

**REVIEWS****THE LEPERS OF  
BAILE BAISTE***at Celtic Arts Center*

Reviewed by T.H. McCulloh

In a sermon at the beginning of this powerful piece, Father Gannon explains that sinners are like lepers: unfit for society with a disease that is highly contagious and fatal. At first glance it is presumed that he means the motley, disturbed group that inhabits the local pub, but as the action develops it is equally apparent that the sin lies elsewhere, and these misfits are only the result of that original sin. They drink, abuse one another roundly, and laugh at their own bitter antics. It is a portrait of a bar with a bit of the angst of *The Iceman Cometh* and some of the whimsy of *The Time of Your Life*. But these victims of moral leprosy have a personal bond they can't forget. Then one of their members returns from a sojourn in England determined to find out where Brother Angelus has gone, as well as to break the bond.

Ronan Noone, a native of Connemara, Ireland, wrote this play while a graduate student at Boston University, receiving a playwriting award from the Kennedy Center/American College Theatre Festival. It heralds a new voice among young playwrights—a tight, seamless examination of some lost souls trying to survive. It's a good omen framed with innate theatrical style and directed here with knowledge, warmth, and dramatic flair by Pascal Marcotte in his professional directorial debut, another

good omen. Marcotte has created a precise example of ensemble playing, performances expertly balanced against one another in a fine tapestry of dramatic intent.

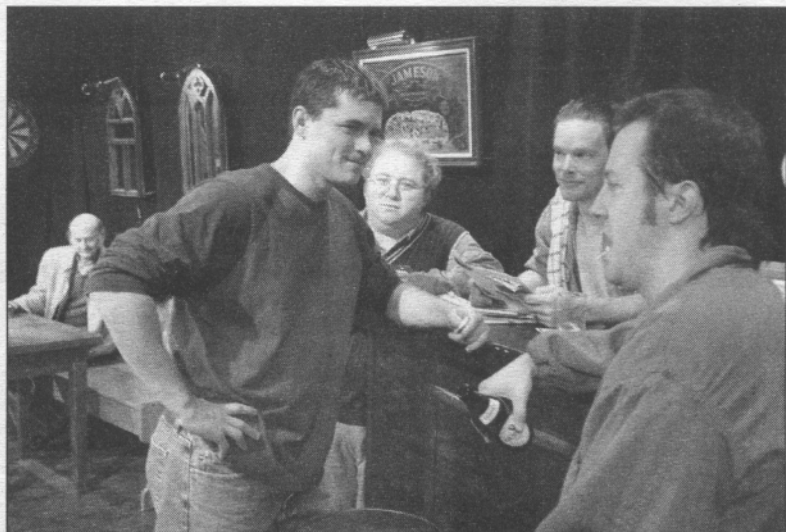
The cast is exceptional in the portraits they paint of these troubled souls. From the cool patience of bartender Kellogg (Joey Gibson) to the rantings of the sodden older Shaneen (Michael Earl Reid), from the barely contained vindictiveness of the very centered Daithi (Tripp Pickell) to the furious anger of the bitter Yowza (Dan Conroy), the images created are totally real and honest. Christopher Carroll's emotionally shaken police sergeant and Weston I. Nathanson's Father Gannon, who is willing to bend some rules to protect the Church from an evil within itself, are outstanding portraits. Two other performances remain indelibly in memory: Jason McCune's Ladeen, who fights his painful memories with a savage humor, and Keith Blaney's extraordinarily detailed and believable Clown, with a vibrantly sad subtext—a poignant and vivid image of a soul more lost than the others but who survives somehow against all odds.

*"The Lepers of Baile Baiste," presented by and at the Celtic Arts Center's Sean Fallon Walsh Theater, 4843 Laurel Canyon Blvd., Studio City. Fri.-Sat. 8 p.m., Sun. 2 p.m. Oct. 4-Nov. 22. \$12-15. (818) 760-8322.*

**TERRA NOVA***at South Coast Repertory*

Reviewed by Kristina Mannion

**F**or some, there is no glory in taking second place. But in this, consule bio



**Morality pray:** Michael Earl Reid (seated), Tripp Pickell, Keith Blaney, Joey Gibson, and Jason McCune in *The Lepers of Baile Baiste*.