



★ **PRINCIPAL** players in the Showcase recorded presentation of "Juno and the Paycock": From left, ★
Siobhan McKenna, Seamus Kavanagh, Cyril Cusack, Maire Kean

theatre to be "an intensely poetical and symbolic creation which would charge the ancient Gaelic myths with new meanings." Their chief principles were the native tradition and realism in dialogue, drawing on the rich texture of the living speech. Within the first 10 years the mood changed, with newer dramatists writing original and clear-sighted plays, ranging in mood and subject but turning more and more to the hard fight of the Irish peasantry and the dull grind of the Irish townsman. The Abbey became a popular realistic theatre, exploiting the comedy and tragedy of everyday life, and so it remained.

Nevertheless, something of the original intention survived. Yeats continued to be a director until his death in 1939, and in playwrights like Sean O'Casey, who were at first sight uncompromisingly "realist," there was often a strong undercurrent of poetry. Indeed, Sean O'Casey said that no one "who hasn't a quivering fibre of poetry in him can write a fine play."

He himself first approached the Abbey Theatre in 1923, when the directors refused his play *The Crimson in the Tricolour*. He countered with another play, about the Rebellion, *The Shadow of a Gunman*, which was produced with great success. Less than a year later *Juno and the Paycock* was playing to crowded houses. *The Plough and the Stars* equalled its success in

changing his earlier style of satiric tragedy to what is far more stylised and symbolic, and far more difficult for the audience to follow. He had also written critical and autobiographical books, in a rich and artificial prose.

In these he has told the story of his life from his early years as a Protestant in Dublin to his final retirement to Devon in England. Born in 1884, the youngest in a poor family, he had a bitterly hard boyhood. Books, somehow available in abundance, were denied him by the state of his aching, ulcerated eyes, which have always given him trouble. When he was finally able to read, literature rivalled Ireland in his affections. For by then Dublin life had driven out all British allegiance, and O'Casey was a whole-hearted Nationalist, passionately involved in the turmoil of Irish factions.

When in his late thirties he began to write as well as read, his early plays established him as a master of comedy and pathos on the grand scale, native in idiom and universal in theme. In a recent article in the *Radio Times*, O'Casey wrote that every dramatist should aim at "the plays that influence the mind and the emotions, however brief their appearance on the stage. Some say, I believe, that the theatre of the future will be an intellectual one. I don't think so. . . Intellect can never banish emotion from the theatre, for emotion is deep within us and round us everywhere; we feel it, see it, and hear it always; it is in the sight of the first rose of late spring and the last rose of summer; it is in the sight of the cradle and the coffin; in the wind and the rain; in the stone of Salisbury Cathedral and the steel and glass of Radio Centre building; in the sound of a Beethoven symphony and the monotonous and insistent beat of the Rock 'n' Roll; and it is in these things and in all others because it is deep in the human heart and forever active in the human mind . . .

"Be the effort a success or failure, I aim, as I have always aimed, at bringing emotion and imagination on to the

stage, in the shapes of song, dance, dialogue and scene; each mingling with the other, as life does, for life is never rigid (except in political parties, respectable families, and old-fashioned schools like Eton and Harrow); nothing changes so often, so inevitably in city and country, in field, factory, workshop and home. The best of dramatists throughout a long life can but get a glimpse of it, and this glimpse is confined to the life and chronicle of his time. And he can catch this glimpse only if his eyes are ever watching and his

ears ever open to catch the merest whisper.

"We shouldn't be afraid of the fanciful, for it is a gay part of life. . . There is a deal of fancy in (my) plays . . . and when you hear them . . . you can, if you wish, look back in anger at the plays or look forward in hope towards a newer and braver theatre. Whether you like the plays or not, whether they be good or bad in your mind, they have one good thing about them—they were the best that I could do."



DUBLIN'S famous Abbey Theatre. The building was destroyed by fire and has yet to be rebuilt

THE CAST

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|------------------------|---|-------------------|
| "Captain" Jack Boyle | - | Seamus Kavanagh |
| Juno Boyle | - | Siobhan McKenna |
| Johnny Boyle | - | - Leo Leyden |
| Mary Boyle | - | - Maureen Cusack |
| Joxer Daly | - | - Cyril Cusack |
| Mrs. Maisie Madigan | - | - Maire Kean |
| "Needle" Nugent | - | - Harry Brogan |
| Mrs. Tancred | - | - May Craig |
| Jerry Devine | - | - Milo O'Shea |
| Charlie Bentham | - | - Gerard Healy |
| An Irregular Mobiliser | - | - Godfrey Quigley |
| Sewing Machine Man | - | - Alex Dignam |
| Coal-black Vendor | - | - Alex Dignam |
| A Neighbour | - | - Maureen Toal |
| Furniture Removal Man | - | - John McDarby |