

ADELAIDE UNIVERSITY  
THEATRE GUILD

**THE COUNTESS CATHLEEN**

BY  
W. B. YEATS

**AT THE HUT**

Monday, June 23rd  
Tuesday, June 24th  
Thursday, June 26th  
Friday, June 27th  
1947

## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

"The Countess Cathleen," by the Irish poet, W. B. Yeats, is essentially, that is, by inner right, poetic drama. For it deals with man's spirit; it presents a central conflict between the absolute power of good, victorious through utter self-abnegation, and the pitiless confidence of demoniac evil. To handle that theme dramatically demands the creative imagination of a poet.

Yeats has given it a "local habitation and a name," a plot and characters that make it concrete and particular. Though it is of universal significance, it is direct, immediate, not esoteric; it is, in fact, a good play. The time is the time of Celtic legend; the names and some of the vivid details are strange; the awareness of spiritual powers is more natural, being quite free from self-consciousness, than in the "modern times" of which we are now uneasily aware that we cannot be entirely proud. Nevertheless, the play speaks to us of ourselves, and the symbolic intent is as directly evident as in an English Morality Play.

But, to compare this play with pre-Shakespearean English Morality, there is a difference by which Yeats gains incalculably, that is, in the quality of the verse. For the verse of English Morality is not free from clumsiness and pedestrianism. Yeats, however, is not only a great poet, but a great poet to whom the instrument of verse comes made infinitely subtle, sure, and flexible by long generations of sensitive craftsmanship. His verse here is subtly, surely, and flexibly fitted to his needs. It is a blank verse, simple but supple, which without strain can give, equally well, vivid and sinewy peasant conversation, poetic love, demoniac mockery, saintly exaltation. Words of the old Foster Mother, Oona, may here illustrate this range, from her practical and impatient:

"There should be broken bottles on the wall,"

to the words with which she ends the play, lines Aeschylean in the power of their imagery, yet at the same time lines with the pathos and beauty of a Euripidean chorus at the close:

"The years like great black oxen tread the world,  
And God the herdsmen goads them on behind,  
And I am broken by their passing feet."

Some years ago the Producer had the privilege of being acquainted with the poet. In discussion of the possibility of a production of "The Countess Cathleen" in Australia, an idea dear to his heart, Yeats stressed two things he would particularly wish: that the half-immortal Aleel, the Poet, should be played by a woman, as at the Abbey Theatre; and, secondly, that the settings should be simple, and should have the effect of missal painting. In order as far as possible to fulfil the latter wish, "The Book of Kells" has been studied in the designing of the scenes for this production. In general, the style and feeling of this production are, it is hoped, akin to what Yeats himself would have wished.

# The Countess Cathleen

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Players in order of appearance

SHEMUS RUA, a Peasant	EDGAR WISE
MARY, His Wife	STELLA SOBELS
TEIG, His Son	WYLTON DICKSON
THE COUNTESS CATHLEEN	PATRICIA HACKETT
OONA, Her Foster Mother	IRIS THOMAS
ALEEL, a Poet	JOANNE PRIEST
FIRST DEMON, disguised as a Merchant	MARTIN KETLEY
SECOND DEMON, disguised as a merchant	HERBERT ALDRIDGE
STEWARD TO COUNTESS CATHLEEN	DAVID GEORGE
YOUNG PEASANT WOMAN	HELEN WESTERN
OLD PEASANT WOMAN	BARBARA SHANAHAN
YOUNG PEASANT MAN	DON FRANCIS

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The scene is laid in Ireland and in ancient times

Scene I Shemus Rua's cabin in the woods  
Scene II A wood near the castle  
Scene III A hall in the house of Countess Cathleen  
Scene IV A wood near the castle  
Scene V Shemus Rua's cabin

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Production under the direction of Patricia Hackett

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The incidental music is arranged and directed by DUNCAN McKIE  
and played by the following members of the  
UNLEY HIGH SCHOOL ORCHESTRA:

Tom Parkin, violin; Peter Furness, viola; Dennis Sallis, flute; Eric Furness,  
first clarinet; Tasman Brown, second clarinet

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Stage Settings - - - MICHAEL JAMES  
Stage Decoration - - - GWEN WALSH  
Lighting - - - BRUCE WALTON

# UNIVERSITY THEATRE GUILD



## Patrons:

Professor E. Harold Davies  
Dr. C. E. Fenner

Professor J. G. Cornell  
Mr. F. S. Johnson

## Committee:

Miss E. Brown  
Mr. T. Brown  
Dr. T. D. Campbell  
Miss Rosemary Fitch  
Miss Patricia Hackett

Miss Barbara Howard  
Professor C. Jury  
Mr. Roy Leaney  
Dr. E. McLaughlin  
Mrs. J. R. Thompson

Miss G. D. Walsh

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## NOTICES

Communications, enquiries, and subscriptions may be addressed to the Hon. Secretary, Miss E. Wedd, Lister House, North Terrace (C. 2315), or care of the University.

Those interested in a study class in stage work, which will be started shortly, please communicate with the Hon. Secretary.

Next Production: J. B. Priestley's "AN INSPECTOR CALLS," under the direction of Miss Thelma Baulderstone.

(Miss) E. WEDD, Hon. Secretary.