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#MollyLTC

## Lantern Theater Company Announces Additional Extension of *Molly Sweeney* by Brian Friel – Professionally Filmed Play Streaming Now and Extended Through Sunday, March 7, 2021

PHILADELPHIA (March 1, 2021) – **Lantern Theater Company** announced today that its newly filmed production of *Molly Sweeney* by legendary Irish playwright **Brian Friel** will **again extend its on-demand streaming run through Sunday, March 7, 2021**. Since opening on January 22, *Molly Sweeney* has been extended twice in response to overwhelming audience demand and has been watched by audiences in almost 40 U.S. states and territories, in addition to far-flung viewers in Canada, the UK, Ireland, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Sweden, the Netherlands, Israel, India, Bermuda, Ecuador, and Hong Kong.

Directed by **Peter DeLaurier** and featuring Philadelphia-based actors and Lantern favorites **Anthony Lawton**, **Ian Merrill Peakes**, and **Geneviève Perrier**, this fully designed and safely realized production was filmed at the Lantern's artistic home at St. Stephen's Theater in Center City Philadelphia by the Emmy Award-winning filmmakers at **Natural Light Films**. Tickets for the extended streaming period are on sale now at [www.lanterntheater.org](http://www.lanterntheater.org).

“We have been shut up in our homes for almost one year, and if you're like me, you have taken this opportunity to stream theater performances and watch theater artists from around the world plying their craft,” Lantern Artistic Director **Charles McMahon** noted in February when *Molly Sweeney*'s first extension was announced. “One thing that this pandemic has brought home is that the actors who live and work in Philadelphia are second to none. We are very proud of the work of these terrific local actors – all three well known to Lantern audiences – and we are pleased to be able to extend Brian Friel's beautiful and devastating play.”

The Lantern's filmed production of *Molly Sweeney* has achieved acclaim with audiences around the world and theater critics alike. For *The Wall Street Journal*, **Terry Teachout** wrote that *Molly Sweeney* is "a natural for webcasting, though it is not nearly so easy to stage as it looks at first glance. Fortunately, Lantern Theater Company's revival, directed by Peter DeLaurier and taped in an empty theater on a semi-naturalistic set designed by Nick Embree, is so fine as to be worthy of unapologetic comparison with the Irish Rep's 2020 video version, and the members of the cast, Anthony Lawton, Ian Merrill Peakes and Geneviève Perrier, are far more than equal to their challenging parts." Teachout continued, "even if you've seen *Molly Sweeney* produced in the past year, I can wholeheartedly recommend this version. I'd heard good things about the Lantern through the regional-theater grapevine but had never seen any of its shows until now, and I plan to visit them in person as soon as the pandemic is over." *The Philadelphia Inquirer's* **John Timpone** hailed *Molly Sweeney* as "beautifully written (playwright Brian Friel was incapable of writing a bad sentence) and acted, it's a reminder that good theater endures." Writing for *Parterre Box*, former *Philadelphia* magazine theater critic **David Fox** referred to the production as "impressive," and that "*Molly Sweeney* is pretty much ideally served by the streaming format. I've seen the play onstage also, but the intimacy provided here through film close-ups really helps us feel the sense of connection." In the *Broad Street Review*, **Cameron Kelsall** wrote that director DeLaurier and the actors "deliver an experience both simple and striking."

Tickets for *Molly Sweeney* are **\$20 per household** and are available online at [www.lanterntheater.org](http://www.lanterntheater.org) or by calling the Lantern Box Office at **(215) 829-0395**. Ticket buyers will receive an email confirmation with full instructions and a private ticket access link, which will provide on-demand access to *Molly Sweeney* for one viewing during the extended streaming period. The play can be viewed on most internet-connected devices with email/web browser access, including desktops, laptops, tablets, smartphones, and select smart TVs. The Lantern Box Office is accessible by phone and email 12 p.m. to 8 p.m. daily to provide assistance.

## About the Playwright

**Brian Friel** has often been called the Irish Chekhov and was long recognized as Ireland's greatest living dramatist until his death in 2015. His work includes *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1991 Olivier Award for Best New Play and 1992 Tony Award for Best Play), *Translations*, *Faith Healer*, *Freedom*, *Wonderful Tennessee*, *The Home Place*, and *Lovers*, which the Lantern produced during the 2002/03 theater season. *Molly Sweeney* is one of 14 Friel plays set in the fictional town of Ballybeg, from the Irish *Baile Beag* meaning "small town." In reference to the comparison between himself and Anton Chekhov, Friel has said it may be because "the characters in the plays behave as if their old certainties were as sustaining as ever, even though they know that their society is in meltdown... They seem to expect their problems will disappear if they talk about them – endlessly."

## About the Artists

*Molly Sweeney* was directed by longtime Lantern artistic partner **Peter DeLaurier**, whose recent directing credits include Lantern productions of *Hapgood* by Tom Stoppard, *Red Velvet* by Lolita Charkabarti, *36 Views* by Naomi Iizuka, and *The Island* and *Sizwe Bansi Is Dead*, both by Athol Fugard, John Kani, and Winston Ntshona. He has also graced the Lantern stage in productions of *The Tempest*, *An Iliad*, *Underneath the Lintel*, *QED*, *The Train Driver*, *Emma*, *Heroes*, *Uncle Vanya*, and *Skylight*. DeLaurier is a seven-time Barrymore Award nominee and two-time recipient: for his role as The Librarian in *Underneath the Lintel* at the Lantern and as Kent in *King Lear* at People's Light. He is an artistic associate at People's Light and has been a member of their resident company since 1991.

**Geneviève Perrier** takes on the title role of Molly Sweeney in her ninth production with the Lantern. Her previous Lantern credits include *The Vertical Hour*, *Betrayal* (Barrymore nomination), *Photograph 51* (Barrymore nomination), *A Child's Christmas in Wales* (Barrymore Award for Outstanding Ensemble), *Private Lives* (Barrymore nomination), *The Lonesome West* (Barrymore nomination), *The Screwtape Letters*, and David Hare's *Skylight*, for which she was honored with the 2008 Barrymore Award for Outstanding Leading Actress in a Play. Perrier has also worked locally with Arden Theatre Company, Azuka Theatre, The Berserker Residents, Headlong, Philadelphia Theatre Company, Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival, EgoPo Classic Theater, Theatre Exile, and Pig Iron Theatre Company.

**Ian Merrill Peakes** returns to the Lantern as Molly's husband, Frank Sweeney. He previously appeared as Dutch military captain Joseph Pillel in the Lantern's critically acclaimed world premiere of *The Craftsman* by Bruce Graham, a filmed version of which will stream on demand March 2 – 28, 2021. A Barrymore and Helen Hayes award-winning actor, Peakes' stage credits also include productions with Walnut Street Theatre, Arden Theatre Company, Theatre Exile, Philadelphia Theatre Company, The Wilma Theater, Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival, American Conservatory Theater, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Shakespeare Theatre Company, Folger Theatre, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Actors Theatre of Louisville, and many others. Film and television credits include *Still Standing*, *Hack*, *Homicide*, *Buried Girl*, and *Lebanon, PA*.

**Anthony Lawton** plays ophthalmologist Mr. Rice, fresh from his highly acclaimed original adaptation of *Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol*, which the Lantern streamed on demand during the 2020 holiday season to audiences across the United States and around the world. Lawton's other recent acting credits include Lantern productions of *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, *Measure for Measure*, and the world premiere of *The Craftsman* by Bruce Graham. Lawton is well known to Philadelphia audiences for his original works for the stage – including *The Foocy*, which had its world premiere production at the Lantern in 2005 and earned five Barrymore nominations including Best New Play, and *The Light Princess*, which premiered at Arden Theatre Company and earned eight 2017 Barrymore nominations including Best New Play and two wins. He has also

created original adaptations of Shel Silverstein's *The Devil and Billy Markham* and C.S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters* and *The Great Divorce*, which he has performed at the Lantern and across the U.S. under the aegis of his Mirror Theatre Company, earning him praise from *Philadelphia City Paper* as the city's "Best One-Man Theatre." His acting credits also include film, television, and local productions with Arden Theatre Company, Walnut Street Theatre, The Wilma Theater, 1812 Productions, and the Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival.

The design team for *Molly Sweeney* includes scenic designer **Nick Embree** (recent Lantern credits include *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, *Hapgood*, and *Copenhagen*), costume designer **Leigh Ivory Clark Paradise** (Lantern debut), lighting designer **Janet Embree** (*Henry V*), and sound designer and composer **Christopher Colucci**, an eight-time Barrymore Award-winner currently working on his 27th Lantern production. **Michael P. Toner** is the dialect coach.

## About Lantern Theater Company

Founded in 1994 and now in its 27th season, Lantern Theater Company's mission is to produce plays that investigate and illuminate what is essential in the human spirit and the spirit of the times. The Lantern serves the Philadelphia region with artistic and educational programming, notably partnering with middle schools and high schools in the Philadelphia School District to provide in-classroom residencies in support of curricular learning. Throughout the Covid-19 health crisis, the Lantern has continued to provide artistic programming on both a free and paid basis, ranging from readings of Shakespeare plays to filmed versions of fully realized theatrical productions, including *Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol* in December 2020.

Following *Molly Sweeney*, the Lantern's reimagined 2020/21 season continues with the newly announced **Plays from the Lantern Archives**, a new program celebrating some of the finest productions from recent seasons brought vividly back to life on screen. Plays from the Lantern Archives will launch with *The Craftsman* by celebrated Philadelphia playwright Bruce Graham, directed by M. Craig Getting, and streaming March 2 – 28, 2021. Three plays by William Shakespeare will follow, all directed by Artistic Director Charles McMahon, including *Measure for Measure* (April 6 – May 2, 2021), *The Tempest* (May 4 – 30, 2021), and *Coriolanus* (June 1 – 27, 2021). The 2020/21 season will also include streaming productions of newly selected plays that can be safely rehearsed, staged, and filmed; additional events and dates will be announced as they are confirmed. More information is available online at [www.lanterntheater.org](http://www.lanterntheater.org).

**Lantern Theater Company – 2020/21 Season**  
**FACT SHEET**  
*Molly Sweeney*

WRITTEN BY:  
Brian Friel

DIRECTED BY:  
Peter DeLaurier

CAST:  
Anthony Lawton as Mr. Rice  
Ian Merrill Peakes as Frank Sweeney  
Geneviève Perrier as Molly Sweeney

CREATIVE TEAM:  
Nick Embree, Scenic Designer  
Leigh Ivory Clark Paradise, Costume Designer  
Janet Embree, Lighting Designer  
Christopher Colucci, Sound Designer & Original Music  
Michael P. Toner, Dialect Coach  
Rebecca Smith, Associate Producer

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TICKET INFORMATION:  
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By Phone: (215) 829-0395

TICKET PRICING:  
\$20 per household

NOW STREAMING ON DEMAND:  
Extended through Sunday, March 7, 2021

**PLAY SYNOPSIS for LISTING EDITORS:**

In this New York Drama Critics' Circle Award-winning play, Molly Sweeney leads a full and productive life as a woman with blindness. But her husband Frank can never leave well enough alone. His insistence that she undergo a risky surgery to restore her sight has powerful and unintended consequences. Inspired by Oliver Sacks' essay *To See and Not See*, legendary Irish playwright Brian Friel tells this gentle tale from the shifting perspectives of Molly, Frank, and the surgeon who values his skills above his patients.