

"Cry For Us All"

THE PLAY

"Cry for Us All" is based on the tremendously successful drama *Hogan's Goat* by William Alfred about the Irish living in Brooklyn in 1890—and, more specifically, about two men, one old and one young, competing for power, motivated by love and driven by revenge. *Hogan's Goat* opened on November 11, 1965 at the American Place Theatre in New York, ran for 607 performances, and won, among many others, the Vernon Rice award for best play of 1965-66.

"Mr. Alfred is a real writer, and his play has scope and quality," Howard Taubman wrote in the *New York Times* the day after it opened. "He is not afraid to strike for the vivid image; he can compose lines that shimmer with poetry." It was this poetry that captivated composer Mitch Leigh when he saw the show—soon after the opening of his own musical "Man of La Mancha" on November 22, 1965.

Leigh wanted to take an option on "Hogan's Goat" and make it into a movie, but by the time it became available a year later, he had read and reread the play and decided it would make a great musical. William Alfred modestly agreed. "La Mancha" director Albert Marre was signed to direct, and he and Alfred collaborated on the book. Phyllis Robinson, an advertising copy writer working on her first Broadway show, joined up to collaborate with Alfred on the lyrics.

The major addition to the dramatis personae was a tattered Greek chorus in the guise of street rats, who parody the action of the leading characters and, in effect, reinforce the plot. Alfred sees them as a delegation from the audience. "Every audience arrives with reservations about consenting," he says. "The kids represent a cynical innocence, and the audience can say, 'We'll assent if you'll amuse us.' The children will always get it wrong when they re-enact the story because they're so brutally innocent they leave the feelings out."

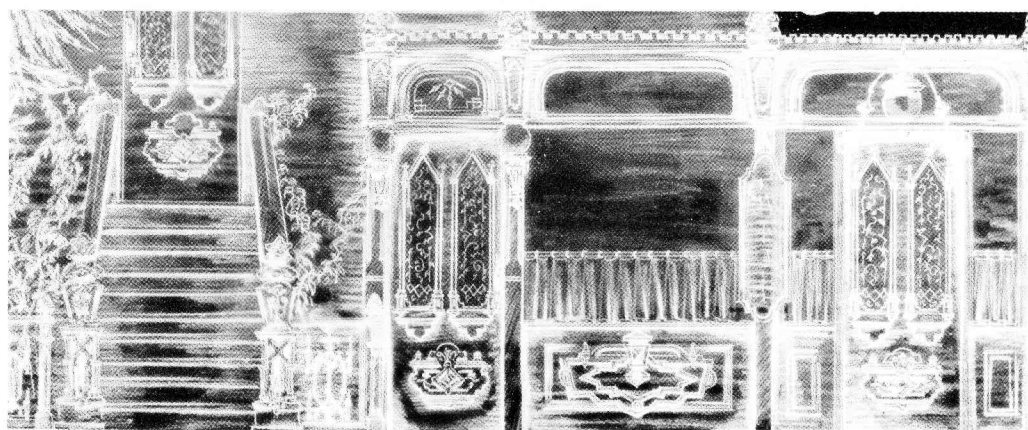
Joan Diener, the unforgettable Aldonza in "Man of La Mancha," was signed to play Kathleen Stanton, the tragic heroine; newcomer Steve Arlen to play her ambitious husband, Matt; Robert Weede, formerly of the Met and more recently of "The Most Happy Fella" and "Milk and Honey," to play Mayor Quinn—and in other roles, Tommy Rall, Helen Gallagher and Dolores Wilson. An invincible company.

ACT I: Tuesday Evening.

The curtain rises on a street in the city of Brooklyn. It is May, 1890. In the back room of Stanton's Court Cafe, the local politicians are about to nominate young ward leader Matthew Stanton (Steve

Arlen) for mayor. He is a formidable opponent for the crusty incumbent, Ned Quinn. Stanton relates how he sailed out of Cork harbor 12 years before, survived the perils of the transatlantic crossing and the first years of poverty in America, and swore that he'd fight for power (*The End of My Race*).

Later, Stanton's constituents gather to meet Kathleen (Joan Diener), his beautiful and aristocratic wife. Her warm greeting



SETTING BY HOWARD BAY

puts them at ease ("How Are Ya, Since?").

Wednesday Morning.

Mayor Quinn (Robert Weede) approaches the Court Cafe, bitter about Stanton's success. "I made him and I can break him, too," he swears. It was indeed Quinn who took Stanton under his mayoral wing and taught him what there was to know about politics. But Quinn's kindness was not repaid: his mistress, Agnes Hogan, became infatuated with Stanton and left Quinn for him.

Quinn goes into the back room and there surprises his own commissioners as they are voting on Stanton's nomination. "I didn't stay mayor of this city for 30 years by taking orders," Quinn says. "You tell the Party Board I'll rot in prison before I'll let Matt Stanton take my place! There's not a one of you I can't get at" ("The Mayor's Chair").

Wednesday Evening.

Father Coyne (William Griffis) visits Stanton and urges him to see Agnes Hogan before she dies. Stanton refuses to see this woman who played such an important part in building his career. Although he knows Kathleen is ignorant of his affair with Ag and not at all suspicious, he becomes sheepishly passive and allows her to sweep him into her romantic fantasies ("The Verandah Waltz").

Thursday Evening.

Agnes Hogan dies. The street rats (Scott Jacoby, Darel Glaser, Todd Jones), who miss little of what goes on around them, re-enact the confrontation they imagine took place when Stanton came in and found Ag in bed with her former lover, Quinn (*The Wages of*

Sin)—the confrontation that turned Stanton away from her forever and became the cause of her death.

Kathleen takes charge of making the arrangements for Ag Hogan's funeral and wake. The wake will be held in the Stanton's parlor, because Kathleen knows that Ag was good to Stanton when he was young. She wonders what her husband was like in the days before she knew him and realizes that even now she hardly knows him at all ("Who To Love If Not A Stranger?").

But Stanton knows himself and knows what he wants to attain. With confidence,

he reaffirms his credo ("Search Your Heart").

Friday Evening.

Quinn's right-hand man, Petey Boyle (Tommy Rall), leads the mourners at Ag Hogan's wake ("Cry for Us All"). Outside, Kathleen meets Quinn, who has been drinking for hours and rehashing in his mind the conflict with Stanton. She is stunned when Quinn relates how Stanton lived with Ag Hogan and used her in his quest for power. When she goes inside to join the mourners and sees Stanton standing over Ag's coffin, Kathleen is suddenly unable to face what Quinn has just told her. She runs out of the house into the darkness.

Later Friday Evening.

Kathleen has been wandering the streets when Bessie Legg (Helen Gallagher), a back-room girl, finds her and brings her home. Bessie has been around for a long time and knows that there isn't a man on earth worth suffering over ("Swing Your Bag"). Kathleen believes it, too, for a while, but loses control when she goes inside and sees Stanton. "Why was I the one soul who didn't know of you and Agnes?" she asks. "You loved her, didn't you! You love her still!" ("That Slavery Is Love"). Stanton insists that in his heart Ag has been dead for years, but Kathleen is not convinced.

Outside on the street, the three street rats play hide-and-seek with an officer from the Gerry Society ("The Cruelty Man").

Saturday Night.

Mayor Quinn and Petey Boyle meet sur-

reptitiously at the back door of Ag Hogan's flat. Quinn finds the marriage certificate of Ag Hogan and Matthew Stanton, and reveals to Boyle how he will use it against Stanton. Boyle leaves him alone in the night—to remember Ag Hogan and how deeply he loved her ("Aggie, Oh Aggie").

Sunday Afternoon.

At the big party shindig, everyone seems happy except Petey Boyle: he cannot understand why his annual contribution to the festivities isn't appreciated by the ladies ("The Leg of the Duck"). Suddenly Stanton interrupts the gaiety to announce that Quinn has conceded the nomination to him and has asked to see Kathleen alone for a few moments. The crowd cheers! The candidate and his followers exuberantly sing the praises of life in America ("This Cornucopian Land").

Kathleen meets with Quinn. He tells her that he has no choice but to do what he must do: he hands her the marriage certificate he has taken from Ag Hogan's house.

Sunday Evening.

Kathleen has packed her bags. She's leaving Stanton. He pleads with her to stay: "It's all over," he says. "They gave the nomination back to Quinn. He brought me to the pitch of hope and betrayed me. I've nothing left. I need you."

"You're free now, Mattie," she says, her voice breaking. "I'm not your wife. I never was."

Stanton rushes wildly up the stairs to grab her. They struggle and Kathleen falls to the ground below; her neck is broken. Stanton holds her in his arms.

THE MUSIC

"Cry for Us All" is a play about good people trying to better themselves, by whatever means they must use. We all do it. The theme is timeless, and, therefore, relevant. So is Mitch Leigh's score. Instead of composing an "Irish" or a "Gay '90s" score, he has combined the best of all ingredients: the folk element with contemporary rhythms and harmonies, the ethnic with the cosmopolitan—the sound of a rickety-tickety vaudeville number ("The Cruelty Man") with a waltz ("The Verandah Waltz"), a Baroque gigue ("The Leg of the Duck") with a cakewalk ("Swing Your Bag")—and the ritualistic ("Cry for Us All") with the romantic ("Aggie, Oh Aggie" and "Who To Love If Not a Stranger?"). It's all right.

Leigh has written this score to be felt, not heard. "We don't want gratuitous songs," he explains. "I don't say, 'Hey, let's have a song.' The play is so truly integrated, the only time you sing is when emotion gets too high to talk."

In each song, Leigh's meter changes are marvelously unpredictable, his modulations subtle, not slick, and his glorious melodies free to soar above their accompaniment. This is more than a musical. It's music.

—Ellen Stock