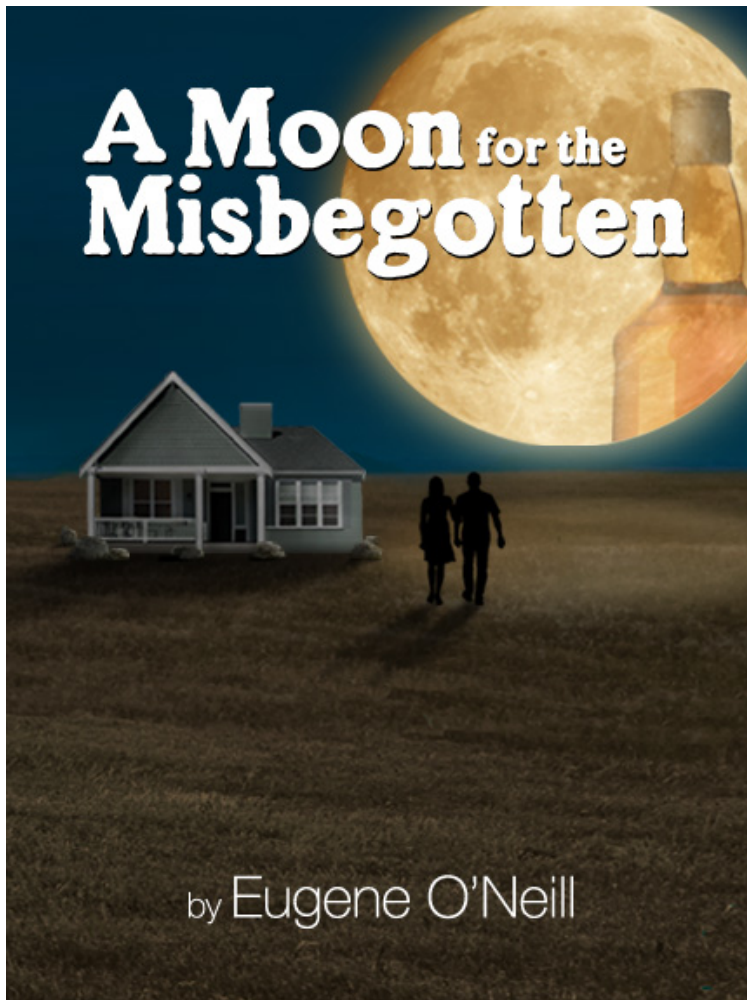


Jewel Theatre Audience Guide
Addendum: Mike Hogan Character Description



directed by Joy Carlin

by Susan Myer Silton, Dramaturge
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MIKE HOGAN

Mike Hogan, played by Shaun Carroll, is Irish-American like his sister Josie and older brothers Thomas and John, who are offstage characters in the play. He is the youngest of Phil Hogan's children, his mother having died while giving birth to him. At the beginning of the play, he is escaping the farm and the bad-tempered, slave-driving Phil like his brothers did before him, as well as Simeon and Peter, the Cabot brothers in O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms*. He will be living with Thomas, who is a sergeant in the Bridgeport, Connecticut police force.

Mike's Catholic piousness contrasts with his father's scorn of the Church, its clergy and its followers. Phil watched his wife die giving birth to Mike 20 decades prior to the time of the play. As a result, he cursed God and abandoned his Catholic religion. Just as Phil Hogan represents O'Neill's battles against the English, the Yankee elitists, and big business, Mike represents O'Neill's rejection of the Catholic Church's dogmas and practices. Nicholas Coccoma's article "Prodigal Son: The Catholicism of Eugene O'Neill" (*The Similtude*, August 10, 2017) analyzes O'Neill's plays in terms of his father's dogmatic and conservative Catholicism, his mother's spiritual mysticism and his own atheism. Coccoma contends that "He turned his back on it [the Catholic Church] as a creed and way of life, but its habits of the heart and mind held fast".

Mike, who is mean-spirited and sneeringly critical, is mocked by his father and sister for his "holier than thou" Catholicism. O'Neill himself abandoned institutionalized Catholicism, telling his father at 14 that he would no longer accompany the family to Sunday Mass (Damon Linker, "The Catholic Atheism of Eugene O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh*," *The Week*, February 5, 2015). It was retaliation—God and the Church had betrayed him after his prayers for his mother's recovery from a morphine addiction went unanswered. In the character of Mike, he writes his disdain for the condemning attitudes of God and the Church, which he sees as a posturing coverup for their ultimate powerlessness. Yet, O'Neill has said, "In all my plays, sin is punished, and redemption takes place", which is deeply rooted in the tenets of the Church. The motif of sin-confession-forgiveness is an integral part of his work, particularly in *A Moon for the Misbegotten*. As Nicholas Coccoma writes, he "definitively rejected doctrinal Catholicism", but his "themes, language, and imagery" showed that "he never lost touch with the faith's imagination".

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