The Donnellys Part II
A play in three acts

BY James Reaney

August 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16

'Vet theatrical experience of a whirling top that's just been spun loose'

The Creative Team

Keith Turnbull  Director
Sue LePage    Set/Costume Designer
Claude Accolas  Lighting Designer
John Raymond  Stage Manager
Richard Armstrong  Extended Voice/Vocal Interpretation
Kelly Arnside  Movement and Dance
Suzanne Turnbull  Text and Choral Coach
Vanessa Porteous  Assistant Director
*Georgia Junghyun Lee  Assistant Set and Costume Designer
*Tina Louise Jones  Assistant Lighting Designer
*Kristen Van Alphen  Assistant Stage Manager
* Work study in Theatre Production, Design and Stage Management Programs

The Cast in alphabetical order

Peter Duschenes  James Donnelly Jr., James Carroll and Ensemble
Helen Schlosser Memorial Scholarship

Dennis Fitzgerald  Patrick Finnegan, Mr. Donnelly, Hugh McKinnon and Ensemble
Schlosser/Alton/Peacocke Scholarship

Daniel Richard  Fiddle Player, Bartenders, Giverin
Jonathon Goad  John Donnelly, and Ensemble
Helen MacFarlane Allison Scholarship

Joel Harris  Ned Brooks, John Macdonald, Bob Donnelly and Ensemble
Anjulina Scholarship

Rick Hughes  Bill Donovan, Will Farl, Tom Donnelly, Syd Skinner and Ensemble
Cranstone Scholarship

Christopher Hunt  Rev. Donaldson, George Stub, Mr. Donovan and Ensemble
Virginia Middelberg Memorial Scholarship

Darren Hynnes  Tom Ryan and Ensemble
Kathryn Kirkpatrick  Fat Lady, Mary Donovan, Mrs. Macdonald and Ensemble
Paul D. Fleck Memorial Scholarship

Laurie Levier  Miss Mercilla Maguire, Norah (Macdonald) Donnelly and Ensemble
Sandra Faye Gaberman Scholarship

Ben Nind  Rev. Maguire, Ned Ryan, cessionist and Ensemble
Barbara and John B. Poole Scholarship Endowment

Colin O’Meara  Mike Donnelly and Ensemble
Kathryn Osterberg  Mrs. Ryan, Bridget Carroll, Nellie Donnelly, and Ensemble
Mary Mooney Memorial Scholarship

Laurel Paetz  Mrs. Donnelly and Ensemble
Katharine Zaborsky  Maggie Donovan, Bridget Donnelly and Ensemble
ArthurUnwin Memorial Scholarship

Peter Duschenes in 'Sticks & Stones'

Photo by Don Laux

BANFF ARTS FESTIVAL
The story of this play concerns a race, a race between the Donnelly boys and their enemies. The road the race takes place on has tollgates with signs on them saying: NO DONNELLYS ARE TO ... run a stage line, marry my daughter, & c., &c. ‘Helped’ by their brothers, William & Michael Donnelly smash through most of the tollgates, but their victories only drive their enemies to build stronger & stronger barriers until, at last, Michael is suddenly & brutally murdered.

It is a tale of barrooms, wheels, horses, nuns, tops, convent yards, derailed trains, homeless boys, tavern brawls, refinements, squallors, wedding cakes, drunkards – and ghosts. In a certain hotel deserted for thirty years there is a stain on the floor no ordinary scrubbing brush can ever wash away.

JAMES REANEY

The Donnelly Trilogy
THE ST. NICHOLAS HOTEL – WM DONELLY PROP: The Donnellys, Part II was first performed at the Tarragon Theatre on November 16, 1974 with Keith Turnbull as director. Following the run at Tarragon it toured nationally and has not been professionally produced until now. The large cast of 15 combined with the extensive ensemble, vocal, and movement involved in its production make it difficult for most theatre companies to produce. It’s an ideal choice for the Banff Arts Festival as it provides the artist with creative opportunities not available elsewhere. Reaney wrote three plays about the Donnellys: Sticks & Stones: The St. Nicholas Hotel, Wm Donnelly Prop, and Handcuffs. Each play of the trilogy is a complete work and stands on its own – it is not necessary to see all of them or to see them in any particular order. Handcuffs is scheduled for production at the Banff Centre for the Arts in 1998.
Chronology

This chronology stays as faithful as possible to history, however some of the names have been changed to match characters in the play.

1877
- January: Hugh McKinnon leaves North Middlesex for his new post as Chief of Police in Belleville
- May 15: James Donnelly Jr. dies at home of consumption, age 35
- July 22: Mike Donnelly begins work as a brakeman

1878
- The Donnellys stop running their stagecoach line
- Summer: James Carroll returns from Michigan
- Summer: During the federal election the Donnellys antagonize the local community by supporting the non-Catholic candidate (Colin Scatcherd) in a tight race.
- October 14: James Carroll encounters Mrs. Donnelly on the road outside her farm and subsequently charges her with using foul language

1879
- January: Rev. Donaldson encounters Finnegan stagedriver who hints at a Biddulphian consensus to be rid of the Donnellys
- August 7: First official meeting of the Biddulph Peace Society also known as the Vigilance Committee
- September 2-3: Biddulph Peace Society and supporters search the Donnelly farm for Mary Donovan’s heifer and are chastened by Mrs. Donnelly – they continue on to Will’s farm where he plays “Boney over the Alps” at them and they retreat
- December 9: Mike Donnelly is fatally stabbed in Slaght’s Hotel in Waterford by “William Lewis”

1880
- February 4: Tom Donnelly, Bridget Donnelly, and Mr. & Mrs Donnelly are butchered and burnt by the Biddulph Vigilance Committee – that same night John Donnelly is shot and killed at Whaier’s Corners. No one ever pays a legal price for these crimes.

1883
- Will and Norah Donnelly begin running the St Nicholas Hotel in Appin

1891
- December 9: Rev Donaldson visits the St Nicholas Hotel

1897
- Will dies age 52

1915
- James Carroll dies in British Columbia

1924
- The St Nicholas Hotel is still in business
A Donnelly Miscellany

“Almost every morning brings tidings of some new outrage, a store burnt, dwellings destroyed, stables, filled with valuable horses, consumed, horses with their throats cut.”
- London Daily Advertiser
May 31, 1877

“When you and all the rest of the boys were children often took the light at midnight to look at you taking a happy sleep, full of the hope that I might live to see you all men and be happy myself, but that hope has left me, and my mind often tells me that Carroll will some day get his ends of us.”
- Mrs. Donnelly to Will on the eve of her murder, as quoted in “The Biddulph Tragedy”
The London Free Press
March, 1880

December 24th, 1873
William Donnelly,
Dear Friend, – I address you with these few lines to let you know I am well, and hope you are enjoying the same blessing. Dear William, I would rather be in the grave than home, at present, for the way my people abused me on your account hinders me of ever forgiving them. I will never have anything like a chance of fulfilling my promise of marriage with you except you come and take me away by force….. I burnt your Letters when they commenced to abuse me about you, for they would surely get them if I did not do something with them. No more at present from your loving friend.

MARGRET THOMPSON
- Letter sent from Maggie Thompson (Maggie Donovan in the play) to Will while she was being held captive by her family.

“Exeter and Vicinity. SET ON FIRE. – Crowley and Flanagan’s London stage on Tuesday evening last was set on fire by placing some straw in the bottom of the sleigh as it stood in front of the Mansion Hose stables. It is supposed to have been done by some maliciously inclined persons.”
- Exeter Times
December 30, 1875

“Reaney’s fascination becomes ours as we watch the deceptions, the unreasoning hatred build against this liberal, independent, aggressive Catholic family in the late part of the 19th century in southwestern Ontario’s Biddulph County.”
- Frank Daley, The Ottawa Journal
November 7, 1975

“A family at war with intolerance; decimated, loathed and feared, the Donnellys live on today in the myths and street songs of southern Ontario. How many children have been ordered, “Get to bed, or the Black Donnellys will get you?” The stupidity is as alive today as it was in Biddulph county a century ago.”
- Tom Crighton, Georgia Straight
October 23-30, 1975

“The Donnellys is a milestone in the social consciousness of the Canadian theatre, an explosive work of the first magnitude.”
- Tom Crighton, Georgia Straight
October 23-30, 1975
1. The Queen vs Thomas Donnelly, attempt at arson;
2. The Queen vs William Donnelly, John Donnelly, William Farrell, James Keefe, and William Denby, assault on a constable;
3. The Queen vs Thomas Donnelly, arson;
4. The Queen vs William Donnelly and John Donnelly, assault on a constable;
5. The Queen vs William Donnelly, shooting with intent;
6. The Queen vs William Donnelly, Jr., assault on Rhody Kennedy;
7. The Queen vs John Donnelly, assault on Peter McKellar;
8. The Queen vs Thomas Donnelly, and James Donnelly, Jr., arson;
9. The Queen vs Thomas Donnelly, larceny from Easdale;
10. The Queen vs James Donnelly, Jr., and William Donnelly, assault on Constable Coursey;
11. The Queen vs James Donnelly, Jr., and Patrick Donnelly, and James Keefe, assault on Joe Berryhill;
12. The Queen vs Thomas Donnelly, highway robbery of James Curry
   – Charges against the Donnellys at the Spring Assizes for the County of Middlesex, March 1876 – known as the “Donnelly Assizes.”

“Michael, Thomas and John ran a line of stages between London, Lucan and Exeter, and for some time conducted themselves well. But an opposition line was started by Flanagan, and this rivalry soon greatly intensified the reign of violence. Vehicles were wrecked or burnt, horses cruelly mangled, and stables reduced to ashes. Almost every depredation committed was laid at the Donnellys’ door; certainly they were specially singled out for suspicion. If a barn was burnt the family were charged with it; if cattle were stolen or found mutilated in the fields, as was often the case, the Donnellys were pointed at as the guilty ones. But though numerous crimes of this character were laid to their charge, few convictions were secured against them.”

March 1880

Glossary of Terms

bee  a gathering of neighbours in a community for some combined work, e.g. a logging bee
Blackfeet  Irishmen from Tipperary, or their descendants, who would not join in the activities of the Whitefeet (q.v.) against the English landlords
cutter  a one-horse sleigh used as a means of transportation in the winter
an information  in law, a charge or complaint lodged with a court or magistrate
shivaree  a mock and often disorderly welcome by a group for a newly married couple
Whitefeet  (also known as Whitefoot Society or Whiteboy’s movement) members and descendants of a secret society in Tipperary, Ireland, sworn to attack their English landlords