

## Big Maggie by John B.Keane: One of Irelands favourite writers



Easily one of the best plays of the last fifty years and arguably John B. Keane's masterpiece. Set in 1960s rural Ireland, *Big Maggie* is a compelling portrait of a woman who is determined to take control of her life following the death of her husband. The story centres on Big Maggie Polpin and her attempts to keep her family together after the death of her husband is an enduring theatre favourite. The dialogue crackles with hilarious, caustic putdowns as the indomitable Maggie deals with her feckless family and unwanted suitors. Everyone wants a part of Big Maggie and her property but she has other ideas. fiendishly compelling - *The Irish Times*

About John B. Keane: John B. Keane, one of Ireland's most prolific and respected literary figures, died on 30 May 2002 at the age of 73, after a long and difficult battle with cancer. John B. Keane was born in 1928 in Listowel, County Kerry and it was here that he spent his literary career, running a pub which provided him with inspiration for his characters and ideas. His first play, *Sive*, was presented by the Listowel Drama Group and won the All-Ireland Drama Festival in 1959. It was followed by another success, *Sharon's Grave*, in 1960. *The Field* (1965) and *Big Maggie* (1969), are widely regarded as classics of the modern Irish stage and jewels in a crown which includes such popular hits as *Many Young Men of Twenty*, *The Man from Clare*, *Moll*, *The Chastitute* and *The Year of the Hiker*. His large canon of plays have been seen abroad in cities as far afield as Moscow and Los Angeles. *Big Maggie* ran on Broadway for over two months in 1982 and *The Field* was adapted into an Oscar-winning Hollywood film, starring Brenda Fricker and Richard Harris, in 1991. But it was not just in his plays that John B. Keane managed to portray all aspects of humanity with both wit and truth. He also wrote many fine novels,

including The Contractors, A High Meadow and Durango. Durango was adapted for the big screen, starring Brenda Fricker and Patrick Bergin. A writer of essays, short stories and letters, his humorous words live on in Celebrated Letters of John B. Keane, More Celebrated Letters, The Best of John B. Keane and The Short Stories of John B. Keane. In 1987 John B. Keane received a special award for his enduring place in Irish life and letters from the Sunday Independent/Irish Life. In that year he also won a Sunday Tribune Arts Award and in 1988 he was chosen as the recipient of the Irish-American Fund Award for Literature. In 1999 he was presented with a Gradam medal, the Abbey Theatres highest award. He was a member of Aosdana and the recipient of honorary doctorates from Trinity College, Dublin, Limerick University and Marymount College, New York. John B. Keane remains one of Merciers best-loved and best-selling authors.

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