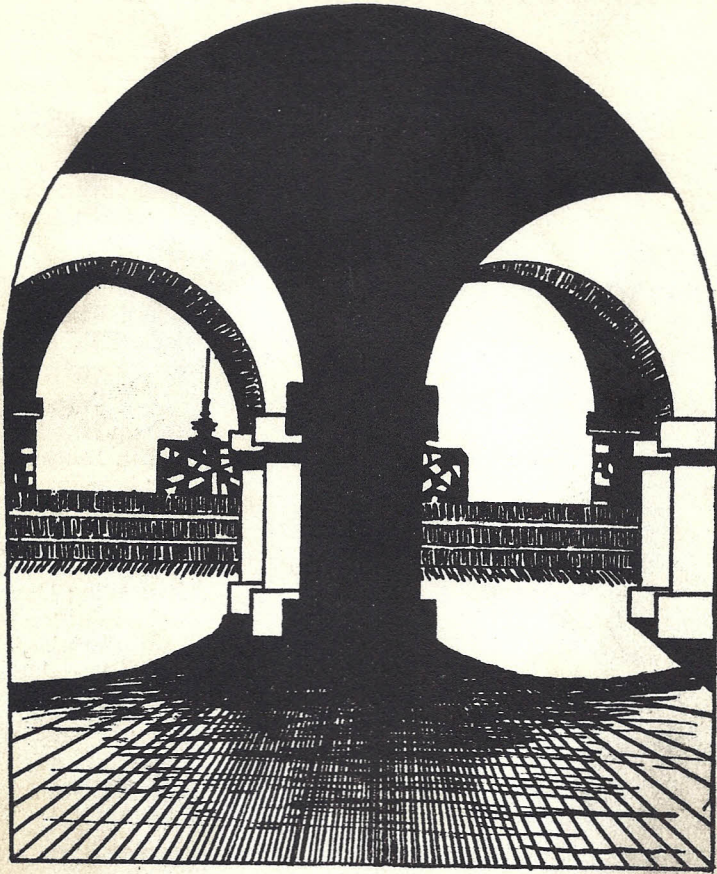


Murder in the Cathedral



WOOLVERSTONE HALL — MARCH 24th and 25th, 1961

Woolverstone Hall School Dramatic Society
presents

Murder in the Cathedral

by T. S. ELIOT

CHARACTERS

Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury				Mark Golebiowski
Three Priests of the Cathedral ...	...			Ian Lloyd David Poolman Peter Donaldson
A Messenger ...	...	...	...	James Dickson
Four Tempters ...	...	...	...	John Lonergan Gabriel Kampis Richard Turner David Prendergast
A Chorus of Women of Canterbury ...				Gabriel Barta Graham Hoad Stephen Johnston Peter Emberson David Odell Larry Howes Peter McNair Mark Wing Davey David Johnston Simon Crawford George Donaldson John Beavan
Four Knights ...	...	...	...	Victor Tyler George Meredith Michael Smith John Aczel
Attendants ...	...	...	...	Raymond Lee Peter Lover Robert Wells

The Play produced by Patrick Hutton

CHOIR (under the direction of Nigel Fletcher)
Philip Bennett John Percival
Michael Farbrother John Pirtle
Christopher Jenkins Ian Rankine

The First Scene is the Archbishop's Hall in Canterbury
on December 2nd, 1170.

Interlude. The Archbishop preaches in the Cathedral
on Christmas morning, 1170.

The Second Scene is the Archbishop's Hall, and later the Cathedral,
on December 29th, 1170.

<i>Scenery Design, Construction and Painting</i>	...	...	...	Mr. B. R. Turner Mr. D. F. Green John May
<i>Stage Manager</i>	...	...	...	Abel Williams
<i>Lighting</i>	...	...	...	Mr. J. Birtles Douglas Gardner Patrick Hastings
<i>Stage Gang</i>	...	...	...	Norman Collins David Aitken Clive Winter Mark Bond Christopher Fuller John Bates
<i>Musical Direction</i>	...	...	...	Mr. M. G. Channon
<i>Business Manager</i>	...	...	...	Mr. M. A. R. Poole
<i>Costumes</i>	...	...	...	Mrs. P. H. Hutton Mrs. G. H. Bailey
<i>House Management</i>	...	...	...	Simon Harris
<i>Properties</i>	...	...	...	Mr. S. Edwards
<i>Programme Cover Design</i>	...	...	...	Edward Gentry

There will be an interval at the end of the First Scene.

A NOTE ON THE PLAY

"Murder in the Cathedral" has become T. S. Eliot's most popular play: partly because it lends itself to production in a church—it was first produced in Canterbury Cathedral in 1935—and also because it belies his reputation for erudite obscurity. It can be interpreted and—we hope—enjoyed as a representation of Thomas Becket's famous last days as Archbishop of Canterbury, and his murder in his cathedral. Mr. Eliot has not, however, written primarily a historical play. Only one of the contenders in that tragic conflict between "two proud men" is seen on the stage: Henry II never appears, nothing detracts from Thomas Becket, throughout the central figure. The story is of Becket's spiritual preparation for the brutal death, and martyrdom, which he knows is coming.

Some background is sketched in: of how Becket, when appointed Archbishop, being already Chancellor, changed from (in his actual words) "a patron of play-actors and a follower of hounds to become a shepherd of souls." Having previously championed the crown against ecclesiastical authority, he now reversed his position. The conflict with the king warmed up, and Becket fled to France, from where he conducted a bitter campaign against Henry II, freely employing his power to excommunicate. Seven years later he returned uninvited to England, while the King was in France, and immediately excommunicated two bishops and suspended others. When this was reported to Henry he spoke these famous, and later so bitterly regretted, words: "What idle and coward knaves have I nourished as vassals, that faithless to their oaths they suffer their Lord to be mocked by a low-born priest!" Four of his knights took this as their cue, left secretly for England, and murdered the Archbishop. In the scenes between Becket and the Knights, Mr. Eliot is closely following contemporary accounts.

Before this however, in the play, Becket is assailed on his return by personified temptations. The first three, inviting him to partake again of the joys of the world and worldly power, and avoid a painful death, are seen off with comparative ease: the fourth, unexpected, tempter almost defeats him, with his subtle insinuation of the glory of martyrdom. With the help, unknowingly given, of the "Chorus"—representing the ordinary people—he overcomes even this ultimate pride, and sees his "way clear." He is able to state his spiritual readiness in his Christmas Sermon.

So when the Knights come he is ready for them. But no one else is: and despite all his attempts to make priests and people understand, his death leaves them amazed and terrified. The Knights explain their action, and invite, indeed require, each one of us to share the blame. Ultimately priests and people, to the accompaniment of the "Te Deum," show that they have reached a complete understanding, and "rejoice and mourn at once" in the martyrdom of their Archbishop.

The author's main intention is that the play should have universal, and eternal, application. If I understand him aright, he wants us to realise that a Becket in 1961 would have received the same treatment—in a more sophisticated form perhaps, if only because "we have now arrived at a just subordination of the pretensions of the church to the welfare of the state". He is suggesting our fear and consequent intolerance of a spiritual power which might upset and overwhelm our comfortable worldly routine.