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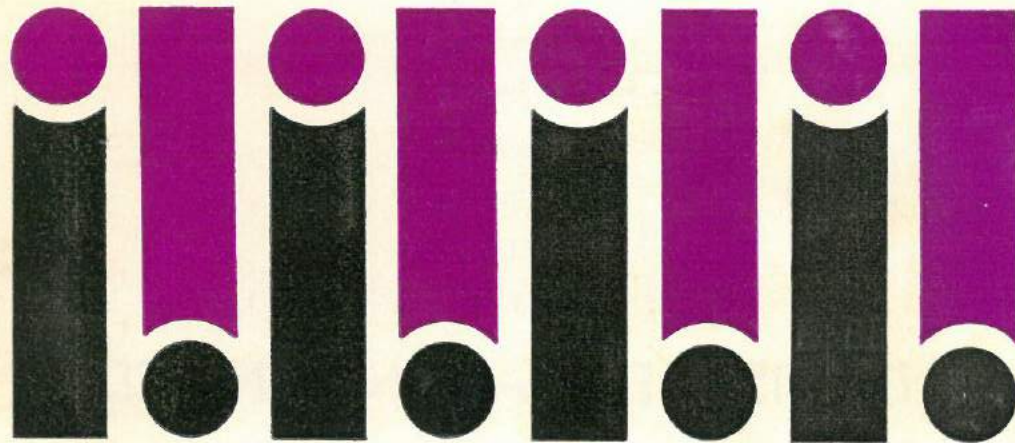


THE LYRIC PLAYERS THEATRE BELFAST

“THE SILVER TASSIE”

by

Sean O'Casey



JUNE, 1971

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THE SILVER TASSIE

In the Spring of 1928, Sean O'Casey, then aged forty eight and living in London, sent a new play to the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, the theatre which had nurtured his genius.

The new play was *The Silver Tassie* and it was rejected. W. B. Yeats informed the dismayed O'Casey that the new play lacked a subject. "You were interested in the Irish Civil War, and at every moment of those plays wrote out of your own amusement with life or your sense of tragedy.....but you were not interested in the Great War."

O'Casey made an indignant reply to Yeats and *The Silver Tassie* soon became one of the most controversial plays of its time.

Who was right, Sean O'Casey or the Abbey Board led by Yeats? It seems clear now that the dramatist himself was right and the great Irish poet (for once) wrong.

For *The Silver Tassie* is now generally regarded as one of O'Casey's greatest achievements, an anti-war play that ranks with Brecht's *Mother Courage*.

Gae bring to me a pint of wine,
And fill it in a silver tassie;
That I may drink before I go,
A service to my bonnie lassie.

That was the song O'Casey hummed during the many months he was engaged in writing *The Silver Tassie*.

In this play "he would set down without malice or platitude the shattered enterprise of life to be endured by many of those who, not understanding the bloodied melody of war, went forth to fight, to die, or to return again with tarnished bodies and complaining minds. He would show a wide expanse of war in the midst of timorous hope and overweening fear; amidst a galaxy of guns; silently show the garlanded horror of war.....And he would do it in a new way."

So in writing *The Silver Tassie* O'Casey believed he had a great theme. In addition he was technically equipped to handle it. He had studied the Greek dramatists, the Elizabethans, and the Expressionists of his own time — Strindberg, Toller, Kaiser and O'Neill. And he was at the height of his power as a dramatist. Others might be unsure of his ability to tackle such a theme and master such a diversity of techniques; but O'Casey had confidence in himself; and, more heartening, his hero Bernard Shaw had confidence in him.

When *The Silver Tassie* was produced in the Apollo Theatre in London, Shaw wrote to Charles B. Cochran: "A magnificent play.....There is a new drama rising from unplumbed depths to sweep that nice little bourgeois efforts of myself and my contemporaries into the dustbin." Even the conservative drama critic of the Times, Charles Morgan, conceded that O'Casey's "attempt to make his play take wings from naturalistic earth succeeds; we move in a new plane of imagination."

But let the final words be Bernard Shaw's: "What a hell of a play!"

JOHN BOYD.



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Conductor: JANOS FURST

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29th May, at 8 p.m. in Shankill Parish Church, Lurgan.

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Soloists: Norma Gray-Wilson, Una O'Callaghan, Martin Walsh, Harold Gray,
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"THE SILVER TASSIE"

By SEAN O'CASEY

A Tragi-comedy in four Acts

Directed and Designed by MARY McCracken

Painted by JOHN MIDDLETON

CAST in order of appearance

Sylvester Heegan	...	...	...	...	...	LOUIS ROLSTON
Mrs. Heegan, his wife	...	...	...	...	...	LUCY JAMIESON
Simon Norton	...	...	...	...	...	MAURICE BLAKE
Susie Monican	...	...	...	...	...	MAUREEN THORNTON
Mrs. Foran	...	...	...	...	...	MAUREEN DOW
Teddy Foran, her husband	...	...	...	...	...	MARK MULHOLLAND
Harry Heegan, D.C.M., Heegan's Son	...	...	...	...	...	PATRICK BRANNIGAN
Jessie Taitte	...	...	...	...	...	LINDA WRAY
Barney Bagnal	...	...	...	...	...	ROY HEAYBERD
The Croucher	...	...	...	...	...	WILLIAM HAMILTON
1st Soldier	...	...	...	...	...	PETER TEMPLAR
2nd Soldier	...	...	...	...	...	NOEL MILLSOP
3rd Soldier	...	...	...	...	...	PATRICK BRANNIGAN
4th Soldier	...	...	...	...	...	MARK MULHOLLAND
The Corporal	...	...	...	...	...	LOUIS ROLSTON
The Visitor	...	...	...	...	...	JACK McQUOID
The Staff-Wallah	...	...	...	...	...	MAURICE BLAKE
1st Stretcher-Bearer	...	...	...	...	...	HARRY FOY
2nd Stretcher-Bearer	...	...	...	...	...	BILL HUNTER
3rd Stretcher-Bearer	...	...	...	...	...	JOHN MUNN
4th Stretcher-Bearer	...	...	...	...	...	ALEX McCLAY
1st Casualty	...	...	...	...	...	WILFRED BLACK
2nd Casualty	...	...	...	...	...	JOE QUINN
Surgeon Forby Maxwell	...	...	...	...	...	ALEX McCLAY
The Sister of the Ward	...	...	...	...	...	MARY BOYLE

The play is set in a period of the First World War.

Act I Room in Heegan's home

INTERVAL

Act II Somewhere in France (later on)

INTERVAL

Act III Ward in a Hospital (a little later on)

Act IV Room in Premises of Avondale Football Club (later on still)

AT INTERVAL

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JOHN BURNS
SHEILA GALLAGHER
JOAN ROLSTON
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CATHERINE ROBERTS

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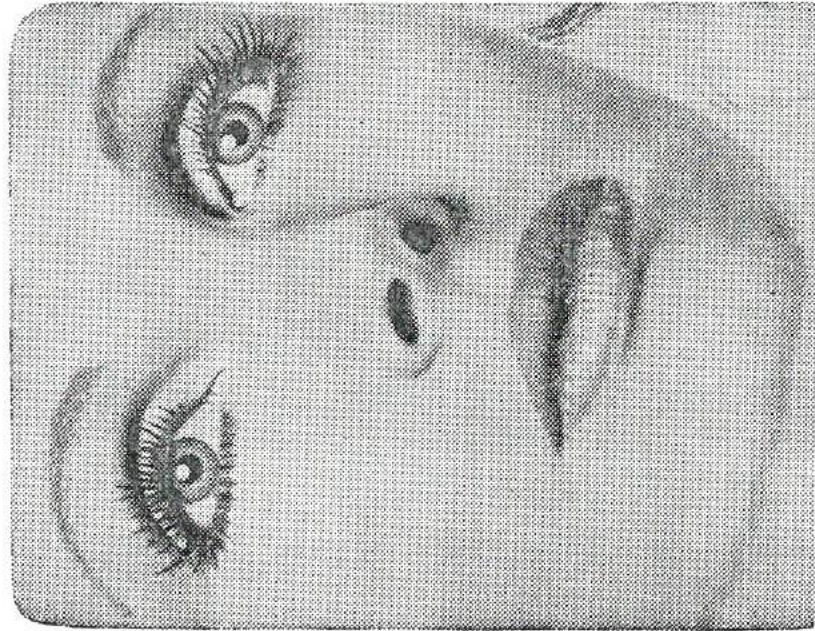
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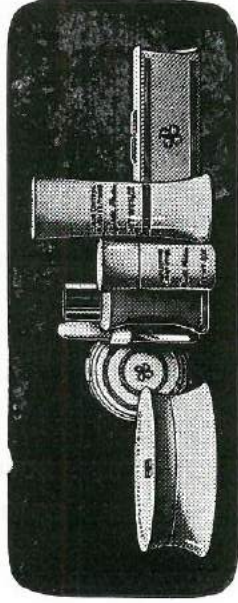
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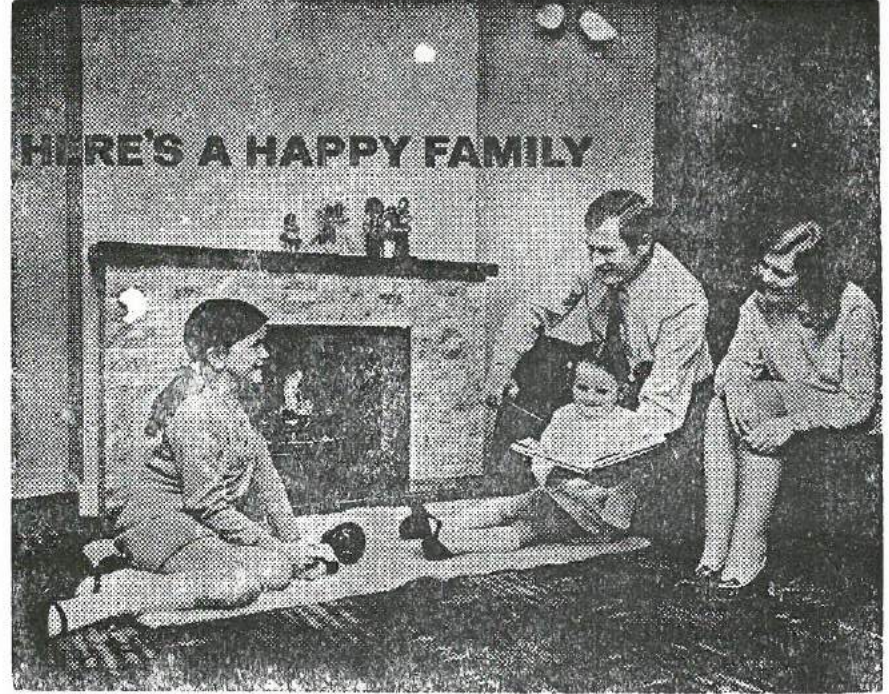
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