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The Children's Hour

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Taylor University Theatre
presents

Lillian Hellman's

The Children's Hour



April 23, 24, 25 & 26, 1980
Little Theatre

From the Director

Since the 5th century Athenians developed the tragic form, playwrights have been using the drama to explore the deepest dimensions of our human experience. Questions involving human morality and immorality frequently provide the theme for our greatest dramatic literature.

Why is there evil? Why do the innocent suffer? To what extent are we free to choose the direction our lives will take? Lillian Hellman's play provides us with a powerful dramatic response to all of these questions.

Much of the impact of the play comes from Hellman's choice to portray the adolescent Mary Tilford as a pathological liar. We are used to coupling childhood with innocence and purity, and Mary's capacity to lie and manipulate others shocks us deeply. We ask with Martha, "How'did she learn so much in so little time?" The real horror is that all her contacts with others are dishonest and manipulative. She controls the girls in the school by intimidation, and they are so anxious to stay off her enemy list that they allow her to make decisions for them, even when they have doubts about the rightness of Mary's actions. Mary controls her grandmother by intuitively finding Mrs. Tilford's greatest moral strength - her sense of integrity, and shaping a lie which is big enough to generate moral outrage in this fundamentally righteous woman. It is as if Mary knows that once Mrs. Tilford's moral values appear to be threatened, she will forget to concern herself with the rightness or wrongness of Mary's actions. The only people who are not amenable to Mary's attempts to control them are Cousin Joe and her teachers, Karen and Martha. When Mary is confronted by the possibility of being dominated, she is driven to a desperate, irreversible course of action which leads ultimately to the destruction of the three people who dared to stand up to her.

What could possibly have happened to Mary to cause her to behave in this way? Hellman offers us no simple answers - only hints and clues. Is it because of her father's suicide? Was it due to the loss of parental love and support? Were her grandmother's demands for "the exact truth" so insistent that Mary came to believe they could only be met by lies? Is her lying really a desperate cry for love and acceptance? Probably all of these factors and more contributed to the creation of Mary's psyche.

Another significant choice made by Hellman is the portrayal of Mrs. Tilford as a woman possessed of unquestioned moral staunchness. The steadfast conviction of her own fundamental rightness has apparently given her the strength of character to weather the personal tragedies which have beset her, including the suicide of her most beloved son. She values truth and insists that it be acknowledged and acted upon. In her commitment to this value she has also come to believe firmly in her own power to determine what the truth is. It is this absolute, unbendable certainty that leads her to declare that she knows Mary's lie is true while failing to recognize the real truth about her granddaughter. When Mrs. Tilford learns that her truth-detecting ability is not infallible, she is deeply shaken.

Hellman has juxtaposed these two personalities - the inveterate liar and the inveterate truth seeker - and in doing so has provided us with an unforgettable dramatic image of personal pain and destruction. Mary's lie by itself could not have produced the destruction wrought in the Wright-Dobie School. The fervor of the "truth" as it was perceived by a righteous woman was also needed to work such devastation. This powerful and gripping image underscores the real theme of Hellman's play; namely, that it is tricky business to pass moral judgments on the acts and lives of others.

J. L. R.

Acknowledgments

Our thanks to Olson Hall, Taylor Maintenance Department and Mr. D. L. Green from the Indiana Bell Telephone Company for their help in making this production possible.

The Children's Hour

Director: Jessie Rousselow

Designer: Ollie Hubbard

The Cast

(in the order in which they speak)

Peggy Rogers	Denise Koughn
Catherine	Kathy Sheppard
Lois Fisher	Ellen Eckert
Mrs. Lily Mortar	Linda Haubold
Evelyn Munn	Cindy Johnson
Helen Burton	Sandy Jett
Rosalie Wells	Maureen Waldron
Janet	Lynn Cameron
Leslie	Pam Kareus
Mary Tilford	Brenda Russell
Karen Wright	Catherine Curtis
Martha Dobie	Laura Binder
Doctor Joseph Cardin	Dale Dobias
Agatha	Eileen Woodard
Mrs. Amelia Tilford	Edie Rader
A Grocery Boy	Kevin Conklin

Act 1

Living room of the Wright-Dobie School.

Late afternoon in April.

Act 2

Scene i: Living room at Mrs. Tilford's
A few hours later.

Scene ii: The same. Later that evening.

Act 3

The same as Act I. November.

There will be a ten-minute intermission between
Act II and Act III.

Following the play, there will be an informal discussion with the cast and director regarding the play. This will be held in the theatre to begin ten minutes after the performance. Anyone interested in discussing the performance and/or the play is welcome.

This evening's musical selections are by American composer
Aaron Copland.

A Communication & Theatre Arts Department Production

As a courtesy to the actors, please do not use cameras during the performance.

Production Staff

Assistant to the Director	Harold Blum	
Technical Director	Ollie Hubbard	
Set Committee	Aaron Brown Dale Dobias Scott Hewlett Jim Ogborn Mark Sumney Randy Wyatt	
Kevin Dayton	Brad Kahle	
Jeff Dusek	Diane Kammerdiener	
Dave Eastman	Daniel Kumah	
Lynne Elmer	Brian Long	
Steve Gabrielsen	Beth Mellencamp	
Kim Garrett	Tori Mounsey	Dwight Thomas
Beth Granger	Mike Reece	Scott White
Tom Housaman	Debbie Speer	Deb Whiteley
Ron Jaderholm	Rachel Stiver	
Lighting Designer	Bev Lindquist	
Head Electrician	Vicki Cruse	
Assistant Board Operator	Joe Jeter	
Lighting Crew	Glenn Brower Mike Grabill Steve Hirons	
Sound	RICH BAILEY Dave Bradtmueller	
Properties	MIKE BURCHFIELD Mark Burkholder Mindy Date Ken Delp Barb Hauter Monica Landis Mike McGinnis Julie Rabine	
Make-up	EILEEN WOODARD Robin Chernenko Teresa Cress Harold Blum	
Costumes	Laura Binder Kay Brewer Linda Britton Linda Haubold Dawn Wilder	
House	LYNN LIVERGOOD Beth Jacober Colleen Kloboucnik Jill Lawrence Kim Leburg Carol Scherer Debbie Speer Denise Stouffer Joy Swanson Joy Wilson Barbara Wolf Anita Yoder	
Program Cover Design	Bob Todd	