

MICHAEL COLLINS - A Musical Drama and W.B. Yeats' Cathleen ní Houlihan

A PLAY WITHIN A PLAY

On the evening the Easter Rising of 1916 broke out, the play scheduled for performance in the Abbey Theatre was *Cathleen ní Houlihan* by W.B. Yeats.

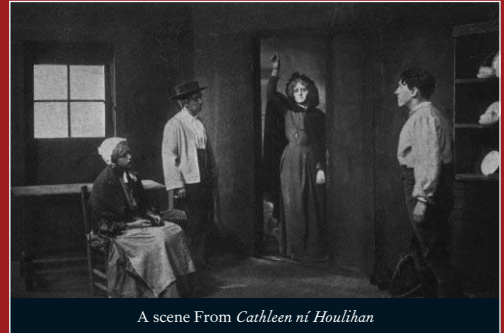
The play is set in the days before the 1798 rebellion and centres around a young man, Michael, who is about to be married to his fiancé, Delia Cahel. However, events take a sudden turn when an Old Woman, Mother Ireland, arrives at the house saying she is buoyed up by “the hope of getting my beautiful fields back again, the hope of putting the strangers out of my house.”

By the end of the play, the young bridegroom, Michael, has followed the Old Woman to join the fight, and she has been transformed into a young girl with the “walk of a queen.”

The performance of the play had to be cancelled on Easter Monday due to the “street theatre” taking place outside.

In *Michael Collins – A Musical Drama*, the Yeats play is used as a theatrical framework, within which the Collins story is told. The Mother Ireland character hangs over proceedings while the other “Abbey players” act as narrators and commentators, rather like the chorus in a Greek tragedy.

- BRYAN FLYNN, Writer and Director



A scene From *Cathleen ní Houlihan*



Killian Donnelly as Michael Collins and Irene Warren as Kitty Kieran