

Topic Page: [Cusack, Cyril \(1910 – 1993\)](#)

Summary Article: **Cusack, Cyril James**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Irish actor. He joined the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, in 1932 and appeared in many of its productions, including J M Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*. In Paris he won an award for his solo performance in Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*. In the UK his long career included playing many roles as a member of the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre Company.

Cusack also had a long, but secondary career in film, first appearing as an evicted child in the Film Company of Ireland's *Knocknagow* (1918). He came to prominence as a film actor when he played a member of an IRA gang in *Odd Man Out* (1947), and went on to play a number of small parts in films, including *Shake Hands with the Devil* (1959), *A Terrible Beauty* (1960), *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1965), *Fahrenheit 451* (1966), Franco Zeffirelli's *The Taming of the Shrew* (1968), *The Day of the Jackal* (1973), *Poitín* (1978), and *My Left Foot* (1989).

Cusack was born in South Africa, where his father was an officer in the Natal Mounted Police, but left with his mother for Ireland when he was six. There they formed a touring company with the actor Breda O'Rourke, and thus Cusack had a thorough theatrical training, appearing in numerous theatre productions in Dublin and London. In 1942 he was playing opposite Vivien Leigh in George Bernard Shaw's *The Doctor's Dilemma* at the Haymarket Theatre when disaster struck – he became ill and forgot his lines. He returned to Dublin and set up his own company, Cyril Cusack Productions, directing and acting in innumerable plays at the Gaiety Theatre for some 20 years. In 1963 he acted for the Royal Shakespeare Company in Peter Brook's production of Friedrich Dürrenmatt's *The Physicists* (as Möbius) and in the Stratford *Julius Caesar* (as Cassius). In 1968 he played Conn in the Abbey Theatre's production of Dion Boucicault's *The Shaughraun* at the World Theatre Season at the Aldwych Theatre, London. His Chebutykin, the drunken army doctor, in Anton Chekhov's *The Three Sisters* at the Royal Court Theatre in 1990, stole the show. It was a rare family occasion – his daughters played the sisters.

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