

ANNA CHRISTIE

By a common consent rarely achieved in a lifetime, Eugene O'Neill is acknowledged to be the most distinguished American dramatist. His distinction rests on a number of serious yet successful plays, and on certain evident respects in which his aims and methods differ sharply from those of his fellows.

Before the advent of O'Neill, American playwrights were chiefly amused by what they saw about them, and the American stage was the scene of pleasant illusions. To it, O'Neill brought the mature and the universal; he succeeded in satisfying audiences even while, in a series of brooding, almost morbid themes, he broke through their illusions.

As this implies, O'Neill has both sincere feelings and a good knowledge of the theatre. His craftsmanship is not deft manipulation of words, dialogue and stage business, but rather an instinctive sense of dramatic presentation. His lines, as the Tin Alley Players discovered in this production, and in the earlier BEYOND THE HORIZON, are not easy to learn or deliver; dialogue and action are not always mutually helpful. But his moulds are nobly formed and presented, and within them moods are wonderfully contrived. O'Neill's concern has been the classical one of man against fate. That O'Neill's fate is not the classical one, but the negative Kismet, is the key to his major limitation. His philosophy seems unable to answer the questions he raises.

Born in 1888, O'Neill spent much of his boyhood in the wings of theatres all over the United States. His father was a romantic actor who gradually discarded Shakespearean parts for numerous and profitable tours in the typically unreal MONTE CRISTO. These early days may account for his apparently intuitive knowledge of dramatic effect, but may have also kindled his violent reaction to all that was conventional in the theatre. A turbulent and adventurous youth, he left Princtown at 19 for gold prospecting in Honduras, then went to sea, taking any job he could get, and winding up as an able-bodied seaman. For O'Neill, as for Chris Christopherson, the sea was almost a religious experience. Later in New York he was a destitute habitue of such a New York saloon as Johnny-the-Priest's. In 1914 his father enabled him to join Professor Baker's famous Dramatic School at Harvard, from which he moved to the Provincetown Players, who staged his first play.

In 1934 O'Neill stemmed his flow across the footlights to concentrate on an ambitious cycle of nine plays, dramatising the story of the U.S. family and the U.S. itself. With the approach of war, his writing faltered; with America at arms, it ceased altogether. Recently O'Neill confessed to having written nothing since 1943—and to what his lack of a positive philosophy had cost him. "I hope to resume writing as soon as I can," he said, "but the war has thrown me completely off base . . . I have to get back to a sense of writing being worth while . . . I'd have to pretend." But a new play, THE ICEMAN COMETH, has just opened on Broadway. And with the hope that it marks the beginning of a new productive period, the Tin Alley Players present, as an outstanding sample of his earlier work, ANNA CHRISTIE.

—E.H.

UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE



THE TIN ALLEY PLAYERS

Present

"ANNA CHRISTIE"

by

EUGENE O'NEILL

at the

UNION THEATRE

on

DECEMBER 14, 16 AND 17

1946

In Aid of Mildura Branch Amenities Fund and Union Appeal

PROGRAMME - - 6d.

THE TIN ALLEY PLAYERS

present

"ANNA CHRISTIE"

by

EUGENE O'NEILL

The Characters as they appear :

"Johnny-the-Priest" - - - - -	NORMAN SMITH
First Longshoreman - - - - -	NOEL McLACHLAN
Second Longshoreman - - - - -	JOHN SPICER
Larry - - - - -	WINSTON HUNTER
A Postman - - - - -	EDGAR HARCOURT
Chris. Christopherson - - - - -	KEITH MACARTNEY
Marthy Owen - - - - -	RUBY MAY
Anna Christopherson - - - - -	DOROTHEA DIXON
Johnson - - - - -	ALAN BURKE
Mat Burke - - - - -	HUGH D. NEVILLE

Three Men of a Steamer's Crew

The Play produced by
EDGAR HARCOURT

SCENES

Act I—Johnny-the-Priest's saloon near the waterfront, New York City.

Act II—The barge, "Simeon Winthrop," at anchor in the harbour, Provincetown, Mass., ten days later.

Act III—Cabin of the barge, at dock in Boston, a week later.

Act IV.—The same, two days later.

The Sets have been specially designed by Desmond Connor, and built in the Union Theatre Workshop.

Stage Direction - - - - -	DESMOND CONNOR
Costumes - - - - -	Mrs. J. A. SEITZ
Properties - - - - -	DIANA MEDLEY
Business Manager - - - - -	MAURICE BELZ
Secretary - - - - -	RUBY MAY

And the Technicians of the Union Theatre Guild