

ADELAIDE UNIVERSITY THEATRE GUILD



Alcestis

by

EURIPIDES



AT THE HUT

TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY, and FRIDAY,
26th OCT., 27th OCT., 28th OCT., and 29th OCT., 1954

*There be many shapes of mystery;
And many things God brings to be,
Past hope or fear.
And the end men looked for cometh not,
And a path is there where no man thought.
So hath it fallen here.*

The drama we are to see and hear this evening was first presented to an audience nearly 2,400 years ago. It comes to us in Gilbert Murray's version very much as it did to the ancient Greeks, though the manner of production is very different. Circumstances, ideas and customs have changed, but not human nature and human experience.

It will not spoil your enjoyment if you know the story of *Alcestis*: though, on second thoughts, there is no need to refer to the ending.

King Admetus had received from the God Apollo the special privilege that when his appointed time for death came, he might escape if he could find a volunteer to die for him. His father and mother declined to perform this service. His wife, Alcestis, undertook it and died.

But it so happened that Admetus had entertained in his house the demi-god, Heracles. He had done so in the exercise of the primitive obligation to show ungrudging hospitality to a friendly wayfarer, even though it was at the most painful moment immediately after his wife's death. When Heracles hears what has happened, he goes out and wrestles with Death for the life of Alcestis . . .

EURIPIDES
ALCESTIS

Translated by Gilbert Murray.

C A S T

ADMETUS, King of Pherae	- - -	AUSTIN CAREY
ALCESTIS, his wife	- - -	DARLENE JOHNSON
PHERES, his father	- - -	SYDNEY DOWNIE
TWO CHILDREN	- - -	MARGARET FORSYTH MICHAEL SYMONS
A HANDMAID	- - -	MARGO JAFFER
HERACLES	- - -	BRIAN COGHLAN
THE GOD APOLLO	- - -	NIGEL SAMUEL
THANATOS or DEATH	- - -	MARK ANDERS
CHORUS	- - -	GLEND A CHRISTESEN, <i>Leader</i> MARY BOURKE, JENNIFER LISTON, MARY McMAHON

Produced by

BRIAN COGHLAN

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SCENE — *Outside the House of Admetus near Pherae in Thessaly.*

There will be one INTERVAL of ten minutes.

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Setting and Costumes designed by ROSANNE McLAUGHLIN

Costumes made by LOUISA SCORER

Music arranged by ALAN GILES and MALCOLM FOWLER.

Played by MALCOLM FOWLER.

With the ALCESTIS, the fifth production of the year, the Guild's programme for 1954 is concluded. Earlier productions were HEDDA GABLER (April), TRAVELLER WITHOUT BAGGAGE (June), THE CIRCLE (July), and CRADLE SONG (September).

Members will be informed by circular of the date of the Annual Meeting of the Guild and of the programme of plays proposed for 1955.



ALCESTIS — A COMMENT

One question which must occur to the modern man is why so sympathetic a character as Admetus should be represented as accepting the offer of his loved wife, the mother of his two children, to die for him? The answer is that Euripides in accordance with the conventions of the classical drama takes over the events of a myth or legend established long before in the remote past of the race. Had they not been so familiar, many of the happenings in these ancient sagas would have seemed almost as peculiar to the educated citizen of Euripides' day as they do now to us.

104

When the saga of Admetus and Alcestis came into existence, the life of a vigorous reigning king or chief was of enormous practical importance to the tribe. Among barbarous folk the death of a chief can mean civil war or foreign invasion. Moreover, fatherless children, especially the potentially influential children of a chief, would be perpetually in danger of violence of one kind or another.

65

Heracles was, of course, the Hercules of the Latins, but he was not the mere strong man with bulging muscles and a club. He was a "hero," capable of dealing with more subtle antagonists than the savage horses of Ares. He had brains and cunning, as well as being a cheerful, rollicking reveller — just the sort of hero who would appreciate Admetus' famous act of hospitality.

66

235