

UNIVERSITY LECTURE

CHRISTOPHER
WHEATLEY

'EACH NATION SHOULD
SUPPORT A THEATRE':

NATIONAL THEATRE IN IRELAND IN THE 17TH & 18TH CENTURIES

SPONSORED BY THE LECTURES COMMITTEE,
THEATRE & DRAMA, THE CELTIC STUDIES PROGRAM,
ENGLISH & THE CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES



A widely held view of Irish theater (and one that still persists in some quarters) is that there was none prior to the nineteenth century. Rather, theater in Ireland in the 17th and 18th centuries was "West British"—an amorphous category where Old English, New English, Anglo-Irish and Irish Catholics writing in English are lumped together under the negative criteria that they lack Irish ethnic purity. This, in my view, represents an anachronistic idea of Irish nationalism. I will argue that the Irish stage represented a space where issues of what it meant to be Irish were scrutinized and negotiated, or, in some cases, fought over in theater riots that were close to being pitched battles. Playwrights, producers and audience participated in the contentious construction of Irish identity

Christopher Wheatley is Professor of English and Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies at the Catholic University of America. Publications include *Without God or Reason: Secular Ethics in the Restoration and the Plays of Thomas Shadwell* (1993), *"Beneath Ierne's Banners": Protestant Irish Drama of the Restoration and Eighteenth Century* (1999), and *"Poland Is Not Yet Lost": Heroic and Tragic Tales for the Polish Diaspora* (2004).

17 FEBRUARY

3:00-4:00PM

ROOM 4010 VILAS HALL

RECEPTION WITH
REFRESHMENTS
FOLLOWING