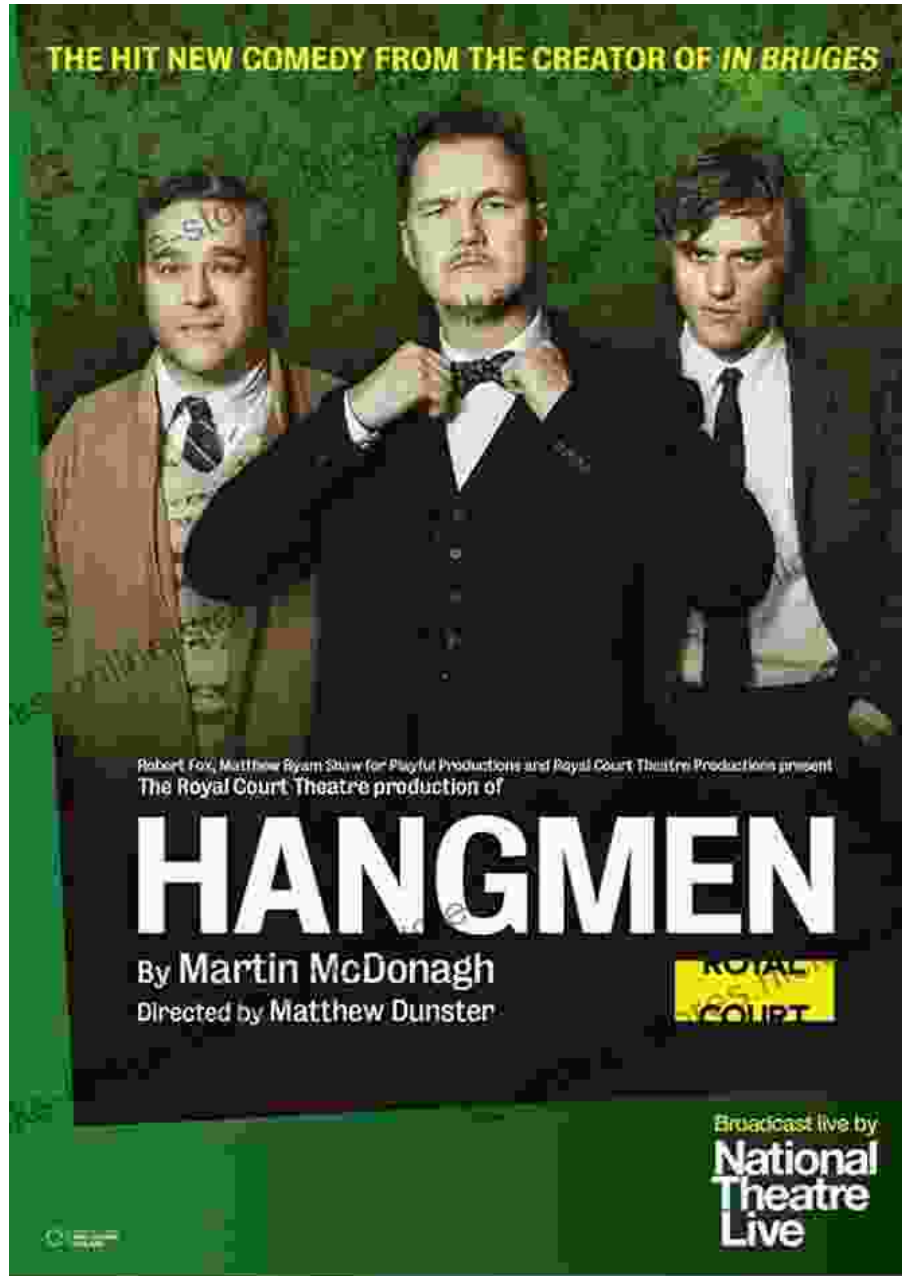


Hangmen: A Masterclass in Martin McDonagh's Dark Comedy



Synopsis

Set in Oldham, England in 1965, *Hangmen* follows Harry Wade (David Morrissey), the former executioner of HMP Wandsworth, who is now

running a pub with his wife Alice (Tracie Bennett). When the death penalty is abolished in the United Kingdom, Harry's life is thrown into turmoil. He is haunted by the ghosts of those he has executed, and he begins to question his own past. Meanwhile, Mooney (Johnny Flynn), a young writer, arrives in town and becomes fascinated by Harry's story. Mooney sees in Harry a chance to write a play that will expose the dark underbelly of British society.

Analysis

Hangmen is a complex and challenging play that explores themes of guilt, redemption, and the nature of justice. McDonagh's writing is sharp and witty, and he creates characters that are both deeply flawed and deeply human. The play is full of dark humor, but it also has a serious side. McDonagh does not shy away from exploring the dark side of human nature, and he forces us to confront our own complicity in the violence of the world.



Hangmen (Faber Drama) by Martin McDonagh

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 182 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 112 pages



One of the most striking things about *Hangmen* is its use of language. McDonagh's dialogue is rich and evocative, and he uses it to create a vivid sense of time and place. The play is set in the North of England, and

McDonagh captures the rhythms and cadences of the local speech. The language is also full of dark humor, and McDonagh uses it to skewer the hypocrisy and cruelty of his characters.

The characters in *Hangmen* are all deeply flawed. Harry Wade is a man haunted by his past, and he is struggling to come to terms with the fact that he has taken so many lives. Alice Wade is a loyal wife, but she is also complicit in Harry's crimes. Mooney is a young man who is full of ambition, but he is also willing to exploit Harry's story for his own gain. McDonagh does not offer easy answers to the moral questions raised by his play. He simply presents us with these flawed characters and allows us to make our own judgments.

Themes

Hangmen explores a number of complex themes, including:

- **Guilt:** Harry Wade is haunted by the ghosts of those he has executed, and he is struggling to come to terms with his own guilt. Alice Wade is also complicit in Harry's crimes, and she is struggling to live with the knowledge of what she has done.
- **Redemption:** Harry Wade is looking for redemption for his crimes, but he is not sure how to find it. He tries to find solace in religion, but he is not able to escape his past. Alice Wade is also looking for redemption, but she is not sure how to atone for her sins.
- **Justice:** The play raises questions about the nature of justice. Is it right to take a life for a life? Is there ever a justification for violence? McDonagh does not offer easy answers to these questions. He simply

presents us with the facts of the case and allows us to make our own judgments.

Critical Reception

Hangmen received critical acclaim when it premiered at the Royal Court Theatre in London in 2015. The play was praised for its sharp writing, complex characters, and dark humor. It won the Olivier Award for Best New Play and the Evening Standard Award for Best Play. *Hangmen* also transferred to Broadway in 2017, where it received Tony Award nominations for Best Play and Best Actor (David Morrissey).

Critics praised McDonagh's writing for its wit and darkness. The New York Times called *Hangmen* "a brilliant and disturbing play that will stay with you long after you leave the theater." The Guardian called it "a masterpiece of dark comedy." The Washington Post called it "a powerful and thought-provoking play that will challenge your assumptions about justice and redemption."

Legacy

Hangmen is a major work in McDonagh's career. It is a complex and challenging play that explores dark and disturbing themes. However, it is also a very funny play, and it is full of McDonagh's trademark wit. *Hangmen* is a play that will stay with you long after you see it.



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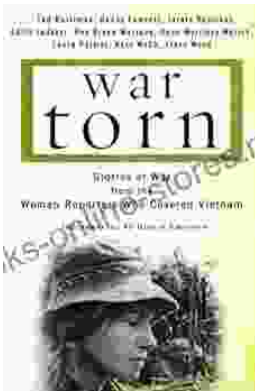
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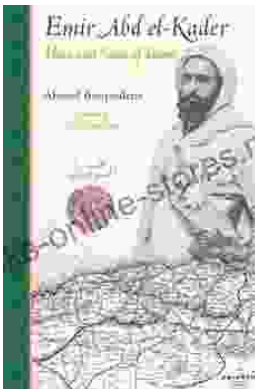
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