

# The English Theatre of Hamburg

*Established 1976*

Presents



# OUTSIDE MULLINGAR



**A Comedy**

**by John Patrick Shanley**

**STUDY GUIDE**

**Premiere on 23 April, 2020**

**Preview Performances at reduced prices on 20, 21 and 22 April**

**Performances Tuesday to Saturday at 19.30 Hours**

**Matinee Performances Tuesdays and Fridays at 11.30 Hours  
beginning 28 April**

**The English Theatre of Hamburg**

**Lerchenfeld 14**

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**TICKETS:**

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# The English Theatre of Hamburg

*Established in 1976*

The English Theatre will premiere John Patrick Shanley's **OUTSIDE MULLINGAR** on 23 April, 2020, with the usual preview performances at reduced prices on 20, 21 and 22 April. You can use the cover of this study guide to advertise the play in your school or workplace. Bookings have already started. The text of the play may be obtained at [theatre@samuelfrench-london.co.uk](mailto:theatre@samuelfrench-london.co.uk) or amazon.com. Teachers interested in being invited to a dress rehearsal of the play on 19 April at 19:30 should contact [marketing@englishtheatre.de](mailto:marketing@englishtheatre.de)

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## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

John Patrick Shanley is best known for his play **DOUBT** which won both the Pulitzer Prize for Drama and Broadway's Tony Award for Best Play in 2005. The play was produced by The English Theatre of Hamburg in 2007, shortly before the prize-winning film version with Meryl Streep appeared in 2008. Earlier in his career Mr. Shanley wrote the Oscar-winning screenplay for the film **MOONSTRUCK** starring Cher and Nicholas Cage.

The playwright was born in the Bronx in 1950 of Irish-American parents, attended Catholic School in New York and later graduated from New York University. He never set any of his plays in Ireland until, at the age of 60, he and his father visited the family's Irish farm site outside the town of Mullingar. The result was **OUTSIDE MULLINGAR** which was nominated for a Broadway Tony Award for Best Play in 2014. Since then, the play has been produced in theaters across the United States and around the world. Some of Mr. Shanley's other plays include **DOUBT**, **DANNY AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA**, **WELCOME TO THE MOON**, **FOUR DOGS AND A BONE**, **DEFIANCE** and **BEGGARS IN THE HOUSE OF PLENTY**. He was recently awarded the Lifetime Achievement in Writing by the Writer's Guild of America.

## **ABOUT THE PLAY**

Many critics have described John Patrick Shanley's **OUTSIDE MULLINGAR** as somewhere between his dramatic **DOUBT** and his charming **MOONSTRUCK**. At its core, the play is a romantic comedy which is defined as "*a type of play which consists of a love affair between the main characters, the difficulties that arise due to the affair, the struggle of the characters to overcome these difficulties and an ending that is generally happy.*" (Classical Arts Universe).

**OUTSIDE MULLINGAR** is about two families fighting over a strip of land while their offspring, Anthony and Rosemary, struggle to declare their love for each other. This piece is set in the Irish midlands outside the town of Mullingar where Anthony and Rosemary have been living on neighboring farms all their lives. She has been secretly in love with him since they were kids, but is stubbornly waiting for him to make the first move. He, deeply wounded in love already, lacks the confidence to express his true feelings for her. Now close to middle age, they are thrown into a crisis when Anthony's father threatens to sell the farm to an American nephew rather than leave it to him. How Anthony and Rosemary cope with their tenuous relationship in this new situation is deeply moving and very funny at the same time. Will they finally take a chance on love?

"Mr. Shanley's finest work since **DOUBT**." The New York Times

"An Irish good time!" The Huffington Post

"**OUTSIDE MULLINGAR** has the luck of the Irish." Time Out New York

## Summary of OUTSIDE MULLINGAR

### **CHARACTERS**

#### **TONY REILLY**

*Tony is a sly, feisty 75 year-old whose main drive is to keep the Reilly farm in the family after his demise. He is something of a bully with a macabre sense of humor.*

#### **ANTHONY REILLY**

*Anthony is Tony's son who, at 42, is still living with his father on their cattle and sheep farm. He is a dreamer with intense emotions but short on self-worth and confidence.*

#### **AOIFE (pronounced Eé-fa) MULDOON**

*Aoife is a tough, practical 70 year-old who wants a good future for her daughter. She is a longtime neighbor of the Reillys and the widow of Chris Muldoon who just passed away.*

#### **ROSEMARY MULDOON**

*Rosemary is Aoife's headstrong daughter. At 36, she is still secretly in love with Anthony and stubbornly waiting for him to return her affections.*

**Time:** Winter of 2008 to Spring of 2013.

**Setting:** Multiple locations on two neighboring farms outside the town of Mullingar, in Ireland.

### Scene 1

The farm kitchen of widower Tony Reilly and his son Anthony. They have just returned from the funeral of neighbor Christopher Muldoon. Tony is irritated that his son has invited Muldoon's widow and daughter to join them for tea after the funeral services. He orders his son to see to the dirty dishes before their guests arrive. "Your mother would die again if she saw the state of this house," he says. While Anthony tidies up, Tony recounts a macabre story about the deceased Christopher Muldoon's son who died of a deformity shortly after he was born. The infant had the same name as his father, which resulted in the local lads joking about whose funeral they were really attending. Anthony can't understand why his dad finds the story amusing.

Muldoon's widow, Aoife, arrives without her daughter, Rosemary. She walks with a cane and is short of breath. Anthony is disappointed that Rosemary isn't with her. Aoife explains that her daughter is outside smoking. "She won't smoke in front of me, and she's always smoking, so I never see her," Aoife complains. Anthony is worried that Rosemary could catch pneumonia outside in the rain. "No, she's crazy. The cracked ones never get sick," Aoife says. As Anthony makes tea for everyone, his father engages in some conversation with Aoife.

TONY: When the husband goes, the wife follows.  
You'll be dead in a year.

ANTHONY: She will not.

AOIFE: Tony's right. I'll be dead in a year.

TONY: Half a year.

Since they are both old and in poor health, Aoife wants to know if Tony has signed over his farm to Anthony as she plans to do regarding Rosemary and the Muldoon farm. When Tony reveals that he hasn't made up his mind yet, Anthony is stunned. "What do you mean, you don't know if the farm is coming to me? Are you serious?" he asks. Tony asserts that Anthony isn't really a Reilly, that he takes more after his mother's side of the family, the Kellys. He even looks and behaves like his grandfather John Kelly, who was "mad as a full moon". And like John Kelly, Anthony doesn't really love the land or enjoy farming, Tony claims. Anthony points out that he has been breaking his back on the farm since he was five and has completely modernized the place. "Not the same," Tony replies.

Hurt and angered by his father's rejection, Anthony announces that he's going outside to find Rosemary. He is stopped by Aoife's voice: "She doesn't like you, you know." According to Aoife, Rosemary still holds a grudge against Anthony for pushing her down when she was six. Unable to remember ever doing such a thing, Anthony goes outside to talk to Rosemary.

Alone now in the kitchen with Tony, Aoife breaks down in tears when reminded of her deceased husband. Both

she and Tony are concerned and confused about the peculiarities of their children. Aoife worries about Rosemary, who has rejected all the men that have shown an interest in her. Tony is frustrated that Anthony shows no interest in women and in producing a son to inherit the farm in the future. "There's no marriage in the man," Tony declares. Aoife believes that Anthony's lack of interest in women stems from his unhappy love affair with a girl named Fiona who left him for another man. Tony reveals that in order to keep the farm in the family, he wants to sell it to a nephew in America who would like to settle down here with an Irish girl. There is a problem with that, however: Years ago, when in a financial bind, Tony sold a strip of his land to Aoife's husband Chris Muldoon, thus blocking easy access to the road from the Reilly farm. This makes the sale of the farm very difficult, if not impossible. Now that Chris Muldoon had passed away, Tony hopes that Aoife will sell the land back to him. She, however, tells him that it is not hers to sell. Her husband signed over the strip of land to Rosemary a long time ago. It is therefore Rosemary that Tony will have to deal with in the matter.

### Scene 2

While Aoife and Tony continue talking in the kitchen, Anthony discovers Rosemary smoking outside near the Reilly barn. This is apparently her way of coping with her father's death and funeral. She has been secretly in love with Anthony since they were kids, but thinks it is his place as the man to make the first move. Her conversation, therefore, often reflects a frustration and impatience with Anthony that he fails to understand. Soon after he arrives, Rosemary brings up what she knows is for him a sensitive topic:

ROSEMARY: Have you ever heard from Fiona?

ANTHONY: Is the human race against me this night?

ROSEMARY: Don't answer then.

ANTHONY: Never. I have never heard from Fiona.

ROSEMARY: Why didn't you just get over her like other people do?

ANTHONY: I don't know what other people do and I don't care. Why do you do what you do?  
Your mother says you're mad.

ROSEMARY: I'm not.

ANTHONY: I am.

ROSEMARY: How are you mad?

ANTHONY: People don't appeal to me that much.

ROSEMARY: That's normal. Who likes people? Nobody.

When he informs her that his dad is not going to leave him the farm, she can't understand why he won't return to the house immediately and confront his dad about it. "I don't like a fight," he explains. He confesses that he doesn't like farming much, but then speaks emotionally, even poetically about his love for the land and the creatures on it. After a short silence he wants to know if Rosemary really hates him as her mother claims. She replies that she doesn't hate him; she just doesn't like him very much sometimes. "You're a bit of a lump," she adds. "You never do anything." They quarrel about whether or not he pushed her down when they were kids and who is to blame for the disputed strip of land in front of the

Reilly house. Rosemary reveals that she persuaded her father to give her the land, after he bought it from Tony, out of spite for Anthony pushing her down there. That way she could make sure that Anthony would always have to go through her property, and two gates instead of one, just to get from the main road to his own house. He finally gets fed up with their bickering. "I'll see you at church. Or I won't," he says as he leaves for a walk in the fields. Rosemary then recalls and repeats out loud how Anthony spoke so fondly and poetically of his love for the land, the green fields, the animals and the universe on top of it all. This is the quality in Anthony that apparently draws her to him. His words make her know she has a soul, she says.

### Scene 3

Back in the Reilly kitchen, a few moments later. Tony and Aoife are joined by Rosemary. She immediately confronts Tony about denying Anthony his right to the farm. Tony insists it's none of her business, but she points out that any discussion of selling the strip of land in front of his house must go through her, the owner. She reproaches the old man for constantly demeaning Anthony who has single-handedly held the farm together for years. She is so fired up by the injustice of Tony's plans that he realizes she must be in love with his son. It's "more than love", she says. She wants to make sure that Anthony continues living on the farm next to hers. When Tony asserts that she is wasting her time because Anthony will never marry her, Rosemary reveals that she has had her eggs frozen just in case. "You should have frozen your whole body if you're waiting for that one," Tony says sarcastically. Rosemary finally appeals to Tony's feelings for his wife, Mary, who for sure would have wanted the farm to go to their son Anthony.

### Scene 4

Two years later. Tony is lying in bed. In the darkness he calls out for Anthony, who quickly appears and turns on the light. The old man has apparently taken a turn for the worse. He is attached to an oxygen tank which he demands that Anthony remove from the room. After asking his son to sit beside him, Tony reveals that he has left the farm to Anthony and apologises for ever considering to do otherwise. His mind then strays into the past when he and Mary were first married. He confesses that he did not really love Anthony's mother in those early days. For that reason he only gave her a cheap wedding ring made of brass. With time, however, his feelings for Mary changed and he wanted to give her a ring made of gold. But the new ring cost two hundred pounds which he didn't have. That is why he sold the strip of land to Chris Muldoon. Tony apologises to Anthony for selling the land as well as for not believing that his son would ever amount to anything. He now has faith, though, that Anthony will do well and someday find love. Near tears, father and son embrace warmly and express their love for each other. Tony then says he needs to sleep, but refuses to be re-attached to the oxygen tank. Worried about his father, Anthony turns off the light and goes.

### Scene 5

A year later. A sunny day. Anthony comes out of the Reilly barn to discover Rosemary there with a covered dish. She has brought him some homemade stew. "I can cook you know," he tells her. "You don't though," she replies. They talk about their parents, Tony and Aoife, who have both passed away in the meantime. Now that the farm is Anthony's, Rosemary wants to know if he is happy.

ANTHONY: No.

ROSEMARY: Why not go ahead and be happy?

ANTHONY: I don't know how.

ROSEMARY: There's nothing in the way.

ANTHONY: No?

ROSEMARY: There's no one left to catch you laughing, Anthony.

ANTHONY: That's true.

ROSEMARY: How many days do we have where the sun shines?

ANTHONY: Not too many.

He has been having dreams, he says, about his ancestors and everybody else who has ever lived, and he can't understand why. He worries that the work on the Muldoon farm is too hard for Rosemary to manage alone.

ANTHONY: It's a two-man job.

ROSEMARY: Or one woman.

ANTHONY: That's the world now.

ROSEMARY: What?

ANTHONY: Men are useless... What's a man for? What's his place?

ROSEMARY: That's for you to say.

They accuse each other of not having the courage to start a new life elsewhere. She regrets that they only speak to each other at church, and adds, "I wouldn't go if you didn't. I hate the Bible. They should call it "the book of awful stories." But she still has faith, she claims. Finally, she invites Anthony to visit her sometime, although she doubts he will.

### Scene 6

Outside the Muldoon house. Spring 2013. The sound of distant thunder and rain is heard. Anthony appears wearing a raincoat. He has a metal detector and headset. He approaches the house, then hesitates. When Rosemary comes out of the house, he tries to leave without her seeing him.

ROSEMARY: Anthony! I see ya! You've been seen now!

ANTHONY: Go in!

ROSEMARY: Come in! Don't you dare turn back!

ANTHONY: What are you doing? Don't come out!

ROSEMARY: Come on in then. I've seen you now. Come in before I drown. (He follows her into her house.)

### Scene 7

Inside the Muldoon house, a few moments later. Rosemary tells Anthony to take off his coat and boots. She also wants him to remove the headset and put down

the metal detector. "People think you're after bombs from Pakistan in that rig...What are you after besides the odd treasure?" she asks. He avoids answering her question directly, saying only that he has found a few old coins in the ground. Rosemary has seen Anthony lurking around outside her house before, and has been frustrated that he never knocked on her door. She decides that the situation can't go on like this and that she will have to take the initiative. She offers him a bottle of Guinness. After some hesitation (and a stern warning from her that he had better not leave!) Anthony accepts the offer and sits down. She tells him that she has quit smoking for his sake and is almost suicidal as a result. He jokes about hanging himself due to the depressing weather. Their talk is light and casual until Anthony reveals that his cousin Adam from America is coming to Ireland in search of a wife. When Anthony mentions that he thinks Adam should take a look at Rosemary's beauty, she is taken aback. Her temper flares. She is furious that he is suggesting that another man look her over as if she were a cow! She wants to know why he never proposed marriage to her himself if he finds her such a beauty. "Are you gay? she asks. "Disabled? A hermaphrodite? Oddly put together? Do you have something extra on you that isn't normal?"

After she calms down, Anthony explains that he never expressed his true feelings for her because he thinks he is mad like all the Kellys on his mother's side of the family. For example, he imagines he is a honeybee. When he told Fiona that, "she ran like fire from me," he says. Rosemary replies that she doesn't care if he thinks he's a honeybee.

She begins to cry. "I'm half dying with living for you," she says.

ROSEMARY: But wait, do you think I'm a honeybee? May I know what I am?

ANTHONY: You're a flower. The most beautiful bloom that grows.

ROSEMARY: Oh. Oh. Do you really think that of me?

ANTHONY: Yes and more. And each time a fella came to try his luck with you, I suffered like Christ himself.

ROSEMARY: Oh Anthony.

ANTHONY: But I wish you had married one of those men, my dearest girl, to end my torture, because I'm no good for nothing and no one.

ROSEMARY: You're good for me.

He admits that a few years ago he lost the ring (his mother's) that he was planning to give her --- which is why he has been searching the ground outside with the metal detector. Rosemary reveals that she found the ring near her doorstep. It has given her hope, she says, that one day he would come back and knock on her door. She gets the ring and offers it to Anthony. He refuses to take it, insisting that the ring has always been hers. He then gives her a long kiss. They breathe deeply.

ROSEMARY: I'm mad too, you know.

ANTHONY: How are you mad?

ROSEMARY: You'll find out. When it's too late.

### Study Questions

1. What sad event has just taken place before the play begins?
2. To whom does Anthony's father, Tony Reilly, want to leave the Reilly farm?
3. Why doesn't he want to leave the farm to Anthony?
4. Why is Aoife Muldoon, Rosemary's mother, worried about her daughter's future?
5. How long has Rosemary been secretly in love with Anthony?
6. Who rejected Anthony's love in the past?
7. To whom does the strip of land in front of the Reilly farm belong?
8. What has Rosemary done in case Anthony wants to marry her sometime in the future?
9. What did Anthony lose that Rosemary found near her doorstep?
10. Why won't Rosemary tell Anthony how she feels about him?
11. Why does Anthony think he's mad and therefore unfit for marriage?

### **Answer Key:**

1. The funeral of Rosemary's father.
2. To a nephew in America.
3. Because he fears Anthony will never marry and produce an heir to the farm.
4. Because Rosemary has rejected all the men who have shown an interest in her.
5. Since they were kids.
6. A girl named Fiona.
7. To Rosemary.
8. She has had her eggs frozen.
9. His mother's ring.
10. Because she thinks he should make the first move.
11. Because all of his mother's side of the family is mad and he imagines he is a honeybee.

### For Discussion or Written Work

1. Why do Anthony and Rosemary find their lives unsatisfactory? Do you sympathize with both of them? Why or why not? Do you sympathize with one more than you do the other?
2. Imagine what their lives will be like in the future. Will they get married? Continue living on separate farms? Sell the farms and start a new life elsewhere, etc? What would you do?
3. How does OUTSIDE MULLINGAR fit into the definition of a romantic comedy (see page 2 for definition)?