

# WILSON'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL



CHRISTMAS 1961

*Yea and Nay—  
Each hath his say;  
But God He keeps the middle way.*

Although Herman Melville wrote these lines in another work, they apply to the terrible but fascinating sea tale of "Billy Budd". Absolute good and absolute evil cannot live in this world together, according to Melville. Each must destroy the other, for human life is a compromise that follows the middle way.

Since Melville was a rejected and forgotten man when he wrote "Billy Budd" a few months before he died in 1891, no one thought much of his tale at the time. Even after it was published, when Melville was beginning at last to interest the world, no one realised that "Billy Budd" contained the material for a remarkable play until Louis O. Coxe and Robert Chapman got to work on the manuscript a few years ago. The play was offered in the invitational series of the Experimental Theatre in 1949 under the cadaverous title of "Uniform of Flesh", and it made an indelible impression on everyone who saw it.

As a theatre work, "Billy Budd" is exciting. For life on board a British warship in 1798 is full of colour and pageantry—the squalid life of the crew below decks, the grandeur of life among the afterguard, the austerity of discipline, the feuds between men and officers, the interludes of wonder and calm at sea, the explosions of anger and treachery. During his seven years at sea, which ended in 1844, Melville served for fourteen months as sailor in an American warship, and he knew intimately the nature of the service.

Although his years at sea were the most fruitful of his life and he loved to look back at them, he was not an uncritical romantic,

and he recognized shipboard life of that time as brutish, depraved and malevolent. Many writing hands have intervened between Melville's original manuscript and this trenchant play. But a theatregoer has an instinctive feeling that it has honestly caught the original spirit without remanticizing on the one hand or defaming on the other. There seems to be a basic truth under the power and viciousness of the life depicted in the play.

If "Billy Budd" were only a sea yarn, it would hardly have the distinction it brought to Broadway. But in the last interval of relative peace that concluded Melville's wretched life, he was thinking about the nature of what he had seen and felt throughout his crushing career. He had reached what Newton Arvin vividly describes as the "perilous outpost of the sane", and had come back nearer the centre of human sympathy. There was much that he still did not understand. But he was convinced that absolute good and absolute evil must destroy each other; and, as Mr. Arvin observes in his excellent critical biography, Melville rewrote the grand epic of the fall of man to communicate his conclusions.

"Billy Budd" is extraordinarily well done. In their dramatization Mr. Coxe and Mr. Chapman have never taken cheap advantage of a melodramatic plot. They have not underwritten or overwritten. They have not stacked the cards. Some of their play is written lightly in a vein of affable comedy. The tragic portions are written with taste, firmness and intelligence. Although "Billy Budd" is the dramatization of a novel, it is a fully wrought play in its own right. There is something translucent about both script and performance. Through them comes the earnest thought of a lonely old man who had been through hell and beaten but not broken. He accepted the universal compromise but he never made it.

WILSON'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL

present

# BILLY BUDD

by

LOUIS O. COXE and ROBERT CHAPMAN

Adapted from a Novel by  
HERMAN MELVILLE

**ON 14th, 15th and 16th DECEMBER, 1961**



## CAST

in order of appearance

JENKINS, Captain of the <i>Maintop</i> . . . . .	JASON ABDELNOOR
THE DANSKER, an old sailor . . . . .	HARVEY MORRIS
JACKSON, a sailor . . . . .	GERALD PAYNE
JOHN CLAGGART, Master-at-Arms . . . . .	JAMES CONROY
TALBOT, a sailor . . . . .	DAVID MANNING
BUTLER, a sailor . . . . .	JOHN O'CONNOR
KINCAID, a sailor . . . . .	RAY HOWELL
PAYNE, a sailor . . . . .	FREDERICK MARIE
O'DANIEL, a sailor . . . . .	ANTONY CAUSER
HALLAM, cabin boy . . . . .	CHRISTOPHER HORLER
GARDINER, a Midshipman . . . . .	DEREK PRICE
SQUEAK, Master-at-Arm's man . . . . .	BILLY MORLEY
BILLY BUDD, a sailor . . . . .	TERRY EDWARDS
PHILIP SEYMOUR, first officer . . . . .	COLIN PIPER
EDWARD FAIRFAX VERE, Captain, Royal Navy . . . . .	JOHN PEET
STOLL, Helmsman . . . . .	JOHN PAYNE
REA, a Midshipman . . . . .	RICHARD SPICER
BORDMAN WYATT, Sailing Master . . . . .	ALAN BOND
JOHN RATCLIFFE, First Lieutenant . . . . .	TERRY JOHNS

The entire action takes place aboard H.M.S. *Indomitable* at sea, August, 1798, the year following the Naval mutinies at Spithead and the Nore.

There will be one interval of fifteen minutes during which refreshments will be served.

BUSINESS MANAGER . . . . . J. M. D. SYKES, ESQ.

SCENERY . . . . . F. C. WARD, ESQ. AND R. F. HORN, ESQ.

MAKE-UP . . . . . F. P. HOAR, ESQ.

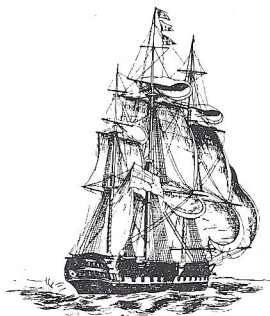
PROPERTIES  
STAGE MANAGER } . . . . . BARRY THORNE

COSTUMES . . . . . THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL

LIGHTING . . . . . A. RIGBY, D. J. READ

Scenery painted by Mr. Ward, A. Brown, G. Payne, C. Kingdon and P. Bolt

PRODUCED BY D. B. REES, Esq.



NO SMOKING

## **SOME PREVIOUS PRODUCTIONS**

1961	TWELFTH NIGHT . . . . .	Shakespeare
1959	OEDIPUS REX . . . . .	Sophocles
1959	MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL . . . . .	T. S. Eliot
1958	THE ALCHEMIST . . . . .	Ben Jonson
1957	SHADOW OF A GUNMAN . . . . .	Sean O'Casey
1956	THE MISANTHROPE . . . . .	Molière
1955	THE GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR . . . . .	Gogol
1954	THE ASCENT OF F.6 . . . . .	Auden & Isherwood
1953	MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING . . . . .	Shakespeare
1952	MACBETH . . . . .	Shakespeare
1951	ARMS AND THE MAN . . . . .	G. B. Shaw
1950	THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST	Oscar Wilde
1949	THE DEVIL'S DISCIPLE . . . . .	G. B. Shaw

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