



# THE VEIL

BY CONOR McPHERSON



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The world premiere production of THE VEIL was presented by the National Theatre at the Lyttelton Theatre, London, England, opening on September 27, 2011. It was directed by Conor McPherson; the lighting design was by Neil Austin; the original music was by Stephen Warbeck; the sound design was by Paul Arditti; the choreography was by Jack Murphy; and the fight director was Kate Waters. The cast was as follows:

LADY MADELEINE LAMBROKE ..... Fenella Woolgar  
HANNAH LAMBROKE ..... Emily Taaffe  
MARIA LAMBROKE ..... Ursula Jones  
THE REVEREND BERKLELEY ..... Jim Norton  
MR. CHARLES AUDELLE ..... Adrian Schiller  
MRS. GOULDING ..... Brid Brennan  
MR. FINGAL ..... Peter McDonald  
CLARE WALLACE ..... Caoilfhionn Dunne

## **CHARACTERS**

LADY MADELEINE LAMBROKE, a widow

HANNAH LAMBROKE, her daughter

MARIA LAMBROKE, known as Grandie,  
    Madeleine's grandmother

THE REVEREND BERKELEY, a defrocked Anglican  
    minister

MR. CHARLES AUDELLE, a philosopher

MRS. GOULDING, a housekeeper and nurse

MR. FINGAL, an estate manager

CLARE WALLACE, a housemaid

## **PLACE**

A fine old house in the Irish Countryside.

## **TIME**

Early summer, 1822.

# THE VEIL

## ACT ONE

### Scene 1

*Evening of Wednesday, 15 May, 1822. Late in the evening — after 11 P.M. The spacious drawing room of a big house in the countryside in Ireland. The room is gloomily lit by one or two candles. There are large windows, beyond which are mature trees with rich foliage, but for now they are unseen in the darkness. Heavy raindrops are heard falling out in the night.*

*There is a mantelpiece, stage right, with a large mirror above it. Some dark old portraits and landscapes grace the walls. The effect should be that the house has seen better days and needs some care. This room was once a versatile social space for receptions and dancing, now it looks bare. What chairs are here are lined against the walls, the only exceptions being one near the fireplace and one near a piano.*

*Among the entrances are a main door to the hallway, stage left, and high double doors in the back wall, leading to a conservatory with steps to the garden.*

*A man, Mr Fingal, stands in the room, perhaps peering out the window, lost in thought. He wears dirty boots and a shabby-looking coat, which is wet and torn. An old horse blanket is draped round his shoulders. While he may be younger, he looks at least 40. He is broad-shouldered and strong but looks tired. He hears a door slam out in the hallway and looks up. Light spills in as Mrs Goulding approaches, carrying a lamp and a*

*bucket. She stops in the doorway. She is about 60, small and wiry with a lined, intelligent face.*

MRS GOULDING. Mr Fingal!

FINGAL. Mrs Goulding.

MRS GOULDING. I might have known it was your muddy boots!

FINGAL. What?

MRS GOULDING. You have dirt and mud and muck and whatever else all across the floor out here.

FINGAL. Oh, I'm sorry

MRS GOULDING. What way did you come up?

FINGAL. I came up through the scullery.

MRS GOULDING. The scullery!

FINGAL. Clare let me in ...

MRS GOULDING. I don't believe this! Could you not look at what you were doing?

FINGAL. I couldn't see! Sure there's hardly a candle lit in the place!

MRS GOULDING. Do not dare rebuke me sir! Where have you been?

FINGAL. I was abroad — almost up as far as Queensfort! — looking for Miss Hannah.

MRS GOULDING. Yes, well, her ladyship found her herself. *(Mrs Goulding crosses to the coal scuttle near the fireplace and, using a rag, takes some pieces of coal, which she puts in her bucket.)*

FINGAL. Where was she?

MRS GOULDING. Down in the glen. We're heating water for her bath.

FINGAL. What happened?

MRS GOULDING. I don't know. They had an argument.

FINGAL. Were you not here?

MRS GOULDING. No. I had the evening off.

FINGAL. Well that's nice ...

MRS GOULDING. I had the evening off to go to my niece's house. Nearly every child in the parish has scarlet fever, and her baby got it.

FINGAL. *(Chastened.)* Oh, well ...

MRS GOULDING. Yah. We were waiting for a woman from Clonturk who was supposed to have the cure. She arrived full of poitín and nearly fell into the fire, the bloody tinker.

FINGAL. How is the child?

MRS GOULDING. She won't last the night. (*She wipes her hands.*)  
Where's the boy? We need turf brought in.

FINGAL. I sent him home. I'll bring turf in.

MRS GOULDING. No, I'll get it.

FINGAL. Mrs Goulding I apologise.

MRS GOULDING. Alright. We were heating some stew for Miss Hannah. It'll be nearly warm if you want.

FINGAL. I'm alright. I'm just waiting for her ladyship.

MRS GOULDING. You can give me those boots now. (*She pulls the horse blanket from his shoulders and throws it on the floor.*)

FINGAL. Hah?

MRS GOULDING. Stand on that. Here. (*She moves a chair for him to sit on. He starts to unlace his boots.*) I'll kill that young one for letting you walk all up here like that.

FINGAL. It wasn't her fault.

MRS GOULDING. Not a brain between you.

FINGAL. It was dark, she didn't see.

MRS GOULDING. I'll rip her bloody ear off for her. (*She tugs at his torn sleeve.*) Where's your new coat?

FINGAL. It got wet in the rain.

MRS GOULDING. You didn't lose it in Jamestown, no?

FINGAL. No.

MRS GOULDING. Playing cards? No?

FINGAL. No!

MRS GOULDING. You were always a bad liar Mr Fingal. Which is why you shouldn't play cards.

FINGAL. Yes, well, I don't.

MRS GOULDING. Yah, right you don't. Down in that kip. With them animals. Sure look at you! You're not able for them man. The dark rings under your eyes. What are we going to do with you? And no good coat to present yourself tomorrow.

FINGAL. What's tomorrow?

MRS GOULDING. Thursday.

FINGAL. I know what day it is. I mean why do I have to present myself?

MRS GOULDING. Because Her Ladyship's cousin, the Reverend Berkeley, is arriving from London.

FINGAL. What!

MRS GOULDING. He's bringing a companion and they'll want to go grousing I've no doubt so you better see about them horses.

Madam is fit to be tied — both horses lame and she going out to look for Miss Hannah earlier.

FINGAL. The both of them?

MRS GOULDING. They're both lame. What's that rifle doing in here?

FINGAL. Some young lads set their dogs on us earlier. (*Madeleine Lambroke, the lady of the house, appears at the door to the hallway. She is in her early 40s. She is attractive and sombrely dressed. She looks worn out from worry. Mrs Goulding looks at her.*)

MRS GOULDING. Madam, I'll have your boots down at the door. I'll give you a can of stew for the boy's supper on the way out.

FINGAL. Thank you Mrs Goulding.

MRS GOULDING. Madam.

MADELEINE. Thank you Mrs Goulding.

MRS GOULDING. Yes Madam. (*She leaves, taking the boots and bucket with her. Madeleine and Fingal stand there for a moment.*)

FINGAL. I trust Miss Hannah is alright.

MADELEINE. Yes thank you.

FINGAL. We went looking for her up towards Queensfort. There are some new foals up there. I thought she might have gone for a look.

MADELEINE. No. She was sitting down by the brook in the glen. A place her father used to take her.

FINGAL. I see.

MADELEINE. So?

FINGAL. (*Producing some coins.*) Of the householders I could find and speak to, nine holdings have paid quarterlies. Two hundred and thirty-seven have withheld all payment.

MADELEINE. Two hundred and thirty-seven?

FINGAL. They have organised themselves into one body formally requesting they might delay payment until their crops are renewed in the autumn.

MADELEINE. And you have accepted these terms?

FINGAL. I have accepted nothing. If you agree, I will go to the magistrate in the morning. Perhaps he could have a constable down here by the end of the week.

MADELEINE. Huh! That's exactly what happened before and here we are again.

FINGAL. They have not the means, Madam.

MADELEINE. Yes, well neither do I! (*Short pause. Fingal looks down.*) Did you call on Colonel Bennett?



FINGAL. Yes Madam. He is happy to extend further credit if and when your estate should require. And he has also reiterated his offer to buy the houses you own in Jamestown. And he has suggested again he is willing to make an offer for the entire estate if ...

MADELEINE. (*Impatiently.*) Yes I am well aware of the colonel's addiction to acquiring property. Look, the reason I wanted to see you Mr Fingal ...

FINGAL. You received my letter ...

MADELEINE. Yes, I received your letter but that is not the reason I wanted to see you. (*She holds an unopened letter to him.*)

FINGAL. You have not opened it.

MADELEINE. No I have not. Is it of a personal nature? (*Pause.*) Is it of a personal nature? (*Pause. He takes it.*)

FINGAL. Yes.

MADELEINE. Then I will not read it. I want no more of these letters Mr Fingal. While I appreciate your offers of ... friendship, understand that such is impossible. I cannot reciprocate on any level. My status as a widow is one I bear without regret. Entirely.

FINGAL. Yes Madam.

MADELEINE. So kindly desist. While matters remain cordial.

FINGAL. Yes Madam.

MADELEINE. But thank you.

FINGAL. Yes Madam.

MADELEINE. The reason I wanted to see you is that my cousin, the Reverend Berkeley, arrives here from London tomorrow. He will accompany Hannah to Northamptonshire where she will be married in six weeks' time.

FINGAL. Married?

MADELEINE. Yes. (*Short pause.*) Her fiancé is the Marquis of Newbury, the eldest son of Lord Ashby, whose seat is outside Northampton.

FINGAL. I see.

MADELEINE. My cousin being a trusted spiritual advisor to Lord Ashby, he has kindly agreed to chaperone Hannah to Northampton while I settle my affairs here. These matters have been undertaken with great delicacy and as such I have not been at liberty to disclose ...

FINGAL. I understand.

MADELEINE. It is my intention to travel to England for the wedding.

# THE VEIL

by Conor McPherson

3M, 5W

May 1822, rural Ireland. The defrocked Reverend Berkeley arrives at the crumbling former glory of Mount Prospect House to accompany a young woman to England. Seventeen-year-old Hannah is to be married off to a marquis in order to resolve the debts of her mother's estate. However, compelled by the strange voices that haunt his beautiful young charge and a fascination with the psychic current that pervades the house, Berkeley proposes a séance, the consequences of which are catastrophic. *THE VEIL* weaves Ireland's troubled colonial history into a transfixing story about the search for love, the transcendental, and the circularity of time.

*"A cracking fireside tale of haunting and decay."*

—**The Times (London)**

*"Truly haunting. A hugely atmospheric night, packed with historical detail, in which McPherson once more has his ear tuned to the other side."*

—**The Daily Mail (London)**

*"... an effective mixture of dark comedy and suspense. ... an original and at times genuinely startling evening."*

—**The Telegraph (London)**

*"THE VEIL is never dull ... McPherson has a wickedly satirical ear."*

—**The Guardian (UK)**

**Also by Conor McPherson**

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**DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC.**

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