PREFACE

The basic purpose of this thesis is to trace the idea of a Theatre in the plays written by John Millington Synge. A play "comes into being" only as a result of an ensemble activity in the theatre. A good dramatic work must, therefore, be waiting for the director to translate its meaning into the visual and auditory images of the stage which has a distinct language of its own. Theme, plot, character, dialogue, diction and spectacle form the essential elements of the literary language of the playwright. Speech, acting, movement, gesture, posture, lighting, properties, music, sound effects, costume and setting are the elements of the theatre language. The organic relation between these two languages suggested in Synge's plays and his efforts to create a new theatre form the content of this study.

The first section of Chapter I aims at locating Synge in the proper context of the Irish Dramatic Movement and establishing his relevance in modern theatre; and the second part deals with drama as literature and theatre, and with Synge's aesthetics of drama as a visual art. Chapters II to VII deal with the analyses of his individual plays in the light of their theatre potentials and production styles possible in the modern experimental theatre. In this connection,
while analysing _Riders to the Sea_, I have referred to my own production of the play at Trivandrum in 1983 on the occasion of the All India English Teachers' Conference sponsored by the University of Kerala. Similarly all the other plays have been studied from the point of view of production and the response of the audience. Chapter VIII concludes the discussion, pointing out the unifying theatre elements in Synge's plays and the special characteristics of his vision against the background of the latest trends in the world theatre.

I had the rare privilege of visiting Dublin, Wicklow and other places in Ireland connected with Synge's life and works and making use of the Trinity College Library for a short period in July 1981 in the course of my European tour, after my formal theatre studies in the University of Rome, Italy. There I met Dr. Nicholas Grene (Trinity College) and Dr. Declan Kiberd (University College, Dublin), two great scholars on Synge, who enlightened me on the complex, ethnic and artistic issues in Synge's plays. I am highly obliged to them.

Dr. K.P.K. Menon, formerly Head, University Institute of English, University of Kerala, my supervising teacher, has always been a source of inspiration. In spite of his ill health, he found time to read through the whole thesis leisurely and offered his invaluable comments for its improvement. My indebtedness to him is beyond words.
I must gratefully make a special mention of the help and services rendered by my teachers and former colleagues of the Department of English, Mar Ivanios College, Trivandrum, my alma mater and the research centre where I was teaching when I registered myself for research.

My sense of gratitude to Dr. K. Ayyappa Paniker, Professor and Head, University Institute of English, University of Kerala is really great. I must also acknowledge the encouragement given by Professor G. Sankara Pillai, Director, School of Drama, University of Calicut. I wish to thank them for their occasional and motivating comments which spurred me on.

I would also like to place on record my deep sense of gratitude to Dr. R. Viswanathan, Dr. N. Ramachandran Nair and Dr. C. P. Sivadasan, Department of English, University of Calicut, for their valuable suggestions, and to Mrs. Kumari Chandrika and Mr. V. C. Harris for their help at the stage of the final proof reading.

In the course of preparation of the thesis I received much help by way of suggestions and advice from distinguished scholars both Indian and foreign. Since there is great dearth of books on the scenic approach to plays, I have also drawn on my practical experience in the theatre as a playwright and director.

I must finally mention my mother who, like Synge's, combines the stoic and the ascetic, struggling to make her
children happy by her hardwork, tears and prayers. To her I humbly dedicate this thesis.

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