

Trotter, Mary, University of Wisconsin-Madison. "The Irish Orson Welles"

This paper explores the influence of Ireland and Irish theatre culture on American theatre, radio, and film star Orson Welles. Welles first visited Dublin as a teenager, and bluffed his way to a leading role in a production of *Jud Süß* at the Gate Theatre, Dublin in 1931. The Directors of that theatre, Michael MacLiammoir and Hilton Edwards, were

English immigrants to Ireland who had re-invented themselves less than a decade earlier from London artists to leaders of an Irish national avant-garde. Their personal and professional relationship with Welles would last for decades, with MacLiammoir and Edwards performing in almost all of Welles' Shakespeare films, many of which were filmed in Ireland. Indeed, Ireland became for Welles a site for self-invention, and reflections of his Dublin experiences can be found in his interest in outsider characters in his theatre and film, as well as his self-performance as marginalized genius in his early career. Examples of this connection are evident in such works as the Negro People's Theatre production of *Macbeth* which Welles directed in 1936, and his films *The Lady from Shanghai* (1947) and *Othello* (1952).

The paper's premises stem from primary and secondary sources about Welles and his work, including archival materials from the WCFTR, the McCormick Special Collections Library at Northwestern University, and the National Library of Ireland.

Mary Trotter is an Associate Professor of Theatre and Drama at UW-Madison, as well as Director of the University's Celtic Studies Program. She is the author of *Ireland's National Theaters: Political Performance and the Origins of the Irish Dramatic Movement* (Syracuse UP, 2001), *Modern Irish Theatre* (Polity, 2008) and articles in reviews in such journals as *Modern Drama*, *Theatre Journal*, and *New Hibernia Review*.