for the sustenance of man, they are exposed to the blind fury of the open Atlantic. In the Winter storms, the islands are almost smothered by the boiling sea, which piles up on the bare and unfriendly cliffs in endless and terrible cataclysms. On the Aran Islands, the negation of fruitfulness, man fights bitterly for the privilege of life. ‘It is a fight,’ says Mr. Flaherty, after two years on the islands, ‘from which he will have no respite until the end of his indomitable days.’ (*New York Times*)
- ”Over the years much criticism has been aimed at the compromised nature of Robert Flaherty’s staged documentaries, but recently the notion of ‘salvage ethnography’, the preservation of vanishing traditions, has come to their rescue: a concept in keeping with Flaherty’s unashamed reconstructions of outdated primitivisms. *Nanook of the North*, in which he put the Inuit on screen in 1922, remains by far his best-known film, but this 1934 account of hardscrabble island life off the west coast of Ireland runs a close second. It has the usual Flaherty question marks – the ‘family’ he focuses on were in reality not

even related, the shark hunt was apparently no longer practised, and bizarre English-language dialogue dubbed over the top – but Flaherty’s sense of poetic grandeur never lets up.” (*The Guardian*)

Barrytown Trilogy: The Commitments (1991), The Snapper (1993), The Van (1996)

- *The Commitments* (1:59:00) – Available via Netflix DVD
- *The Snapper* (1:34:00) and *The Van* (1:26:00) – Available via Netflix Instant Stream
- Comprised of *The Commitments*, *The Snapper*, and *The Van*, this Irish trilogy focuses on the Rabbitte family in fictional Barrytown, as son Jimmy forms an Irish soul band, pregnant daughter Sharon refuses to name her lover, and dad Jimmy, Sr., starts a business venture with friends.
- “In Doyle’s Barrytown trilogy, ‘Barrytown’ stands as a fictional counterpart for Dublin’s Northside. The Barrytown community is comprised of mostly uneducated working-class characters, many of whom are unemployed or underemployed, struggling to find the material means necessary for survival. However, although Doyle’s characters are aware of their dire economic situations, they refuse to be defeated. Instead they find comfort in humor, seek help from communal networks of friends and family, and display unmitigated pride in their regional dialect.” (eNotes)

Angela’s Ashes (1999)

- Available via [YouTube](#) (2:25:56)
- A tragicomic memoir adapted into film, *Angela’s Ashes* recounts the lives and struggles of the McCourt family in Ireland and America.
- “This is a story of the fight against poverty. The McCourt family moved back from America where they had gone to make a life and returned to Limerick city at a time when Ireland had little to offer them. When disease, hunger and malnutrition takes his brothers and sisters from him, young Frankie and his brother Malachy grow up little realising that life has more to offer than old potatoes and boiled pigs head for Christmas dinner. The family was crammed into a tenement slum. The upstairs room was ‘Italy’, warm and dry. Downstairs was Ireland, wet and cold. The rats, the death, the shared latrine and the smell of poverty and neglect pervade every paragraph. This typical tale of an Irish childhood is now the subject of a major motion picture directed by Alan Parker with Robert Carlyle and Emily Lloyd in the lead roles.” (review by Michael Green)

The Quiet Man (1952)



- Available via Netflix DVD and [YouTube](#) (2:09:26)
- In this romantic comedy, an Irish-born American, played by John Wayne, returns to the Old Country to reclaim the family farm. When he falls in love with a local maiden, his dark past resurfaces to plague him. The fictional movie *The Quiet Valley* being filmed in *Stones in His Pockets* winks at this feel-good classic (and tales of its location shooting).
- It's “an uplifting fantasy of a traditional community that continues to thrive by resisting modern encroachments, of a magnificent couple born out of conflict, and of a broken man who finds redemption by escaping the past and embracing the present.” (*New York Times*)
- “*The Quiet Man* is a comedy of return — of a return to Ireland, Ford’s ancestral home, here seen as a Technicolor dream of rolling fields and lush meadows, in precise contrast to the black-and-white slag heaps of Wales.” (*New York Times*)
- “With its vivid color scheme of bright scarlet and emerald green *The Quiet Man* could almost be a fairy tale told to comfort a child traumatized by the serial losses of *How Green Was My Valley*. Ford’s themes here are fulfillment, fertility and renewal (it is certainly the most erotic of Ford’s movies, with its powerful evocation of the physical passion that draws the central couple together), [... the community] unites into a unified chorus, with an ending that even hints at an end to ‘the troubles.’ If you’re making a fantasy, Ford suggests, it’s best to go all the way.” (*New York Times*)

The Irish Pub (2013)

- Available via [VOLTA](#) (1:16:00)
- A series of interviews with pub owners across Ireland, seeking the heart of the particularities and traditions of “the Irish pub.”
- “The Irish Pub film is a eulogy to the greatest institution in Irish society, the pub, or more specifically, the traditional Irish publican. These characters come from long generations who run and own their family pub. It is interwoven into Irish society. The famine, religious persecution and cultural enrichment all started and ended in the pub. The stories these men and women tell capture days gone by and it is feared these will be the last in a long line of family publicans who lived and died in their pubs with little interaction beyond that point.” (film blurb)
- ““Tradition is important, now more than ever,” say Bobby and Ray Blackwell, father and son proprietors of the celebrated De Barra’s pub in Clonakilty, Co. Cork. The venue has a deep cultural heritage that stands as a monument to an Irish social institution. Bobby and Ray are among the many pub landlords and landladies to appear in Alex Fegan’s life-affirming documentary *The Irish Pub*. Fegan’s film offers a profile of a resilient staple in Irish life. *The Irish Pub* is a filmic antidote to the modern gastro bar, where the barmen can’t pour the porter properly and the fancy drinks are a funny colour. “Our grandparents opened the pub on St Patrick’s Day, 1900,” say sisters Nan and Patricia Brennan, veteran keepers of a family establishment in Bundoran. Fegan observes many enduring boozers (both pubs and patrons) across Ireland, his camera frame crammed with the bric-a-brac of ornamented shelves, decorated mirrors, rare whiskey bottles and rusty farm tools. The Irish Pub is unabashedly nostalgic but it honours an authenticity that’s worth preserving. This movie will recall memories of settling down with a jar in a warmly-lit bar, while an ancient air from a fiddle wafts across the room.” (from the *Irish Post* review by Stephen Martin)

Hollywood’s hand in Ireland’s economic recovery

Film industry can provide a Hollywood ending to recession

by John Daly for The Irish Examiner, 29 August 2011

A report has identified the film sector as a key area of growth and employment in the Irish economy over the next five years.

The report, *Creative Capital: Building Ireland’s Audiovisual Creative Economy*, sets out recommendations aimed at doubling the turnover of the industry from €500 million to €1 billion and increasing employment in the sector from 5,000 to 10,000 jobs.

The main recommendations include extending the Section 481 tax breaks to 2020; a dedicated Irish film channel; an international TV co-production fund with high economic return; and developing Screen Training Ireland to ensure skills training is aligned with industry growth targets.

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht Jimmy Deenihan welcomed the report. “The Irish audiovisual sector possesses world-class talent and this report is key to unlocking its potential,” he said.

Big budget productions such as *Braveheart* and *Saving Private Ryan* may be thin on the ground nowadays, but Ireland’s established creative infrastructure and geographical location still form an attractive package for overseas productions.

“The fact is there are fewer big Hollywood productions being made, full stop,” says Ed Guiney of Element Films, whose company has been responsible for the 2010 hit, *His & Hers*, as well as this year’s hugely successful *The Guard*, starring Brendan Gleeson.

“And while Eastern Europe and many other territories are now offering similar tax breaks, what attracts productions to Ireland is the quality of crews, the proximity of a huge variety of locations, and the fact that we are an English-speaking nation.”

As an example of Ireland’s success internationally in recent times, the animation industry, currently valued at €80m and employing several hundred skilled technicians, won two Oscar nominations — *Granny O’Grimm’s Sleeping Beauty* and *The Secret of Kells*.

“We have a competitive advantage over most territories due to the availability of Section 481 for television drama on a five-year time-frame which allows us contend for features as well as develop and produce our own films,” says James Flynn of Octagon Films, whose projects include *The Tudors*, *Camelot* and *The Borgias*.

“There is a broad range of talent in Ireland which punches well above its weight and a lot of clever writers targeting film and television in a business-like manner. We need to continue to nurture and develop the less-obviously commercial film-makers, otherwise, as has happened in parts of Europe, you can only be left with a service industry. We need a voice for Irish films and Irish film-makers and cannot afford to lose this identity.”

Irish directors on indie cinema, Hollywood’s grip

by [Peter Caranicas](#) for *Variety*, 6 October 2013

Five Irish directors invited by Korea’s Busan Intl. Film Festival to discuss their country’s industry ended up talking about the dominance of the U.S. over the international biz.

The quintet – John Butler (“The Stag”), Lance Daly (“Kisses”), Neil Jordan (“Byzantium”), Brendan Muldowney (“Savages”) and Jim Sheridan (“Brothers”) – mostly agreed that success in the American market has always been a big boost to the local box office.

Sheridan held up Jordan’s 1992 “Crying Game” as a prime example. The film had a hard time finding audiences in Ireland and the U.K., but after Harvey Weinstein promoted it effectively in the U.S., it took root on its home turf.

“It’s a one-town industry,” he added hyperbolically. “If a movie doesn’t go on a U.S. screen, it doesn’t feel like a movie.”

Jordan recalled that John Carney’s 2006 Ireland-set “Once” vanished quickly after its local release, only to become a hit following its success in America.

Yank films exert sway over content as much as over distribution. Fielding a question about the influence of Brit pic “The Full Monty” on his “Stag,” Butler said he was more inspired by such

U.S. male-bonding stories as “Swingers,” “Diner” and “Sideways” to find a way to say something about Irish men.

Sheridan noted an odd similarity between the Ireland’s and Korea’s film industries. Both thrive in the shadow of a more powerful neighboring biz (the U.K. and Japan, respectively), and both live in a nation divided between north and south.

As for the future, Sheridan fears that the Hollywood juggernaut is destroying its own independent cinema by focusing on tentpole fare that eschews drama in favor of costly visual effects. Citing sentiments recently expressed by Steven Spielberg and George Lucas at a USC confab, he said most movies being made by the majors today are huge, almost dialog-free investments.

The trend is driving more directors to television. Even though “we still have a vibrant industry in Ireland,” he said, many directors interested in drama are moving to the small screen. (Jordan, for instance, created Showtime’s “The Borgias.”)

He added, “We’re all trying to figure out how we can migrate to TV because that seems to be the place where you can still say something.”

4. Behind the Movie Magic

The Life of a Movie Extra: How To Do It and What To Expect

by Gary Michael Smith, with special thanks to Yale Rep dramaturg Sarah Krasnow

Sound! Action! Cut! Check gate! You too can learn such fancy film industry words. All you have to do is sign up to be an extra. But I’ve discovered that many who are interested in breaking out into nonspeaking roles have no idea what to expect should they be called to be in a film. In this article I’ll walk you through the steps from registering with a casting company to showing up on the set for your close-up—or at least your walk-by or “camera swipe.”

Your First Steps

First, you need to develop a Hollywood Format Résumé Template. This is a standard format used by those hiring actors and extras. It includes your pertinent data regarding work experience and education relevant to the film industry. Naturally, you don't want to include information found in your normal, nonfilm, résumé; keep it focused on your film and video production and acting work only. Next, you might as well complete a Motion Picture Extra Profile Sheet. Any casting company you solicit is going to need this information and will have you complete such a form anyway so it can save time if you already have one ready and in hand.

Also, you can even print a high-quality digital photo on the back. Even though you'll have your picture on your résumé, printing on the back of the profile sheet gives you an opportunity to present a larger image.

Regarding photos, come casting directors will tell you that head shots are not important, especially if you're in a crowd scene and will be only a dot to the film-goer. But good-quality headshots can be invaluable to casting directors looking to cast you as a "featured extra" where you'll actually be identifiable on the screen. And talent agents will require photos to help them in their job getting you paying work. While you may want to use your own digital camera to take a picture for your résumé and profile sheet, you should also consider using a professional photographer. A photographer knows how to put you in the best light, so to speak.

Once you have a résumé, profile sheet, and picture of yourself it's time to submit it to some casting companies. In New Orleans there are a number of resources listing casting companies—from businesses seemingly unrelated to the film industry to those dedicated specifically to Hollywood South. One good venue for finding casting companies includes the Office of Film and Video under the Mayor's Office of Economic Development. Also, I've developed a list and have posted to my site at www.ChatgrisPress.com, Film and Video. See the list of Film Extra Casting Companies.

Casting companies don't ask for exclusive agreements so you can send your packet to as many casting directors as you'd like. (Note that I said "casting director" instead of "casting agent." Remember that an agent, such as a talent agent, represents you while a casting director hires you for a job. So, there's really no such thing as a "casting agent.") Just attach a cover letter stating who you are and what you're looking for. Give them an idea of your availability as well; it's difficult enough for a casting company to have to work around those with day jobs, and it's good to give them a heads up initially so they can plan how to use you.

Now, you've come to the waiting stage. You may be called within days of listing with casting companies, or these days could turn into weeks, months, or longer depending on the amount of work available and the aggressiveness of the casting company. You may not even be called at all, depending on the needs of the production company. You can follow up with emails and phone calls if you haven't heard from the casting company, but just understand that these are busy professionals with a job to do; if they haven't contacted you, it could be because they don't need someone with your particular look or experience at the moment. Patience is a virtue.

Wardrobe

As a film extra you probably won't be called for an audition; this is reserved for actors in speaking roles and would be booked through a talent agent if you decide to try out for speaking roles. As a nonspeaking extra, you might simply respond to an "open casting call" that you hear on the news or read in the newspaper. At a casting call, you'll actually meet people from the casting company, who will be set up in a hotel ballroom, shopping mall, or some other public place. When you show up you'll first be asked about your availability. If they ask that you be available for three days, you need to be honest with your ability to show up; nothing is more frustrating to a casting company, who is working directly for the production company, to have to replace you when you decide you don't want to work for the full number of days to which you committed. And not completing your time may be viewed as being unprofessional on your part.

If you are available for the days of the shoot, you'll be asked to complete a profile sheet. Then a casting person will take your photograph and attach it to the sheet. Finally, you'll be given a wardrobe appointment, which often is scheduled weeks before the actual film shoot. You may also be given information regarding when and where to show up for the actual shoot, but often you are not given this information until you show up for the initial wardrobe fitting.

Another scenario is that a casting company with which you've previously listed calls you to ask if you're available at certain times over a period of dates. If you agree to work in the film, the casting company will give you an initial wardrobe fitting appointment. Whether you will be wearing your own clothes or a costume provided to you, you need to show up at your appointed time and location. Productions run on a schedule, and you don't want to disrupt this. If the film is contemporary, you may be asked to bring your own clothes to the fitting. While it's not really a "fitting" per se, the wardrobe staff needs to see you in certain attire. As such, you will be told by casting company staff what type and color of clothes to bring to this temporary wardrobe location.

For instance, if you are playing a middle-aged business man or woman you will be asked to bring several suits with light colored or white shirts. (Dark colors and stripes don't look well on camera.) You also need dress shoes and belts, and whatever else is needed in the scene. If, on the other hand, the film is of a different period you may be provided with vintage clothing. In such a case, the fitting actually is used to size you up for appropriately fitting attire. (This is where your profile sheet comes in handy as well.) The best part about a wardrobe fitting is that since it is your time that you're expending, you normally are paid a set fee for the fitting.

Another skill that you may gain is the ability to undress in front of a total stranger of the opposite sex. While men and women have separate dressing areas, as a man you may find women wardrobe specialists coming in and out of the fitting areas. This is not so they can get a free thrill; they need to work quickly and with multiple extras simultaneously and it's simply for efficient for them to monitor the fittings. If you're shy about this, simply ask that they wait until you are dressed, although this may slow the fitting process a bit. In time, you won't care who's in the fitting area; it's just part of the job.

At the wardrobe fitting, a production assistant (PA) will give you some information on the shoot.

Such info may include location, a map with driving instructions, and an information sheet. This last sheet will give you information on what and what not to do as an extra. It'll include such requests as: show up on time, don't bring a camera to photograph the movie stars, and don't speak with the stars nor ask for autographs.

While this may seem like common sense, it's surprising how many extras are inconsiderate enough to break the rules. What you need to remember as a film extra is that everyone with whom you're working is a professional. Just as you wouldn't want someone interrupting you while you are busy at your job, actors don't need you breaking their concentration while they are getting into character and memorizing lines so you can get them to sign a photograph or your autograph book. Remember, you have moved from fan to colleague now so you should respect their craft and act as a professional.

On the Job

When you arrive on the set you will be asked to fill out your daily voucher with all information except the ending time. You'll hang on to this voucher since you'll have to complete it and turn it in at the end of the shooting day. Then, you'll probably be provided with breakfast since you'll be working anywhere from 8 hours on up. After breakfast you may be instructed to go through wardrobe, hair, and makeup. If you're in a crowd scene you can expect this step to take hours, so bring a good book. If it's a smaller scene, the process will be quicker but there still may be a line, and consequently, a wait.

Wardrobe will be the same people who sized you earlier, but now they have moved to a location closer to the set, and will most likely be positioned near the hair and makeup experts. Once you're done with wardrobe, hair, and makeup you'll be sent to an extra's holding area. Here, again, your book will come in handy. Eventually, an assistant director (AD) will communicate via a headset to a PA that such and such extras are needed. The PA then will handpick the required extras and send them to the AD on the set. The AD will tell you exactly what you are to do and when. You should pay close attention to these instructions, as you're now about to be on camera.

Understand that PAs and ADs are on tight schedules and, consequently, may be under much stress. As such, they may not have the time for niceties such as "please" and "thank you." If they seem brusque or curt, don't take it personally. They have a job to do in only a limited amount of time and are under direction from the filmmakers. Do what they ask and do it quickly, and by no means argue with them or offer advice; save this for when you're the AD, scriptwriter, or director.

Also, since you may end up with a lot of time on your hands, don't spend it chitchatting with the PAs. There's a reason they are wearing earphones—they're working. Consequently, don't be insulted if they seem to ignore you if you ask them a question or try to speak with them; they probably are listening to instructions from an AD.

The actual on-camera time may be brief, but the number of takes may be many. For instance, the scene may call for you to walk across a room in the background while the actors recite their lines

in front of the camera. Depending on how many variations the director wants, you may find that you are walking across that room 15 times before that scene is finished. Then, if you are going to be used again for another scene, you may have to stand around while a new scene is set up or you may have to move to a new location.

You may even be asked to change clothes to be in a different scene. For instance, you could be playing a janitor in one scene, then be sent to on-set wardrobe to change into a businessman's suit. Or, you may be sent back to the extras holding area to await being called for another scene—or not. In the worst-case scenario, you could end up waiting around all day in the extra's holding area, or even be taken to the set to stand around, only to be returned to the holding area and never be used for that shooting day. It's all up to the director at this point, but you'll still be paid for the number of hours you are present.

It's important, however, to be visible. While you might be quite bored sitting around in the extra's holding area for hours on end, it's still important that you are there. You never know when the PA will suddenly appear and, at the request of an AD, handpick a number of extras to go to the set. So don't go wandering off or hanging out somewhere other than where you are told to wait. You don't want to miss your opportunity. And besides, you're being paid to be available.

In the End

When you're finally done with the morning scenes, you may not know it. You might be sent back to the extra's holding area only to remain there until the next meal, which will probably be a late lunch around 1 or 2 P.M. Then, after the meal, everyone returns to the holding area to hang out and wait some more. If you are easily bored, you want to bring with you plenty to keep you busy. Or if you're like me you'll meet as many other extras as possible. It's great networking, collecting email addresses, and staying in touch, which also could lead to other jobs.

Once the shooting day is over, the PA will ask that you form a line to return any wardrobe articles that don't belong to you and to hand in your extra's voucher so they can record the ending time. You'll be given a receipt and sent on your way, usually with instructions regarding your reporting time the next day. If, however, you won't appear until another day or later in the film, you may not be given the details until a few days before the next shoot. Don't press the PA for information; you'll be told what you need to know when you need to know it.

Within a couple of weeks you'll begin to receive the fruits of your labor. These will come in the form of a single check for every day you worked and one for the wardrobe fitting as well. You may even be paid \$10 or so if the hair folks have to cut or trim your hair. Hang on to a copy of these checks as you may need them for proof one day that you were in the film, which may be a requirement for union membership. And there you have it: The life of an extra in a nutshell! Just remember to create and maintain the appropriate paperwork, list with casting companies, and do as they ask once you are hired. With any luck, you'll be called for future work!

Tales from the Set

David Mamet, Writer/Director (*House of Games, Oleanna, Heist*)

“Most films are made on location, and location shooting means hundreds of hours in the van. We pile into the van to scout locations, to revisit chosen locations with the Art Department, to revisit with the Director of Photography and the Storyboard Artist, to revisit with Locations, Stunts, Effects. . . . Four hours a day five days a week times 10 weeks of preproduction is 200 hours in the van; we talk on the cell phone, and gossip and exchange film stories. Getting dishy or silly is an effective strategy to take the edge off The Van -- than in which locale it never gets more “entre nous.”

The most prized stories, of course, are the morbid: who threw up on camera, who got on the wrong plane and went to Thailand, who forgot to remove his or her body mike and repaired to the camper to make love with an unauthorized person (while the sound man, of course, put it out over the P.A.).

This week my favorite is the couple who leased their house for a shoot. (“We’ll leave it better than we found it” -- a phrase, in itself, capable of raising a chuckle in the van. Other van howlers: “It plays in one shot,” “I see one bare light bulb,” “Don’t worry.”) One gag involved the couple’s house catching fire. The technicians built a false front on the house and, on the day, set it aflame. The gag went awry and the whole house went up in flames. The owners, standing on a neighbor’s lawn, looked at the marvelously believable effect and clapped. “They clapped three times,” the eyewitness said.

Extras

Jimi Kinstle

When I was 21, I was an extra in the jail scene of *Cry Baby* directed by John Waters. The scene was shot on site at Jessup prison. We checked in at 6pm and stayed overnight until 6am shooting the “Teenage Rage” musical scene. Johnny Depp was just post-*21 Jump Street* and a real “regular” guy on the set. During the night he hung out with the cast, told stories, I found out we share the same birthday (June 9). A crazy, long, fun night. A couple years later I was sitting at the bar in the Rendezvous Lounge on 25th street, and I heard a murmur as John Waters

entered the little dive bar. He sat down right next to me. It was then that I uttered probably one of my best introduction bar lines of my life: I turned to him at the bar and said, “Hi, John Waters. You probably don’t remember me, but we spent the night in prison together.”

Kelli Midgley

Speaking about being an extra, a wise actor once said that we would act for free; they have to pay us to wait. That’s the job, and you get paid the same whether you are on set or in holding, so it’s all good work. For *Philomena* I was only in one still photograph that took 5 minutes to shoot, but I was on set for nine hours (at SAG rate), and I spent two of those hours sharing a makeup

trailer with Dame Judy Dench. Not a bad day at all!

Anonymous #1

Diva story: I was shooting an exterior scene one frigid January night, and the rather famous lead actress (whom I'd rather not name) had to cut in front of me to grab a taxi. Between takes, I and my fellow extras shivered in place, while she had an entourage draping her in blankets, bringing her hot coffee, and fussing over her hair and makeup. My only solace was knowing that the taxi was going to blow up in the next scene, and her character would suffer a horrible, fiery death ;-)

Dwayne Morris On the set of *Step Up* I remember when I met recording artist/producer/actor Heavy D, R&B singer Mario, and actor Channing Tatum. During the house party dance scene I kept bumping into Heavy D on purpose just to get on camera. I never saw myself in the final cut. On the set of *The Wire* it took two hours of makeup before I went on set as an extra with lines. They had me play the role of a dope fiend and I really looked the part. I looked so realistic in character that when I approached the craft service table security thought I was really an addict on set trying to get some free food.

6. Glossary

With special thanks to Northlight Theatre and Yale Yep dramaturg Sarah Krasnow

Bollicks: Irish pronunciation of British slang word “bollocks,” meaning nonsense, trash; literally, testicles

Boyo: A lad, young person

The Boys: A criminal fraternity; also, soldiers. Used to refer to the IRA

“Check the gate”: The signal to verify that the camera was working properly during the take and that there is no debris in the area that contains the film (“the gate”)

Clockin’: Noticing or looking at

Coddin’: Kidding, fooling

County Kerry cows: One of the oldest breeds of cattle in Europe, native to County Kerry. They are smaller than most breeds and have a nearly all-black coat.

Cow clap: Northern Irish for cow dung

Cunas: Phonetic spelling of the Gaelic word “ciunas,” meaning “be quiet”

D-4: Dublin 4 is a postal district of Dublin, Ireland. The headquarters of the national broadcaster RTÉ, the RDS, Merrion Centre, University College Dublin, Aviva Stadium, Google and a number of foreign embassies to Ireland are all located in Dublin 4. The Dublin 4 area is fixed by

the Irish postal authorities. Dublin 4' or its abbreviation, 'D4', is sometimes used as a pejorative adjective to describe an Irish upper-middle class attitude, based on the perceived opinions and characteristics of some residents of this area. In this sense it is sometimes contrasted with "the plain people of Ireland" by Irish commentators. During the 1990s, the term changed to refer more to the alleged wealth and posh life-style of residents. The term has been used to describe very aspirational middle-class people from south Dublin. In the early 1980s, a group of people in Dublin 4 developed a different accent, partly in rejection of older views of Irishness. The accent was known as "Dublin 4," "Dartspeak," or later "DORTspeak" (after the Dublin 4 pronunciation of DART, which runs through the area). The accent quickly became the subject of ridicule.

The day: Today

Digging turf: Also referred to as digging peat. Peat is a type of soil that contains a large amount of dead organic matter, and has been used as fuel in Ireland for hundreds of years. Peat farmers slice squares of peat from the bogs in which they are found, stacking them up or arranging them in cone-shaped piles (called "castling")—an emblematic image of Ireland.

The dole: The popular name for payments made from national and local funds to the unemployed

The Duke: The nickname of popular film actor John Wayne

"DYB DYB DYB, I was in the Brownies": DYB stands for Do Your Best, a traditional Scouts slogan

Gee up: To motivate or energize someone; comes from "giddy-up"

Gob: Mouth

Haring off: Running off

Hugh Grant and the prostitute: In Los Angeles in 1995, British actor Hugh Grant was caught with a prostitute and arrested for "lewd conduct." The prostitute, Denise "Divine" Brown, subsequently became famous on the tabloid and talk show circuit.

Hure: Irish pronunciation of whore, and a common insult

IRA: The Irish Republican Army, a paramilitary organization created in 1916 with the purpose of using violence to prove British rule ineffective and bring about a united and independent Ireland. The IRA carried out numerous bombing attacks, assassinations, kidnappings, and other violent acts in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and England, most heavily during the Troubles.

"It's just the day that's in it": A Hiberno-English phrase, or a phrase in English patterned after Gaelic construction. For example, some Irish say, "Is it yourself that's in it?" (an tú féin atá ann?) to mean, "Is it you?" When Charlie says, "It's just the day that's in it," he simply means that the

sad day is what's making him upset.

The jacks: The bathroom

Jumped up: Someone who acts above their station or class

Knock it on the head: To stop doing something

Matt Talbot: A reformed alcoholic who became a devout Catholic ascetic and hero of the temperance movement in early twentieth-century Ireland. Upon his death, it was discovered that he had practiced self-flagellation.

The morra: Tomorrow

The night: Tonight

On the dole: Out of work and collecting unemployment benefits

Plebs: From "plebians." Lower-class citizens

Pockets full of stones: Ancient stone monuments, miles of stone wall, the Blarney Stone – stones are an Irish icon. The earliest known writing in Ireland, called Ogham, was etched on stones. In his novel *Molloy*, Samuel Beckett writes about a sequence of transferring "sucking stones" from a pocket to his mouth to another pocket. And though the reference is not Irish, putting stones in one's pockets is a known suicide method because of English writer Virginia Woolf, who filled her coat pockets with stones and walked into the River Ouse near her house.

Pound: Refers to the Irish pound, which was the currency of Ireland until 2002

Quid: Irish currency; the quid referred to Irish Pounds when *Stones* was written but is used today to mean euros

The Quiet Man: A 1952 film directed by John Ford, starring John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara, shot in County Mayo and County Galway (but not *Stones'* County Kerry!). The Quiet Man takes place in the fictional Irish village of Innisfree, meant to be situated near Lough (Lake) Gill between Counties Sligo and Leitrim. Ford also famously directed *How Green Was My Valley*; the play's fictional film *The Quiet Valley* seems to be a composite of the two titles.

RTE: Raidió Teilifís Éireann, Ireland's National Public Service Broadcaster

RUC: Royal Ulster Constabulary, the police force of Northern Ireland from 1922 - 2000 (in 2001 it was renamed Police Service of Northern Ireland), charged with maintaining order during the Troubles. In its handling of IRA attacks, RUC was often accused of brutal, vigilante-like tactics, mistreatment of political prisoners, and loyalty to the Crown over commitment to peacekeeping.

Scrake: As in, “the scrake of dawn”; very early, or the crack of dawn

Seamus Heaney: The Nobel Prize-winning Irish poet and author of “Exposure,” the poem that Jake recites to Caroline Giovanni and claims as his own. The poem talks about Heaney’s “self-exile” from Northern Ireland to Dublin and the questions of identity it forced him to consider.

Skiff: A light shower of rain, usually in the summer

Slag: Whore; also used as a generic insult

Special Branch: The Crime and Security branch of the Irish police force, also known as the Special Detective Unit; in other words, the Irish FBI

Tosser: An insult; literally, masturbator

Throw a wobbler: To lose one’s temper

Trainers: Sneakers

The Troubles: Violent hostilities over British rule and Catholic persecution in Northern Ireland that took place officially from 1969 - 1998, though related violence occurred before these dates and has continued to the present. Catholic Nationalists, who favored unification with the Republic of Ireland, and Protestant Unionists, who favored remaining part of the United Kingdom, clashed in a series of riots, bombings, and shootings, mostly in Northern Ireland but spilling into the Republic of Ireland and England. More than 3,000 were killed. The Troubles reached a shaky end with the 1998 Good Friday Accord, which made Northern Ireland largely self-governing.

“Turnover, speed, mark it”: Signals before a director calls “action” on a film set for sound and camera to begin rolling; confirmation that the sound equipment is running at the proper speed; and the film slate to be shown to the camera and clapped

Waster: A worthless person

“The West’s Awake”: In Act II, Mickey sings a verse of “The West’s Awake,” a 19th-century ballad that traces the battles in Ireland’s past and calls for its independence from Britain. It was written by Thomas Davis, a poet and Irish nationalist.

*When all beside a vigil keep,
The West's asleep, the West's asleep.
Alas and well may Erin weep,
When Connaught lies in slumber deep.
Their lakes and plains smile fair and free,
'Mid rocks they guard their chivalry.
Sing Oh! Let man learn liberty,
From lashing winds and crashing sea.*

Whacki backi: Marijuana

Xtra-vision: A chain video store in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland

Your one: An expression equivalent to “that guy”