

Repertory Theatre Presents "No Incense Rising"

CAST.

Mrs. Bergmann Edith Rowett
Mrs. Carney Nancy Fowles
Ada (Mrs. Bergmann's elder daughter) . .
Carl Nissen Ailsa Krimmer
Ellen (Mrs. Bergmann's younger daughter) .
Mary Sinclair Catherine Craig
Sergeant McCarthy Donna Toppin
The play produced by Barbara Sisley.

THE Repertory movement in Australia claims to exist primarily for the provision of a stimulus to dramatic art; so that the Brisbane Repertory Society must have gained a great deal of satisfaction last night from the fact that it was able to produce a play by a local dramatist without renouncing that claim.

"No Incense Rising" is by George Landen Dann, and won first prize in the competition conducted last year by the Australian Dramatists Club.

It is not likely to prove a popular play. Mr. Dann has too much sincerity and courage to stop "drawing a thing as he sees it" for the sake of popularity. But one felt last night that the audience would not have been altogether culpable in longing for something to lighten the gloom of his tragic and beautifully expressed story.

From the rise of the curtain to its fall, the play is concerned almost exclusively with the slowly mounting hatred of a daughter for a mother neurotically obsessed by a desire to keep her one remaining child by her side. The obsession is common enough—the consequences, by the grace of the humour and fortitude vouchsafed to man, seldom so dreadful as befell Mrs. Bergmann and her daughter Ada. One commits suicide, the other, weighted down by the responsibility, real or imagined, of her mother's death, goes slowly mad.

As the daughter, Ailsa Krimmer had a most arduous part. The transition of a carefree girl to a demented woman with technical murder on her hands is a tall order for three acts if it is to be done with conviction. Miss Krimmer executed the order with hardly a falter, building up the character with imagination and without haste. Her final scene of growing dementia is nervously exacting and very long—almost too long for the successful sustaining of its initial atmosphere of horror, but she carried it through to the end without symptoms of weariness.

The part of Mrs. Bergmann is almost as arduous, and totally unsympathetic into the bargain. You learn to hate Mrs. Bergmann—nerve-ridden victim of tragic circumstances as she is—and Edith Rowett contributed a fine piece of work in a difficult characterisation. Donna Toppin as the frivolous Mary Sinclair, was natural and cheerful, her inconsequential struggling in and out of frocks in the dressmaking scene providing the one light touch in a sombre subject.

From the point of view of the cast, this is a woman's play, for apart from Robert Risson's brief appearance as a sergeant of police, Colin Turbayne as Ada's patient sweetheart, is the only man

to make an appearance.

Mr. Turbayne has a tendency to mumble—in fact the majority of the cast might have been more considerate of the ears of the dress circle—but otherwise acquitted himself well.

The play runs to the accompaniment of surf breaking on an adjacent beach, an effect accomplished by a person or persons unknown off stage. It might cheer these anonymous contributors to the cause of realism to know that their efforts were crowned with success.

Finally it was good to hear the call of "author" in a Brisbane theatre, and to see Mr. Dann stand up in his seat in the stalls to acknowledge the warm tribute of the audience.

J.R.S.