

# Florida - West Coast - "Long Day's Journey into Night" - 6/3/19

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Regional Reviews: Florida - West Coast

***Long Day's Journey into Night*** American Stage

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There is very little doubt that Eugene O'Neill is one of America's greatest playwrights or that *Long Day's Journey into Night*, written in 1941 but first performed in 1956, the winner of the last of his four Pulitzer Prizes, is one of his finest plays.

I have been looking forward to American Stage's production of this monumental piece of drama. I was unprepared for the emotional wallop O'Neill has woven into his story of a family's epic battle with various addictions and the impact on their relationships. Considering how little was known then about the physiology and psychological elements of addiction, compared to what we know now, it is surprising how emotionally right on O'Neill was. On my way out of the theater I heard a woman exclaim, "I'm exhausted!" and well

she should be, after three hours of unbelievable intensity. I find myself wondering if *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* could possibly have come to be without this play, but *Long Day's Journey into Night* has catharsis that Albee's opus lacks, at least for me. I am not sure that I love this play, but I sure am glad to have an opportunity to experience one of the great American classic plays.

American Stage has assembled an excellent cast for a play that demands it. Many legendary theater names that have appeared in these roles (Frederic March, Jason Robards, Jr. and Jack Lemmon have portrayed James; Florence Eldridge and Katharine Hepburn took on Mary; and Jason Robards, Jr. and Kevin Spacey have played Jamie). In this production, James Keegan as James Tyrone and Janis Stevens as his wife Mary are excellent throughout. Billy Finn as elder brother Jamie and Josh Odsess-Rubin as Edmund don't seem focused in the early parts of the play, but Odsess-Rubin is brilliant in the third act where he is the central figure, and Finn catches fire when he enters midway through that act. Rose Hahn has a thankless task as maid Cathleen.

Director Brendon Fox fine tunes all the acting so that each character's battle with their substance of choice (morphine for Mary, alcohol for the men) rings honest and true. Trish Kelley's costumes are period perfect, especially Mary's outfits, the set design by James Kronzer is detailed and

authentic. The wallpaper which modifies in design once outside the living room looks like it could belong in a nice Victorian rehab in San Francisco or another place where these homes were in style. Property master Jerid Fox displays some nice touches, especially the light fixture over the table, stage right, which appears real period. The lighting design by Phillip Franck adds some nice atmosphere and delineates the time periods during our eventful day.

Thanks to American Stage for taking on this mammoth piece. I wish that every season would bring us a classic play (American or world), but they do scare audiences off a bit. Serious Tampa Bay theatergoers should not miss this opportunity to see one of Eugene O'Neill's and America's greatest plays in a well acted production.

*Long Day's Journey into Night*, through June 30, 2019, at American Stage, 163 Third Street North, St. Petersburg FL. For more information, visit [www.americanstage.org](http://www.americanstage.org).

Cast (in order of appearance):

Jamie Tyrone: Billy Finn\*

Cathleen: Rose Hahn

James Tyrone: James Keegan\*

Edmund Tyrone: Josh Odsess-Rubin\*

Mary Tyrone: Janis Stevens\*

\*=Member of Actors' Equity Association