

In the Wings

THE play is Life ; and this round earth,
The narrow stage whereon
We act before an audience
Of actors dead and gone.

There is a figure in the wings
That never goes away,
And though I cannot see his face,
I shudder while I play.

His shadow looms behind me here,
Or capers at my side ;
And when I mouth my lines in dread,
Those scornful lips deride.

Sometimes a hooting laugh breaks out,
And startles me alone ;
While all my fellows, wondering
At my stage-fright, play on.

I fear that when my Exit comes,
I shall encounter there,