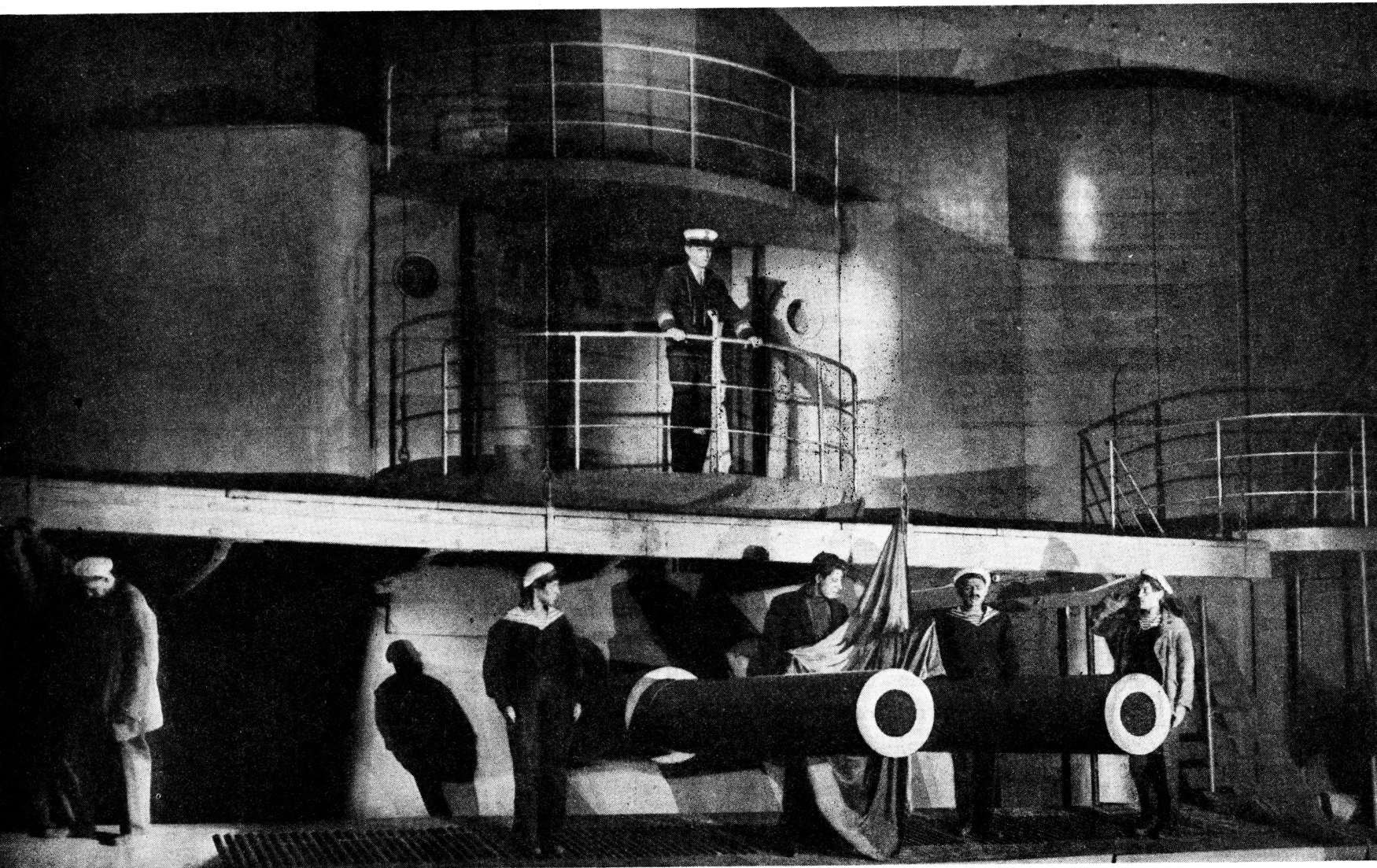


# NEW

DECEMBER, 1934



# THEATRE



*Scene from "SAILORS of CATTARO"*

*Theatre of Trade Unions, Moscow, U.S.S.R.*

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# NEW THEATRE

DECEMBER, 1934

SEVERAL months ago at the International Exhibition of Art held in Venice, a portrait head of Marion Davies by a Polish artist suddenly turned up in the most prominent position in the section of the exhibition which was supposed to be devoted to the work of American artists. The staff of the Whitney Museum, who had been invited to select the American exhibition from its museum collection, was naturally surprised to learn that the Marion Davies picture, which they had never seen before and which was moreover painted by a Polish artist, occupied the place of honor in the American show. Appeal and protest to the Italian director of the exhibition and to Mussolini himself were of no avail and the portrait of Hearst's favorite film star remained exactly where it was originally placed. Mystery filled the air as to who might have been responsible for the hanging of the picture, and why Mussolini remained so adamant against its removal. Certain malicious individuals maintained that the wide network of Hearst's influence extended to the seat of Italian fascist power, to Il Duce himself, and that Hearst, who spoke so fulsomely of Hitler on his return from Europe, had an equal pull with Mussolini.

IT now appears that William Randolph Hearst is not one to forget a favor. In his own modest way, he is now reciprocating by furthering the spread of Italian fascist propaganda in America. In the November 7th issue of the *N. Y. Journal*, under the mellifluous headline, "Duce Film Saga Unfolds for Christmas Fund," Hearst announced that *Man of Courage* (originally *Blackshirts*) written by Mussolini and "through which stalks the Titan figure of Il Duce, building new roads, harbors, schools, hospitals, and bringing fulfillment to his dream of 'protected infancy' and 'favored maternity,' would be shown for the benefit of the *N. Y. Journal* Christmas Fund" (50 per cent of the receipts on the opening day and 25 per cent of the run). Now the editors of NEW THEATRE think it generous and fitting that Mussolini, who has just urged the Italian masses to tighten their belts, take wage-cuts and starve quietly and patriotically for the fatherland, and who "protects infancy" and "favors motherhood" by training children of the age of eight to die nobly on the battlefield, should serve such a useful function in aiding the "kiddies and mothers of



"The people must feel that the opera is theirs"—Mrs. August Belmont.

the American poor" by way of the Hearst Christmas Fund. And of course, we are not malicious enough to conjecture that Hearst chose Mussolini's black shirt film in preference to say, *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch*, for any covert reason. However, as much as we like to see Hearst return favor for favor, we urge our readers in New York and wherever the film is exhibited to join the Film and Photo League on the picket lines in front of the theatres to stop the spread of this vile and lying propaganda for the bloody fascists of Italy.

THE theatre game as it is played on Broadway," declares Elmer Rice in a letter published in the *New York Times*, "is palpably adolescent. In the main it is a trivial pastime, devised by 'grown up children' for the delectation of the mentally and emotionally immature . . . the Broadway theatre is in the hands of business men, of real estate operators and entrepreneurs, whose chief interest is to capitalize the creative talents of authors and actors and turn them into dollars and cents. They can do this best by catering to the tastes of the amusement seekers, particularly to the well-fed and the idle, who have money to spend and who know quite definitely that what they want is nothing that rocks the brain, the heart or the boat. . . . Between the creative artist and his potential auditors stands the sordid and ugly barrier of the commercial theatre. Here, as everywhere in our organization, the profit system stifles the creative impulse and dams the free flow of human vitality. . . . And so I say goodbye to Broadway. Perhaps goodbye to the theatre. I believe that America is rich in dramatic material and that there is a large potential audience for what is really fine in the drama. But whether or not it can be organized, or

whether or not it is worth the trouble, I do not know. . . ."

AS Joshua Kunitz pointed out in the *New Masses*, the history of the workers theatres and Theatre Union demonstrates the truth of Rice's surmise as to the "rich dramatic material" and the "large potential audience" for what is really fine in the drama. The rapid growth of the revolutionary theatres supplies an answer to Rice's doubts as to whether such an audience can be organized and whether this is worthwhile. "Mr. Rice," Kunitz writes, "says he is a revolutionist. If he is really that, why the pessimism, why the doubts? Let him stop flirting with the well-fed and the immature. Let him join the revolutionary theatrical organizations; write for them, work with them. They are clamoring for new plays, revolutionary plays. The working class audiences want sound dramatic food; and are warmly appreciative of the artist who is willing and able to supply it . . . the audience which Elmer Rice dreams of is not a potentiality but a vital, throbbing, enthusiastic reality."

YET Mr. Rice, although not unfriendly to the revolutionary theatre, shows no inclination to act as Kunitz asks. He does not seem to be concerned about reaching this audience of revolutionary workers who would support such a fine play as *Between Two Worlds* if they could afford the Broadway ticket prices. *Why?* Does he believe that this audience is not 'worth the trouble'? Or does he fear that he would be hampered by the cooperation of the radical organizations that would give his plays the same loyal support they give Theatre Union if Elmer Rice would meet them half way. If Elmer Rice is really "a revolutionist" why does he try to buck the Broadway game

alone? The revolutionary and anti-fascist organizations offer him their support and await his answer.

**T**HIS month the Theatre Union is one year old. After more than two years of organizing it presented *Peace on Earth*, an anti-war play, last November. Now with only two productions behind it and a third in preparation the Theatre Union has entrenched itself as the pioneer professional revolutionary theatre. Its development is bound to have a profound effect upon the future of workers' theatres of all types—projects modeled directly upon it are forming in Philadelphia, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. The Theatre Union lays its heaviest emphasis upon the revolutionary script—what the play has to say to its audience of workers and their sympathizers. Second in importance has been the organization of a stable audience. The importance of competence in productions was recognized by establishing the theatre as a professional one. In order to begin the Theatre Union has been willing to subordinate certain artistic problems. That it means to grow artistically is evidenced by the production of *Stevedore* which was sounder than that of *Peace on Earth*, and the promise of the coming *Sailors of Cattaro*. The Theatre Union is expanding and developing its experimental studio for further growth in this direction.

**T**HERE are important lessons to be learned from the first year of the Theatre Union. It has proven that a literature of revolutionary plays can be created; that such plays can be produced at a low price scale; that they can secure the support of workers; that liberals, intellectuals, and middle class people of low incomes—in other words regular theatre patrons will attend such plays, disproving the canard they can "preach only to the converted." The policy of the Theatre Union has enabled it to reach a real mass audience—the estimate is 300,000 for its first two plays. Its *organized approach* to its audience through trade unions, political, cultural and other groups is a guarantee of stability. When *Sailors of Cattaro* went into rehearsal, a few weeks' run was already guaranteed by benefit theatre parties. By the time it opens it will be assured of a run of two months or more. This record cannot be duplicated by any commercial theatre organization in America today.

**A**NOTHER revolutionary birthday occurs this month—the printed *New Theatre* first appeared one year ago. In this year *New Theatre* has grown from an obscure inner organ of the workers theatre movement into a broad magazine of the theatre arts with a firm base in the revolutionary theatre, film and dance movement. The magazine has won recognition from out-



standing theatre artists and from bourgeois as well as revolutionary critics. As a result of the vitality of the revolutionary cultural movement, the loyalty and self-sacrifice of those who are building the "new theatre," and the fine support of revolutionary workers and sympathizers, the growth of *New Theatre* has been almost incredible. A *five-fold increase*—from a January circulation of less than 2,000 to 10,000 circulation for December. The magazine has increased in size and improved in format despite financial handicaps that still threaten its future. *New Theatre*, unfortunately, gets no support from "Broadway angels," "Moscow gold," or expensive advertisements. It must rely on the dimes per copy, dollars per yearly subs, and, until *New Theatre* becomes entirely self-supporting, the income from benefit entertainments. Accordingly *New Theatre's* editors want you to do some organizing for us. Show your copy of the magazine to your friends and acquaintances. Get them to read it—to subscribe if they can afford the dollars we need so bitterly. And accept our invitation, if you live in or near New York,

to attend the *New Theatre* "benefits" described on the back cover of this issue—the Saturday night preview opening of *Sailors of Cattaro* on December 8th, and the united theatre, dance and film celebration, in which *New Theatre* readers, writers, artists and editors will join in a gay New Year's Eve Frolic.

**T**HE high priests of Nazi Kultur, having consigned to the flames the great masterpieces of the past and exiled the greatest creative artists of Germany, have now assumed the roles of prophets. Two weeks in advance of the beginning of production, they have decided that Reinhardt's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, which he is scheduled to make for Warner Bros., will be banned from Germany on the ground that it will be harmful to the Aryan spirit. *Variety* reports that Warner Bros. has received a cable to the effect that the film will not be permitted exhibition in Germany due to Reinhardt's connection with the production and the inclusion of the music of that non-Aryan Mendelssohn.

**T**HE January issue of NEW THEATRE will be a special Soviet number. Leading Soviet artists and writers are preparing the following articles that promise to be the most complete picture and analysis of the Soviet theatre, dance and film ever published in America: *From Theatre to Film*, by Erwin Piscator; *An Attitude Towards America*, by Dinamov; *Structure of a Kino Industry*, by Bela Kashin; *Moscow Jewish Theatre*, by Leon Moussinac; *Beginnings in the Soviet Dance*, by Jack Chen; *Music and the Theatre*, by Chebalin; *Gorki* by Mirski, and articles by Seki Sano, Aki-mov, Glebov, and other Soviet artists.

# NEW THEATRE

Organ of League of Workers Theatres, Film and Photo League, and Workers Dance League.

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# Dramatist in Exile

By RICHARD PACK

**I**F a certain fascist firing squad had acted with more speed one winter morning fourteen years ago, Friedrich Wolf would not be alive today, and the Theatre Union would not be presenting *Sailors of Cattaro* this month. A revolutionist before he was a playwright, this forty-six-year-old German author in exile who has been sailor, soldier, worker, and physician, has taken an active part in the struggles of the working class, so that instead of inhabiting a "Red ivory tower" and writing vicariously of strife, he creates from actual experience.

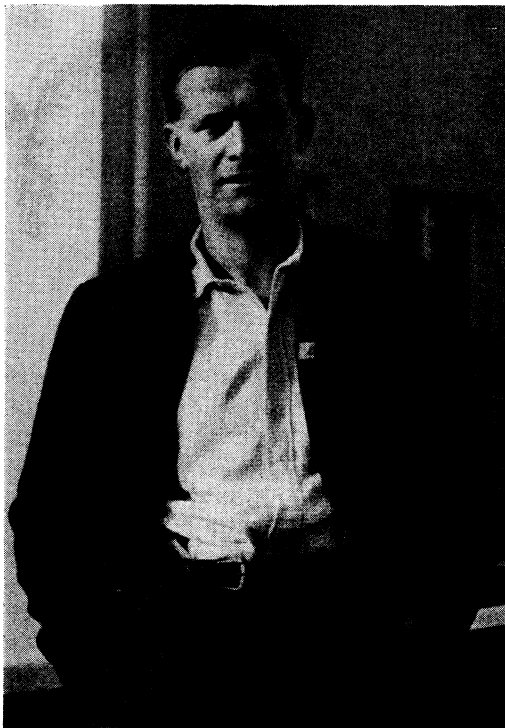
A syndicalist settlement for veterans set up in 1921 at Wormswede, Germany, provided Wolf with the material for his first play, *Colony Dog*. The colony was built up with the greatest effort by the soldiers themselves. Among them was Wolf, who dug peat. Like the others, he had gone into the project fired with enthusiasm, expecting that it would set a successful precedent for the establishment of similar colonies. But the settlement proved to be an illusion; the government withdrew its subsidies, and that was the bitter end of the experiment. He realized then the futility of such attempts and embodied his experience in a drama.

After this, Wolf returned to the practice of medicine. He might have had a lucrative practice in the city. Instead, he chose to go out among the small farmers and poor weavers of Southern Germany. He lived with them, worked with them, and doctored them. *Poor Conrad*, his second play, dramatized one of the revolutionary traditions of these people—the peasant insurrection of 1514.

*Cyankali*, which came next, grew out of Wolf's pre-Wormswede days shortly after the war, when he served as city physician of Remscheid. Here he came in contact with the workers' movement for the first time. He carried in his mind for years the bitter memory of these underpaid, half-starved metal workers, raising large families they could not support, and finally he wrote *Cyankali*, advocating legal abortion.

While Wolf was in Remscheid, the first fascist *Kapp-Putsch* took place, the event which almost prevented *Cyankali* and *Sailors of Cattaro* from ever being written. On March 3, 1920, the Whites seized Remscheid. The workers resisted bitterly, and Wolf fought side by side with them on the barricades. He was captured on March 17 and sentenced to be shot. The next day the workers stormed the prison and freed him.

Although Wolf did not participate in the 1918 revolt of the Cattaro fleet, the nautical knowledge gained in his youth stood him in good stead in the writing of *Sailors of*



Friedrich Wolf, author of *Sailors of Cattaro*

*Cattaro*, his fourth play. For according to the best story-book tradition, he ran away to sea when he was only twelve. They brought him back; he ran away again. Eventually, he returned and settled down to the study of medicine. But he had not abandoned the sea, for, during summer vacations, he shoveled coal in the "black gang" of a Dutch steamer. Later, he served as ship's doctor on several German liners.

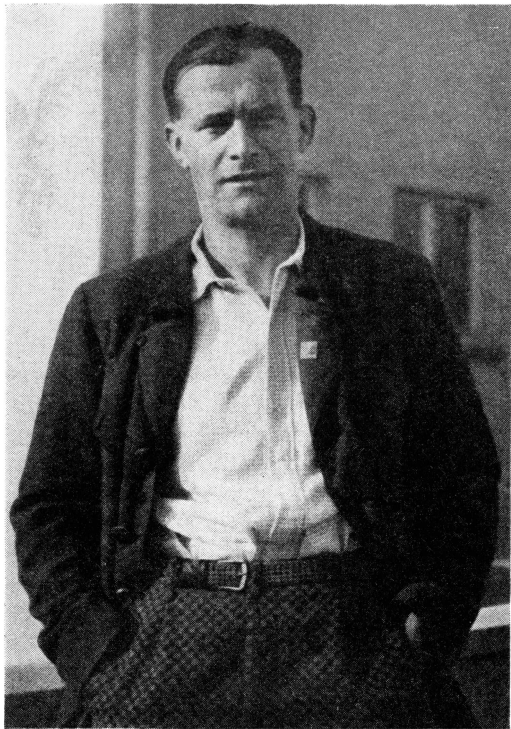
**W**OLF'S recent play, *Dr. Mamlock's Way Out*, dramatizes his latest and most bitter experience—persecution by the Nazis. By 1931, his plays, novels, and stories had established him as one of Europe's leading proletarian writers: *Sailors of Cattaro*, his most popular drama, was played numerous times, not only in Berlin, at the Volksbuehne, but also in Dresden, Vienna, Munich, Amsterdam, and Moscow. Naturally, he was a target of the Nazis. With the increased fascization of Germany, he was placed under surveillance, and in November of 1931, arrested. The charge—he still practised medicine—was illegal abortion; the evidence—*Cyankali*. But the fascists were not yet powerful enough to put across this vicious frame-up. Mass protests by the German workers forced his release.

Wolf thereupon intensified his battle against Fascism. Realizing that the theatre was one of the most potent weapons in this

fight, he abandoned all other literary activities, gave up his medical practice, and for the next two years devoted himself entirely to the workers' theatre movement. Then, in the winter of 1932-33 he organized a group of actors into the "Troupe Southwest", which toured southern Germany in motor trucks and presented "How Is it On the Front", "From New York to Shanghai", and "Farmer Baetz"—agit-prop revues written especially for the Troupe by Wolf himself. Some ninety performances had been given, when in March of 1933, they were officially banned by Hitler. A month later Wolf had to flee the country.

**A** LETTER he wrote at this time to Charles Walker of the Theatre Union presents a vivid picture of the ruthless treatment accorded writers who dared oppose fascism. "As you know," wrote Wolf, "Hitler recently has burned all the books of Jewish, non-Aryan, and proletarian writers. . . . He has also banned production of our plays, radio-plays, and films, thereby violating the Berne agreement. All German publishers and theatrical enterprises have been forbidden to pay any royalties to us Jewish and proletarian writers . . . we are consequently utterly helpless today; it is not our fault! I myself am being persecuted—my wife was refused a visa to see me, and my Postal Savings account, where I had a little savings, was seized and confiscated, so that my wife and my two children are destitute."

A few months after this letter, Wolf's family managed to obtain a visa, and they joined him in the Soviet Union. When Walker visited Moscow last summer, he found Wolf seated before an open window, stripped to the waist and surrounded by a litter of papers; sun-bathing, pounding a typewriter; vigorous, youthful, dynamic. He has entered with full zest into the activities of a Soviet author; he writes prolifically for the trade union publications and newspapers, and at the same time keeps up his creative work. He recently translated the "Stop-munitions-shipments" scene of *Peace on Earth*, for underground distribution among German workers. At present, he is working on a play dealing with the Austrian revolt of last spring. He hopes to visit the United States in January. American workers will perhaps greet him as did the workers of the Soviet Union, where *Sailors of Cattaro* was performed more than a thousand times. "In Moscow," says Wolf, "they greeted me in the streets with the fighting words of the hero in *Sailors of Cattaro*: Comrades, the next time better."



**Friedrich Wolf, author of  
*Sailors of Cattaro***

# A Little Child Shall Read Them

By ROBERT FORSYTHE

WHAT interests me about Joseph I. Breen, the movie censor, is not so much the Master himself as his eleven children. As a father and a tax-payer, I am by way of being a censor in my own right and I have been suffering defeats of such magnitude that I very much fear Joseph is having his hands full. He may be able to curb Carole Lombard but what can he possibly do with the bairns between the ages of eight and twelve who have just discovered the movie magazines? He may have issued strict orders against attending motion pictures but I can assure him he will never have any success in keeping out the fan mags. If the children have no money of their own for the purposes of purchase, they will dig the dated copies out of ash cans or borrow them from the neighbors' children. By way of definition, a neighbor's child is always one who reads *Screen Romances*.

In the way of motion pictures there are pitfalls enough in such ventures as the double features. The children are very astute in this particular matter. They want to go to the movies and you ask them what's on and they say Will Rogers in *Judge Priest*. You dislike Will Rogers personally but in the present world of wickedness he comes as near being moral as anybody could be and you give your approval. It is only later that you hear that the other half of the double-feature has been *Hot Desert Love*.

In their usual feeble manner, the churches and the ladies with very definite moral codes and no boy friends have been attacking the wrong enemy. The movies are not so much immoral as preposterous. If you wish to find the force which is really corrupting American youth, you have to go to the news-

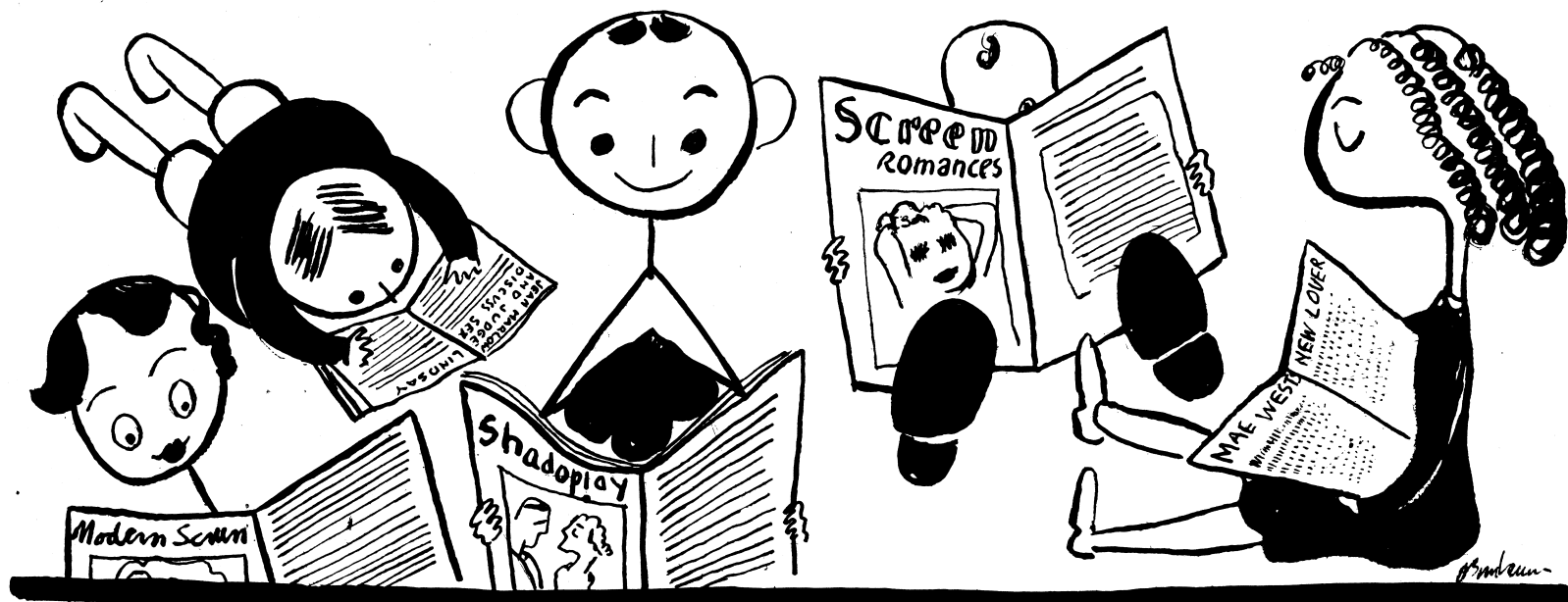
stand. In our day we used to hide Nick Carter under the mattress but I have just come from my daughter's room where I have collected eighteen movie magazines, lying about in full shame. She tells me she got them from the neighbor's child and I am prepared to believe this for only a parent like the father of the neighbor's child would be stupid enough to give a girl ten years old money enough for eighteen magazines.

The first one I picked up was *Hollywood* and it took my eye immediately. The line at the top read, "Jean Harlow and Judge Lindsey Discuss Sex." The lower and larger caption was, "Mae West Tells What Every Girl Should Know." Only my zeal as an investigator permitted me to continue to *Screen Play* which was featuring "Harlow vs. Crawford, The Truth About the Franchot Tone Affair." Breaking down at this point, I turned inside to find how things were faring with Franchot and ran into other matters which I am sure would interest the Breen children as they have interested mine. One story was "Mae West's New Lover," in which Mae finds that "Roger Pryor, horn tootin' son of the famous bandmaster, has plenty of that old sex appeal." A page earlier our old friend Minna Gombell was discussing her "Marriage on a Business Basis." This had to do with a contract between Miss Gombell and her husband, Joseph W. Sefton, Jr., by which either member to the contract may have freedom between the hours of twelve noon and 2 a. m. Just what time is reserved for their home work was not stated but it was evident that the Seftons had things on a good modern footing. Still further along, Nina Wilcox Putnam was taking things in her own hands to "tell who should

marry who and why." She thought it would be fine if Lionel Barrymore would marry Joan Crawford and Clive Brook would marry Katharine Hepburn. Whether the folks involved would care for the attention was not revealed, *Screen Play* having done its part by providing the services of Mrs. Putnam.

FROM that I went on, entranced, to *Movie Classic*, which turned out to be a more demure proposition. Having had notice that the future was to be different, they had obviously cleaned the magazine up and had even joined the parade to the point of printing an article entitled, "Hollywood Starts a Big Clean-Up." In their laudable ambition to show how bad things had been they reproduced some of the more awful examples. They had a picture of Garbo lying on John Gilbert with this caption, "This portrait of Greta Garbo and John Gilbert in *Flesh and the Devil* is something to remember—even when you turn it upside down. Photographs of 'horizontal love' are now banned!" They pointed out in another picture that Marion Sayers, who was showing a great deal of her frontispiece, would not be allowed to crouch that way now. "Gloria Stuart (sitting, left) can't show so much thigh. And Billie Seward (above her) will have to wear more." Having pointed the evils, *Movie Classic* was against them.

The moral side of the film books was engrossing enough but what went on in the way of rising to a higher station in life quite captured me. *Screen Play* had this to say of Miss Crawford: "Joan Crawford, nee Lucille Le Sueur, nee Billie Cassain, was born with twinkling toes. She stubbed them many a time on her way up but they carried







ing fever which melts ice here. Oho! The other sectors are on their toes. Signal the enemy we are ready! Carrion is ready. Blast, shoot, fire, tear, explode, ship off, slice off, break off—carrion is ready! Ice is ready! Waft us, wind, we're only rose petals in God's nose!

REVEREND TUCKER: (*Lighted against a stained glass window showing Christ blessing the world*) Rise up, soldiers of Christ, and smite the Anti-Christ! Behold the Savior gazing down upon us—behold His word: "Make waste upon thine enemy and let no sun shine upon him." (*Light off*)

BARTENDER: The artillery is all cockeyed—it can't steer itself into place!

JUDGE LANGDON: (*A light finds him standing against a multitude of flags wrapped in his judicial robes*) War to the last man and the last dollar! Whoever opposes it is a yellow-livered coward, a spy, a red, not worthy of the attention of the court or a bullet from a hero's gun! I sentence you all to twenty years, to forty years, to sixty years, for life, to death, and to kiss the flag at sunrise and sundown! (*Light out*)

BARTENDER: Reporting artillery having trouble getting into position—rockets out for help. Calling for horses.

MRS. TERRACE: (*The light outlines her standing against an advertisement of "Fullerton's Five Star Prime Roast." She is smothered in flowers.*)

(*Singing*) Won't you say a prayer for our boys out there?

For our heroes o'er the sea?

In the raging fray by night and day

They're fighting for you and me!

Through the dreary lining

There's a bright star shining,

Turn the dark cloud inside out

Till the boys come home! (*Light off*)

(*Rumbling of artillery*)

BARTENDER: The barrage is ready! Everything is ready: The guns, the buttons, the tags, the doctors' hands, and the ice. Mountains of ice. Mountains of baskets. Mountains of "Rest in Peace." Fresh as the morning dew they'll be waiting at the back door along with the morning paper and the cream for the coffee for mama and papa and Aunt Sophia.

Those wheels are not turning, that motor will never start, those wheels will stick in the mud. But the horses are coming! They are being harnessed to the artillery! God, your horses look fine and shiny! They are coming through a field of roses stuck on crosses, your roses and your crosses, God. They are pulling artillery to the right and to the left and hurrah for the school teacher too proud to fight!

The horses are moving slowly. Whit go the whips as they mingle on the sleek backs of the brown, white, black horses. They are looking around—they have our eyes, your eyes, his eyes—the eyes of Johnjames-george. They can see! They can see the car-

riage, the buttons, the barren sleeves and the empty helmets. The metal, the fuses, and the cousin of death. Move on! The kings and the generals and the presidents cannot wait! There must be a victory before tea, cocktail, aperitif. Giddap, damn your eyes and all you see! Closer! To the barrage! Over the top! Now they understand orders—the whip is a great teacher. It has no pride—your back, my back, the horse's back—democracy in a nutshell!

They are answering their enemies now! The horses of Bohemia, Brandenburg, Bulgaria. In their own lingo they swear, spit out their hatreds, kick up a million hells with their iron shoes.

Bah! They are ignorant horses—why drag them into a war like this? Ignorant—never heard of Newton's apple, the Prince of Peace, don't know patriotism from moldy hay, never burned midnight oil over the artillery manual. They are ignorant horses, God, made in your image even as every living thing and every cannon and the last gasp of Private Unknown is made in your image. Attention! Over the top you go! Horses from Iowa, Brandenburg, Kansas, Bohemia, Wyoming, Bulgaria! The chaplains are polishing the crosses on their chests and have no time for you. You are heathens, don't know a psalm from alfalfa and you never had communion with whipped cream on top! Corporal! Get your men ready—we follow the horses! If we are to be led to death the horses can lead as well as Lieutenant Two-Bars! We, who know what it is to be brave and to die for God and country and mayor of Pilgrimsville and the Archbishop's mitre! Our Bedlam—right or wrong—our Bedlam! Are you listening Corporal or are you dead? Listen! Get an earful of this! The damned horses—is it at us or at the enemy? Listen closely, Bob Leslie,—the horses—all of them . . . are snickering, *snickering* as they take a last look at us and hear our last words. The damned snickering horses think they are brave, eh? We'll show them! Ready! Get the ice ready for the Five Star Prime Shredded Heroes of Democracy!

(*A sharp whistle. Terrific explosions. The voices of dying men, beasts and spent shells. Then silence. Bartender continues quietly as if he were just being released from the terrors of a horrible dream.*)

BARTENDER: The horses snicker at ice, at us, at all we hold dear as they present their aluminum tags at the doors of the heavens and hells of horses—still snickering at us. (*The magnified ticking of a clock—moving time forward*) Doctor, I feel like a fuse that's gone pft! Thank you, doctor, for giving me basket number eleven eleven eleven. (*Then, as the ticking of the clock becomes faster a steamer fog horn and an ambulance gong are heard. The lighting circle spreads outward showing a mass of flowers encircling a basket in which the Bartender is reclining, and Fullerton standing with outstretched hand in welcome.*)

FULLERTON: Shake AGAIN! (*A pause*) Won't you shake hands with me?

BARTENDER: Sorry, Fullerton, I have nothing to shake with—

FULLERTON: Remember my promise—I'll take care of you—I am putting aside two per cent of whatever profit we made in the war to help you and all veterans. But everything must be put to use—nothing must be wasted.

(*The ticking of the clock becomes louder and faster, as Time rushes headlong. The lights enlarge the scene again to include the entire "Trench Rat," with Fullerton and his family receiving their drinks from the hand of the Bartender and raising their glasses in salute to the peace of the world.*)

BARTENDER: Bartender—server for Mr. Fullerton, that's me. Nothing must be wasted. A proverb of my people. You know my people, don't you, God? A great people. A before-and-after people. They make arms and legs appear where there were no arms and legs before. A before-and-after people. Before, I was a basket. Now I'm duraluminum, ball bearing, ankle joints, felt toes, well-seasoned English willow, light, rawhide parchment finished in flesh colored enamel, inter-changeable hand-and-utility hook. A bullet would go clean through and be disappointed. Not a drop of blood, and you know blood, God! The roof of my skull is platinum, the wind can go right under and You know the wind, God! Listen, God, and I'll tell you what comes *after* in this before-and-after Bedlam. I'll go into the rain, Your rain, and I'll shrink. I've shrunk from a man with the hope of life to a basket. And they'll shrink me again and put me in a bottle as a sample of a citizen of a before-and-after people who helped save this before-and-after people.

And for what? Look! They're making bullets and guns and gas and cannons! They're raising horses for the artillery! Growing willow trees, fusing duraluminum, weaving baskets to play the game all over again!

I'm the *after* of a people fashioned in Your image and You wouldn't want to see Your eyes in a bottle, would You, God? Staring at You? Mocking You? My brain turns to ice when I think of it! Stop the wind from freezing my brain! Its Your wind and Your brain, God! (*Screeching*) Mash them to a rain-drop! Wipe them out! Erase them! You are the God of Bedlam and You can do it! Tear them off the earth! What's the use of the earth with them on it?

*The lights dim to blackness.*

(This scene was successfully produced by a workers' theatre on the open Plaza in Hollywood as a part of the August 1st Anti-War demonstration this year. The author here offers it for the use of other workers' theatres or any non-profit making group.)

# Robert Flaherty's Escape

By PETER ELLIS

IN twelve years Robert Flaherty has made three films; at least only three he cares to remember: *Nanook of the North*, *Moana of the South Seas*, and *Man of Aran*. In these years Flaherty might have become one of the great film artists. But it is unfortunate that he has become a cult: the savior of the documentary film and chief rebel against the Hollywood cesspool. The latter is true perhaps, but the former is a title that Flaherty would be the first to deny. However the acclaim received by *Nanook* and *Moana* evidently convinced Flaherty that he was following the correct esthetic line. Some of us are as guilty of this false praise as the arty groups that revolved around *Close Up*, *Experimental Cinema*, and the London Film Society. Excepting that we hoped, as Mike Gold put it, "if he should ever decide to give up this whoring after strange gods, and dare to work in the Soviet Union, we would find we had another Eisenstein or Pudovkin."

This is very unlikely. Flaherty insists that he is on the right track; that if he did go to the Soviet Union (and he has expressed a desire to go) he would employ the identical methods that he used in his other films. He has no use (in film making) for the sociological implications of the subject matter that confronts him. He recognizes the existence of the class struggle; but to him it is a thing of banality and has no place in his films. This bit of philosophy is the clue to the estimation of Robert Flaherty's work. This position becomes understandable upon a chronological examination of his career.

He was born and brought up in mining towns. The desire to pioneer and explore new places is a social inheritance from his father who was an exploring mining engineer in Northern Michigan. Later Robert became a mining geologist. It was in this capacity that he became associated with Canada's chief Robber Baron and railroad builder, Sir William Mackenzie. He made a motion picture record of his work for Mackenzie and in 1916 set out to assemble and edit it. As a result of a fire which destroyed the film Flaherty resolved to go back to the North to make another. Every motion picture company turned him down, but he managed to talk Revillon Freres, the fur company, into financing the job as an advertisement for their product. The result was *Nanook of the North* (1923). It established the formula that Flaherty would follow (although at that time it wasn't obvious) in the rest of his works. *Nanook* opened with a quiet sequence establishing the family in their "normal" environment. It made the blizzard the protagonist. And *Nanook's* "heroic" struggle to overcome the elements



Gaumont-British

Still from *Man of Aran*

(his will to live) was the central theme. Flaherty used natural phenomena in building his continuity. There was the great climax: the blizzard out of which Flaherty's superman emerges with success, and the film ends on a note of rest.

In 1923 that created quite a stir. From a technical point of view the film was an advance. It was made in the out-of-doors and it didn't smell of Hollywood. The photography was clean, sharp, and interesting. It was hailed as Art and gave the American film (and Pathe, the distributors) some prestige. It also convinced Flaherty that the future of the Art film was in the hands of individual capitalists, be they from Hollywood or a fur company.

But nowhere did the film show the social life of the Eskimo. There has been a whole school of romantic anthropologists in literature, but this was the first time it occurred in films. Even his *Nanook* was a Robinson Crusoe in furs. As far as the film was concerned *Nanook* and his family were the only Eskimos in Canada. And of course there was no class struggle, there was no exploitation, there was no oppression! It was too obvious; too banal for Robert Flaherty.

STILL trying to escape Hollywood, and his horrible childhood memories, always looking for the ideal race, the graceful and gentle, but brave, people, Flaherty got Jesse Lasky of Paramount to finance *Moana*

(1926). Here again he used the identical formula, the same situations. Only the scenery was changed to the Samoan Islands. *Nanook* is *Moana*, as much as he is the *Man of Aran*. The success of *Moana* got Hollywood interested in Robert Flaherty. He was asked by Metro-Goldwyn Mayer to film O'Brien's apotheosis of the "noble savage," *White Shadows in the South Seas*. That deal was a fizzle. W. S. Van Dine, explorer-in-chief for M-G-M and director of *The Thin Man*, made the film, instead.

Later Flaherty met Fred Murnau and a new partnership was started. They both complemented each other. The result in *Tabu* (1931) was only a suggestion of what might have resulted from the partnership. At least, it contained a slight recognition of the social implications of imperialism in the South Seas, in the effect of Chinese and English traders on the life of the natives. That in itself was an advance over *Moana* and *Nanook*. Left alone, Flaherty went back to his search for Atlantis. Of course, not being able to find any, he had to create one.

Thus we come to the *Man of Aran* (1934). There is no need to go into a detailed analysis of *Man of Aran*. It is an Irish *Moana* or *Nanook*. It follows the exact formula. For a fine critical appraisal I suggest Brian O'Neill's article in the *New Masses* of October 30, in which the gross disparity between Flaherty's *Aran* (stark struggle with the sea) and the real *Aran* (struggle against landlords and British imperialism) is brilliantly exposed. Actually Flaherty wasn't blind to the social implications on the *Aran* Islands. He confessed to me that since British capital was financing the film he was limited. He shot over 200,000 feet of film: scenes of evictions; of the native customs; of British imperialism as exemplified in the following sequence:

Two men in canoes are struggling over something in the water. We can't identify the object. They come back to shore and engage in a fist fight. Then we see that they were fighting over a piece of driftwood, a very valuable commodity in the *Aran* Islands. Just as the ownership has been agreed upon, the Coast Guard intervenes and confiscates the piece of wood, claiming it as the property of His Majesty.

This sequence was cut out to make room for the artificial shark hunting sequence, because, as Flaherty explained, it would ruin the "composition of the film"!

It seems that in seeking things at the ends of the earth, Flaherty avoids the life around him when he gets there. Thus, what should be a documentary film (the creative treatment of the actual, honest reality) is transformed into a "poem" of pseudo-symphonic structure. Even the thrilling

(Continued on page 29)

# Below Chicago's Mason - Dixon Line

Letters from the Mid-West

By ALICE EVANS

## Neighborhood Performance

THE Mason-Dixon line of Chicago's South Side is Cottage Grove Avenue. This boundary is rigidly adhered to particularly in the neighborhood of the World's Fair. West of Cottage Grove, only Negroes are supposed to live—in the battered, garbage-ridden frame shacks, with wood stoves, kerosene lamps, and outhouses which are the gifts of the Century of Progress to the working class. East of Cottage Grove, only whites are supposed to live—in the shabbily genteel flat buildings of the decaying middle-class and deluded white collar workers. In restaurants on the East Side, no Negroes are allowed. In barbecue stands on the West Side, whites are looked upon with suspicion. One Negro family lives a block east of Cottage Grove. Three months ago their home was bombed. Fierce antagonism smoulders along the boundary line. Two years ago there were race riots here, in which several workers were seriously injured. Today, under the leadership of the Communist Party, the neighborhood barriers are being broken down.

The Workers' Laboratory Theatre of Chicago is situated in the midst of this powder box. The first step in its campaign to break through neighborhood segregation and recruit new members from both sides of the line, was a recent program of three one-act plays, presented at Lincoln Centre. Admission was 15 cents, 10 cents for unemployed, and 5 cents for members with cards in the Unemployed Council or Workers' Committee. Children came in free—some fifty or sixty of them, from the alleys, backyards, and empty lots of the neighborhood. Two hours before the show began, a decorated truck trumpeted through the streets, announcing its dramatic wares through a megaphone to the workers who lined the sidewalks, and later filled the auditorium.

The program began with songs by the South Side I.L.D. Chorus. Negro and white workers lifted their voices in "Anti-Spirituals":

"Communism is too high  
You can't go over it . . .

It's too low  
You can't go under it . . .  
It's too wide  
You can't go around it—  
So you gotta come in through the  
door. . . ."

A single black curtain provided scenic background for all three plays. Watching the program from its quiet beginning to a triumphant end, one might call it a crescendo for the mass hero. It was the group and not the individual who won this audience of strange, bewildered faces to spontaneous cheering. At first they were merely curious—a "cold audience" to play to. The first play, *The Big Shot* presented a sordid scene in the home of an unemployed worker, who becomes a member of the Unemployed Council, where—"If I can't work for a living, by God, I'll fight for it!" With these words the play ended. The audience was quite impressed. One could hear mutterings—"That's right." "That sure is right." "There's a lot of truth in that," as they slowly assimilated this new medium. I heard one worker explaining to another the theory of drama: "No, it ain't real. But the story is. They act out a real story up

on that platform, so's we can see the truth in it."

When the second play started, the audience was already anticipatory. You could tell by the hush before the curtain went up. Realistic hogs hanging against the black curtain set the mood for *In The Hog House*. Stockyard workers discussed their troubles, organized their shop committee, battled with the boss, staged a walk-out, and won a victory before the amazed and delighted eyes of this workers' audience. Some of them had never seen a play before. But many of them had worked in the stock yards. And when the pretty young thing who was the boss' stenographer stood up to him and said: "For ten minutes you'll have to wait on yourself. The stenographers are striking with the rest of the workers in the Hog House. We back up their demands and we're waiting for your answer!"—the audience responded with prolonged applause.

THE last play on the program, *Sharecroppers Unite* was the one which really brought down the house, and turned this miscellaneous collection of workers from the tenement houses and apartment hotels into a single, exalted mass. This was done by the entrance of the group as hero. The play opened with a scene in a Negro sharecroppers' cabin in the South. Pappy is reading his Bible, and Mammy is worrying about her children. After a while, the prodigal son appears on the stage, and the argument begins. He is the oldest son, who has been North for five years, and has returned a Communist. He persists in his attempt to organize the Negro and white sharecroppers of the neighborhood, in spite of family fears and the landlord's threats. When the white sharecropper comes in to say that they are ready to join forces, things begin to happen. As the young Negro Communist says: "When a general is in a war he tries to divide the other side's army, so he can lick one section at a time. When our enemy finds us divided, so he can beat the whites, while the blacks stand by and grin, and then lynch the blacks while



the whites cheer, then it's time we got together and give them a surprise!" They are given an opportunity, for just at this moment the white landlord and his son enter. They throw out the white sharecropper, and threaten to lynch the young Negro, who refuses to be intimidated. The two bosses then call for the lynch gang which is waiting outside. But no lynch gang comes. Instead, onto the stage, slowly, walks a crowd of Negro and white sharecroppers, carrying guns, which they level at the two landlords. They stand there grimly, silently, facing the bosses, ready to fight.

It is here that the audience rose in their seats and cheered for five minutes. They clapped, they yelled, they stamped their feet. The curtain fell on a storm of continued applause. Somehow, unexpectedly, and overwhelmingly, this group of six or seven Negro and white men, with their wooden guns and their faded shirts, became the heroes of the play. Although they did not have a single line to say, and although most of them had rehearsed the scene only once before—at the dress rehearsal—they managed to become the symbol for Negro and white solidarity. The audience, which an hour before had sat bewildered and somewhat hostile before the curtain, now rose in their seats, and hailed this group of sharecroppers as their own. It showed in a dynamic way, the effectiveness of group action on the revolutionary stage, as compared to individual action. It is interesting to note that the play as originally written, had nothing about the



entrance of this group in it. Instead, the one white sharecropper had come back on stage, and inferred that his "gang" was outside. It just happened one time at a traveling performance of the Workers Laboratory Theater, that a few extra men had been recruited from the audience, to come on the stage as the sharecroppers. From that time on, the custom continued, until it became, at this performance the high point of the play.

The Workers Laboratory Theater plans more such performances before the workers of the neighborhood. They are now working on a play called *Stockyards, 1934*, in which the hero is a Negro trucker at the yards. Eventually, through these programs, the theater group plans to become a strong force against chauvinism and fascism, in this "World's Fair" neighborhood.

## Opening Night

A PURPLE glow from the new hand-constructed flood-light is reflected against the pale green and silver of the walls. We are at the new headquarters of the Theater Collective, in a dingy store building on Chicago's West Side. The place has been cleaned, scrubbed, decorated, painted, entirely by the actors and actresses themselves.

This is the opening night. There is an excited buzz of talk about the theater—workers theater, revolutionary theater, New Theatre—we hear it on all sides. Who says the theater is dead in Chicago?

There is preliminary dancing and eating before the program begins. Meanwhile we walk through the several rooms, listening to various small groups in deep discussion. A cross section of the Chicago Workers Theater movement can be found here.

"I hear the Blue Blouses gave their last street corner performance last night."

"It's getting cold, you know . . ." from a smiling young man, whom we recognize with difficulty as the belligerent officer in the 'anti-war' play, *Recruit*. (The Blue Blouses are doing things with make-up these days). "Did you see the new scene from *Troops Are Marching*?"

"Sure did. One of the best pieces of anti-fascist work we've had. And well done. Your group has the best discipline of any one in the city. You are so completely a unit in everything you do. . . ."

The "Officer" smiles. He knows the work and sweat that has gone into building this discipline. Rehearsals five nights and one afternoon a week for six weeks. . . .

We walk on. "I thought you were at the Jewish Workers Theatre Olympiad tonight."

"I was. Just came from there. Five Jewish groups gave plays. I couldn't understand a word of it—but the spirit got over. That play about the sailors' rebellion, given by the Albany Park Workers Club—that was great. I hear they're presenting it at the Midwest Festival of the League of Workers Theaters. . . ."

Over a cup of coffee the organizer of the Nature Friends is making an admission to the organizer of the League of Workers Theaters.

"We never realized how important dramatic work could be to us. But since the success of that mass chant, *The Communist Party of Germany* and the silhouette, at our Fall Festival, we've started a permanent theater group. We've got some

new young members already, and they're terribly enthusiastic. By the way, where can we get a spotlight?"

There follows a mysterious discussion in dollars and cents. Maybe—perhaps—the Chicago workers' theater movement will possess a spotlight!

"I hear you've a new play being born at the Playwriting Class."

"Well, so has everyone else in the class. Drop around some time and hear us light into each other. Every Friday night at 7:00 at the Workers School."

"The Workers Laboratory Theater has a new play—*Stockyards, 1934*. . . ."

"The Artef performance of *Harry Simms* will open November 30th at the Eighth Street Theater. . . ."

"The Chicago Workers Theater is building a stage at its headquarters."

But it is time for the program to begin. A young Irishman is master of ceremonies. He has just finished a job at the World's Fair—acting in the Transportation Pageant, *Wings of A Century*. He plays a piccolo and sings—song after song, working class songs from the old wobbly repertory:

"Casey Jones

That's what you get for scabbing  
On the S. P. line."

The audience howls for more. They join in the chorus. Native, American working-class songs—a healthy note to begin on.

Then comes a dramatic sketch by two members of the Theatre Collective, *Brain Trust Duo*. Here is the brain trust in cap and gowns, with gaudy make-up. As they sing and dance, we see prices going up, wages going down—and the standard of living of the working masses kicked merrily out of sight. It is deft satire, expertly acted. In technique it is a good challenge to the bourgeois theater. Our critics who claim the workers' theater is crude and inartistic would have a hard job explaining away this performance. We look around. Many of these critics are in the audience tonight. They are clapping enthusiastically. The Theatre Collective has great skill and talent . . . we can only hope it will be poured into plays of more significance than this sketch. Ah—the chairman announces they have begun rehearsals of *Newsboy*. There is the answer.

The program ends with classical music by the new Musical Collective, first cousin to the Theatre Collective. They play beautifully—again we wish it were revolutionary music . . . and hear from their members that such work is beginning.

As we leave the program and go back to the dance floor, there is an interesting unofficial announcement. The Theatre Collective has received a request from the Mechanics Educational Society, a non-revolutionary union of skilled automobile workers, affiliated with the American Federation of Labor—and will perform for them next week. Thus does the young workers' theater of Chicago turn its face to the shops.



# Stanislavsky's Method of Acting

By M. A. CHEKHOV

*Arranged by Molly Day Thacher from Chekhov's Notes*

**T**HE first systematic method of training and directing actors was worked out by Constantin Stanislavsky with the Studio of the Moscow Art Theatre. There have been many schools of voice and body training, and many styles of acting that have been handed down with innovation and imitation, but this was the first attempt to analyze what had made acting effective in the past, its constituent elements, its processes, and so lay a basis for recreating it. It proved the feasibility of getting specific desired results from actors by consciously utilizing psychological factors. These factors are involved in any performance, but their contribution is ordinarily left to chance or to genius. Such a technique cannot be learned at a glance, as though it were a trick of the trade, but it is one which the workers' theatres and other innovators must master as they work toward their own methods.

Interest in the Stanislavsky system has been widespread in this country: modifications of it have been taught by the now extinct American Laboratory Theatre under Boleslavsky, Le Gallienne's former Studio, Madame Ouspenskaya, the Theatre Union Studio, the Theatre Collective. The Group Theatre is making the most creative and professional use of it. However, misconceptions of the method even among those who have attempted to practice it, have been more widespread than its application.

Apparently this was also true in Russia as late as 1922, in spite of the fact that a large proportion of the post-revolutionary theatres stemmed from the Art Theatre. The actor Chekhov, (a nephew of the playwright) who was working with Stanislavsky, was moved by the current misinterpretations to set down notes on the system. These notes are among the very few written formulations of the Stanislavsky's method.\* Chekhov explains that while talented actors may of course play without any conscious method, they can be helped by one. Every other art has its technique, which is useless unless the person applying it has talent to begin with.

The Stanislavsky system is based upon an analysis of the creative process—the workings of the creative urge which is common to all artists of all times. Having noted the way in which this functions, the factors which aid it and those which hinder it, the system offers the possibility of controlling it, and thus disposes of the artist's old bug-

bear and alibi, that he has to wait for "inspiration."

An actor will not "love", "suffer", "hate" or "rejoice" to order. He will not respond to violence, but he can be stimulated to creative effort. The system, speaking broadly, offers a method by which this can be done with any material, theme, or idea which the actor selects.

Among the artifices the actor must combat is one of forcing his feeling into stereotyped form. Imagine an actor stirred by a newly discovered joy. Without allowing it to run its course he begins to smile in an exaggerated fashion, to laugh uproariously—the feeling of joy vanishes, and soon he realizes unhappily that he is exhibiting an artificial and toothy smile. An impulse should develop organically through the range of its colors and shadings, for these "subtleties", which can never be intellectually calculated, are what finally build up the truth of a creative work. To permit this organic development, the actor must remember the right natural relationship between emotional and bodily activity. The latter is the result of the former, and should serve as sounding board. Hence the need for training to make the body an elastic and obedient medium.

**T**HE work of the system may be divided into two parts: one's work upon one's self, a general training which must be carried on constantly; and work on specific roles. The former purposes to give the actor elasticity, full mastery of his emotions and control of his body. The following points are stressed in the general training:

## OBSERVATION

The student must train himself to analyze his own motives and to detect the motives of other people. He must keep before himself the problem of determining other people's characters, professions and habits from their appearances.

## INTELLECTUAL CONTROL

Everything in acting is not done mentally. Intellectual analysis determines what is demanded by a scene, and sets the problem for the actor as clearly as possible. But the way in which the problem is to be solved, the details and manner of the performance cannot be arbitrarily determined in advance. They have to be worked out as one plays. This is where the rich material of the subconscious, which holds much of the background and personality of the actor, makes its contribution. For example, an actor decides that the core of his activity in a scene

is to subdue a mob. Then he concentrates upon doing this, but he must not try to settle for himself, prematurely, when or how he shall move, whether he shall shout at the mob or command it quietly.

When a rehearsal has been handled in this organic way, the director or the actor decides which details and developments are to be retained and developed still further for the final performance.

## CONTROL OF EMOTIONS

This problem is more complex. The actor must have at his command all kinds of moods and feelings. One way of achieving a specific emotion is by using "affective recollections," that is, by awakening in the memory a definite feeling actually experienced in one's past, in order to recreate the feeling. Some people can do this simply by remembering a feeling. They think how angry they were at a certain time, and a real anger begins to stir in them at the recollection. It can also be done by concentrating upon the physical details and incidental circumstances which surrounded a moment of high feeling, until by association the feeling itself is recreated. Often a mood can be induced by simply stimulating through the memory sensory effects. A sense of lazy well-being, for instance, might be achieved in this way through a sense memory of sunshine sinking in through one's pores.

## SCENIC FAITH

This term defines an actor's belief in the situation he is playing. If he lacks it, the audience will lack it. They may admire his performance and say, "Isn't he exactly *like* a hungry man?" but they will never believe he *is* a hungry man on a street corner. One step toward the development of such stage faith is illustrated by Chekhov in the following example:

"I have to play a scene in which a very dear friend is supposed to be lying ill in the next room, and guests come to call." His comment describes the very obvious but basic core of stage performance, "It is difficult to conceive why a dear friend should be lying ill here in this theatre, or why guests come here, or indeed why I myself am here. . . . This prevents my accepting the situation in full faith; it becomes necessary to resolve the bald incongruities.

"I have to invent circumstances to supplement those of the scene, so that I can come to believe in the unrealistic conditions. Such fictitious explanatory circumstances may be very silly, naive, and lacking in any lifelike truth. I might justify the above scene like this: I find myself in the theatre with a sick

\* Translated by Mark Schmidt for the use of the Group Theatre, through whose courtesy it was made available to us.

friend. It happened because my landlord dispossessed me and I had to ask the director to let me stay in the theatre for a while. I am here on the stage because the manager was having all the other floors waxed. My friend came to see me on account of his leaving for Moscow today. He was taken ill and the doctor was summoned. . . Such excuses are sufficient to smooth over all the unacceptable features of the scene. The student need not tell them to anyone since in the telling the naivete would be lost and the silliness of the fabrication would become apparent."

Having thus obtained a sense of the reality of the setting, the student will come to feel a certain intimacy with regard to it. This is one step toward the development of complete stage faith.

**T**HE second half of an actor's problem is his work on specific parts. He learns to analyze the material, decide on its value for him and the meaning he wants to bring out. The process of building a performance is for the actor to merge with the character in his play.

#### FIRST STAGES

The fresh approach and enthusiasm which accompany a first reading of a script are useful and should be prolonged. In this period of spontaneous reaction to the material, creative suggestions for the production are most likely to turn up. They can be stimulated by provocative questions about the characters, their backgrounds, the details of their lives. Which trait of the character is nearest to the actor? What animal does he suggest? What would he do in some situation outside the play? This sort of speculation will also clarify the actor's idea of the character.

#### DISSECTING THE PART

Next the part can be broken into sections (also called *beats*). There is nothing formal about this: a part falls during a scene into a few divisions from each of which a different effect is desired. The effect desired may be one of amazement, then servility, then fear. But if the sections are labelled with nouns they must then be expanded into verbs, for one cannot perform "amazement" in general. Amazement can result because the character wants to understand something. Fear, he wants to avoid a danger. Servility, he does not want to be put out. In selecting the actions to produce the desired effects, account must be taken of the actor's personality as well as of the script, for the same action will not bring identical results in all actors.

Out of all the actions of the sections one may derive two or three, and finally from these a single one, which not only includes the separate ones, but which conditions and explains them. The three examples given above might be resolved into one. The character wants to ingratiate himself. And if the other main actions of the play were, the

character wants to make money, and he wants to prove that he is on the side of the law, then the inclusive action of the play may prove to be, he wants to find security. This inclusive action is the basic drive of the character.

This is not always easy to find at the beginning of rehearsal. If it can't be determined at once, the actor can recall his own experiences which are analogous to those in the play, and use them as his starting point. In trying to give verbal definition to these "I wants"—the actor acquires a deeper understanding of the role. Each action sets him a problem similar to the ones in the work on effective feeling, and to be approached in the same way.

#### PLAYING FOR ONE'S PARTNER

**T**HERE are three ways of playing a scene: to concentrate on explaining and demonstrating everything to the audience, to put on a performance for oneself, or to play for and with the other actors in the scene. The first is typical of stock company acting and is common even among the better Broadway performers. It consists of using gestures and mimicry in an effort to make clear to the audience exactly what the character is supposed to be doing and feeling, and what kind of person he is. The actor does not do or feel these things at all, nor is he aware of the other actors in the scene as real characters.

To play for oneself is to plunge into the contemplation of one's own feelings and actions. It is a particularly irritating kind of performance to an audience, since it leaves them mystified and out of it. It is the kind indulged in by certain arty, though very sincere actors, who are more interested in their own emotional contortions than in what is happening in the scene.

The only satisfactory performance comes with the right relationship with one's fellow actors. If the actor, like a human being, makes himself clear and understood by his stage partner, the audience will understand him, the performance will become real. Suppose a character has to beg a favor from another. If the actress plays "for the audience" she will be trying to prove to them how much it means to her. If she is playing for herself she will churn up desperation inside herself and end by feeling sorry for herself—but the audience will not feel sorry for her. All she needs to do is actually to beg from the other actor, to concentrate upon convincing him of her need—then the audience can be convinced.

In achieving this relationship, the actor must make constant use of real things—the other actors, the setting, the properties. He must relate himself to them in a real way. If he really studies another person's face, there is at least one real thing happening on the stage which will make the other happenings seem more real to the actor as well as to the spectator.

#### PHYSICAL CHARACTERIZATION

All the above gives us the soul of the role, but not the body. And it is only through the body that all the thoughts and feelings of the character can be conveyed to the audience. Body and voice must be elastic and obedient to the will, so that they can reflect fully and easily every experience of the actor.

The external characterization must be selected for its expressiveness, interest, and appropriateness. It must not only fit the logical and psychological characterization which has been built up, but must take the latter for its starting point. Of course in creating what might be called the inner image, a means of externalizing it may suggest itself. If this happens, the job is to understand this association, and then to incorporate it in the performance.

But inner characterizations will not always suggest suitable outer ones. In most cases one has to invent for himself the most characteristic forms, but once these are selected they must be closely related to the inner characterization, and they must be justified. In performing the role of a shy and modest man, one can take as his characteristic feature a light and inaudible step. This must be related to the rest of the characterization. One must trace the origin of such a step, work out a series of exercises which will give full justification of this feature, and enable one to adopt this gait as one's own mannerism. Then this must be practiced until it becomes mechanical, but at the same time light and customary without demanding conscious attention for its execution. Such characteristic features must become an integral part of the actor. "Then as soon as he begins to live the life of the character these characteristics assert themselves spontaneously; and vice versa, when acting these features, the actor begins to experience the feelings underlying them.

#### CLICHE

**A** CLICHE is a ready-made form for the expression of feeling. It is harmful because it forces the feeling into a set cast, and is likely to break up the continuity of the real experience. Some cliches are copies of other actors, some are repetitions of one's own devices. In showing a state of distress, for instance, one may invariably clasp one's hands regardless of whether this fits the part or the degree of intensity of emotion. Or a cliché may be a habit formed in real life. A certain actor always pulls his ear when he gets confused. This habit cannot suit every part—and besides it comes out of the actor's own confusion, not the character's, and should be kept off the stage.

In order to eradicate a cliché a real activity should be substituted. A cliché used to indicate deep thought is wrinkling one's forehead and looking at the ceiling. If the actor will stop and actually *think*—even if all he does is the multiplication tables—

(Continued on page 29)

# Piscator's First Film

A Moscow Letter

By BELA BELASZ

[Both the author, Bela Balasz, and the subject of this article, Erwin Piscator, refugees from Nazi Germany, are working in the Soviet Film industry. Piscator's first film, *The Revolt of the Fishermen*, will soon be released in this country by Amkino.]

**E**RWIN PISCATOR does not introduce himself to the world with *Revolt of the Fishermen*. As an artist, director, as a political personality, he is widely known even outside of Germany. His importance cannot be measured by this, his first film.

Piscator is known throughout the world as the 100 per cent *political* theatreman. To him art is primarily a weapon of the revolutionary offensive. The political, the Marxist point of view, determines the style, the artistic formula of Piscator's theatre. The desire to create a social entity, to fuse social matter with economics and to penetrate to everyday realities, has always prompted him. He constructed huge designs with revolutionary aims. Piscator is no painter of miniatures, no engraver and no aesthete. His productions have the significance, the meaning of political mass demonstrations. This is his great and commanding strength. This has been the source of his inventions and phantasies, but also the source of his weakness. He could never find a corresponding play for the tremendous scale of design he is able to project in his theatre. He has stretched small and thin materials on a giant stage, or superimposed the vastness with too obvious solutions. The very greatness of his genius has often been the cause of his faults.

We are able to trace most of the faults of Piscator's first film to this basic source. The subject of Segher's novel *The Revolt of the Fishermen at St. Barbara* is too thin, too pale to serve Piscator's aim: the creation of a monumental social picture. He was forced to magnify it in order to give it a political entity. The film begins with unorganized dry political titles; in spots we find rough

and schemed shots. The claim that this picture is purely agitational is sheer nonsense, for it is full of tender lyricism, of psychologically shaded figures, and possesses an artistic quality altogether new in the film. It suffers in the beginning from an abundance of imposed agitational material, especially where the political tendency within this narrow subject can not be stated internally. This is its only artistic imperfection.

Piscator's first film is not a masterpiece. He shows himself even here the great master, the great director, and indeed, a great film director. We can easily detect many of his weaknesses, at the same time we are forced to admit his tremendous strength. There is no need to deal lengthily with the faults of this film, for even a third rate motion picture reviewer could easily detect them. These errors are expected of one who makes his debut in the field of the cinema, especially when he is unable to use the experience of others as his own. The shortcomings of the film are partly due to the scenario, partly to the magnification of the theme itself.

**I**T IS more important to discover, within the frame of this work, the great director. One can recognize his greatness in the differentiation of his figures, in the richness, in the coloring and shading of individual characters such as we have not yet seen in any film. This, of course, does not condemn all other pictures. The simplicity, the single color of characterization was the needed and natural style of the silent film, for the director worked without dialogue. We believed that the talkies would present a discriminating, psychological, deeper, a three-dimensional characterization. Until now the talkies have not fulfilled this expectation. Piscator, however, with his first still imperfect film already shows a path in this direction.

His richer individuation is exemplified in the varied forms of the *political character*. From the class-conscious sailor of St. Sebastian to the cynical strike-breaker, Piscator shows all sorts of political types among the fishermen: the hero of this picture, an anarchistic revolutionist, who stabs his friend in the back for becoming a scab; the strike-breaker who discovers solidarity with his class in a decisive moment; the naive young fisherman who "knows what is to be done" and blows the ship up.

To Piscator a class does not mean a *psychological uniform*. Every face which he portrays is individual, alive, and expresses an unusual political consciousness.

The most outstanding artistic and original expression of this film is not this differentiation of varied political characters, but the inner perception and the psychological coloring of a few of the principle performers. Piscator creates two characters which have not as yet existed in the art of the cinema—the two female characters of this film, masterpieces of cinema characterization. One of these characters is the sailor's whore, portrayed with inexorable realism. Not for a moment is she romantically idealized. She is no "La Dame aux Camellias," but an ordinary prostitute in a harbor town. She is much used, but never martyred. He portrays her as a lumpen-proletarian, very ordinary, tough and businesslike. She remains declassed though she shows warmth and solidarity towards the working class. This contradiction is organic in the character—through this contradiction the portrayal becomes three-dimensional.

In order to show her human qualities Piscator does not find it necessary to give her a perfumed soul. He creates the many sided picture of this woman. At first we see her in the window of a waterfront brothel. She is not even exceptional. She is but one of the many, a very ordinary type. Next we see her on the boat, sailing to Barbara, sitting among the rich bourgeois and among the sailors. She does not concentrate on the bourgeois alone. She is displaying her body here. We notice next an adolescent. Then: her first meeting with the youngster.

"I would like to come to you. Maybe I could come tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow? Impossible."

"Why?"

"Today!"

**T**HE amiable charmer, the declaration of love of an ordinary prostitute, is created here with unsentimental realism. In the scene with the sailors we see a great deal



Stills from *Revolt of the Fishermen*



Mejrabpom-Film





Stills from *Revolt of the Fishermen*



*Mejrabpom-Film*

more. Social feeling has awakened in the girl. She converses with the sailors in a very businesslike manner. "Maybe you haven't got money?" She understands his sadness. She is sorry. But at no time is she allowed to become soft. She throws herself on the sailor's neck, though she knows that he has no money. Here she becomes different from what she appeared to be in the beginning of the picture. At first she was selling her body; now she would like to lay her head on his breast. Being inexperienced in such behaviour she fails to convince the sailor. The sailor pushes her away. She is not surprised, she knows that she has failed. She is not idealized even later when she goes to the market-place with a young fisherman. Someone offers her money. She is reluctant to accept it in the young man's presence, but exclaims in a friendly rational voice: "You must not disturb my business dealings." The youngster spits at her. She creates no scene, she shrugs her shoulders, but later, when left alone, breaks down weeping.

In spite of her being a whore we are persuaded to believe her deeper feelings, that she is capable of calling the youngster a traitor and a scoundrel when she thinks that he is scabbing. Janukowa, who plays the prostitute, is an excellent actress. From gestures and voice the director built a complicated architectural design of a living being that has many sides, but one character. This organic many-sidedness is new in the movies.

More meaningful, deeper and picturesque is the other female figure, a figure of gloomy strength, of somber stature. There



is antiquity in the dignity of her tragedy.

This character is created with silence. She speaks no words. Silence used as a dramatic emphasis is the most specific and strongest possibility of the talking pictures. In the silent pictures this was impossible. Where everything is silent, muteness can not be used for accentuation. Even on the stage silence can not have such meaning because the production itself is unable to convey the tempest brewing under the stillness. The actress Gliser and Piscator were able to create and translate this mute, restrained inner storm.

In the first scene, after her husband has been shot dead, she goes from one child to

another, her eyes tearless, she herself suppressed, mute and hard, a housewife who must keep order even though the earth shakes. At the burial where everyone cries she does not shed a tear. She is sorrowful, silent, aloof like a storm-cloud. Only once her muteness is broken by a wild shriek—then silence again. She seems absent-minded and when everyone runs to meet the soldiers she is left alone with the coffin. She stands up slowly. As if in a dream, her sight clouded, she walks straight ahead towards the soldiers. She seems unconscious and possessed by a fixed idea. She is frenzied with hate. She runs after the soldiers, without seeing, without thinking, through the middle of the firing line. Her eyes search for the soldier she wants to find. She chases him as stubbornly as a werewolf. She is beating him now like a maniac. Under her hand the soldier must have died a hundred deaths.

This is truly a tragic figure of the gloomy stature of Electra. Gliser is a great actress and Piscator has given her style. It is too bad that this greatness of silence is disturbed, even though only for a moment, with a spoken word. Piscator through this break wanted to give to the character a particular political meaning. He weakened the character and gained little instead.

Many will praise the scenes of warfare and perhaps these very scenes will receive the most popular acclaim. Such scenes have already been done with greater perfection by the Russian masters. However, Piscator's female characterizations show a new and important path.

Translated by NICHOLAS WIRTH.

## "Blood on the Moon"

By JOHN HOWARD LAWSON

*Blood on the Moon*, a Play by Paul and Claire Sifton. Mayan Theatre, Los Angeles.

THE plays of Claire and Paul Sifton have given evidence of increasing dramatic skill and social clarity. Therefore, when I first heard they had written a drama about Hitler Germany, I was elated—the subject offers smashing possibilities for the revolutionary playwright who has sufficient force and political understanding to handle it.

*Blood on the Moon* has the poignancy and sense of sheer theatre which characterize the Siftons' work. The Los Angeles production was inadequate, carelessly staged and badly acted (with the exception of Lenita Lane's excellent performance as the heroine). But defects of production did not obscure the effectiveness of many scenes.

Having granted so much, the Siftons will (I hope) forgive me if I desert the function

of a reviewer, and content myself with asking *them* a few sincere and puzzled questions: these questions grow out of my very definite admiration for the Siftons, my assurance that they are among the few playwrights who are equipped technically and ideologically to help build the revolutionary theatre:

1. You have chosen a middle-class theme, the persecution of a family whose blood is fractionally Jewish. Admitting that such a theme is good theatre material, can you justify disregarding the whole historical and economic framework in which this tragedy is enacted?

2. Do you think it is *true* that such a family would be completely unaware of the causes behind Hitlerism, of the fundamental conflict between Communism and Fascism, the conflict between the awakening Proletariat and the forces of black reaction?

3. You end your play with defeat, suicide and an emotional plea for Jewish

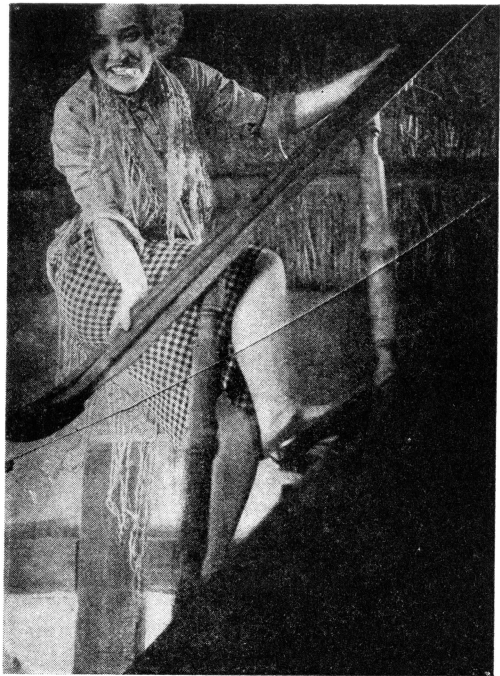
Nationalism (on the part of the elderly doctor): don't you think this is extremely misleading unless you *also* show that many members of the bankrupt and persecuted German middle-class (Jewish and otherwise) are being led to an enforced clarity in regard to the nature of war and Fascism, and the only possible way out?

4. Do you think your occasional references to Imperialist war, etc., are sufficient to give any real picture of the economic framework?

5. Did you intentionally avoid emphasis on the class struggle because you think such emphasis would make the play less palatable to American middle-class audiences?

6. I don't think you are afraid of the word "propaganda": do you think stories of horror and persecution are effective propaganda unless they tell *why* the horror exists and what can be done about it?

7. Heinrich, the young musician in your play, is frequently referred to as a "Com-



munist" and calls himself a "Communist". Do you think that Heinrich expresses the point of view of a Communist? Particularly, how do you explain the cowardly and confused plea for mercy which this "Communist" makes when he is arrested by storm-troopers? This speech is so extraordinary that I believe it is proper to quote a large part of it:

"I speak and think in German . . . I . . . acknowledge the Nordic Gods . . . I love Germany . . . our fatherland . . . the land . . . the fields . . . the cities . . . the music . . . the poetry . . . the hunger and yearning of its people . . . all of them. . ."

Nazi Officer

No one has asked you to lie, Marxist.

Heinrich

"It's true . . . you and I . . . we're after the same things . . . peace and bread . . . and honor. . ."

(to the troopers)

"Germans . . . brothers . . ."

Later, after more pleading, Heinrich speaks as follows (with stage direction which says, "driven by pure terror"):

"Don't arrest me. What have I done? . . . I am not an enemy of Germany. Do you want pledges, promises?"

And again,

"My god! Why do you do this? You are young . . . my age . . . Without that shirt, that uniform, that gun . . . you are my brother. . . Shoot me if you will . . . on orders. But tell me why? What good will it do? What will it prove? Will it feed and clothe and give security to our brothers who are cold, and hungry, and filled with terror from day to day and hour to hour? . . . Will it make Germany whole and strong and happy?"

There is much more of this long desperate plea for mercy. Later, Heinrich's horror becomes concentrated on the idea that they will break his fingers:

"I'll kill myself . . . They'll hurt me . . . My fingers . . . They're lame already . . . They'll break them . . . No more . . . music! Oh God, Lieutenant, don't you see? If anything happens to my hands . . . No more music!"

Do the Siftons think this "Communist" gives an accurate impression of the known heroism of thousands of German Communists?

The above are not rhetorical questions: I honestly wonder whether the Siftons have analyzed these problems and how they approach them?

*Blood on the Moon* is significant—because it wastes a great opportunity. Lacking political clarity, it also lacks punch and meaning. It gives the audience no awareness of Fascism, but rather makes the spectators feel safe and detached from the insanities of Hitler Germany, convincing us that these mad brutalities are peculiarly Teutonic and could never be duplicated in this country.

The aesthetic weakness of *Blood on the Moon* springs directly from ideological

weakness. Being bad art, it is also bad propaganda—simply because it gives an incomplete blurred picture of events which can only be seen clearly when viewed in the light of accurate Marxian analysis.

### PAUL SIFTON REPLIES

LAWSON's criticism is accurate in its main contention, that the play does not portray the fundamental reasons for the rise of German Fascism to power and the struggle between workers and exploiters before, during and after that event. Our defense is that we did not intend to write such a play. We could not write such a play because at the time of writing we were ignorant of the details of that struggle and of the important unreported events just prior to and after January 31, 1933. What we did intend to write was a play about a middle-class family of partly Jewish blood in Germany under Hitler. We never claimed that *Blood On the Moon* was the definitive "Hitler play."

Lawson's point-by-point questions are difficult to answer because they are of the "have you stopped beating your wife?" type. However, here goes:

1. We did not "disregard the whole historical and economic framework in which this tragedy was enacted." In the Prologue (which may have been botched in Los Angeles) and in speeches throughout the play, we built in the historical, political, economic and cultural background. We may not have done this well, but it is an exaggeration to say we disregarded it.

2. The family was not "completely unaware of the causes behind Hitlerism." Here, for instance, are Dr. Mohlenhoff and his two sons talking in Act. I:

*Heinrich:* You can't go backward in a world that moves forward.

*Dr. Mohlenhoff:* It is easier to go backward and downward than forward . . . against such difficulties. We have been slipping for the past fifteen years.

*Heinrich:* Since the republicans and the socialists called on the monarchists to stop the revolution!

*Hans:* It is the fault of France and America. Of reparations. Our war guilt is a lie.

*Heinrich:* "It is the fault of capitalist imperialism, why won't you say it, Hans?"

3. Yes, the play does end with defeat and suicide. Since it is about a doomed class and group, why not? But Lawson could not be more wrong than in calling the ending "an emotional plea for Jewish nationalism." We wonder what might have been inserted in the Los Angeles Production, because there is nothing in the play as we wrote it which could possibly be interpreted by anyone as such a plea.

The play ends with Dr. Mohlenhoff, the liberal, the gradualist, faced with the fact of Hitlerism. Pleading with his daughter to get rid of her unborn child, he says:

"What future is there for your child in Germany? He will be born into a country

we won't know. Shame and fear will be his heritage. He'll be allowed no education . . . no hope. When he is older . . . blood and terror . . . war. Already Hitler has united Europe against us. He has committed Europe to an international suicide agreement . . . nation against nation . . . race against race . . . to destroy each other. . . . The future of the world is black."

Does Lawson argue that this man, who evades the class struggle in life, should on the stage say "class against class?" We can't see it. As for showing some middle class persons surviving and achieving clarity, yes, it would have been a good idea, but that was not the play we were writing.

4. Only occasional, Jack? And what do you mean by "etc.?" We probably did not give a thorough picture but background.

5. No. We were ignorant of the facts and events in the class struggle in Germany and we did have a definite knowledge of the middle class Jewish situation.

6. Smile when you say that word. Let us explain. As writers, we have two serious aims. First, we want to learn our craft, so that we can call upon it as surely as a good pitcher spots his fast ball, his hook on the inside, outside, high, low, or across the center of the plate. Second, we want to deal with live, controversial subjects which are of interest and importance to us and to everyday people. We have never deliberately set out to write a "propaganda" play for or against anything. There are other plays to be written about Hitler, particularly about the workers under Fascism. It will be a great play. Why don't you write it, Jack Lawson?

7. Heinrich is not a Communist in the sense that he is "politically correct." He is a bourgeois "fellow traveler," who thinks of himself, and is thought of by his family, as a Communist. He is not "cowardly." Unconsciously, no doubt, you have selected lines unfairly. For instance, had you quoted the beginning of the Heinrich speech to the Nazi officer, starting with the stage direction which indicated his attitude and technique, the reader might understand that Heinrich was trying to "talk himself out of" the Nazi's grip. He was fencing for an opening. And why not? Would he not be more useful outside a concentration camp than in?

As to his being afraid: A person who has no imagination in front of danger isn't brave, however bodily he faces his doom. But the man who can foresee, who is afraid, and yet goes, has the qualities of a hero. That was the basis for our characterization of Heinrich. When he has tried every device to get out of being arrested, when he has faced all that it will probably mean and knows that he has to go, he walks out. "They want me; that's all," he says to his family. "It's all right." We felt that his going then was heroic, more so than if he had dumbly accepted the inevitable.

# The Mass Dance

By JANE DUDLEY

THE mass dance, or choric dance, as well as the folk dance, can be put to revolutionary uses, the extent of which has not yet been tested. Large groups of lay dancers, even at times the most superficially trained people can, by careful direction, set simple but clear patterns of group movement into a form that presents our revolutionary ideas movingly and meaningfully. The dancer learns to move communally, to express with others a simple class-conscious idea. In this way, large numbers of people can be mobilized not only to dance but to observe, and through the discussion of the theme and the problems of movement brought forward by the leader and dancers, clarity of ideology can be given. Certainly the clarification that will come with the discussion of the theme at the end of the class, plus the experience of dancing in groups of twenty or thirty people such a theme as strike or anti-war, cannot fail to educate (propagandize) the members of such a mass class. The following is an outline of procedure and specific directions for the formation and teaching of a class in mass dancing.

Themes for a mass dance should be chosen as well for importance as for timeliness, *e.g.*, current events, important days, historical events in the class struggle, anti-war issue, Negro rights, class war prisoners, Fascism. Care should be taken, however, that the approach to the theme is one that underlines the important issues and interprets them correctly, and that the approach to the theme is a *danceable* one. These classes should be called either at regular intervals, or during important events (such as the textile strike, San Francisco general strike), or before or on important days, *i.e.*, May First, etc.

Twenty or thirty people are essential for this class, and as many as fifty can be used if space permits and the leader is skillful. Laymen interested in dancing can participate, and members for the class can be drawn from all groups, since no one technic is necessary. For accompaniment, such instruments as drums, cymbals, piano, gongs, even voice, chants, songs, are valuable, and should be used in order to provide rhythm, and so keep the unity of movement, and to help build intensity.

Finally there should be a chairman to lead discussion before class begins, and after class when questions are asked, and an actual dance leader for the class who can direct large groups of people, who understands the nature of a mass class, and who understands the theme as a revolutionary dance leader. A committee should be formed to decide on the theme and leader. The committee's responsibility would be to see that the leader thoroughly understands the theme. The committee can also handle the organizing of the class, the sending out of notices, selecting the studio, etc.

Before the class begins, discuss the theme decided upon. If an event, describe it, and interpret it. If a day, give history of day, its significance, etc.

In order to give the members of the class an understanding of what it means to move together as a group, a few simple exercises should be given, such as standing together and swaying from side to side, walking together backwards and forwards, sinking down and rising up. These are exercises purely on a movement basis. It is possible to color the exercise by adding meaning to the movement, *e.g.*, the group should go towards a point as though asking for something, demanding something. What must be

remembered is the goal—*achieving a group sense in the class*. The group is not a collection of solo dancers; the unity of every one's movement should be worked for.

After these exercises, the leader begins on the theme. In the directing of this theme, several facts should be kept in mind. Choose movements that are simple, not limited to one technic, and movements which a dancer, no matter what her training, can do. Choose movements, the sequence of which must be suitable to group dancing. Remember that the more members in a group the more unwieldy it becomes, and the slower must be the changes in direction. For this reason, the simple, fundamental steps—the walk, the run—are the most useful and effective. Think of the possibilities in the walk — marching, creeping, hesitating, rushing forward, being thrown back, the group splitting apart, scattered in all directions, uniting, coming forward, backing away, being thrown down, rising up. For this one does not need "steps," *bas de basque*, *tour jete*, etc. All that is important is the movement of the group in space. Keep in mind the technical level of the group. More difficult parts can be given to the better trained members.

THE leader tells the group or groups how it begins, what the movement is, where the movement is directed, how many times the movement is done. She gives them a phrase, as much as they can easily remember. If the first phrase of movement has been correctly danced, the leader can go on to the next phrase or section. In this way piece by piece the dance is built up.

The process of building the entire dance may have taken an hour. Parts will have been repeated: it will have been danced through up to the place where a new part is to be added. By the end of the period, the dance should be done. It can be danced through three or four times by the group. It need not take more than three minutes to perform. It will of necessity be simple. It must be moving, especially to the participants. It must have significance. It is the leader's duty to emphasize this significance to them, explain it to them. Her description of the theme, of the movements, must be vivid, must mobilize the members in such a way that they throw themselves into the dancing of the theme.

As an example I will try to describe a mass dance suitable for a group consisting of any number of people. The theme is *Strike*. It is the conflict between pickets who call to the workers within the factory to put down their tools and come out on strike, and the militia which stands as a wall between the pickets and the workers. For



Anna Sokolow, Sophie Maslow, Lilly Mehlman, who appeared November 25th in the Solo Dance Recital at the Civic Repertory.

Photo by Messik



Anna Sokolow, Sophie Maslow, Lilly Mehlman, who appeared November 25th  
in the Solo Dance Recital at the Civic Repertory.

*Photo by Messik*

the theme three groups are needed, the pickets, the militia, the workers. It is the leader's first job to divide the large group she has into three smaller groups, and to tell each of the three which part it takes. She explains how the dance starts. The rear of the floor space is for the workers. She puts them in a formation in groups of three or four depending upon their number. To all of them she gives the same rhythmic work movement, a large swing perhaps so that it can be seen. She tries the movement out with them; sees if they can do it all together, exactly at the same time.

In front of the workers she places the militia. In this group no more are necessary than it takes to form a line across the width of the space, the members placed at least a step apart. They are facing the audience, on guard. The dance starts. The workers begin their movement. The militia stand on guard throughout the first section. After the rhythm of their movement has been established, a picket enters. He crosses the space—recrosses it; another picket enters; pickets come singly, in pairs, four at a time. It is a chaos of people passing back and forth in front of the militia. Slowly this chaos resolves itself into a unified group which turns, faces the workers, leans forward. With raised arms they call the workers out. The workers stop, turn. The militia shoulder their guns.

This is the first section of the dance. Those who are the pickets must enact the sequence of their entrances. The first section is a continuous crescendo climaxing in three sharp accents. One: the pickets turn to the workers with raised arms. Two: Workers stop. Three: Militia shoulder arms.

The first action should now be danced through two or three times so that the group grows more familiar with the sequence of movement. When this is done the leader outlines the next part—the conflict between pickets and militia. The militia on this part stand as a wall between the pickets and the workers. They do not move from their place until the end. The quality of their movement is brutal, explosive as the shot of a gun, sharp as the edge of a bayonet. In these qualities lies the approach to movement for the militia. If one merely copies (pantomimes) the action of shooting, brutality is lacking. But, by using the actual gesture of shooting only as a basis, and the qualities spoken of above as the means of amplification one adds the emotional impact. The quality of the movement of the pickets in contrast is dynamic, the crescendo and decrescendo of swaying forward, being thrust back.

The first section ends with the militia shouldering their guns. The arms of each picket, which had been raised to call the workers, sinks and the pickets slowly back away from the guards. But this withdrawal is a preparation. The whole group of pickets

surges forward. The militia strikes down. The group is thrust back unevenly. The group attacks again, but this time in sections. And in sections it retreats, preparing to strike again. One side charges forward on the diagonal to the center and is forced back on the diagonal to the other side. The center of the group rushes forward. Its front ranks are mowed down by the stroke of the militia, like tall grass under the stroke of a scythe. The whole group is now massed on one side.

**D**URING this there has been no movement on the part of the workers. Now from the group of pickets one breaks away, runs towards the workers. They lean towards him. The militia raise their arms, but as the picket backs away another from the group runs forward. This time the workers move to the side where the picket stands.

Now from the group of pickets single members break away, run towards the workers; they are thrown back by the militia and one is thrown down. Again the two forces face each other as at the beginning. Meanwhile the workers have shifted their group from the side to the center. As the pickets one after the other call them out, the workers, a few at a time, will shift positions into the center in back of the militia. The tension within the group of workers grows. As the pickets prepare to attack, the workers raise their arms to break through the militia. As the pickets move towards the militia the workers, their group wedge shaped, lunge forward. The line of the militia splits in the center. Through the opening surge the workers to join the pickets. From the center the workers and pickets together press the militia back to each side. Here the dance ends.

## Open Letter to Jasper Deeter

Dear Jap:

It's been a month since I left Rose Valley and your theatre. A great deal has happened to me in that month—a good part of which concerns you.

I knew when I left your theatre where I was headed. For a year I'd been a "sympathizer" of the revolutionary movement. But "sympathizing" with the working class never has been and never will be enough for anyone who lacks the capacity to kid himself. One has to go to work for something as important as this, in whatever field one is most valuable. So, after answering most of my own "ifs" and "buts," I joined the Workers Laboratory Theatre Shock Troupe.

Let me tell you something of the W.L.T. It is what is known as a "theatre of action" and follows the principle that theatre is a powerful weapon in the class struggle (and always a means of propaganda for either the capitalists or workers). Our work consists of playing at strike meetings, revolutionary workers' rallies, for affiliated mass organizations and playing on the streets in workers' neighborhoods.

What has this to do with you? Just this—you left New York and Broadway eleven years ago "to get away from a theatre controlled by real estate men." I have come back to New York to find a new theatre growing by leaps and bounds, because of the avid desire of workers for a theatre of their own. But we need more trained ability in the workers' theatre movement.

**YOU ARE NEEDED!** In your heart and mind you agree with the basic principles of Communism. Your theatre in its beginnings (before you became so successful) was run as a commune. You know the capitalist system is rotten to its core. You

are not fooled by the Socialist twaddle of "evolution without revolution."

Because you know all this, I say, you dare not ignore these things in your theatre any longer. As one of the greatest directors in the country (I think you know that's an honest opinion), you cannot use your theatre and your ability to produce pap like *Happy Ending*, *Spring in Autumn*, *Let the Punishment*, etc. You can not produce this meaningless stuff in a period of sharpening class struggle, and respect yourself or your art. *Winesburg, Ohio* may seem vigorous to you in the isolation of lovely Rose Valley but it is not enough.

What am I (for the revolutionary theatre) asking of you? Nothing Utopian or impossible. See if you can't find time to assist one of the Workers' Theatres in nearby Philadelphia. You'd find it challenging and much more stimulating than your work with the Junior League. Stop using your craftsmanship on pap. Cut the synthetic out of your theatre even if you have to cut your repertory in half for a year or two. Bring your theatre down to earth and into life, as it is lived in the coal mines near you, in textile sweatshops, in German dungeons. Use your theatre as an artistic force in the revolutionary movement instead of playing house in a vacuum.

Forgive my lack of diplomacy.

Sincerely yours,

CURT CONWAY.

P. S. Do you remember the thrill all of us experienced the day Wayland Rudd, the Negro actor, came back to see you at Hedgerow after two years in Soviet Russia, as he told us of the joy of theatre work in a socialist state free from real estate men and politicians? A theatre of unlimited opportunity, artistry, life?



# Two Authors Between Two Worlds

## The Plays of the Month

By BEN BLAKE

SEAN O'CASEY, in *Within the Gates*, has a very simple tale to tell that is neither very original nor very dramatic. It is about a young woman who has become a Whore because she could not get a decent job, and about the Bishop who will not help her until he learns that she is his illegitimate daughter. Then there is the poetic pleasure of life with him. There are also a host of minor characters, well-drawn, earthy, vivid.

The trouble is that O'Casey has seen fit to fluff up this simple tale with a host of pretentious irrelevancies. In an advance article, O'Casey proclaimed his play an all-embracing allegory. The characters, though they stand quite well on their own feet in the play itself, are declared (in explanatory notes inserted in the program by a considerate management) to be "symbols" of all manner of weighty things. The playwright has woven in dancing and song, some of it artistically justified, and some of it—to put it mildly—out of place. In the dialogue, speeches of rich and substantial poetic imagery alternate with speeches of jagged poeticism, where the sensitive listener grits his teeth in unpleasant anticipation of forced and sustained alliteration.

O'Casey is here concerned with widespread "poverty of spirit." All his characters except the Young Whore and the Dreamer are afflicted with it. And here is one weakness of the play. The author seeks to maintain this "poverty of spirit" as an abstraction, arising wilfully in each person. So we witness the shameful spectacle of an O'Casey who was once an Irish workingman, labeling two Chair Attendants who are fired for being "too old" as "symbols of life's wreckage who are wasting life by living it." And we see this O'Casey addressing a song to the poor suffering little bankers and industrialists, who of course never take time off to enjoy life on their country estates, villas, and yachts, a song inviting them to come out and enjoy the beauties of nature. Then there is that ominous group of Down and Outs, all afflicted with that same "poverty of spirit," be they wealthy or poor, whom "life has passed by."

His "strong" characters are likewise significant. It is their weakness that is the chief source of the play's weakness. There is no adequate force to give battle to those afflicted with poverty of spirit. The Young Whore who has not succumbed is none the less life's wreckage. Only a new and decent social system (but of this there is no hint in O'Casey) could give her a chance to live and grow and make her contribution to so-



Gropper Sees *Within the Gates*

ciety. As for that other strong one, the Dreamer, "symbol of a noble restlessness and discontent; of the stir in life that brings new things and greater things than were before . . ." the Dreamer, a purposeless young man with minor creative gifts, who in the play is actually a rather ordinary, not altogether real fellow (despite the praiseworthy efforts of Bramwell Fletcher)—we can show Mr. O'Casey half a dozen such young men in as many minutes, any summer day on the steps of the New York Public Library. If this were the hope of the world, the outlook would be dark indeed.

In its technical aspects, *Within the Gates* abounds in weaknesses which O'Casey seeks to rationalize theoretically. In the aforementioned article, he comes forth with the "new" idea that poetry and music and dancing belong in drama. Who denies it, that it must now be reasserted so vehemently? Realism as a style of artistic expression arises in different social systems at definite stages of social development. To consider briefly this very play: O'Casey, as an artist of high talent, is sensitive to his social environment. He perceives the decaying imperialism that is the British Empire today. ("The golden life of England is tarnished," says one of his characters.) Everywhere is poverty of spirit. So much O'Casey understands, but not how this has come about. To understand the full social implications of this phenomenon requires a sharp break with one's past viewpoint on many matters. It is a difficult process to accept the revolutionary conception that capitalism must be destroyed and labor emancipated from wage-slavery if humanity is to

survive and progress. The first and natural reaction of many sensitive artists to the unpleasantness of life ("poverty of spirit") is flight—escape from reality. "The world is a sad place; in my works of art I shall scorn reality. I will bring in poetry and music and dancing and high thoughts, though the world be barren of them." Yet, this flight from the field of battle, results in abandoning the world to the ruthless overlords of profit, means influencing others to abandon the field with you, means doing very much what O'Casey denounces the Down and Outs for doing.

This is the trend of O'Casey's present theorizing. His plays, however, do not wholly succumb. *Within the Gates*, with all the artificiality so inartistically puffed into it, retains a high degree of realistic vigor, a flavor of the solid earth, an alive-and-kicking quality deriving from the robustness of the common characters. O'Casey's roots in proletarian soil stand him in good stead. His workingclass background is his strength.

*Within the Gates* is excellently acted by a large cast, featuring Lillian Gish as the Young Whore and Moffat Johnson as the Bishop. The play is a difficult one to stage, but Melvyn Douglas has done it admirably. James Reynolds' simple park setting is a thing of beauty and power, dominated by the unforgettable statue of the unknown soldier with massive body and small head, wearing a trench helmet. The music, written by Milton Lusk and A. Lehman Engel, reflects the minor pastoral tone of the dances excellently. Special mention should be made of the music for the Song of the Down and Outs, a weird, powerful, ominous chord of the damned. Probably it is the beauty of all these elements of the production (together with the poetic virility of much of O'Casey's dialogue) that hypnotized a drabbed Brooks Atkinson to acclaim a play that contributes no fresh understanding or insight into life, but only confusion, as a "great" play.

**B**ETWEEN TWO WORLDS is a solid, mature play, one of the most worthwhile and enjoyable productions of this or any season. *We, the People* and *Judgment Day* were products of an Elmer Rice aroused by patent injustice and tyranny. They seem written at white heat. The new play is quite different. Here the dramatist is writing from sober reflection. Calmly selecting and ordering his material. Rice has dramatized effectively the major conflict of contemporary life. Yet he has done it with hardly any physical action. The result demonstrates an old, but seldom illustrated

dramatic axiom, that a clash of ideas can be every bit as exciting as a clash of physical forces.

The scene is the first-class deck of a transatlantic liner. The characters are many, yet each is as carefully etched and real as the myriads of *Street Scene*. Chiefly there is Margaret Bowen (sweetly and intelligently acted by Rachel Hartzell), a wealthy society girl; her friend Elena Mikhailovna Golitzin (Margaret Waller), white-Russian ex-princess; Lloyd Arthur, delicate and impotent son of a once wealthy capitalist who was stripped in the stock market crash of 1929, Harvard graduate and very minor poet; and Edward Maynard, successful young advertising man. So far all are of one world. But soon appears a man who is as different from all these as the sun is from the moon. One solitary figure, and the old world is shattered.

The new element is N. N. Kovolev (Joseph Schildkraut), a Soviet film director on his way home from Hollywood. But Kovolev is an artist in the Soviet sense—not some impractical eccentric who somehow has a strange gift for creating, but man made whole, a Communist and practical organizer as well, who fought in the Revolution, and who is interested in developments in science and medicine no less than in art, psychology, and personality.

The drama concerns itself mainly with how in the brief days of one ocean crossing, the contact with Kovolev gives Margaret Bowen the courage to break with her past thinking. It is rather weakly typified by her breaking off her conventional engagement with a society playboy and going off instead to marry Maynard, who has been even more thoroughly revolutionized by his brief contact with Kovolev. The Communist remains a bit sad at the thought of all the personal pleasures he had foregone as a soldier of the revolution—sad, but strong. The most dramatic scene of the play is a quite simple one. The ex-peasant Kovolev confronts the ex-princess Elena for the first time. Elena, sounding like a walking edition of *Escape from the Soviets*, has previously told her side of the story: how she saw her own parents shot down by the Soviets during the civil war. But now for the first time the audience hears the other side of the story. Kovolev tells Elena how his grandparents worked as serfs on her grandparents' estate and of the beatings they suffered at the hands of her grandparents; how in 1905 his father and brother were among those shot to death by a force officered by her father while they were part of an unarmed crowd seeking to present a petition to the Czar. Kovolev has compelled her to listen to his story. Now the delicate little princess shows her class character. She is furious. *Canaille!* she hisses. Kovolev's answer is simple. He slaps her cheek. Here has burst through all the stored up hatred of the peasant for his oppressors. That

slap, shattering the nice-mannered bourgeois order, was a slap which Elmer Rice's bourgeois patrons will not soon forgive him.

The many other characters and incidents take up a good part of the play. There is only space to mention a few: The Negro maid (sensitively acted by Osceola Archer), who receives the hand of comradeship as an abused fellow-worker from Kovolev in two brief scenes that are among the most touching in the entire play. The pathetic figure of Rita Dodd (Constance McKay), wife of a hack novelist, a woman of intelligence whose life is caught in that of a rotten class, who is aware of it but does not say it, and whose reaction takes the form of shrewd and cynical wisecracks. There are humorous incidents, and incidents sharply bitter as Maynard's indictment of the capitalist class as parasites. Mr. Rice retains some minor misconceptions as to the Communist attitude towards a number of things.

The production, staged by the author, is an interesting one all around. The acting is generally very good. The opening scene drags, but picks up immediately thereafter. There is a single ingenious set by Aline Bernstein. The play is perfectly cast, and there is ensemble acting that is rare on Broadway.

*Between Two Worlds*, though not a great play, is a creditable achievement, all the more significant after the impetuous emotionalism of *Judgment Day*. With it Mr. Rice seems to have left the old world behind, and is at least facing the new. If his talents have not yet attained their highest fulfillment, it may be because, though he has long had too much mind and heart to believe in the old world, he has not yet arrived at complete understanding and faith in the new. *Between Two Worlds* is a fellow traveler's play without the usual fellow traveler's confusion. To Mr. Rice our last word for the present is, "Keep on traveling."

**C**ONVERSATION PIECE is a comedy with the faint sweet smell of decadence about it. It is set in England in 1811, and tells of the efforts of an impoverished French nobleman to marry off a charming French girl to any English lord with money—a nobleman pimping, as it were. It was written as a vehicle for the French actress Yvonne Printemps by the everlastingly English Noel Coward, whose knowledge of and contempt for the decadent upper class world in which he moves creeps into his creations.

The production is perfect in its way. Clever oh-so-minor lyrics and music, good acting, swell costumes and magnificent outdoor sets by G. E. Calthrop. Much of the dialogue is in French. Ideal bourgeois theatre—and how the evening-dressed orchestra patrons lapped it up! No ideas, no vitality, everything just pretty-pretty. What more could your little heart desire?

*Geraniums in My Window* is a perniciously pleasant trifle, a sort of *Abie's Irish Rose* of the classes. The heroine is Nellie Quinn, a red-headed waitress (endearingly played by Audrey Christie). The hero is Slater Jones, incognito for Toby Starr, son of a millionaire, Harvard graduate, and writer, who feels he must go to the masses in order to know and write about the real life of today. He falls for Nellie, and in the end marries her despite his millions. His rich dad is a perfect gentleman about it. Nellie's boss Weinstein (Robert Leonard does him with pleasant gusto) is an old dear, and everything is very wonderful in a very wonderful world. The hitch: It was written by Vera Caspary AND Samuel Ornitz. Have we said enough? P. S. There is also an astrologer at the theatre—available free to all ticket-holders.

## PLAY CONTEST

**T**O stimulate the writing of short revolutionary plays for immediate productions by the workers' theatres, *New Masses* and *New Theatre* joined in offering the following prizes:

1. \$50 for the best revolutionary play: anti-war, anti-fascist, strike or relief struggle, etc. Any dramatic form: realistic, symbolic, musical, vaudeville, etc. Maximum playing time: approximately 35 minutes.
2. \$25 for the best short revolutionary play: any form, any subject. Maximum playing time: approximately 15 minutes.
3. \$25 for the best revolutionary political sketch suitable for performance at street meetings, workers' clubs, picnics, etc., as well as on the stage. Maximum playing time: approximately 10 minutes.

Although the contest was announced to close December 15, the deadline for submitting plays has been postponed until January 31, 1935, because hardly any plays have come in under sections 2 and 3, the short plays that are needed most of all. According to the changed plans, the winning playwrights will be notified on February 15th, and will receive the awards in cash immediately. The two magazines will sponsor presentations of the prize-winning plays at the Civic Repertory Theatre in New York, and in other cities throughout the country.

*Rules:* NEW THEATRE and *New Masses* reserve all rights including publication and performance of winning scripts. Royalties to author, wherever possible. No full length plays will be considered. Scripts submitted should be typed on one side and double spaced, and accompanied by return postage. Contestants may submit any number of plays. Judges: Harry Elion, L.O.W.T.; Al Saxe, Workers' Laboratory Theatre; Herbert Kline, NEW THEATRE; Stanley Burnshaw and Joseph North, NEW MASSES.

# English Theatre of the Left

By MARIE SETON

**M**ANY people say the English Channel takes a great deal of crossing, that is, if anyone is trying to cross with a new set of ideas concerning art. No matter whether it is in the field of literature, painting, music or the drama, England is supposed to be at least ten years out of date. That is not so true as it was. The fascist bludgeoning of "cultural Bolsheviks" has put the theatre of central Europe back a hundred years; while it has aroused hitherto socially unawakened artists to reconsider their position. In England this process of revaluation is just beginning to take visible and vital forms.

Experiments there have been in the non-commercial private theatre clubs of England; but they have been designed for the consumption of the Bloomsbury intellectuals rather than the general public. Realism of content was lacking, so that each and every attempt degenerated into the cul-de-sac of formalism. The latest effort to create a new form for a new public, the Experimental Theatre Studio, however, grew out of a singularly real purpose; a desire to enlighten the students of London University as to the character of the world they were living in, a world fraught with the danger of Fascism and War. The instigator was Aubrey Menon.

While Menon was still a student at the University he founded a group called the London Survey Players. This group, composed of students of many nationalities, considered the theatre the best art medium for spreading ideas. Menon wrote and produced plays of a sharply critical nature, presenting them in a form bare of all but essentials. This simplicity was far away from photographic naturalism, but was not an imitation of the various "isms" of ten years ago. From economic necessity a striking though not completely clarified form was realized. The group came into the limelight through the production of *The Shape of Things to Come*, which was a very free adaptation by Menon of H. G. Wells' rambling fantasy of social upheaval.

The first half of *The Shape of Things to Come* was a sharp picture of European warmongering, knit together by unemployment and the British Means Test. The second half disintegrated into Wellsian universalities enacted in the future by numbers of apocryphal and symbolical characters who talked in excellent epigrams.

After this production Menon came into contact with the professional theatre. He played a part in *Sailors of Cattaro* when it was produced by the Left Theatre in April 1934, and afterwards joined the committee of the theatre. A few months later the London Survey Players disappeared and Menon formed a professional group called the Experimental Theatre. The new group included Andre van Gyseghem, producer of the Embassy Theatre, London (now producing *Stevedore* with Paul Robeson), and a number of other artists from the Left Theatre. They sought the co-operation of Walter Leigh, one of England's most advanced composers; Duncan Grant, a leader of the avant-garde painters, and the dancers, Hedley Briggs and Diana Gould. The group, though in close contact with the Left Theatre, was separate from it in point of artistic methods, each theatre evolving a distinct character designed for different audiences. The plays chosen by the Left Theatre are directly political in intent, those by the Experimental more by their implication. The former theatre aims straight for a worker audience by taking its productions into the heart of working class districts. To meet the requirements of a hitherto untrained audience the production methods have been developed along lines of simplified naturalism. The Experimental Theatre seeks another audience, that of the intellectuals, sympathetic artists and general public of central London, and therefore its form is frankly experimental. Naturally there is a continual interchange of audience.

**T**HE newly evolved Experimental Theatre set to work on Menon's third play *Genesis II*. His method of work was to write and improvise upon his text during rehears-

als, incorporating the personalities of his actors, incidentally a method completely new in the experience of his group. Again the subject veered towards the universal, the inter-related themes being the denunciation of anti-Semitism, the Church and Imperial exploitation. The dramatic form Menon conceived was history presented in the idiom and expressive of the ideology of today; while the production style, a further development of *The Shape of Things to Come*, was the synthesis of the song, the dance and the spoken word, the plasticity of movement being continually emphasized.

Having no permanent home, the group gave two private performances at the Fortune Theatre in June. They were an unexpected success. Since then the nature of the theatre has changed again, or to be more accurate, it has entered upon a new phase of its rapid development. A group of well-known actors has now joined it, including Esme Percy, the greatest actor of Shavian roles; Robert Donat, recently returned from Hollywood, and Catharine Lacey and Joyce Bland, two of the most interesting young actresses; while Hans Eisler is composer-in-chief. Aubrey Menon and Andre van Gyseghem will be the permanent producers and they have taken and settled the collective into the Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, London.

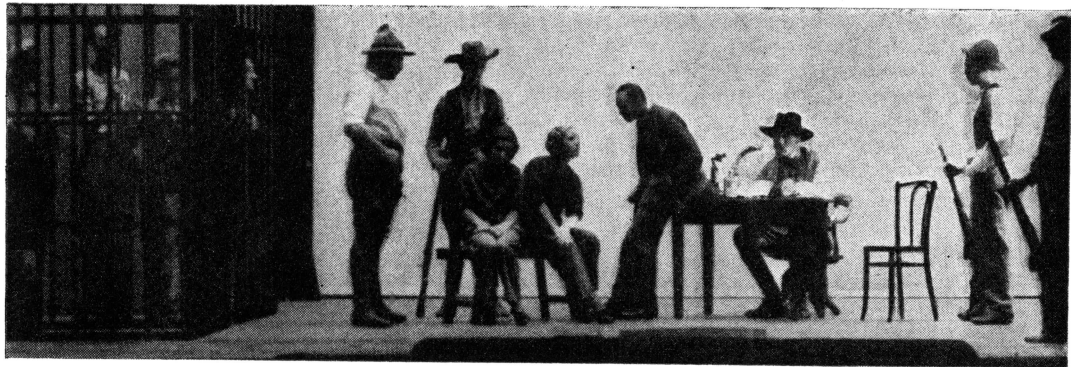
The first step towards making the Experimental Theatre an international theatre is to have selected a repertoire which includes a classical Chinese play, a play of ancient Aztec, classics from Tibet and Java, *Hero and Nymph* by the Indian dramatist, Caladas, and two Soviet plays, Slavin's *Intervention* and Gorky's *Mother*. The web of international experiment is to stretch still further, for Oklopkov, regisseur of the Krasny-Presny Theatre in Moscow, has been invited to produce a play early in 1935. Oklopkov is a pupil of Meyerhold, and his work represents some of the furthest developments that have been made upon the methods of his master, who created the first Soviet political theatre. The other foreign regisseur to be invited is Piscator, the most important figure in the pre-Nazi political theatre of Berlin.

It would seem that with such a program the Experimental Theatre will succeed where the former experiments in England failed, and that is in knowing that all valuable experiments in form develop from the content having its roots in the social reality of its time. What Vakhtangov, pioneer of the style now known as socialist realism, said of the Soviet theatre in 1919 is applicable to the English theatre of 1934. If a new theatre is to come into being its artists must "listen to the people" and gather their creative strength from them; they must "contemplate the people with all their artistic beings" and find harmony of content, form and material so that "today must be felt in tomorrow, and tomorrow in today" in the theatrical form that emerges.



Scene from J. Wexley's *They Shall Not Die*

Left Theatre, London



Scene from J. Wexley's *They Shall Not Die*

*Left Theatre, London*

# Writing for Workers Theatre

By HERBERT KLINE

THE scripts in the League of Workers Theatre's repertoire range from the early mass chants and agitprop sketches to the most recent realistic plays. The subjects are varied but familiar. There are plays about strikes against intolerable working conditions, about the sufferings of the unemployed and their struggles against evictions and starvation, for relief and unemployment insurance, etc. Other plays agitate against war and fascism, against labor fakers like Ryan and fake philanthropists like Rockefeller; for the freedom of class war prisoners like Tom Mooney, the Scottsboro Boys, and Thaelmann. The material is rich with dramatic situations, sharp conflicts, shameless betrayals and sell-outs, heroic loyalty and self sacrifice, the pity and terror and magnificence of the struggles of class against class.

Playwrights who proclaim theatre is a weapon, should be able to give dramatic life to these stirring themes. Yet, with but few exceptions, the plays simply do not come off. In fact, most of them are so meagre and unconvincing, so badly and carelessly written that their translation into terms of living theatre on the workers' stage is a tribute to the ingenuity of the theatre groups and their directors. Stiff, over-written dialogue, carry-all plots, poor timing, failure to even try for characterization and the tendency to substitute long expository or argumentative conversation for dramatic images and action are the most glaring faults. Worse still, the critical reader cannot help but observe that most of the worker-playwrights have spent little time and thought, developing and reworking their plays. For, while some of the scripts reveal an almost hopeless lack of talent, many of these young revolutionary playwrights have the ability to do creditable plays if they would work harder to improve their quality before turning in their final drafts for production.

The difficulties of writing a revolutionary play that encompasses not only the lives of individuals, but also the manifold ramifications and interlacings of class relationships and conflicts, are great as compared with the relatively simple problem of writing a "different" Broadway sex tragedy. Yet there is no excuse for the general artistic poverty and political naïveté of these plays. This deplorable situation, which finds the production groups of the leading workers theatres advanced far ahead of the plays they are given to dramatize, is undoubtedly the major problem facing the revolutionary theatre today.

The main fault with the plays lies in their

conception. The authors try to include too much in each play, as if the whole revolution must be pictured and won on the workers' stage. Thus we find playwrights trying to cram the material for two or three full length plays into a sketch of ten to twenty minutes playing time. The result is what may be called *the carry-all plot*. For example, a play will attempt in ten minutes to present the plight of oppressed and starving miners, the schemes of the operators to keep wages down and dividends up, the support of the miners' strike by the working class, the working conditions of miners in the Soviet Union, and a number of other details including an appeal to the audience for funds to support the mine strike. No devices or dramatic forms that would bind all these themes together are suggested or conceivable since the material is not organized but merely thrown together. There is no use laboring the point. A formless, diffuse stringing together of details of many phases of a particular strike struggle, does not constitute revolutionary drama or any sort of drama.

This fault is not merely the failure to practice, as art demands, the principles of selection and arrangement of content into the form best suited for the dramatization of the particular material. It reveals a fundamental lack of understanding of the approach of the class-conscious playwright to his material. This results in schematic plays (with a *carry-all* intention) that only scratch the surface of the complex and intense life they seek to portray.

GEORGE LUKAS, the exiled German revolutionary critic in an essay on *Marx and Engels on Dramaturgy* in the current issue of *International Theatre* indicates an approach to the problem:

"As always Marx and Engels proceed on the basis of the general underlying principle of dialectical materialism. It is being which determines consciousness; the images and thoughts of people are but the reflections of objective reality. In literature in general and dramaturgy in particular, the question arises as to what particular aspect of being constitutes the specifically appropriate subject for drama and what specific methods the drama may utilize to transmit through its own specific medium the proper reflection of reality."

*What specific aspect of being constitutes the specifically appropriate subject for drama.* From this it should be obvious that Marx and Engels based their analysis of dramaturgy on content just as they based their philosophical ideas on dialectical materialism.\* For them dramatic content constitutes the various manifestations of the

broad, international class struggles that determine man's fate. The conflicts between these tense struggles *i. e.*, the clashes between the characters which represent the various ideas, issues and classes involved have always been the subjects of major dramatists. That is why Marx and Engels revered the great dramatists of the past, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Shakespeare, for having expressed clearly and completely such conflicts in *specific methods utilized to transmit through the drama alone the proper reflections of reality*. In order to get Lasalle "to transmit through the drama alone" the reality of the great sixteenth century peasant revolt, Marx wrote to Lasalle concerning his play *Franz Von Sickingen*:

"You would have to Shakespeareanize more, while at present I consider Schillerism, making individuals the mere mouthpieces of the spirit of the times, your main fault. . . . I do not find any characteristic traits in your characters . . . yet is there another period with such sharp characters as the XVI Century? Your Gutten, to my mind, represents too much mere 'inspiration': this is boring. Was he not at the same time pretty clever, a desperate wit, and did you not therefore treat him most unjustly?"

"In many places I must reproach you with too much discussion of themselves by the characters, which is also due to your bias for Schiller. Thus . . . why rob Maria of her naive views on the world characteristic to her according to earlier speeches, and turn her into a doctrine of rights? . . . I think the scene between Sickingen and Karl V very good, although the dialogue on both sides sounds more like lawyer's speech."

And Engels wrote to Lasalle at the same time:

" . . . you could without difficulty make the dialogue vivacious and quick . . . the intellectual content must, of course, suffer by this, as is inevitable, and the perfect blending of great intellectual depth and historical content, for which you justly credit German drama, with Shakespearean vivacity and wealth of action will probably be achieved only in the future and perhaps not by Germans. It is truly in this blending that I see the future drama. Your *Sickingen* is wholly on the right road, the principal characters in fact represent definite classes and tendencies and hence definite ideas of their time and the motives of their actions are to be found not in trivial individual desires but in the historical stream upon which they are being carried. However, the next step forward

\* The dialectic materialism of Marxism is no dogmatic and static system of thought that is a burden to creative expression. Neither, as some heavy-handed revolutionary writers indicate, is its meaning understandable and of value only to advanced thinkers. Dialectical materialism, the most frequently used and abused term in revolutionary writing, means, clearly enough, the concept of matter in a state of constant change, hence changing relationships in "all our yesterdays" and today between individuals, ideas, classes, etc.

should be in making these motives more lively, active so to say, spontaneously occupying the foreground by the course of the action and on the other hand making the argumentative speeches (in which, by the way, I recognize your old oratorical talents, brilliant before a court of justice and popular assembly) become unnecessary . . . you quite justly object to the present day poor individualization which is reduced to trivial cleverness and is a circumstantial indication of the decay of epigonean literature. It seems to me, however, that the person is characterized not only by what he does but also by how he does it, and from this point of view the intellectual content of your drama could gain by a sharper contrast and the juxtaposition of the separate characters. . . . According to my views on drama, the realistic should not be overlooked because of the intellectual elements, Shakespeare for Schiller, the introduction of the then many sided plebeian society would lend entirely new material to enliven the play, would give an invaluable background for the action on the proscenium of the national movement of the nobility, would first throw proper light on this very movement. What a variety of quaintly characteristic characters are to be found at this period of decay of feudal ties in the penniless ruling kings, poverty stricken free-lancers and adventurers of all sorts—a Falstaffian background that, in an historical play of this type, would be much more effective than in Shakespeare!”

**H**ERE is a dramatic criticism of a high level, written in 1859, at a time when most American dramatic critics were writing pretentious reviews praising the old blood and thunder melodramas at which we now throw pennies during revivals. The basis of Marx and Engels' approach to analyzing the relationship of the characters to their background is that *the images and thoughts of people are but the reflections of objective reality*. When they called for rich characterization, colorful representation of peasant life, the juxtaposition of individualized characters and the blending of intellectual depth with the social content in quick and vivacious dialogue they struck at the heart of the workers repertoire problem today.

The time is past when the theatre groups expected the audiences to be patient because "We're just learning." The workers want lively, entertaining, thrilling drama, not long, dull speeches and fight talks. They want plays with real people in them. They cannot be convinced by a fake character who opens a scene as a duped and discouraged dolt and becomes ten minutes later a revolutionary leader. The new audience wants convincing plays with characters it can believe. How much more credible a villain is, for example, if he is shown possessing some human trait. And would it be "counter-revolutionary" to picture on our workers stage a different kind of capitalist than the usual Morgan caricature. Is a "scab" always the slinky rat or is he sometimes a self-concerned worker who is driven by the need of his family to steal his class brother's job? And wouldn't it be more realistic to see him converted to the strikers' cause not through an argumentative speech but be-

cause his wife and kids object to being discriminated against and taunted by the strikers' wives and kids. Or possibly, not become converted at all, and be sent on his scab journey home by the strikers?

It would be a fine thing to see workers theatre plays with a bit of poetry in them . . . not big speeches but the kind of worker's speech that Sean O'Casey gave his Irish rebels in the days when he wrote *The Plow and the Stars*, the kind that O'Neill wrote in his fine short plays of the sea, the kind that Elmer Rice wrote in the love scenes in *We, The People*.

There is no reason why the workers theatres in America should not follow the example of the Soviet theatre in adapting famous plays of the past for production before revolutionary audiences. When Al Saxe appeared on a full program of revolutionary skits in Moliere's masterly satire on *The Miser*, the audience responded warmly to his fine characterization. Why not show scenes from Moliere's *The King Enjoys Himself*, Gorki's *The Judge*, Elmer Rice's *Adding Machine*, Gogol's *Inspector General*, etc., in order for the workers theatre playwrights, directors, actors and audience to profit from experience with these fine plays. One might, by changing the words of the narrator ever so little, make a fine revolutionary play of the animal satire, *The World We Live In*. The possibilities suggested above are endless. The workers theatres, and the playwrights especially, must fight against disdainful disregard of the old cultural inheritance, and toward the masters of theatre art. There is much to be learned from plays that are sometimes referred to disparagingly as "bourgeois." In fact, the workers theatres should hold regular readings and discussions of the best of these plays, and analyze their mastery of dialogue, characterization, timing and stage technique.

It is not possible in one article of this length to deal completely with the complex and varied problems facing worker playwrights, let alone to deal completely with the Marxist approach to dramaturgy (a subject that will be dealt with more fully soon in *NEW THEATRE*).

However, since the purpose of this article is to get results in the form of good short plays for immediate production, several steps can be suggested to accomplish this end.

First, the leading professional playwrights must be urged to write at least one short play for the workers theatres in the next few months, as John Wexley, Michael Gold, Virgil Geddes and Langston Hughes have already promised to do. If these playwrights and every professional playwright who considers himself a "revolutionist" (we quote Elmer Rice) will follow the examples of the revolutionary dramatists of Europe, who write regularly for the amateur work-

ers' theatres as well as for the professional stage, we shall soon have good short revolutionary plays that will give the worker-playwrights a precedent to equal or surpass.

Secondly, higher critical standards must be developed and practiced. Serious criticism must be applied to all scripts submitted to the League of Workers Theatres and suggestions made for their improvement before they are accepted for production.

If the professional and amateur revolutionary playwrights buckle down to the task of translating the life about them into short plays that communicate their message *by means of the drama alone*, the theatre groups are prepared to give them a rich portrayal on the workers stage throughout America.

### Books Received

*The Best Plays of 1933-34*, edited by Burns Mantle. Dodd, Mead & Co. \$3.00.

This useful compendium of the Broadway season has made its annual appearance with its listing of all openings and condensed versions of the ten plays Mr. Mantle considers best. Although *They Shall Not Die* is justly included, *Stevedore* is not one of these. Amazed, we referred to Mr. Mantle's original review of the play in the *Daily News*: ". . . the Negro stages a half-way successful riot of his own . . . pathetic sort of fight for the black . . . uncohesive . . . first time a colored actor has had a chance to be consistently heroic . . . might easily lead to racial disturbances . . ." Perhaps that explains it.

*Broadway, Inc! The Theatre As a Business*, by Morton Eustis. Dodd, Mead & Co. \$2.00.

A thorough account of the business side of the theatre . . . and a sordid account it is, although Mr. Eustis has done his best to be impartial to producers, theatre unions, and realtors alike. This book, which was written at the suggestion of Mrs. Isaacs, editor of *Theatre Arts Monthly*, is deserving of the interest of everyone who wants a real glimpse what of goes on "backstage" before a play opens along Broadway.

*GOD'S IN HIS HEAVEN*, by Philip Stevenson. Published by the Script Library of the Theatre Union, 103 West 14th St., New York City. 35 cents.

This one-act play, winner of the Theatre Union Contest of this year, can be classed with the best of the full-length social plays dealing with the American scene. It will unquestionably have a future in the repertory of the workers' theatres, and is plainly marked for any little theatre group which still has life above and below the neck.

The scene is the home of one hundred per cent Hearst paper Americans who persist, on the edge of poverty, in believing that "nobody starves." They are made liars by the visit of their nineteen-year-old son who left them to look for work, and has joined the army of boys and girls who make shift on the road, in boxcars, in jails. The author has been content to create this picture and drive home his point dramatically and skillfully within the scope of a vivid realistic scene. He does not indicate any solution of the problem. The boy and his girl, unfitted for the family life, and too bitterly wise for it, go off again to the road. Thoroughly radicalized and unified audiences will demand a stronger conclusion, and the author himself in future plays should cope with the problem of sounding an affirmative note. The play deserves production before audiences of many types.

# Films of the Month

By ROBERT STEBBINS

**W**ORMS have turned before, but never with such unflinching loathsomeness as in the case of fascist movies. We had always held that art under fascism couldn't rise above mediocrity and seldom attains that status. And heretofore there had been no lack of evidence for this contention in painting, architecture and music, but the movies offered a difficulty. An insuperable one. There weren't any. The movie industry in Germany and Italy had folded up and died of malnutrition. This of course, while bearing excellent testimony to the regenerative effects of fascism, never left me completely satisfied. Lurking in the back of my head there was always the thought that if a film *were* made, somehow it might be good. You couldn't tell. Fortunately, within the last six months, two productions, one German, *S.A. Mann Brand*, and the Italian *The Man of Courage*, the latter being presented at the Gaiety at this writing, rid me completely of my skepticism. Fascist movies simply defy human ingenuity to create something more crass, more worthless. A challenge that I doubt will ever be successfully answered.

After the mind has recovered from the assault of mis-statements and outright lies in *The Man of Courage*, the one remaining impression is that of the maniacal self-esteem of Il Duce. Compared to him Caligula and his jackass were shrinking violets. *S.A. Mann Brand* provided a sequence

wherein a young blond boy (soon to be done in by the murderous Communists) is given a portrait of Hitler for his thirteenth birthday. The ensuing rapture, with "Ach wie Schoen! Wie Schoen! Sehe Mutter, Wie Schoen!" drooling from this poor puppet's mouth, was calculated to turn a strong man's stomach, but at least the tie-up between Der Fuehrer and the movie-director was not obvious. In *The Man of Courage*, however, the narrative was suggested by Mussolini, is dedicated to him and he appears in it as chief attraction.

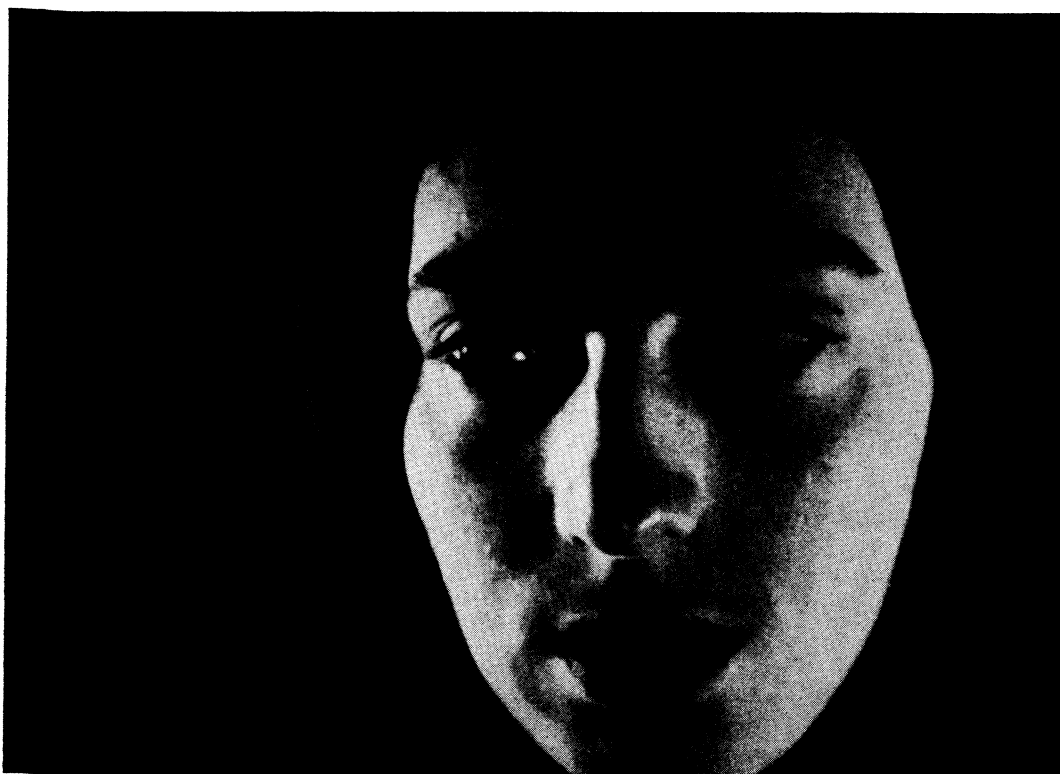
During the course of the story, which serves purely as a peg for Benito's hat, Mussolini delegates to himself the strange honor of having brought Italy to war by his inflammatory writings in *Il Popolo d'Italia*, an extraordinary accomplishment for a newspaper numbering all of 1500 subscribers. His rantings in the trenches win the war on the Italian front. The war over, a great sorrow descends on his country. Not only is she cheated of her war spoils by Jugo-Slavia, specifically mentioned in the film and described as an "old enemy under a new name" (a striking example of Mussolini's peaceful intentions) but worst of all, the degenerate radicals threaten to destroy the authority of home, church, and state. The barbarity of these destructive elements knows no bounds. Not a woman, child or beast but has felt its fury. At one point the officer hero of the plot, such as it

is, returns to Italy from a German hospital where after three years he has been cured of amnesia due to shell shock. He asks for lodging at a peasant's house. They are sorry but the radicals are on the rampage for anyone wearing a uniform. He is about to go when he hears the cows bellowing in pain. "Why do they moan?" "They want to be milked," is the reply. "Well, why don't you milk them?" "We don't dare. The radicals have called a General Strike and no one may do anything." The peasant and his family raise their hands disclosing on their palms a hammer and sickle printed in ink. "If we milk the cows they will discover the ink on them." A moment later another officer rushes in pursued by a wild-eyed mob of rioters. About to be mauled to death he is rescued by a truck-load of young black-shirts who press the heads of his assailants to his feet shouting the while: "Kiss his boots! Kiss his boots!"

But why proceed further in enumerating these nauseating instances of the black pall of idiocy that has descended on the Italian people? After the film proper is over, the American editors have seen fit to recommend the lessons of Mussolini's career to the American public. Superimposed on an eagle bearing the legend *E pluribus Unum* there is flashed a lengthy note exhorting the same fealty to "our leader, F. D. Roosevelt" as the Italians show Mussolini. The Eagle does a fadeout and the Roman fasces emerges from the back of the screen, grows larger and larger until . . . Finis. Fortright measures, such as picketing in front of the theatre and protests to the distributors should be adopted at once to cut short the run of *The Man of Courage*.

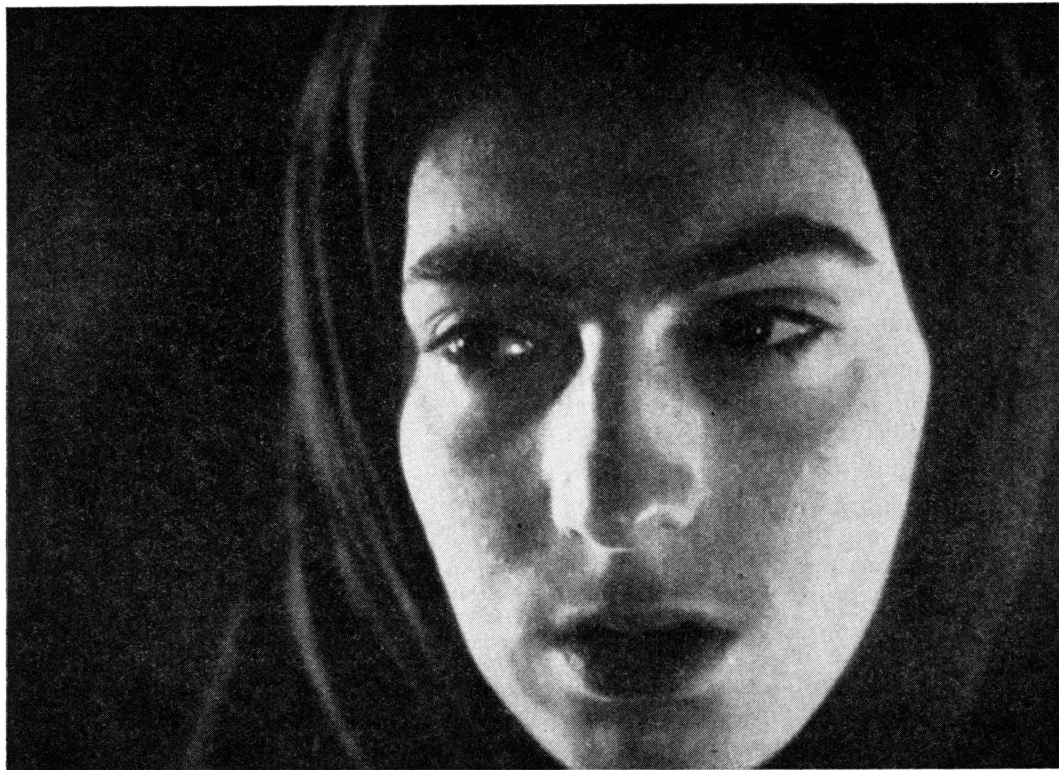
**I** HESITATE to speak of *The Three Songs About Lenin* in the same review with *The Man of Courage*. Not only is it necessary for the writer to proceed by degrees from the spurious to the superlative, to the genuine, but the reader himself deserves to be spared the strain entailed by the great contrast. Related to *The Man of Courage* in that it also celebrates the life and works of an individual, *Three Songs About Lenin* is all that the former is not. It breathes truth and conviction from every shot. Documentary in form it achieves a dramatic force equivalent to the impact of life. It attains a moving urgency that only Pudovkin and at times Eisenstein have heretofore shown.

In Pudovkin's *Mechanics of the Brain* you will recall the episode of the children who have been given the problem of getting an object hung high over their heads on the wall. They move chairs about. Stand on



Still from *Three Songs About Lenin*

Mejrabpom-Film



Still from *Three Songs About Lenin*

*Mejrabpom-Film*



them. All are too short. They discard the chairs for a table and finding that too low, they strike on the expedient of standing on a chair which is placed on the table. At that moment (and this is true of every audience of which I have been a part) the onlooker experiences a feeling of emotional fullness that only the greatest poetry can impart. In *Mother*, Pudovkin creates the same effect with the brief image of the child laughing and throwing a ball used to symbolize the coming of spring. *Three Songs About Lenin* communicates this poetic intensity time and time again; in the stirringly beautiful close-ups of the native women who all over Russia mourned Lenin's death; in that unforgettable sequence where the child of an eastern country is seen dancing and chanting her song in Lenin's praise. The character of the movement, snakelike in quality, of the melody, the ornate costume, all are indigenous to her native land but the hope in her voice comes from a vision of a new life that Lenin was greatly instrumental in creating for the suppressed racial minorities.

*Three Songs About Lenin* is documentary film only in the sense that no enacted material was utilized but the great skill in cutting and montage is the outgrowth of the contributions of Pudovkin, Eisenstein, Dovschenko and other Russian masters. Rather than proving that the cinematic theories of the Russian school are outmoded as some "documentaires" would have it, the filmic excellence of *Three Songs* attests to the validity of the Russian method of film construction even when applied to unenacted material. The film had some faults, certain irrelevancies and repetitions. The use of stills in the five minute silence seemed to this reviewer an over obvious and unconvincing device. Sometimes the choice of music is unfortunate. But these are as straws before the great emotional purity and heights achieved by Dziga Vertov, director of the *Three Songs*.

There is no doubt in my mind that Pudovkin's *Deserter* would have reached as great heights if performed in the original version. Despite obvious cuts and consequent lack of continuity, *Deserter* showed no diminution in the creative vigor that has given the world *The End of St. Petersburg*, *Mother*, and *Storm over Asia*. The scenes of police brutality, for instance, have been modeled with a finality that make them classics of cinema expressiveness. The shot in particular of the mounted policeman drawing his foot back from the stirrups; his leg flashing at close range across the lens, a face contorted in pain, a body sinking slowly to the ground—these press down on the brain with the burning brightness of images perceived in a nightmare and possess a similar oppressiveness. Pudovkin's montage displays an uncanny ability to select the inevitable, the universal image and in his concept of the

(Continued on page 30)

# The Movie Front

## CENSORSHIP IN PENNSYLVANIA

THE Film and Photo League of Philadelphia sends the following important information on censorship in Pennsylvania. . . . *Potemkin*—banned in Pittsburgh for past nine years because it "incites to riot". . . . *Torch Tango*—"eliminate closeup view of tear-gas bomb in box". . . . "Eliminate dialogue: 'It's a tear gas bomb. When that explodes there won't be a dry eye in the house'". . . . *Cheaters*—"Eliminate capitalized words where they appear. . . . 'Suppose you did prefer the straight and narrow . . . YOU'VE FOUND THAT THERE AREN'T ENOUGH JOBS IN THE WORLD FOR HONEST PEOPLE . . . MUCH LESS FOR JAIL BIRDS, HAVEN'T YOU'". . . . *The Expectant Father*—"Eliminate all speeches describing longings of pregnancy . . . also the word '*Liverwurst*' wherever it appears." . . . From *Variety*, Sept. 18th, 1934. . . . "And in Pennsylvania where taxpayers are estimated to contribute \$100,000 per annum for censor maintenance, no feature picture can contain a sequence dealing with rioting, despite the fact that newsreels can tell their story in the same state untouched." . . . "In Pennsylvania it is estimated there are from 200 to 300 per cent more deletions and rejections than in any other state . . ." From *Variety*, November 13th, 1934 . . . "the present Pennsylvania Board of Censors, long considered one of the toughest in the country will cease to exist officially January 1st. . . . While few in the industry regret the present board's disbandment question is what kind of crowd is coming in." . . . Yes what kind? . . .

## IN LAREDO, TEXAS

A Film and Photo League is being formed in the little town of Laredo, Texas. . . . "Four other photographers are here", writes our correspondent who states "Laredo is on the banks of the Rio Grande which divides the U.S. from old Mexico. Due to this the bulk of our work is passport photos." . . . Now they are going to start showing Soviet films in a praiseworthy effort to build a solid organization of film and photo workers and associates in Laredo whose function will be to expose the miserable living conditions that exist on the banks of the Rio Grande. . . . A group of students at the University of Wisconsin are organizing a Film and Photo League and planning a worker's film theatre "in view of the disgust generally reflected on the faces of our fellow students and workers after viewing a Hollywood production". . . . The Photo Section of the New York Branch of the Nature Friends voted recently to affiliate to the National Film and Photo League. . . . Greetings to NYKino, the Film Section of the Workers Laboratory Theatre, also an affiliate of the National League. . . . Full time production of enacted films and a studio group for film training has begun. . . . Applicants see Lucy Kay, at 42 East 12th Street. . . . NYKino is at work on a short trailer for the *New Masses*.

## HARVARD STUDENTS PROTEST FASCIST FILM

A group of 75 Harvard University student fighters against war and fascism recently passed a protest resolution denouncing the pro-fascist film "Call to Arms", being released by Columbia Pictures Corporation as a strike-breaking weapon against militant workers . . . the meeting was addressed by the National Secretary of the Film and Photo League who appealed to the students present to help build the recently organized Boston Film and Photo

League . . . several applications were filed as result . . . the Boston League's three month plan of action ending February 1935 includes production of two reels of films . . . a city-wide photo exhibition involving amateur and professional photographers outside the organization . . . popularization of NEW THEATRE as the central organ of the Boston League . . . a bi-monthly bulletin on the film for local distribution . . . symposia on the film and photo. . . . Israel Prager is the new Executive Secretary. . . .

## REORGANIZATION OF N. Y. FILM AND PHOTO LEAGUE

The Film and Photo League of N. Y. is undergoing complete revision to facilitate planned film and photo production . . . writers, cameramen, cutters, technicians, directors, organizers badly needed . . . work is advancing . . . forces still too few . . . assistance of John Reed Club writers in scenario and editing departments especially welcomed . . . the field of the film is certainly broad enough to include other cultural workers besides cameramen . . . the demand for workers' films is immeasurably further ahead than the current insignificant supply . . . it is necessary for the revolutionary cultural movement to begin actively supporting the one revolutionary cultural medium of our time, whose potentialities are without limit . . . new address of the N. Y. League is 31 East 21st Street. . . . Marquette, Mich., is planning a film and photo group . . . "we want material and suggestions, also organizational directives on your type of work" . . . Nathan Asch, author of *Pay Day*, and David Platt have just completed the scenario and continuity for a one reel film tentatively titled *Cigarette* . . . it will shortly be produced by the N. Y. Film and Photo League. . . .

## MICHIGAN FILM CIRCUIT

The Film and Photo League of Detroit is building the Michigan Film Circuit to take Soviet and revolutionary newsreels into all the industrial towns of the State . . . a tour of the territory with Pudovkin's *Mother* and newsreels of *America Today* was recently completed . . . workers film circuits should be initiated by Film and Photo Leagues in every part of the country both as a bulwark against the capitalist product and for strengthening support of workers' film production in America. . . . The Detroit League now has 20 members, four or five movie cameras and has undertaken two documentary, partly enacted projects with the assistance, when necessary, of the John Reed Club and the Theatre of Action . . . these are . . . *Speedup in Auto Industry* with A. B. Magil as consultant . . . and *Workers Health* with Dr. Bicknell as consultant . . . the League is also calling a meeting of representatives of cultural organizations and groups connected with the American League Against War and Fascism to take up the fight against war and fascist films. . . . The Chicago Film and Photo League is taking the initiative in building an Illinois Film Circuit . . . "there can be no meaningful workers film movement until the problem of national distribution is solved . . . nor until we solve the problem of what kind of films the workers want . . ." writes our correspondent from the Michigan Film Circuit, who reports that the "newsreels of the Film and Photo League are literally eaten up by the workers . . . they can't seem to get enough of them . . . they are even more popular than the Soviet films. . . ."

DAVID PLATT.

# The Voice of the Audience

## We Take It on the Chin

To NEW THEATRE:

THE four numbers of NEW THEATRE that I have seen since my return from the Soviet Union in June have been so much superior to any of those I reviewed in the past, and the general line that you are pursuing right now is so encouraging that I hesitate to write down those "adverse comments" that I indicated to some of you in conversation. I do so, however, because you suggested that they might be of some use in making NEW THEATRE what I have always maintained it would become, the best theatre publication in this country.

In reading carefully through the last two (July-August and September) numbers of NEW THEATRE I was struck by the fact that though the separate articles had improved in authoritativeness, subject matter and general interest, there still remained in the magazine a peculiar rawness of tone, a fundamental immaturity and sometimes even a kind of staleness that were the opposite of inspiring. When this is said of any "left" publication the rejoinder generally is: "We are young, and we haven't enough competent writers." This however is not the case with NEW THEATRE, since the latest numbers contain the work of people who can write and who moreover have a real experience of the subjects they treat. There is something *in the way* many of these articles are written (there are notable exceptions, of course, such as the Joe Freeman and Lee Strasberg articles) that diminishes their value.

I seek for an explanation. I observe in one article in the same issue that the word "revolutionary" is used exactly fourteen times in three-quarters of a column. In a number of other places I read sentences that begin "Revolutionary criticism (or art or dancing, etc.) should . . ." be thus and so, and finally I notice that playwrights, stage directors, photographers, and other workers of standing offer us mostly generalizations or expressions of faith that might have been written by almost any one.

The word "revolutionary" represents a certain standard; and it also has definite technical, historical, one might say, scientific connotations. It should not be bandied about loosely, for if it is, no matter how genuine the writer's intentions, it is bound to strike the reader as a shibboleth without any special dignity or significance. But more serious than this, the use of this term where it is no more than a label begins to cover a multitude of sins. It leads the person who uses it to believe that he has actually expressed something, whereas it very frequently serves only as a short cut through a subject, a short cut that may evade the subject altogether. When a reviewer says that a dance is "not quite revolutionary" he has said practically nothing to define or to describe that dance (particularly as some of the leading Soviet authorities of the subject will tell you there are hardly any examples as yet of a truly "revolutionary dance"). And if the writer uses the term in order to announce his point of view he is performing a more or less mechanical function, since his point of view must be made evident not by phrases but through the method and quality of the analysis itself.

I would suggest that at present all statements of ideology be left to those qualified to make them—in editorials or possibly in special articles by accepted masters in this field. In saying this, I am thinking especially of the aforementioned professional theatre people who when solicited for a contribution to NEW THEATRE write as if they had no more connection with the theatre than a university professor who had suddenly "gone left." I can mention the case of John Howard Lawson because I admire him and have voiced in other places my belief that he is the strongest potential force in American playwrighting

today. Frankly, I do not think Lawson's general ideas as such are important. But he can write very informatively as well as very readably if he will not declare his position so often or point to the poverty of the Broadway theatre (We've heard about that before), but set down accurately some of the things he has learned about playwrighting and about the theatre since he has begun working in it. . . . A stage director like Stephen Karnot in a workers' theatre surely has some very knotty problems to solve that are hardly appreciated by the "layman," and his experience in dealing with these problems should be presented to us rather than any pedantic aesthetic considerations or even class-room synopses of the art of directing in the abstract.

SO many generalizations before the fact, constant reiterations of what proletarian or revolutionary art should or will be, are finally misleading and even presumptuous. We need more laboratory demonstrations, it seems to me, more proofs by investigation, documentary records of work accomplished and very much less sloganizing and exhortation of other people. We must cultivate a greater spirit of inquiry. We must get down to our basic materials.

For myself, I would rather hear what work George Sklar did to make Paul Peter's original script of *Stevodore* a better play, I would rather see one of the directors of the dance groups analyze the particular contribution of past techniques to the needs of today, I would rather listen to an official of the Theatre Union tell us what difficulties they encounter in the finding of suitable play scripts than hear any of these people make vague overtures to the art of the future or patronize the falterers and the resistant on the revolution's thorny path!

If this policy of proceeding from the specific to the general were adopted I believe we would find that every article that truly probed patiently and thoroughly into its subject matter would reveal a revolutionary significance, for the making of revolutionary theory with us must consist primarily in the discovery of the relevant facts in every situation.

The tendency to glib and hasty generalization has led in NEW THEATRE to certain very dangerous habits and false ideas that may work havoc in our own thinking and in our ability to convince others. Thus Paul Romain's article in the June issue gives the impression that our sole criticism of Eva LeGallienne is that she has not been affected by our movement, which involves two errors: (a) that a "correct ideology" in itself teaches one a sound theatre technique, (b) that Eva LeGallienne's theatre technique is satisfactory aside from her lack of a revolutionary point of view! As a matter of fact, we should be the first to welcome a theatre that really did justice to classic plays. . . . Statements recently made also seem to imply that while such plays as the Theatre Guild's successes of last season may be good "for art's sake" they are bad from a social point of view! The truth that we must emphasize, of course, is that a play like *They Shall Not Die* is more fertile even aesthetically than one like *Mary of Scotland* because it is closer to life from any standpoint. . . . Finally there are too many signs that we take pride and joy in comparing our activities to the Broadway theatre every time it gives the most painful evidence of dullness and decline. Such attitudes and arguments create a sense in the reader of a neophyte enthusiasm rather than of critical understanding, and even seem to betray a secret lack of confidence.

To sum up: in the use of words, in choice of themes, and in our whole approach to matters of new theatre I would like to see a more modest and *workmanlike* attitude. We have our job to do, an

arduous, crucial, magnificent job. Let us get busy in study and work to increase our knowledge and to assist in the building of that theatre and that society which so many desire and everybody needs.

Fraternally,  
Harold Edgar.

## Conditions in the Chorus

To NEW THEATRE:

WHEN people go into a theatre, and see the chorus of dancers, smiling and tossing their heads, they don't realize what these same girls go through before they see the finished product.

I should like to tell of an incident when I worked on the Publix Circuit. I was cast in a very elaborate unit that had three different scenes, which meant three different dances to learn. We started rehearsing at nine o'clock in the morning, and more often than not, we weren't through before midnight. Of course we were allowed one half hour for lunch and then again for supper, which we were too tired to eat most of the time. This went on for four weeks, and then the unit opened in New Haven, Connecticut.

At the opening performance, all the directors of the circuit came to see the show, and they decided it was too long and would have to be cut. They also decided they didn't like one of the dances the girls did and that it would have to be changed before the show opened in New York, which would be in two weeks. And all this after rehearsing the show for four weeks.

I would like to mention here that on the Publix Circuit we do four shows a day, five on Saturdays and Sundays, and on special holidays like Christmas, New Year, and the Fourth of July, we do six.

Well, the director decided to change them, so that when we opened the following week in Boston we could do them and be perfect by the time we reached New York. We opened on Friday and between all the shows Friday and Saturday we had to rehearse. On Saturday we rehearsed between all four shows, and then instead of going to the hotel to sleep we had to dance all through the night. Miss ———, director of the dances, sent out for coffee and sandwiches and that was all we had to eat. One of the girls fainted four times during the night, and when I complained to Miss ———, and asked her to send the girl home, I was told that she was probably shaming.

We had to rehearse on a cement floor, and no one who has not done tap dancing can realize what that means to dancers' feet. Sunday night we were all so tired we could hardly move, and the star of the show, whose band had been playing for us, refused to stay and insisted that we all be sent home to get some sleep. This was six o'clock Monday morning. When I awoke I found that my left leg was swollen up to the hip. I was taken to the house doctor. He strapped the leg and drove me to the theatre to tell Miss ———, because I told him that she probably wouldn't believe me.

When we got there we found most of the girls in hysterics, and when asked what was wrong, they said that they could barely stand on their feet, they hurt so badly. He examined them and found that the soles of their feet were raw. Also one of the girls had had a very bad cold and she developed pneumonia and was sent to the hospital.

The stage hand threatened to call in the humane society and the manager of this theatre called the manager of the theatre in Boston and told him not to allow Miss ——— into the theatre there if he wanted to have a show.

In spite of the condition my leg was in and the

other girls' feet, we all had to go on and do the three shows that day. I did a tap dancing solo wearing one shoe and one bedroom slipper, because I couldn't get my other shoe on.

BOBBIE SIMMONS

### "Black and White" Burlesque

TO NEW THEATRE:

I AM "filling in" for a week at a "black and white" burlesque, on South State Street, in Chicago. We do six shows a day, and seven on Saturday, finishing at 2:00 A. M. They used to have the white show come early one week and the next week the colored show would start early—at 11:00 A. M. Now that is changed, the Negro performance comes early all the time, and we start at 12:00 o'clock. We girls get \$12.00 a week, and the colored show

gets less. I haven't found out yet just what they make. We are not allowed to talk with them, or eat at the same restaurants as they do. When we are downstairs between numbers and they happen to be playing cards in the hall, we are forced to either stay in our dressing rooms or go upstairs on stage.

The boss owns a hotel right around the corner from the show, and all those in the white show, who are not living at home, must live at his hotel. It costs six dollars per week for one sleeping room there. If they refuse to live at this hotel, they cannot work in his show.

We haven't much heat here, and the girls are always sick with colds. In the winter they freeze you, and in the summer when it rains hard, the water is knee deep. The girls told me they often have to wade through this water to change wardrobe.

It is weeks before the dampness is gone.

I have talked to a few of the Negro performers about getting together to fight this discrimination and all of these bad conditions. They are willing to listen, but when you tell them to organize, all the answer you get is: "What good would it do?", and "This is the only job I've got, and I've got to eat." I am bringing the *Daily Worker* and the *New Theatre Magazine* down to the show, and several of them read them.

I am only going to be here a week, because I'm just filling in. Will I be glad when it's over, even though it's back to the Relief Station ration box for me! I'm just dead when I get home nights. I'm so tired. I don't see how some of the girls keep it up for months, as some of them have.

TAP DANCER.

# Return from Moscow

An Interview With Anna Sokolow

By LEONARD DAL NEGRO

"THE first thing that I did when I landed back in the States was to dash into a cafeteria and have a piece of apple pie and a cup of coffee, fare that is unobtainable in any recognizable form in the Soviet Union. But now that I have been back in America for a few days, apple pie and coffee have lost their appeal. I feel that I must return to the Soviet Union. When I left they asked me to come back and stay a year. As soon as it is humanly possible I intend to do so. I'll stay a year, two years, as long as they'll have me. The country is an inspiration to any working class visitor and a provocative challenge for a modern dancer."

From the above statement one might infer that Anna Sokolow, talented young pupil of Martha Graham, and director of the Theatre Union Dance Group, in her three months stay in the Soviet Union had been constantly overwhelmed by the plaudits of the Russian populace or carried through the streets of Moscow on the shoulders of cheering throngs. Such was not the case.

Before dancing for the Russians, Anna went out to see how the Russians danced. The only professional dancing that she found in Moscow was the ballet. She disapproved, of course, as any modern revolutionary dancer would under the same circumstances.

"It was provoking to find that in a country with the most advanced political ideas in the world, the most modern experimental theatre, with unsurpassed cinema, they still clung so tenaciously to this dance form. . . . The Russian people are dance enthusiasts, storming the theatres whenever ballets are shown. Yet these people, who have just won a whole new world, still insist that their dancers move around in it in five restricting positions. . . . To see plain Ivan, in lumberjack and cap, sit where probably Count Ivan in gold braid and epaulettes once sat, and

clap vigorously with hands that had just built a Magnitogorsk, a Dnieprostroy or pushed through a railroad, for exactly the same entertainment that pleased the Count, seemed a trifle incongruous."

But perhaps what is most important to us is not Anna's reaction to the ballet, but rather the reactions of the Russians to Anna's dancing.

"I was given a most hearty welcome when I arrived. Dancers command great respect in the U.S.S.R. Not only are they assured of an appreciative audience for their talents after their period of apprenticeship is over but, wonder of wonders, they are actually paid while they study!" (How different from the sad plight of our own dancers.)

"Shortly after my arrival in Russia, I was asked to give an exhibition of technic before a group of dance specialists connected with the Park for Culture and Rest in Moscow. This I did, and my performance had something of the effect usually attributed only to gentlemen who pull rabbits out of hats."

"FOR two hours I gave an exhibition of the Graham technique, no dances, simply bare framework, the basic principles of a modern art. The audience had never seen anything like it before. It was entirely outside of their experience. They sat mentally agape. Unheard of dancing! No pretty curved movements! No acrobatic pirouettes! They were amazed, bewildered, as any group of people must be who are steeped to their eyes in traditions of 400 years "pretty" dancing. After the performance they asked question after question (via interpreter). Bewildered, they were greedy to know more of this strange art. Why did I never point my toe? Why was my face so expressionless? (Russians like clearly shown emotions in their dancing.) For hours after my tiring performance I sat and answered questions. The

audience was not satisfied—they had to see more of my work."

A short time later Anna gave another performance, this time in the Foreign Workers Club in Moscow. Her audience consisted again of the same professional dance and theatre people with the addition of a number of American residents in Moscow at the time. At this performance she exhausted her repertoire of solo dances. The audience sat through the performance, attentively, politely, but mystified withal. When it had ended the audience insisted that they must have a meeting to discuss the performance. (Imagine, if you can, a like happening after an American dance recital.)

"So off the whole group trooped to ask questions, interminable questions, 'way into the morning. My solo dances were not so bewildering to some of the audience as the exhibit of plain technic had been. Some of my dances were decadent they thought. I must admit I think so also. I do not feel I have created satisfactory revolutionary solos up to date, not because of the lack of desire to do so, but because I feel I haven't developed to a point where I'm capable of doing revolutionary solos possessing complete identification with the class struggle."

The Russian dance specialists wanted to get the reactions of a workers' audience to the modern dance and it was arranged that Anna was to dance before the usual Moscow dance audience, the people from the fields and workshops. Somehow this never came to pass. Technicalities slowed up the arrangements and she never got the chance to see how the ballet-loving Ivan would react to an art form which is more of his world.

"Come back," the Russians said to her. "We must see how your technic looks in group work. Come back, and we will give you as many girls as you need to work with, all the assistance that you want. Work for a year—then show us!"

## Dance Reviews

Martha Graham and Group, (Theatre Guild, Nov. 11)

IT IS difficult to review a recital of Martha Graham the dancer without wanting terribly to review Martha Graham the artist—her uncompromising integrity, her strikingly beautiful performances, her unsurpassed, unique technic, make one hesitant about continually carping about her philosophic outlook and wherein it differs from our own. This review must of necessity be brief; NEW THEATRE goes to press before Miss Graham's recital on November 18. The following issue of the magazine, however, will contain a more comprehensive discussion of this phase of Miss Graham's work.

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Her performance on November 11 repeated many of the dances discussed in a previous issue of NEW THEATRE. Of the more recent additions to her repertoire, *Celebration*, a group dance, and *Act of Piety*, a solo dance from the suite *American Provincials*, deserve to be ranked together with the third *Frenetic Rhythms*, as outstanding achievements in the dance. Miss Graham's almost unparalleled talent for group choreography makes *Celebration* a powerfully dynamic movement study. As one sympathizer remarked, it could almost have been called *Demonstration*, a revolutionary dance. *Act of Piety* chose from the American scene the repressed, tight-lipped, tightly-coiffured Puritan who, while her mind sought God in devotion, let her body yield to flesh and the Devil. *Act of Judgment*, which immediately follows in this suite makes of the rebel an outcast. This second dance, however, seemed a little too reminiscent of *Heretic* on first sight to grant it any serious consideration. *Dance in Four Parts*, solos, and *Four Casual Developments*, trios, are bright studies in witty insouciance, mocking, with cheerful ridiculousness, quests, dreams, tragedy, on the one hand, and "expressive" dancing on the other. *Sarabande*, divorced from the suite *Transitions* of last year, emerged this evening as an intensely effective study.

A hurried survey of the program elicits one final comment. More and more of the subject matter of Miss Graham's ever-provocative recitals deal, however impersonally and abstractly, with social conditions and social change. This is a fact noteworthy in itself.

E. O.

Carola Goya, (Town Hall, Nov. 5)

THERE is a program note appended to one of Miss Goya's offerings, *Fandanguillo Gitano*, which contributes the following information:—"One of the oldest dances in Spain, known in Ronda in the days of

the Roman occupation. History tells us that senators and wise councilors left their deliberations to watch the dancing of the women of Ronda." Good for the lusty old senators! If the ladies of Ronda gave as eye-salving a performance as did Miss Goya, not even the wisest of councilors could be expected to continue his deliberations when the women folk were Gitanoing in the public square. Miss Goya enjoys the enthusiastic patronage of the most fashionable section of the New York theatre audience. White ties, opera hats, bare backs, filled Town Hall to overflowing and the applause was voluminous and indiscriminate. These people, bored with their own uselessness, come to be titillated, and Miss Goya aims to please.

Miss Goya's program consisted of twelve Spanish dances, among which were *Sevilla a Baile de Presentation*, the traditional first dance of a program in Spain; *Venga Maestro*, a fiesta dance, in which Miss Goya takes the parts of several people; *Farruca Divina*, an Andalusian dance having to do with a flirtation on horseback; a *Nineteenth Century Bolero*, a throwback to the Italian Ballet; *Vivan Las Gitanas!*, a dance concerned with a gypsy girl who has just stolen a pair of shoes; and *Flor de Amor* a Jota, rural dance of Aragon, (imaginary daisy, he loves me—he loves me not), etc.

Miss Goya's grace, personal charms, and excellent miming almost made one forget that her dancing was not of the highest quality.

L. D. N.

### New School Lecture-Recitals

IT is unfortunate that more dancers and dance students do not attend the series of lectures on the modern dance conducted by John Martin at the New School of Social Research every Friday night. The course, this year, plans a survey of technics of the modern dance, Graham, Wigman, etc., group dances presented by these schools, solo dances created by the students themselves, lectures on music for the dance, etc. Though students could benefit most from these discussions, the fee is prohibitive (\$1.00 single admission). Ways and means should be found for the distribution of cut-rate tickets to this course so that students could attend lectures on dance problems and on technics different from their own. We noticed that while Wigman enthusiasts crowded to see the comprehensive demonstration presented by Hanya Holm and her group, very few members of Martha Graham's troupe made an appearance, yet for dancers seeking an understanding of the broad field of the dance, such a program could have proven invaluable. And where were the Wigman devotees at Miss Graham's clear exposition of her technical system? Among the performers were four members of the Workers Dance League in Miss Graham's demonstration group, and three in the Wigman Group.

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# Shifting Scenes

## THE UKRAINIAN WORKERS' THEATRE

Besides the English-speaking dramatic groups in America, there is a strong theatrical movement among workers of foreign extraction. Especially prominent among these is the Ukrainian group who, with the presentation of their play *Oh Yeah* at the national contest in Chicago, was adjudged second only to the Workers Laboratory Theatre's production *Newsboy*.

The theatrical activity of the Ukrainian drama groups in America is not a recent development but dates almost from the beginning of the revolutionary movement in America. Not having a suitable repertoire of their own, the Ukrainian workers for a long time selected plays from the Ukrainian bourgeois stage which seemed to depict in some measure at least the ideals of the workers.

It wasn't until recently with the appearance of new plays by Soviet dramatists, that a new spirit was introduced into the Ukrainian workers' stage in America. But, neither the Soviet plays nor the plays of the proletarian writers during the first period after the revolution gave any of the needed materials. For, while the plays of the Soviet dramatists were written for a Soviet audience, the plays of the Ukrainian writers in America were largely a mechanical reproduction of old-country materials and forms. There was a lack of originality in our Ukrainian dramatists in America.

A new era in the life of the Ukrainian theatrical groups in America started soon after the formation of the League of Workers' Theatres with which the Ukrainian group became affiliated. Participation of the Ukrainian Dram-Circle of New York in the theatrical work of the League brought a new enthusiasm to this group and served as an example to all the Ukrainian workers' dram-groups in America.

On October 28, the first Ukrainian Workers' Dram-Groups Conference was held in the Labor Lyceum of New York. Preceding the actual conference was a theatrical contest in which were presented original plays before an audience of eleven hundred people, including Ukrainian proletarian writers who are interested in enlarging the repertoire of Ukrainian groups.

At the conference, M. Nastus editor of the Ukrainian Daily News, analyzed the course of the Ukrainian dram-groups in America and emphasized and explained their future course; stressing particularly the fact that dramatic art can become a mighty weapon in the class struggle. Harry Elion, representative of the League of Workers' Theatres, reviewed in detail the production and the scripts of all the groups who participated in the contest. From the presentations of six dram-groups, three were selected as best. First place, for the best script, was awarded the Newark play, written by Walter Geeba, titled *Is That So?* Second place to New York; author M. Han; titled *That's Right!* Third place to New Haven; author M. Kasandra; titled *Chip In!* The first prizes for production were reversed, New York getting first place, Newark second and New Haven third.

Following the two lectures, the conference accepted a resolution for further activity in the dram-groups, the important features of which were: preparation for a contest of a national scope; and a call to Ukrainian Dramatic Groups to affiliate with the League of Workers Theatres. Advantageous and timely, this Conference will create a new outlook, a new proletarian development of the theatre among the Ukrainian workers' dram-groups in America.

### TRI-CITIES (Rock Island, Moline, Davenport)

The New Theatre Group has been especially active since the end of the summer building up the artistic effectiveness of our group by systematic

training in pantomime, improvisation, characterization, etc. *Nanking Road* was on the first of three full-length programs we have planned for fall; *Daughter*, *Recruits*, *Risen From the Ranks*, *The Sellout* and several individual recitations rounded out the bill. We are working on Mike Gold's *Money* and Alfred Kreymborg's *America, America*.

These programs are presented not only in the Workers' Hall in Rock Island, but in nearby towns and farm centers. A performance was given in Mathersville to an audience of miners. The attendance at these performances runs from about forty to three hundred workers.

The group's correspondent writes "We are enthusiastic, to put it mildly, about the improved NEW THEATRE".

## THEATRE OF ACTION IN DETROIT

The Detroit Theatre Group in the last six weeks has performed three new plays, *Newsboy*; *Pennies*, *Nickels and Dimes*; and *Scottsboro*, a mass chant. The Group has written a play, *Jenks Muir*, and collaborated in the writing of *James Victory*, based on the Negro frame-up here. We have planned a series of monthly forums, and already have Paul Romaine scheduled to speak on "The Little Theatre and Workers' Theatre, their birth and growth."

## THE SAN FRANCISCO BLUE BLOUSES

The terror here has given the Revolutionary Theatre a new lease on life. For the first time we have been able to form a section committee of the L.O.W.T. Our first production was *Recruits*, played on the ruins of a stage which had been wrecked by the vigilantes several weeks previous. Our next production was *War Dogs*, and we intend producing *Hurrah for the Bolsheviks* November 7th.

## THEATRE MASS

*The Red Sun, Burning*, (Die Wandlung) an anti-war play by Ernst Toller, as an introductory prelude to the Theatre Mass, will open at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, on December 24th, for a limited engagement. The first official production of this new professional revolutionary Theatre will be Samuel Ornitz's *In New Kentucky* which will open shortly after *The Red Sun, Burning*.

## STEELWORKERS IN NEW YORK

The W.L.T. has received the following letter from the Shipyard Workers Local No. 307, Steel & Metal Workers Industrial Union:

"Although tardy, still it is not too late to send you this brief note. We wish to commend the excellent performance of the W.L.T. group at our social affair arranged in Staten Island.

"It contributed greatly in explaining to the workers vital issues confronting the working class, and was a demonstration of the value of the activity of the W.L.T. in the labor movement.

"We hope that you will continue your cooperation with our organization in the future.

"Wishing you the best of success in your work, etc., etc.

(Signed) "Shipyard Workers Local No. 301"

## INTERNATIONAL THEATRE, NO. 2

As we go to press, the latest issue of *International Theatre* has arrived with articles by Maxim Gorki on *Plays and Playwrights*, V. Meyerhold, *On Ideology and Technology in the Theatre*, R. Pelshe, *Lunacharsky*; George Lukas, *Marx and Engels on Problems of Dramaturgy*, *Confusion* by Heinrich Diamant, and many other articles indispensable to the workers-theatre goers in America. *International Theatre* can be ordered through *New Theatre*.

## STANISLAVSKY'S METHOD

(Continued from page 13)

thought will be manifest in his face and body.

Of course the actor may find, in searching for external characterization, a cliché which will fit very closely into a situation or feeling. In that case it can be used, life must be put into it, and an inner relation to the content of the role must be found. Such cases are rare.

## REPETITION OF PERFORMANCES

The actor comes to each performance of the same part in a different state of mind, and a different mood. This fact should be utilized in keeping his performance from becoming stale. Every time he sets out to play a part he should refresh himself by thinking over the principal intention of the character and relating it to his own immediate state. If, for instance, reaching out for family happiness is the dominant drive of the character, the actor should ask himself what aspect of this is nearest to him. If one evaluates his role from the aspect of his mood at each performance, each problem in it acquires a special coloring each time. In essence it remains the same.

(TO BE CONCLUDED)

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FILMS OF THE MONTH

(Continued from page 25)

pliability of sound, he is years ahead of the Hollywood technicians.

AS FOR the home products, the less said of them the better. All over town film critics are to be seen falling over one another, anxiously disavowing their pre-season predictions of merit in the fall season's movies. *St. Louis Kid* presents James Cagney in an apathetic imitation of himself. The one novelty the picture contains is that now Cagney knocks out his opponents with a single blow of his hard skull instead of the more orthodox "one-two" punch. *Transatlantic Merry-go Round* is chiefly memorable for the worst line of the year, "I adore you, my poison ivy!" That venerable corpse Tolstoy's *Resurrection* was again disinterred as *We Live Again*. It still is a painful experience "Annastenic" notwithstanding. Mr. Frederic March, our hero, who appears as Browning in *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, reads his lines with all the abandon of ye ancient town crier. The *Barretts* provided the familiar sight of Norma Shearer in her sole contribution to the histrionics of this generation: clasping her hands in mute appeal and cracking her fingers at the joints.

*The First World War*, far from being a "thrilling spectacle" (the unanimous finding of the press), was an endless succession of parades and presentations of medals, and soon had me gasping for relief from tedium. Compared to Mr. Stallings' compilation of still shots bearing the same name—the movie appeared inept and actually opposed to the original in spirit. To begin with, the film squarely places the war guilt on Germany. Save for a fleeting shot of a shell factory in France, only Germany is seen preparing for the conflict. With America's entrance into the war, the music, up to that point subdued, suddenly crashed into "The Stars and Stripes Forever." The audience, previously conditioned by this music in the past, bursts into applause, eyes glistening with fervor; their legs twitch in an effort to march in time. I am convinced that if at this juncture in the picture a fire-eating "two-minute man" were to appear from the wings of the theatre a successful recruiting could be carried through. In this connection Mr. Watts' inability to understand why Hollywood cannot make convincing anti-war films (*Herald Tribune*, Nov. 11) where the Russians succeed is surprising, especially since Mr. Watts points out the reasons himself in the opening paragraph of his article, namely, the Hollywood producers are not interested in anti-war films. As instruments of imperialist propaganda their chief function is to foster and nurture a combativeness that can be easily fanned into insane hatred when as a last resort Capitalism falls back on war to save its dying rule.

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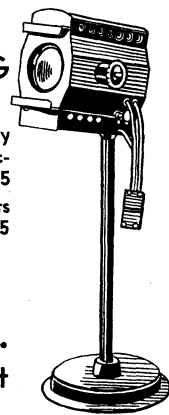
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