

# NEW THEATRE

EUGENE O'NEILL  
• CHARMION VON WIEGAND

MAYER OF MGM  
• JOEL FAITH

KINO-WALPURGIS NIGHT  
• EDWARD DAHLBERG

FOKINE BALLETS  
• BLANCHE EVAN

THE NON-ACTORS  
• V. I. PUDOVKIN



15c SEPTEMBER 1935

*From  
Gulliver's  
Travels,  
Soviet film.*

# ARTEF THEATRE

247 WEST 48th ST.

TEL. CHickering 4-7999

## OPENING

WITH THE BRILLIANT SOCIAL SATIRE

# "RECRUITS"

FOR TWO WEEKS ONLY

BEGINNING

FRIDAY EVE. SEPT. 13

TO

FRIDAY EVE. SEPT. 27

TICKETS NOW AT BOX OFFICE

PRICES: 50c - 75c - \$1.00

GRAND - OPENING - PREVIEW

SAT. EVE. SEPT. 28

NEWEST ARTEF PRODUCTION

# "REVOLT OF THE REAPERS"

BY SISKIND LIEV

DIRECTION: BENNO SCHNEIDER

SETTINGS: M. SOLOTAROFF

MUSIC: BEN YOMEN

DANCES: LILY MEHLMAN

TICKETS NOW

PRICES: 50c - 75c - \$1.00

# FROM RECENT ISSUES

Here's Part of New Theatre's  
Record for 8 Issues of 1935!

## DRAMA

Criticism and articles by John Howard Lawson, John W. Gassner, Harold Clurman, H. W. L. Dana, M. A. Chekhov, Eugene Gordon, Langston Hughes, Molly Day Thacher, Leon Moussinac and Alfred Saxe.

Published plays—*Waiting For Lefty* by Clifford Odets, *Panic* fragments by Archibald MacLeish, *Floridsdorf* by F. Wolf, *John Henry* by Herbert Kline and *Parade*.

## FILM

Criticism and articles by Robert Forsythe, Ilya Ehrenburg, Sergei Eisenstein, V. I. Pudovkin, King Vidor, Richard Watts, Jr., Robert Stebbins, Dovzhenko, Piscator, Bela Balasz, and Louis Norden.

## DANCE

Paul Love, Lincoln Kirstein, E. Eisenberg, Blanche Evan, Edna Ocko, Tamiris, and Chen-I-wan.

## These Writers and Artists

make NEW THEATRE America's liveliest and most stimulating theatre magazine. You'll find no 'ivory tower' aesthetes here, but outstanding creative workers and critics with a definite social point of view. You can read what they have to say right through the heart of the theatrical season—from October 1935 to May 1936 for only \$1.00. Why not subscribe now?

# NEW THEATRE

**\$1** for 8 months subscription

NEW THEATRE, Box 67, Station O., N. Y. C.

Here's \$1.00. Please send me NEW THEATRE for 8 months beginning .....

Name .....

Address .....

City and State .....

# NEW THEATRE

SEPTEMBER 1935

**N**EW THEATRE greets the announcement of the \$3,000,000 allotment for the Drama Unit of the Works Project Administration with mingled feelings of enthusiasm and misgiving.

Misgivings because the New York Drama Unit, under the management of Colonel Earle Boothe, has already demonstrated its pro-war attitude in *Meet the Enemy*, a poisonous military propaganda play written by Boothe himself. Fear that Mr. Boothe may use his influence and dubious talents to persuade other drama projects appointees to convert their groups into machines for the diffusion of reactionary ideas would seem under these circumstances not to be unfounded.

Our enthusiasm is based on the fact that the Drama Unit with approximately \$1,000,000 at its disposal in previous allotments has been putting on between 160 and 180 performances in parks, settlement houses, Y.M.C.A.'s, C.C.C. camps, churches and public schools, before 200,000 to 300,000 people every week. That most of the plays were just so much dramatic pap, innocuous when not downright reactionary like *Meet the Enemy*, is undeniably true. But there still remains the possibilities for such a project including social plays in its repertory and reflecting the problems and needs of the mass of people that form its audience.

More enthusiasm is enkindled by the appointment of Professor Hallie Flanagan of Vassar to coordinate all relief theatre projects on a national scale. Professor Flanagan is admirably qualified to guide the development of the drama projects so that they may become a genuine peoples' theatre honestly reflecting the real life and problems of the American people.

Encouraging also is the fact that this project will give employment to some 50,000 unemployed, 17,000 of them actors. NEW THEATRE urges these workers to follow the example of project workers everywhere and organize into the theatrical and craft trade unions for union wages and equal pay for equal work. Otherwise their low wages will be used to break down existing union standards. NEW THEATRE

urges the vast audiences who will view the Drama Unit productions to demand good vital drama that will rank above the usual twelve-year old entertainment level of past projects, to protest every attempt to present anti-labor, pro-fascist or pro-war productions.

The New Theatre League gladly volunteers to the heads of the Drama Project its assistance and support in the shaping of a broad program for the development of a theatre with meaning and purpose for the American people. NEW THEATRE magazine likewise pledges itself to be the first to praise every progressive aspect of the Drama Unit while retaining the right to condemn any reactionary idea that may be reflected there.

It is NEW THEATRE's hope that the millions of dollars awarded the Drama Unit for fostering the American drama will not be used, as so many "new deal" innovations, against the real interests of the American people.

The October issue will contain a full analysis of the drama relief program and an account of the activities of the Authors' League, the Dramatists' Guild, the Writers' Union, Equity and Actors' Forum in securing relief for theatre workers.

The battle against Hollywood deception and Hearstian news distortion continues not only in the pages of NEW THEATRE but on picket lines in front of neighborhood theatres.

The New York City Committee of the American League Against War and Fascism has organized a campaign to boycott theatres that continue to show Hearst's notoriously jingoistic newsreels.

The following New York theatres are under boycott: Loew's 175th Str. and Broadway, Loew's Oriental Theatre at Bay 19th and 86th St., Brooklyn, and Loew's Spooner at Aldus St., and Southern Boulevard, Bronx.

Other branches of the American League Against War and Fascism plan to picket and hold mass demonstrations in front of movie houses that continue to display Hearst Metrotone newsreels.

## DRAMA

Editorials • 3

Preview • 5

• Fred J. Ringel

The Quest of Eugene O'Neill • 12

• Charmion Von Wiegand

"Midsummer Revue" • 21

• John R. Chaplin

Prospects for the New Theatre • 24

• Mark Marvin

Shifting Scenes • 25

## FILM

Louella Parsons: Reel Two • 4

Footlights in Filmland • 20

• Richard Sheridan Ames

Mayer of MGM • 6

• Joel Faith

Kino-Walpurgis Night, 14th St. • 10

• Edward Dahlberg

Directing the "Non-Actor" • 18

• V. I. Pudovkin

A New Approach to Film Making • 22

• Ralph Steiner and Leo T. Hurwitz

The New Film Alliance • 29

Film Checklist • 33

## DANCE

The Fokine Ballets • 26

• Blanche Evan

Martha Graham's "Panorama" • 27

• Edna Ocko

Redder Than the Rose • 28

HERBERT KLINE, Editor • MOLLY DAY THACHER, Drama • ROBERT STEBBINS, Film • EDNA OCKO, Dance • GEORGE REDFIELD, Managing Editor

ASSOCIATES: Luther Adler, L. Berman, Ben Blake, David Crystal, S. Foster, Leo T. Hurwitz, Jay Leyda, Ray Ludlow, Mark Marvin, Louis Norden, Muriel Rukeyser, Robert Steck, J. Stern, Bess Serman.

Vol. II, No. 9. Published monthly by the New Theatre League and New Dance League at 114 W. 14th St., New York City. (Phone WAtkins 9-5473 or CHelsea 2-9523). 15c a copy; subscription \$1.50 a year U. S. A.; 20c a copy; \$2.00 a year foreign countries. Illustrations and text cannot be reprinted without permission of New Theatre Magazine. Entered as second class matter October 29, 1934, at the Post Office, N. Y. C. under Act of March 3, 1879. Address all mail to New Theatre, P. O. Box 67, Station O, New York City.

NEW THEATRE encourages its readers to support and initiate boycotts against Hearst Metrotone newsreels and recommends that the boycott be extended to the fifth issue of the *March of Time*, which is so unequivocal, so brazen a fascist appeal that there can be no dissent of opinion. When even *Variety*, the Dun and Bradstreet of the show business, finds that section of the *March of Time* called *France* (Col. Francois de la Roque and his Croix de Feu), a "surprising manifestation of a form of fascism—a silent, military threat," the time has come for united action.

Julius Streicher, probably the most notorious anti-Semite in the Third Reich, recently proclaimed that the German people have no need for the religion of Christ, that anti-Semitism is religion enough for any "good" German. One week later the following Havas News Agency story appeared in a New York newspaper:

"Vienna—Oberammergau's famous 300-year-old Passion Play, long one of Bavaria's greatest attractions to foreign visitors, is to be abandoned entirely in favor of an anti-Jewish play entitled *The Harvest*."

NEW THEATRE is pleased to report that we are now able to continue the enlarged size and improved format of this issue. Every person who believes in the importance of the work we are doing will be glad to read the facts recorded below:

Circulation now totals 16,000 as against 5,000 in August 1934 (320 per cent increase!). Subscriptions are now 2,800 as against 600 in August 1934 (466 per cent increase!). And advertising is mounting steadily.

NEW THEATRE is in a position to go ahead rapidly. If every reader of these lines would send in \$1.00 at once for an eight month's subscription or get a friend to subscribe, NEW THEATRE would then have a sustaining fund with which to pay off back bills, pay contributors, editors and office workers, improve the magazine still further, and play an even greater role in developing the new theatre, film, and dance movement in this country. The editors take this occasion to appeal to every reader to become a subscriber.

In the August issue of NEW THEATRE, an article on Mary Wigman as a potential fascist appeared which unfortunately was an indefinite statement of the artistic stand which she has taken in Germany today. NEW THEATRE does not feel, in view of the many points raised by this brief article, that all the facts mentioned should remain unqualified. In the forthcoming issue of NEW THEATRE, for the sake of those in America who are studying in schools bearing her name, as well as for those dancers who have been forced to leave Germany, or who had the courage to defy the Hitler regime, a further clarification will be presented.

## Louella Parsons: Reel Two

Hollywood, the fantastic, specializing in the manufacture and sale of sensations, has awakened with a joyous rush to a sensation not of its own making. It is *Louella Parsons: Hearst's Hollywood Stooge*, the article by Joel Faith, published in NEW THEATRE for August. One might think from the excitement that Cecil B. DeMille had successfully arranged for the Second Coming so that he might use it for incidental background in one of his projected film spectacles.

George Lewis, columnist on cinema matters for the Los Angeles Post-Record, and not the George Lewis who writes for this magazine, reports the event thus:

"There has been excitement in town since the NEW THEATRE came out this month with its article about Louella Parsons. The article . . . was written simply and with a sledge hammer. The magazine's hard to get. Clerks at the stands said someone bought all the copies and they can't get any more. It has caused such a commotion people are gathering in small circles to read the story over a subscriber's shoulders."

Lewis, one of the many Hollywood columnists wrongly suspected of being Joel Faith, writes "People have telephoned threats, called us a Communist, slapped our back, and one person sent us a little tomato wired like a bomb with a note that reads 'congratulations for an effective explosion. Next month throw this!'"

Daily Variety, the coast edition of the New York trade paper of the same name, points out in its own reformed pants-presser English that the "Mag. which is more or less unknown in Hollywood, has been a sellout for several days." Then, though it dislikes Louella and Hearst with its whole rag-pulp soul, Variety throws down a red-cape on the mud puddle to aid the lady in distress. "Sheet is out-and-out communistic," it declares..

Other reporters stick to the point. One notes that "copies of the magazine were sell-

ing at a premium among film folk, with prices running as high as five and ten dollars per copy." While another admiringly comments, "NEW THEATRE is apparently setting out to do what no journalist has ever dared—namely to blast the gingerbread roof off Hollywood. . . I'm willing to wager my all that there isn't a star in California who hasn't bootlegged a copy by this time."

On the heels of this barrage, come letters from Los Angeles readers. They tell of the dark rumors to the effect that Hearst emissaries have allegedly bought up all the newsstand copies, that Louella allegedly is thinking of bringing suit, and that Louella allegedly insists that her photo illustrating the story was doctored and her head pasted onto somebody's undieted figure. And finally, the popular Hollywood game seems to be trying to guess the real name of the author of the article. About the only prominent member of the film colony who hasn't been mentioned is Shirley Temple.

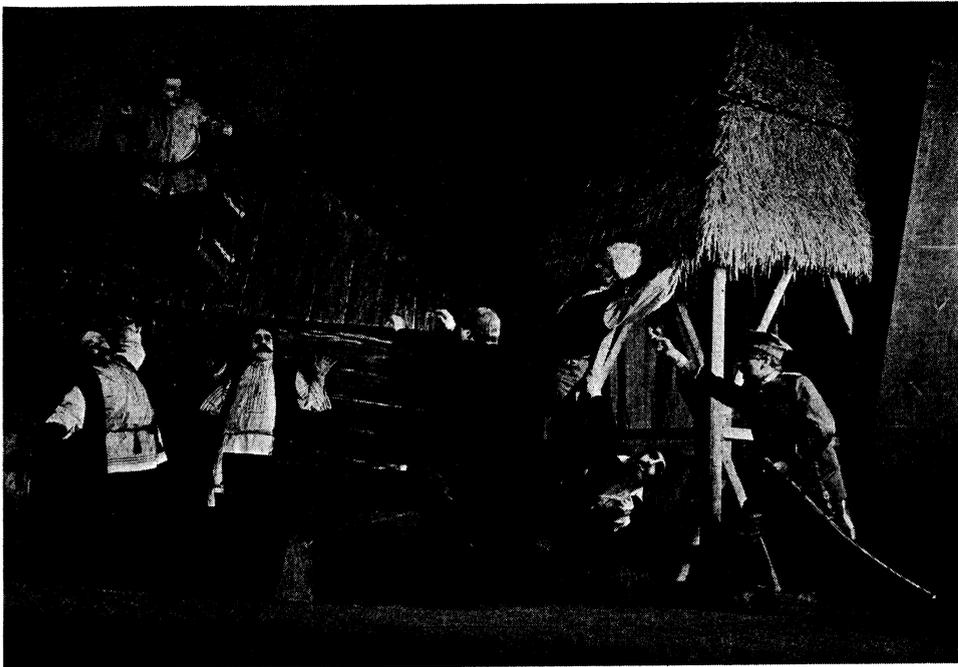
NEW THEATRE has no desire to be ungalant, rubbing salt in open wounds, but it may comfort Louella—who is reported to have taken the article hard—that this magazine unlike most of Hollywood bears her no personal animus. To this end it suppressed as non-consequent, certain portions of the original article. NEW THEATRE's interest in Louella extends only as far as her works, for, (and she may find this hard to understand) she is the most prominent representative of that vicious and degraded form of journalism the function of which is to "sell" the cheap and unreal movies of Hollywood and fascist Hearst, to millions of American workers. There are a few dozen Louellas writing, some more mannered, but all produce the same pap to the same end—providing the ultimate excuse for bourgeois newspapers to claim larger grants of paid advertising.

That movies in America are first a business, and second an art form, is no secret. And that this business is conducted with unusual treachery and distortion of social facts in its dealings with the public is also understood. But the specific examples of Hollywood's anti-social, mass deceptions, have not been sufficiently exposed.

NEW THEATRE has always presented serious studies and criticism of the art of film making, and has agitated for working conditions. It now proposes to put the real Hollywood in print. With this issue, then, it introduces another searching portrait of filmland, *Mayer of MGM*, again by Joel Faith. Other exposes by Faith, who is now in New York, will follow. Next month, Robert Forsythe will swing his famous satiric pen on Hollywood's House of Horrors. In the words of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, "California, here we come!"



Spencer



Revolt of the Reapers, Artef production

I. Russack.

## PREVIEW

The coming season will see the Broadway theatre legitimately established at last, as what it has bastardly been for years: Wall Street's guinea pig for Hollywood's flicker output. More than half of the 118 scheduled productions are backed by the limitless gold stream of Paramount, Warner, Fox and Metro. To be sure, the great rejoicing about the coming boom in the amusement industry has little relationship with such realities as the nation-wide strike wave against terror and starvation. Producers and directors, "angels" and stars, will have to pitch their artistic ambitions fully now in the direction of combined stage and movie box-office results. The monopolization is nearly perfect. The movie industry has conquered Broadway, radio has taken over several theatres for their public-attended broadcasts. How long will it be until television, the third member of the giant trust, will spread its icy wings over the rest of our theatres?

There is a planned revival of the classics announced: two productions of Hamlet at once; several plays by Shaw, Ibsen, O'Neill and Shakespeare; fifteen musical spectacles with plenty of doping sex and glitter; a row of pacifist-militaristic "problem" plays including three about the coming Japanese-American war. . . Fully aware of the lack of ideological substance and artistic value of Broadway's flicker-ready vehicle, the critics are hardened to do the sort of "reviewing" their ad-controlled papers subtly command. At the end of the season Variety's Box Score will pick the winner of the game: the "critic"

who anticipated the biggest box office success. The so-called Academy of Motion Picture Arts will present its medal to the actress, director and movie, which proved to be the biggest money-maker. The Pulitzer Prize Committee will save itself once more in crowning another dark horse instead of crediting the new social theatre with the vitality and force that give inspiration to a growing audience. . . .

Will any of these type-cast routine plays, written and directed with an eye to the movies, contribute more than another zero to the art of the theatre? Will Broadway's crutches not cripple rather than crystalize the specific flavor and integrity of cinematic expression?—Some producer will discover some minor talent which will be grabbed off before it has a chance to develop and grow. A few stars will clean up, the mass of unemployed actors will feel once more the suicidal shadow of hopelessness. For many years Hollywood has been buying off the best talent of the theatre to flatten them out into paralyzing screen sterility. The movie capitol boasts of twenty-five new stars for the last season. Yet of the 11,000 actors registered at Hollywood's Call Bureau, Variety reports, seventy-five percent did not work a single day last year. There is an infinite army of lost causes in Hollywood's artistic cemetery.

The *G-Men* gangster cycle slowly fades out into the *G-Women* cycle. The roaring classics continue forth with such spectacles as Cecil DeMille's *Crusades*, Fox—*Dante's Inferno* . . . Charles Chaplin will be presented with *Modern Times* . . . Greta Garbo in an *nth* version

of *Anna Karenina* and *Camille* . . . Max Reinhardt will specialize in pageants after the high-hat experiments with the costly *Midsummer Night's Dream*. . . Plenty of Tin Pan Alley musicals, Shirley Temple tear jerkers. . . 20th Century Pictures make ready to glorify militarism in *Professional Soldier*. United Artists is about to release *Red Salute*, attacking the liberal and radical student movement. *From Little Acorns* (Paramount) will dish out manly heroism in the C.C.C. camps. Warner Brothers announce *Shipmates Forever*: "Dick and Ruby at Annapolis . . . middies marching . . . martial music . . . the Navy's *Flirtation Walk* . . ." All these flickers represent artistic achievements, of course. The "propaganda" scare is saved for Russian pictures and any film touching the social struggle. The newsreels are feverishly preparing for a few new beauty contests and the great Ethiopian show Mussolini is staging for the imperialist powers. . .

The Summer School of the Dance at Bennington College drew an astonishing number of revolutionary dancers for vital work and training. Martha Graham and Doris Humphrey, besides creating impressive dances themselves, conducted workshops which bear evidence of the seriousness and maturity their respective groups have grown up to. More than ever, our great dancers and aspiring dance groups will have to turn from retrospective themes of nostalgia and frustration to vigorous expression of revolutionary content. Their field is the new theatre, backed and carried by high ideals and an audience that rips the dividing line between false illusion and inspiring reality.

Broadway's sell-out will undoubtedly open the eyes of many to the activities of the new social stage—the only living theatre in America. The Theatre Union begins the season Gorki's *Mother*, an adaptation by Paul Peters from a version of Brecht and Eisler. The Group Theatre is going on tour with *Waiting for Lefty* and *Awake and Sing*, before opening in New York with *Paradise Lost* by Clifford Odets. The Group will later present John Howard Lawson's long-awaited *Marching Song*, and probably a new play by Paul Green. Albert Bein is producing *Let Freedom Ring!*, his own adaptation of Grace Lumpkin's novel *To Make My Bread*. He is also planning to import Piscator from Russia to direct an English version of *The Good Soldier Schweik*. The colorful Artef Group will give Liev's *Revolt of the Reapers* and Ornitz's *Haunch Paunch and Jowl*. The Theatre of Action is working on several new plays and sketches. And finally, the growing number of New Theatre League dramatic units in Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, etc. are not only producing in their respective cities but are touring the nearby countryside and imbuing their audiences with an active spirit of social protest.

FRED J. RINGEL.



*Revolt of the Reapers*, Artef production

I. Russack.

# Mayer of MGM

BY JOEL FAITH

Louis B. Mayer, president of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios, holds a position from which he exerts the most powerful influence of any man in Hollywood or Wall Street on the motion picture industry.

Although his earnings are more than \$800,000 a year; although he is head of MGM; president of the Motion Picture and Distributors of America; official spokesman and chief lobbyist for the film industry; pal of William Randolph Hearst and Herbert Hoover, Mr. Mayer has his lighter side — a side which brought out an amazing virtuosity in the man but a side which did not begin to develop until his wife fell ill a year ago. Mayer has established himself at Malibu Beach, while Mrs. Margaret Mayer is bed-ridden in their Beverly Hills mansion. It is at Malibu that Mayer entertains lavishly, when he is not flinging a mean torso about the dance floor of the Trocadero, an exclusive Hollywood night club. So adept has he become at the rumba and other fashionable diversions of the rich that he is known to a wide circle of friends as "Trocadero Lou."

These references to the Magnate's private life are made in no spirit of ascetic righteousness; let him enjoy the lighter pleasures who can. But in this case the private life has its public implications. When a man who controls the greatest medium for moulding the popular imagination steps out occasionally with the ladies, that is his private affair; but when he poses as a champion of "good," "clean" pictures extolling the old-fashioned virtues, that is hypocrisy—which in the case of a public man is a public vice. When he throws Lucullan banquets for his friends, that is his private affair—though in time of universal starvation even that liberal shibboleth may be questioned. But when the purveyor of movies for the millions which extoll the national espionage system, the military defenders of the status quo, the distorted newsreels — when such a man lavishly entertains public officials, and even fascist agents, that is hardly a private matter. The movies are a tremendous social force, whose control gives the owners power to mould opinion and attitude. But for this, Mayer would not be worth writing about.

Mayer received his formal education in the public schools of St. John, New Brunswick, and then assisted his father, Jacob, in a ship-salvaging business before coming to the United States. His first theatrical venture was the presentation of *From the Manger to the Cross*, in a small Hayerhill, Mass., theatre. That is a far cry from some of his latest productions, *Red Dust*, *China Seas*, and other films starring Miss Jean Harlow and Miss Joan Crawford. It was under Mayer that MGM started the Hollywood cycle of penthouse lechery in which picture actresses un-

dressed at least six times and ended by marrying millionaires. It is indeed a tribute to the cinema king that he has been able to convince the Legion of Decency that his films are clean and wholesome entertainment.

Until recently Mayer has been Hollywood's leading host, putting on studio banquets that would cause royalty to blush for shame. These parties are thrown in a gaudy bungalow used for no other purpose. Troubadors greet the guests as they enter. Splendid food is served. The honor guest is usually surrounded by a bevy of film cuties. Sometimes the ultimate in juxtaposition is reached, as when Miss Harlow is placed next to Bishop Cantwell and Miss Crawford is beside Rabbi Magnin. When George Bernard Shaw toured America he was the guest of Mayer and Hearst. He sat at table beside Miss Marion Davies. When he rose from his chair to view the studio Miss Davies clung to his arm with a grip of iron. Nor would she let go until news photographers snapped their shutters. Next morning pictures of these intellectuals graced the pages of all the Hearst newspapers. Perhaps the most colossal luncheon Louie ever had was in 1933 for Secretary of War Dern, 11 governors, and, as the press said, "more than 1000 notables." One of his recent guests was Senora Margherita Saraffita, Italian biographer of Mussolini. "Films are civilizing the world," she said at that luncheon. Among his guests have been Senator Arthur Capper; Don Carlos Avila, Peruvian ambassador; James Rolph, late governor of California; James G. Davis, ex-secretary of labor, and Dr. Hubert Work, former secretary of the Interior.

Louie did most of his entertaining during Hoover's palmy days in the White House, and he still plays host at gigantic affairs which are duly reported in the Hearst papers, but he isn't what he used to be. His job has been taken over by Jack Warner, honorary California administrator of the NRA and the very first film magnate to increase the working hours of his employes when the Blue Eagle expired. Warner had the foresight to jump on the Roosevelt bandwagon with cheers and cash. Now he is Hollywood's official host for visiting big shots and has gained such a high political and social position that he has already had Postmaster Farley and Marion Davies to lunch.

Mayer is also known in Los Angeles for his participation in the Julian Oil crash. The bursting of this speculative bubble cost investors millions and landed several of the lesser figures involved in the hoosegow. In March, 1930, Mayer was indicted by the Los Angeles County Grand Jury for conspiracy to commit usury! His fellow-defendants were other men whose names were in the Who's Who of Los Angeles capitalists. Louie and the other

big shots were exonerated however.

Mayer took a leading part in breaking the short-lived studio strike. MGM set the pace in promising workers reinstatement if they would stop their truculence. The men, of course, were not taken back, and one Metro employe committed suicide. "A very small percentage of the working force is involved", Mayer commented on the strike. "We pay the highest salaries on the West Coast and shall continue to give work to those who are loyal." Just to be sure his workers remain loyal, Mayer lately has employed Pinkerton detectives to watch those suspected of disloyalty at MGM. Other studios are beginning to follow suit. Volunteer and professional red-baiters are watching Hollywood carefully. Their services will soon be in demand.

If any fascist hopes to find anti-Semitic material in this sketch of Mayer, let him remember that Louie is not above fascist leanings himself. His friends are Hearst and Hoover; he is a powerful foe of labor; California Chairman of the Republican Party, active in anti-labor activities.

As an economic prognosticator Mayer is on a par with Dr. Julius Klein, who used to specify certain Tuesdays upon which prosperity was sure to return. Louie's official biographer may overlook these statements:

"Hoover will be the first among the rulers to bring his country back from this worldwide condition of economic depression." (October, 1930.)

"There is a marked improvement in business generally." (August, 1932.)

"I say we have emerged from the depression. And so we have. There are, it is true, six to eight million men and women for whom employment must be found, but there are 30 million employed." (October, 1932.)

In May, 1932, Mayer flayed a proposed Federal tax of ten cents on theatre admissions, asserting that the masses needed films as much as they needed the other necessities of life. One day later he said: "In the direct sales tax on manufactured products, advocated by William Randolph Hearst, lies the country's only solution of its muddled budget problem."

He has been one of Hearst's most ardent back-patters for years. In 1928 he congratulated the Hearst papers for their "splendid and relentless fight for the Boulder Dam, for their alert and intelligent attitude on public questions." Hearst papers, he said, "have shown themselves faithful to the finest things in modern journalism. It is to such newspapers, always zealous for the public welfare, that the public must look for guidance." When Hearst came back on his shield from France as an "undesirable" the French authorities didn't want to contaminate the soil of their country, Mayer spoke thus of Hearst: "His abiding faith in his country will ever inspire and tinge the public actions of those in public life. Loyalty to one's country and to one's flag is a fundamental emotion regardless of

# LOUIS B. MAYER 'WILLING TO BECOME COMMUNIST!'

## FILM MILLIONAIRE HURLS DEFI IN TAX SPEECH

race, color or creed. We can well understand it. And so we can thrill to know that William Randolph Hearst's patriotism is not only an inspiration to every American, but to every man the world over in whose breast burns the fire of the patriot. And so it was that as we watched recent happenings, we could not help but paraphrase the lines of David Warfield in *The Music Master*—"if they don't want you, we want you. If they don't love you, we love you."

Hearst has paid this warmth back in kind by giving wide publicity to MGM films; by frequent use of the names of Mayer's stars in his "society" columns, and, especially, by campaigning bitterly against horse racing in California so that Mayer and the Schencks could continue without opposition to rake in the shekels of suckers at Agua Caliente.

Carl Laemmle has been called many unkind names for placing so many of his relatives on the Universal Studio payroll; but poor old "Uncle Carl" is a piker beside Mayer and Irving Thalberg when it comes to plain and fancy nepotism. Here are a few of the Mayer relatives in lucrative MGM positions: Jack Cummings, short-subject supervisor, Ruth and Mitzi Cummings, writers; and, until recently, David O. Selznick, Mayer's son-in-law. Thalberg has his sister, Sylvia, on the payroll as a writer. She is also a novelist but her books are known only to a select few, mostly relatives. There is Thalberg's wife, Norma Shearer, who gets star parts in all of MGM's best stories; Larry Weingarten, Sylvia's husband, is a supervisor, and Douglas Shearer, another brother-in-law, is head of the sound department. Jehovah alone knows how many other relatives are in soft but minor jobs at MGM. David Selznick recently moved to United Artists as an independent producer, where he makes large use of the clients of his younger brother, Myron, head of a thriving agency. Myron's clients are also favorites at MGM. William Goetz, another son-in-law of Mayer's, is one of the minor chieftains at Twentieth Century-Fox under the recent aegis of Darryl Zanuck and Joseph Schenck, where he looks out for his father-in-law's interests.

Mayer's best known "cousin" however, is Herbie Hoover, the rugged individualist of Palo Alto. Hoover and Mayer recently were guests of Hearst at the San Simeon duchy of the aging publisher, hatching out dark plots for Herbie to come back as a political power. Hearst and Hoover first met at Mayer's palatial home and the movie king sold the newspaper king on a campaign against Al Smith which helped to put Hoover into the White House in 1928. For that nifty piece of conniving Louie was offered the post of Ambassador to Turkey in 1929—a position he refused. Who ever heard of an ambassador making \$800,000 a year?

About that same time Mayer was helping other big Wall Street figures thrust the knife into William Fox, who was then king of the film world. That story is dramatically told by Upton Sinclair in his book on William Fox. Sinclair tells how Fox asked Hoover's aid in keeping the U. S. Department of Justice quiet when he attempted to put over one of his gigantic mergers; how Hoover failed; how Mayer was appealed to for help and, Sinclair says, "apparently Louis B. Mayer was able to do in the Attorney-General's office what Herbert Hoover wasn't able to do." That incident in Sinclair's book was recalled in the Autumn of 1933 when Fox was called before the Pecora committee and testified that Mayer had told him to have the Department of Justice records changed in connection with the Fox-Loew transaction. Mayer immediately sent a wire denying the Fox charge and said that it would be almost impossible, in any case, to tamper with the records.

Mayer's first connection with Hearst was established in 1919 when Paramount let Marion Davies go as a flop and the publisher moved his girl friend over to Mayer's lot. Marion Davies' films—all save *Little Old New York*—were unsuccessful, but the Mayer-Hearst business alliance continued until early this year. At that time Hearst finances were used as a prop for Warner Brothers, one of the less solvent film plants. Marion was also furious because Norma Shearer, and not she, was given the leading role by MGM in *The Bar-*

*retts of Wimpole Street*, a pretty tony picture. Today, as you walk into Mr. Mayer's suite at the studio, your eye will at once be caught by a portrait, larger than life-size, of the senile Sultan of San Simeon. Mayer is still friendly with Hoover, the White hope of American reaction. Perhaps, at their recent conference, Hearst, Mayer and Hoover planned how they would use the film as a campaign weapon against Roosevelt in 1936. Certainly Mayer learned a lesson valuable to those of his kind in the California gubernatorial race which Frank Merriam won by a narrow margin from Upton Sinclair. Seige guns of the California capitalists were turned against Sinclair to stem the tide of his EPIC followers. Mayer's bit, aside from money contributed by the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, was to manufacture a film called *The Inquiring Reporter*, designed to depict the feelings of Californians against the EPIC leader. In one newsreel the interviewer talked with an old lady sitting on her front porch in a rocking chair.

"For whom are you voting, Mother?"

"I am voting for Governor Merriam," the oldster quavers.

"Why, Mother?"

"Because I want to save my little home. It is all I have in this world."

Here is a splendid example of Mayer's red-baiting. An MGM newsreel shows a be-whiskered, evil-looking fellow interviewed by a reporter. There aren't any bombs visible about his person but one look at him will convince you that he knows where to lay his hands on plenty of explosives in a hurry.

"For whom are you voting?"

"Vy, I am foting for Seenclair."

"Why?"

"Vell, his system vorked vell in Russia, vy can't it vork here?"

The Merriam supporters were pictured in this propaganda as kindly, home-loving citizens and the Sinclair supporters were presented as ignorant, shiftless people. The parts, of course, were played by bit actors, as was disclosed by the New York Times during the campaign.

When the Sinclair popularity was growing by terrific leaps and bounds, both Mayer and Hearst were in Europe. Mayer immediately rushed home to save the state by screen propaganda. Hearst was soaking his stiffening joints at Bad Nauheim with the notorious Hitler henchman, Hanfstaengel. Church censorship against films was also a fearsome question in Hollywood then, so Hearst penned a front-page editorial for his papers damning dirty pictures and had the double-strength effrontery to sign that gem, *An American Husband*, before he, too, dashed madly home—accompanied, of course, by the charming Marion—to rescue California. Just before election the Hollywood Reporter, a trade paper, praised the magnates for defeating Sinclair.

"When the picture business gets aroused" the Reporter said, "it becomes AROUSED, and, boy, how they go to it!

"This campaign against Upton Sinclair has been and is DYNAMITE. It is the most effective piece of political humdingery that has ever been effected, and this is said in full recognition of that master-machine that used to be Tammany. Politicians in every part of this land (and they are all vitally interested in the California election) are standing by in amazement as a result of the bombast that has been set off under the rocking chair of Mr. Sinclair.

"Never before in the history of the picture business has the screen been used in the direct support of a candidate. Maybe an isolated exhibitor here and there has run a slide or two, favoring a friend, but never has there been concerted action on the part of all theatres in a community to defeat a nominee.

"And this activity may reach much farther than the ultimate defeat of Mr. Sinclair. It will undoubtedly give the big wigs in Washington and politicians all over the country an idea of the real POWER that is in the hands of the picture industry. Maybe our business will be pampered a bit, instead of being pushed around as it has been since it became big business.

"Before Louis Mayer, Irving Thalberg, Charlie Pettijohn (a good old Democrat under ordinary conditions) and Carey Wilson stepped into this political battle here, the whole Republican party seemed to have been sunk by the insane promises of Upton Sinclair. With that group in the War, and it has been a WAR, things took a different turn. Gov. Merriam's party here in the South had a HEAD, something that was missing before. It received the finances it so direly needed AND the whole picture business got behind the shove.

"Sinclair is not defeated yet, but indications point to it, and California should stand up and sing hosannas for their greatest State industry, MOTION PICTURES, and that same industry should, for itself, point to its work whenever some of that screwy legislation comes up in the various State Legislatures during the next few months."

Is THAT a United Front!

Mayer, Hearst and Joe Schenck also dished out reams of preposterous rot to the effect that the movies would leave California if Sinclair won the governorship; they intimidated studio employes into voting for Merriam and into contributing money to his campaign fund. There was courageous resistance, however, to the campaign fund brigandage, notably from Jean Harlow who refused to be blackjacked by Mayer. California had so many jobless and its funds had been so depleted by Sunny Jim Rolph that Merriam, after election, had to bite the celluloid hand of his benefactor and impose—or at least talk of imposing—a healthy tax upon the film industry. Immediately, of course, there was much talk of moving to Florida, Governor Merriam loomed as large an ogre as Sinclair and Mr. Mayer was moved to make a speech.

Mayer delivers his orations when he elects to speak extempore in the "stream of consciousness" method made famous by James Joyce. The meaningless, disjointed parade of phrases which he utters later has to be translated by a stenographer and sent to the press. Of all the muddle-headed things he has ever said, the speech he delivered before the Los Angeles Breakfast Club takes all the prizes. It is a pity that space limitations will not allow its reproduction in full here.

"Everyone," the film magnate said, "has the right to try for peace and happiness. If Bolshevism is the road toward this, I am willing to be a Bolshevist. One country—Russia—already has Bolshevism. I don't wish that country any harm. It has the right to happiness. And we should find out whether its method is succeeding. With a few dollars, we can go there and see for ourselves how happy they really are. Right now, in spite of our depression I doubt whether they are really as happy as we are. But I am willing to be a Socialist, or a Communist, or anything else which will bring happiness and security and a continuance of the high standards of living which our working-men have enjoyed in this country for 150 years.

"Because of our geographic isolation, we have become nationalistic in our trade tendencies. We have no merchant marine worthy of the name. In a newsreel weekly on the screen I saw the Leviathan, one-time pride of our merchant marine, being towed to the junk yard. Its sister ships, the Majestic, and the Berengaria, have been prosperous, the Leviathan, an American ship, just a load to carry. Why? Because we're too busy making social reforms, arranging for fewer working hours.

Already, we're beginning to think that a 30-hour week is too long. If this keeps up, we won't be working at all."

Then Mayer wailed at length about the proposed taxation.

"To be conservative, there are a hundred men and women in this industry on whom it depends and without whom it could not exist. These individuals pay 86 per cent of their income, under the present form of taxation, and already the Federal Government is looking in their direction for more. If the Federal tax increases, the state tax increases with it, automatically. Besides the 86 per cent, there are taxes on home and property. Why should any of these hundred individuals work? They can work for the radio or on the stage; they would be under the proposed California tax system.

"If confiscation of all my money would help", said the big-hearted tycoon, "I would yield to the cause of general welfare—but it wouldn't help. So long as you keep the gates open from Arizona, our bill will increase, as we have to take care of the hungry and jobless of the 47 other states. . . .

"Labor and capital must prosper together, because if capital cannot pay labor, the whole country suffers. That is why, by not thinking of what it is doing, the American Federation of Labor, and I am an honorary member of this, is the enemy of labor. I think many of its members will agree with me."

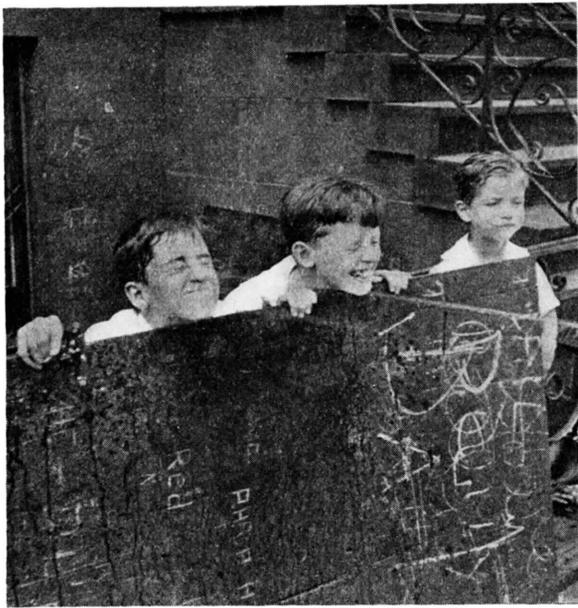
"The trouble between capital and labor is an old one. First we had the arrogance of the employer who would not yield from the then existing conditions. It was regarded as anarchism to speak of an eight-hour day. And now the American Federation of Labor has reversed this, and has taken on the arrogance and it has the blackjack.

"Hate, jealousy, intolerance and greed, after all, continue to exist. They are the cancer of humanity. I never could understand how the person who has nothing, and tries to tear down the person who has built up something, can ever hope to gain. Still, it is constantly done.

"How many stars," Mayer asked near the end of his plea, "have you heard of who died and had much money left? In the first place, time is short, secondly, they are great spenders, thirdly, they have a great many demands on them. Now if you take away the money they get, we've got to go. It won't cost our industry very much in view of the inducements held out to us by other states. It is possible that our brains have become paralyzed and that we no longer think in the manner that caused our forefathers to build our country?"

Two days later Mayer and Nicholas Schenck returned from putting the pressure on the legislature at Sacramento. Both wore wide smiles.

"They're good boys up there," Schenck told reporters as he and Louie stepped from plane. "I think they'll take care of things for us."



## ON YORKVILLE'S STREETS

These photographs of children at play were taken on the streets of Yorkville, German-American section of New York City, by Pierre Renne, a young member of the French Film and Photo League who is now residing in this country. Renne is now planning a coast-to-coast tour during which he hopes to gather enough material for a book of photographs on life in the United States. New Theatre hopes to present other examples of his work soon.



# Kino-Walpurgis Night, 14th St.

EDWARD DAHLBERG

Alex Salter dropped into a fifteen cent moviehouse, the Bijou. The flashlight against the West Point cadet uniform smeared carbon darkness. Looking about him the ceiling was faintly emerging from a dense skim of blackness. Then the walls dimly moved and wavered toward him and the gold-braided loges palsied and were at rest. For a moment the submarine murmurlessness of the movie theatre itself keened; it was broken by a "Lookie!" from an eight year old boy with a sickly sanded stem of a neck. Salter read:

"DEVIL OR DOVE: Coming Attraction October 11."

From the announcer came: "Billie Love in a whirlwind comeback to the silver screen. Never more winsome, more sparkling or more devilish."

A cataract series of close-ups follow: Billie Love, in a simple Patou satin dress fluttering above may buds of silkstockinged knees, sliding down a gold-nuggeted balustrade into the arms of an English tweeded millionaire. Man in audience, his adam's apple buoying against wilted collar, pushes his knees outward. The girl next to him in geranium dress seams it more tightly around her blimp thighs.

"Gorgeous girlish red-headed Billie in a delicious delirious dilemma: Four men on all fours and not one hand of marriage offered.

Billie, revealing grade A milk aurora of white teeth, alluringly lifts stark simple Rodier skirt, slim tapering debutante thighs outlined against material, while four suitors with male chorus faces are peeping on hands and knees at her iris colored garters.

"Were they improper, impertinent or just girl-inclined? Was she deceived, deceiver or just devil? You will simply love Billie Love."

The girl in the geranium dress moves two seats away.

"THUNDERBOLT" A cape cod cottage of stone-gray shingles with a slanting sea-warped door is shown in miniature. The horizon is dismally studded with mackerel clouds and then the entire background, yard woolly rocks, whitewashed fence and gate are revealed.

The radio voice galloping at jockey pace: "The lurid mystery of the sea with all the searing searching heartbreak of separation and reunion on a lonely rock-bound coast."

A man in seaboots, a thick clothcap, with a pipe choked by a silent mystery mouth unlatches gate and walks in. His name jiggles in gothic script; "Roan Mathers, played by Jack Bolt. The girl, EDNA PURCHASE, played by Nancy Racine, tall, reedy, misty, is gazing through crooked slot of window at a beacon. Her father, straggling rock-ribbed hair, the forehead stonily veined and wrinkled, the mouth meagerly chipped out of the immobile face, is blowing out the lamp.

ELY PURCHASE played by Eric Suther-

land. A shipping office, safe, toproll desk, cuspidor and a man about thirty-five, with elbowed jaw and eye-bags hemstitched to skin, carries ledger toward safe.

"The girl, strange, throbbing, uncanny. Her father, greedy, twisted by tragedy and a misunderstanding in his youth. Her seafaring lover, proud, remorseless, silently facing the grim ocean for her in a leaky suicide vessel, but too haughty to wring the final yes from her. And the man who stays at home and snoops and snipes, almost winning the girl for his own nefarious schemes. Don't fail to see Jack Bolt as the fisherman in his most tortured, tremendous and heart-taking role. Don't miss the unforgettable Nancy Racine as the forgotten girl in a lost stony Cape Cod fishing town. The most talked-of and whispered-about star on the screen today, the Duse of the talkie sea dramas."

"COMING ATTRACTION: Special Columbia Birthday Star Double Bill Featuring Curly Winkle, October 2nd. The Bijou's regular low price prevails."

"Rascally loveable she gives them the idea of starting a jam factory." Close-up of Curly Winkle, with jam ribboned across mouth and forehead and streamlined down chin. She licks her fingers, dimple smiles and takes a bow. Seven year old child pads wrinkled cotton stocking against skinny calf and enviously oohs. "Nuts!" pops from the pin-slit mouth of her brother.

"One sheerly excitable jam after another but ending in a suburban love nest just near enough father and mother to be homey but far enough from the cousins and the aunts and the uncles to be an eternal tea for two. She will dance her way into your lives." Close-up of Curly on top of a piano, her tinkling-winkling chin dimpled with crooning rills, and singing:

"A kiss from you is a jam for me

A hug from you and I'm simply wacky . . ."

Scattered thin titters from the audience.

"She will coo her way into the arms of every American mother and father. Curly Winkle will smooth out that troubled depression wrinkle."

Salter's mouth pulses at the corners, then smiles easily as some one boos. Usher hurrying down aisle uncoils darkness with flashlight.

The next panel spreads and batwings open. A pistol emerges; it explodes into the compact plaque face of the audience. The small boy in front of Salter, T-squares one leg underneath him while he stands on the other. His body jigsaws up and down as the report goes off. His mouth automatically capguns "Bang! Bang! Bang!" as his knee peppers the back of the seat before him. An elderly couple disunite and tst tst and the eight

year old child pivots the skinny spool of his neck.

Three G-men with dreadnaught chins and bulging bullet calves are talking. Fadout and following shot in shape of a billiard ball. Scene in poolroom. Chinee-sly eyes of gangster tapering cue as G-men enter. The chandelier in the ceiling moves and the hole is corked by an automatic which goes off. There is a shriek, a nauseating thud of a falling body and the lights are extinguished.

The third panel: two flights of stale roominghouse stairs. A 25 watt hall bulb is dimly pulsing against tepid wallpaper roses. A shadow is goulishly branched against the door on the second floor. Bones of hinges creak; six shots spray the steps; the G-man fills gangster with lead and his moll's breast is sluiced. The boy, digging his nails into his sister's punily scribbled elbow skin, capguns "Bang, Bang, Bang!"

"I'm gonna tell mama."

"I'll shoot you dead if you dare," the boy G-man threatens, the egg-skin whites of his eyes ballooning out of their orbits juiced with the thrill of a hundred crime pictures.

Alex Salter, his nerves fused, his lids fisted tight. As he releases them he reads from the screen: MEMORIES, a Metrotone Short.

A wooden frame, hoosier schoolhouse on top of a knobby hill; music and words from an early Edison graphophone:

"Memories, memories

Dreams of love so true

O'er the sea of memories

I'm drifting back to you . . ."

An elderly woman with a scrabby neck takes out her handkerchief; the man at her side lays his bony hand on the slab of her forearm.

Fadeout and appearance of a small frame inside of which slowly rolls a black and gilded hearse-carriage drawn by six upper class stallions; the shot enlarges and the entire funeral procession becomes visible.



Broadcaster in the organ tones of the professional mourner: "It was a day of universal sorrow and black crepe for all Britannica when that proud monarch King Edward VII made his final journey to Westminster Abbey. But long live the King!"

King George V, with alligator pursed cheeks, in a festival coronation carriage accompanied by Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance*. A wiry drizzle is falling and hussars are lightly cantering down Whitehall Street. Londoners in shellacked streets are waving cockneyed bowlers.

The adams apple of the man near the girl in geranium dress chokes inside the sack of his throat, then buoys against the collar. *Pomp and Circumstance* is pensively blowing through iodine weeds in a vacant lot; a rusted notched blade of a childhood raft is dully splicing a still pond. How often he had played at coronation; oh, if he could get work relief! He parted his lips as if to catch the silver crowns of rain drops hooping down over Whitehall Street and he saw the aspen-leaved seam of light pouring and jittering through movie blackness. His knees drearily seeped as they touched geranium knees in his mind. Groggily he remembered he'd have to sleep on a park bench. Christ, spending his last fifteen cents on a movie; but maybe he'd get a CWA job and then if he could get a dame. Oh, to take the hollow and the ache and the mess out of the bones and flesh of him. His fingers dug into the darkness reaching out for her; but she was two seats away and maybe if he moved next to her again the usher . . . .

"And do you recall this one. . . ." The screen is blank; the theater is filled with the same aqueous blackness and ringing murmurlessness of the silent moving pictures. The audience hears:

"I'd like to be a monkey in the zoo and never have to worry about the shoes on my feet. . . ."

"Sounds like the Depression-Blues, doesn't it, but let's forget that, and believe me, you can, by just taking one look at one of the most glamorous women that ever graced the American footlights, Nora Bayes!"

Thin handicapping. An old nickelodeon lantern-slide passes across the screen. The eyes and nose of Nora Bayes are tenderly brushing a bouquet of American Beauties.

The still jiggles, disappears and a white note reading "Just a moment please, ladies remove their hats, positively no smoking" replaces it. Whistling and stamping of feet.

"But memories are sad, even the most tender ones, and our tragic remembrances we cherish most of all. Remember the Titanic, the most majestic palace afloat the Atlantic." A post card ship is capsized in mid-ocean and the Corpus Christi strains from *Nearer My God To Thee* can be heard.

Unemployed salesgirl, with ale-colored hair,



Anton Refregier

her fingernails glistening like the beads of a rosary across her breast mutters as the post-card *Titanic* is gulped down: "O Little Flower of Jesus, don't let me go down like that, don't, don't. . . ."

"1914! The armies of Europe are on the march, from Tipperary to Ceylon, from Berlin to Bagdad, from Jerusalem to Moscow. The world's on fire and the heart of the world is weeping."

A still of Woodrow Wilson; the artillery pince-nez set on the embalmed intellectualized nose, and the acid-tasting mouth are in plain view as he signs the fatal document.

Shots of Italian cavalry sliding down perpendicular incline merge rapidly into close-ups of Prussian soldiers goosestepping Under den Linden which dissolve into a panel-like glimpse of a battalion of the French Foreign Legion in Morocco. Boys in khaki singing:

"Goodbye Broadway, hello France"  
We're ten million strong  
Goodbye mother, sis and brother  
It won't take us long."

"The boys come home, a great red letter day for American mothers and fathers, but alas not for all of them. War has taken its cruel toll. But can we fail to forget some of the bright cheery spots of those trying days. Our movie favorites, as always, were in the foreground. Get an eyeful of the most adorable Lord Fauntelroy of all times. There's the peerless Doug Fairbanks, and look! the mother of the American Grand Opera, Mme. Schumann-Heink."

Douglas Fairbanks is froghopping about in a U.S. motortruck, his teeth clamped against Liberty Bonds. Mary Pickford has just received a bashful beau kiss from a shipping clerk who has bought a fifty dollar bond. Mme Schumann-Heink, dirty clouds of hair corkscrewing below a steel helmet is fleshily stumbling along between two doughboys.

"The great holocaust is over. The Mohamadan goes back to his mosque and the Jew returns to the synagogue and the American doughboy to work. . . ."

"But Europe is still seething. Tartar blood has not stopped smouldering. There is Civil

War on the Russian Steppes, and the Czar, the Czarina, and three noble princesses are executed by Red Soldiers and the heart of the world is again broken. Kerensky goes the way of all democracy in Europe and Lenin becomes sole dictator of all Russia."

"An earthquake mightier than Vesuvius shakes the boot of Italy. . . ."

Insert of Mussolini's cupola'ed pate and thick Verrochio ledge of jaw are visible from royalist renaissance balcony.

"While America is occupied in the peaceful reconstruction of industry (president doffing felt hat and ghostsmiling); applause.

Unemployed salesgirl slithers nails, her eyes bedridden with prayer: "St. Therese of Lisieux, please tell FDR to give me a job, just twelve dollars a week, so I won't . . . O I won't, I won't. . . ."

"But the memory of humanity is short and time marches on. . . 1933: Germany abandons the democratic Weimar Constitution for dictatorship. A simple house-painter with appealing brown eyes rules Germany with an iron-hand and powers undreamed of by the Hohenzollerns."

Hisses spray—two or three applaud.

"Europe again prepares for war. Hitler tears up the Versailles Treaty, and England, Italy and France are watchfully waiting. Russia celebrates May Day in Red Square by demonstrating its mighty army and air forces. Russia is preparing for peace, says Joseph Stalin, the Steel Hammer of the Bolsheviks. Well maybe, but in the meantime, good old Uncle Sam better not be caught sleeping!"

A squadron of destroyers are jouncing over billowy knuckled waters; long range guns are leveled at the audience. The torso of the small boy is dithering and as the guns explode, the head pulled out of the neck hangs as if from a limb. *Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean* splashes into the ears of the audience. The heads of the elderly couple merge; Salter's throat pinchily gulps; his shoulders, rising, slice the web of movie dust, and angrily cocking his head, he says: "S - - t!"

The main feature is inscribed on the silver screen: NOTHING TO LOSE.

\* \* \* \*

The seats are emptied; aqueous blackness dissolved, stale winy wallpaper mucilaged with tinfoil braids, and a thin wafer of sepulchral screen are in plain view. Salter looks at the walls, solid and fixed again. Rubber-gray grit of dust cakes the boxed-in air of the theater. Lavatory disinfectant and vaporous layers of sick breaths blanket the sluice of aisles. A lob of a rat, with stringy longitudinal tail comets past him and down a gaspipe hole. Salter sways toward the nearest exit. A few feet in front of him, a ragged parachute of child drawers is hanging limp over electrically jittering legs; a small boy is finger-triggering after her, and through his pis'ol mouth cracks: "Bang! Bang! Bang!"

# THE QUEST OF EUGENE



Aline Fruhauf

## From the Moon-Drenched Caribbees to the Foot of the Cross

When *The Hairy Ape* was produced by the Provincetown Players in the spring of 1922, a number of radical literati jumped to the conclusion that Eugene O'Neill had written a revolutionary, even a proletarian play. Nothing could have been further from the truth. Because of this initial error, radicals in 1934 were astonished and disappointed to see *Days Without End*, a play in which O'Neill sought refuge in the bosom of the Catholic Church. They felt as if he had betrayed not only them but himself.

Yet few playwrights of modern times have been more consistent. The journey from the moon-drenched Caribbees to the foot of the cross has been a steady and necessary progression. O'Neill himself has made no bones about the meaning of *The Hairy Ape*, although he never grasped the full implications of his own play. In 1924, he wrote:

"*The Hairy Ape* was propaganda in the sense that it was a symbol of man, who has lost his old harmony with nature, the harmony which he used to have as an animal and has not yet acquired in a spiritual way. Thus, not being able to find it on earth nor in heaven, he's in the middle, trying to make peace, taking the 'woist punches from bot' of 'em.' This idea was expressed in Yank's speech. The public saw just the stoker, not the symbol, and the symbol makes the play either important or just another play. Yank can't go forward, so he tries to go back. This is what his shaking hands with the gorilla meant. But he can't go back to 'belonging' either. The 'gorilla kills him. The subject here is the same ancient one that always was

and always will be the subject for drama, and that is man and his struggle with his own fate. The struggle used to be with the Gods, but is now with himself, his own past, his attempt to belong."

Here we have from the author himself the key not only to *The Hairy Ape* but to his entire works. Hailed as a daring innovator in the drama, O'Neill was never a revolutionary writer—neither in content nor in technique. The rebellion which he dramatised was rooted in old moral presuppositions. It is true that in his early plays there appear proletarians: sailors, stokers, farmers, Negroes, poor whites, white collar intellectuals. But these characters—seen through the eyes of their author who never penetrates beneath the surface to their real psychology—embody merely the more lurid, romantic, exterior aspects of such people. When O'Neill develops a character internally, the character is always a middle class intellectual seeking to escape into another class.

This type of escape resembles somewhat the annual excursion of the summer tourist to Europe; he deserts his native milieu for a foreign and exotic one; here, unhampered by home conventions, he temporarily enjoys a spurious freedom. But it would never occur to this tourist to take out citizenship papers and to settle down in a foreign country. It never occurs to O'Neill to desert his own class and to align himself with the working class.

In his first plays, O'Neill employed the sea or the farm as a backdrop for the romantic dissatisfaction with life. He portrayed sympathetically a series of poor, morbid, unhappy characters. In the Broadway theatre with its indoor drawing room setting and its conventional bourgeois characters this was a startling novelty. But never once did O'Neill explore the depths of his characters; never did he indicate that their psychic disturbances had roots in social ills. The misery of the poor as of the rich was always ascribed to a malignant fate working havoc with man's life.

## Drama and Will

From the beginning, O'Neill has been the dramatist of the petty bourgeois intelligentsia, lost between the heaven of the upper classes and the earth of the proletariat. Not yet fifty, he has written a score of full length plays and half as many short ones. He is at an age when his most mature creative work might be expected to be ahead; yet his plays may already be viewed in retrospect, since like his illustrious literary forbears, Chateaubriand and Huysmans, he has collapsed in the arms of the church. The dramatist who will

emerge after such a religious conversion can never be quite the same as he who wrote *The Great God Brown* and *Desire Under the Elms*.

At bottom O'Neill's ideas are the ideas popularised by the French Revolution. This is why his development so closely parallels the development of the famous romantics of the latter part of the 19th century.

The primary problem of western drama has always been the problem of the will in action. In a period of cultural upsurge, the social will of the individual is healthy and functions normally toward a given goal, which may be reached by active striving. In a decadent period, on the other hand, when society is sick from ill-balance, the social will of the individual becomes weak, hesitant, atrophied, incapable of consciously striving toward a goal and the goal itself becomes obliterated, obscure, or split into numerous goals. Of course a healthy society may contain individuals with sick wills. In the robust period portrayed by Shakespeare, we find a Hamlet, but it is interesting that in spite of Hamlet's conflict and indecision, he achieves action in the end. Whereas in an ailing society, the will of a healthy individual may assume all the characteristics of the illness of the society. Both Hedda Gabler and Rebecca West were women of strong will without any outlet for their thwarted energy; both, in the society in which they lived, were doomed. Long ago in the 19th century dramatists in Europe had begun to feel the laming of the will which came with a slowing of the creative processes in bourgeois society and their plays reflected the conflicts which grow out of the dislocation of the will and the deed. The climax comes in the drama of Chekov where we are treated to a picture of a will-less intelligentsia throttled by censorship, deprived of political life, and sentenced to a goal-less, aimless existence without even the hope or the desire for action. The favorite characters of O'Neill all exhibit a serious conflict of the will.

In order to grasp more fully the meaning of O'Neill's plays, it is necessary to examine the social roots of his development. The post war period in the United States witnessed a revolt of the secure and increasingly prosperous middle class intelligentsia from the conformity, ugliness, and standardization of Main Street, with its Babbitt concern for church socials, sports, movies, gin and clandestine sex. In literature there were many spokesmen of this revolt, which spread like prairie fire throughout the country. An integral part of the new mood was the little theatre movement. The Carol Kennicotts of cultural adventure, who could not escape to the South Seas, Spain, or Greece, set up temples of art in the

# O'NEILL

BY CHARMION VON WIEGAND

family barns, where they burned their orange candles at both ends in home-made Bohemias patterned after Greenwich Village and Provincetown. They demanded plays which voiced their inner discontent and which could be produced with two yards of theatrical gauze and a set of kitchen chairs and table. At this time, O'Neill, who had spent a year in Professor Baker's famous playwrighting class Harvard 47, was turning out one act plays simple enough for amateurs, yet embodying what seemed at the period a stark, relentless realism with a poetry of discontent profoundly nostalgic.

## A Hostile Cosmos

O'Neill was at first above all a spokesman against Main Street—the drab conventional life of the "average" American. His revolt took the form of flight. Sailing on a Norwegian ship for Buenos Aires, he experienced the life of a sailor at first hand. In all, he made four sea voyages and became an able seaman. Contact with crude reality, which remained in some respects his chief experience with the external world,—left an indelible impression on his sensitive nature. The result was a series of one act plays later produced under the name of *SS Glencairn*. All deal with the sea; the gorgeous moonlight nights of the Caribbean, its tropic islands, its sinuous brown women, are contrasted with the hard-drinking, hard-working, lives of the sailors. These plays are in some respects the best things O'Neill ever wrote; their mixture of poetry and bad language was refreshing in the stale theatre of the period. Today their realism seems tintured with romantic tradition and their bad language has become a convention in literature, a convention developed and handled with more mastery by Hemingway and other younger writers.

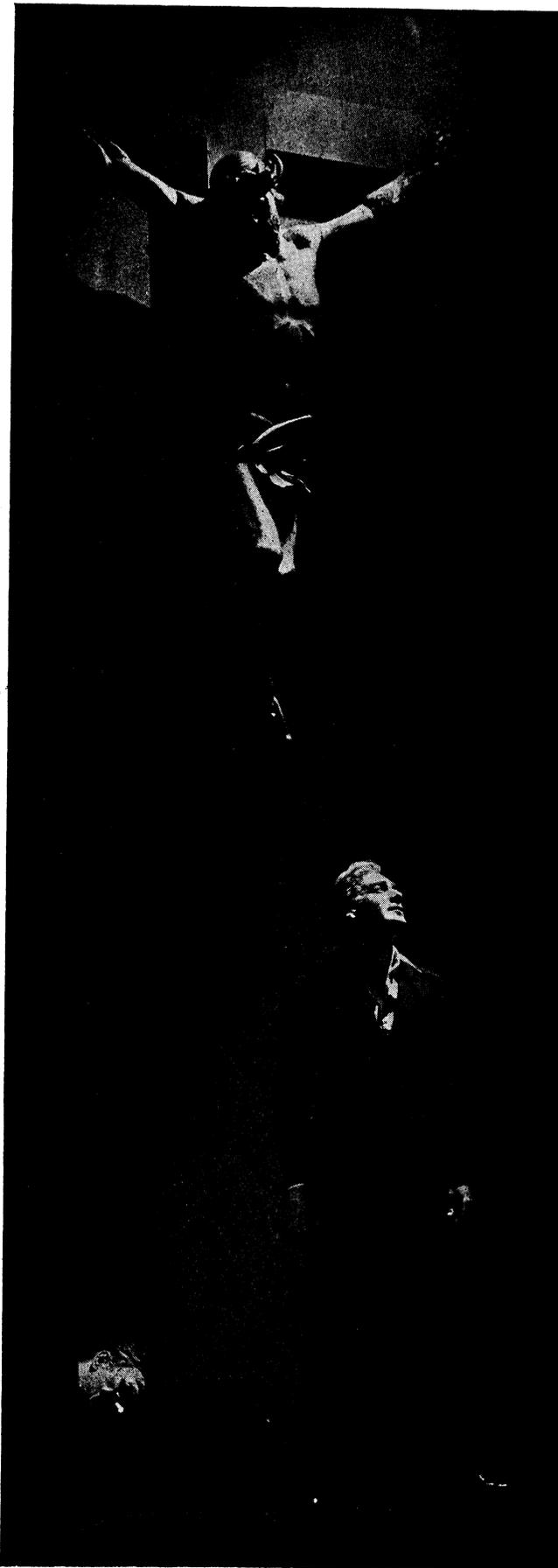
Seemingly formless both in technique and content, these early one act plays contain the gist of O'Neill's major concern—the struggle of his own ego with the universe. He constructs a primitive, hostile cosmos pervaded by a blind fate hanging like the sword of Damocles over man's life—a fate in no wise effected by social forces or relationships. All his work mirrors a baffled quest for the long lost innocence of happy childhood: his plays are never ends in themselves but stepping stones toward his unreal goal. Fruitlessly the quest has led him away from reality to each of the traditional escapes of the romantics.

## II.

O'Neill's first really organized effort at drama was the long play *Beyond the Horizon*. Here he counterposed the romantic

symbol of the earth as the mother of man, and the sea, as the symbol of freedom, dramatizing the conflict between the farm and the sea, as if these two elements were the chief characters of the drama. The actual characters and the setting are naturalistic, yet there is a tremendous yearning to escape from the material and concrete in life. Robert and Andrew Mayo are brothers—already indicating the dual nature of O'Neill later fully developed in *The Great God Brown* and *Days Without End*. The former longs to go to sea to seek his dreams "beyond the horizon" and the latter longs to till the soil and create something from it. But fate intervenes in the person of Ruth, who promises love to Robert. The roles are reversed. Andrew, the practical man, goes to sea; Robert the dreamer remains to run the farm. Both suffer disillusionment and failure, for inherently both are the romantics, who cannot face reality. The plot of the play is developed like a novel, and this technique is used to spread the story over a long period of time. In this way the author evades bringing the characters together at a crisis, which would involve choice and a directive will power. This evasion is not due to O'Neill's ignorance of the rules of the well-made play, for he was brought up in the Broadway theatre, and from the beginning understood its craft; it must therefore be attributed to a psychological aversion to a crucial choice! Time solves the problems of the characters in *Beyond the Horizon*; through the long years they remain passive instruments of an environmental fate. They scarcely ever act and when they do, they act to their own detriment; as in Act I when Robert, about to fulfill his desire of going to sea, changes his mind at the last moment, and sends his brother instead. In fact the whole plot is evolved from this false choice, which proves an evil fate to everyone. Perhaps Robert was a victim of what the Freudians call "scheitern am Erfolg," that catastrophe on the threshold of success, which comes from the fear of it. He did not dare to face the consequences of realizing his heart's desire, the voyage to sea. Hence his action in giving up the sea is not an act of will, but an escape from the consequences which an act of will involves. His brother Andrew, while supposedly practical is haunted by the same fate—a desire to escape from his heart's desire. Thwarted in love, he leaves the farm, his life work, and goes to sea, gaining prosperity and betraying his love of the soil by speculating in wheat.

O'Neill's repudiation of action and his emphasis on natural environment rather than on social background, has led him to depend on



*Days Without End*—Vandamm



*Days Without End—Vandamm*

mood to carry his drama. Already in this first play, he is a master of mood. He is able to create atmosphere — an atmosphere that overhangs and sweeps through his later plays — the primitive sounds and colors of the jungle in the *Emperor Jones*, the macabre, sensual-puritan conflict in *Desire Under the Elms*, the morbid decaying lilacs of *Mourning Becomes Electra*. In this sense, his plays often achieve lyric poetry.

Compare O'Neill's last play, *Days Without End* with his first long effort, *Beyond the Horizon*. The dialogue shows no inner development, no essential quality, that makes it inevitable, nor does it lend itself to quotation when torn from the context. When one remembers how the dialogue of Shakespeare has enriched the English language or even how Bernard Shaw's quips have enlivened the conversation of the present day intelligentsia, one has an inkling of what creative dialogue may accomplish.

In *Beyond the Horizon* O'Neill's dialogue is cast in naturalistic form, but the speech misses the tang of spoken language. Only in ecstasy, madness or drunkenness do his characters speak out of themselves as if from an imperative urge. Hence in later plays where he shifts from naturalism to super-naturalism, the dialogue has a more sensitive quality. Like his master, Strindberg, O'Neill is most at home when he is dealing with neurotic, over-strained individuals. The theme of madness is ever recurrent in his plays. It occurs already in one act plays *When the Cross is Made*, and *Ile*,

and it is developed further in *All God's Children Got Wings*, *Strange Interlude*, *Dynamo*, and *Mourning Becomes Electra*.

It is O'Neill himself who has revealed that the sea which is the romantic symbol of man's freedom in *Beyond the Horizon* is a snare and delusion. In the one-acter, *Ile*, the wife of a whaling captain has dreamed of the free, noble life on shipboard, but taken on a voyage, she discovers that it is merely another form of captivity, enlivened by brutality, meanness, and monotony. When her husband insists on heading the ship northward away from port, and she is doomed to remain on board, she goes mad. Insanity may be an escape for some individuals but it solves no problems for the world as a whole. Hence O'Neill is compelled to seek some other romantic solution for human happiness.

Yet having portrayed life on the farm as drudgery, poverty, and monotony and life at sea as the same dull routine, O'Neill is still incapable of making the final judgment; that it is capitalist society which condemns the worker to slavery regardless of environment.

He continues the search for happiness in *The Emperor Jones*. Because of its use of expressionist technique and its choice of a Negro for hero this play was the sensation of its time. Actually its basic idea is as old as Rousseau. We have the return to nature in the person of the simple, happy savage unhampered by the cares of civilization. The hero, an ex-pullman porter, a civilized American Negro, with all the vices of the white man, has

made himself king of a tropic island. Threatened by the natives, whom he has ruthlessly exploited, he plans escape back to civilization, where he may enjoy his stolen gains; but caught in the jungle, his progress becomes a backward journey into the racial memories of primitive existence and only the fatal legendary silver bullet stops his flight.

## The Meaning of Expressionism

*The Emperor Jones* departed from the conventional theatre of the time in two ways. It broke with the technique of the well-made play, with its solid three or four acts building to a climax. Instead it presented the scene succession of expressionist drama most successfully. The method was in keeping with Jones' flight through the forest and the fantasies he meets. Actually the play is a monologue with pantomime, for the other characters are either shadows of Jones' dream or else are introduced for local color and atmosphere. Jones is the sole protagonist.

O'Neill has been accused of borrowing this new stage technique from the Germans but he has denied the influence. There is no reason to doubt that he came to the method independently of the post-war German dramatists. But both the Germans and O'Neill have been profoundly influenced by Strindberg, who is actually the father of modern expressionism. It was Strindberg even more than Ibsen who reflected the breaking up of the organic relationships of bourgeois society and mirrored the resulting soul sickness of the intelligentsia. In Strindberg unconscious fantasy takes possession of the stage and drives out the every day world. This was already apparent in the later Ibsen of *When We Dead Awaken*.

Expressionism represents not a beginning but an end. It celebrates the destruction of old forms in art and society and their dissolution into separate units. In expressionist art, the boundaries of form are loosened. Drama approaches painting and music, painting simulates music, and music painting. Likewise the boundary between the natural and the super-natural is obliterated. The dream assumes the vividness of reality and reality takes on the color of the dream life. Literature disintegrates into words and the words themselves lose meaning and become merely sound. Form in painting is dissolved into juxtaposed spectral colors. The disintegration of a social class sends its destructive vibrations into the most distant ivory towers of the intelligentsia and the arts prophetically assume the sunset colors of the end. Expressionism in painting, poetry, drama and music was perfected by the post-war Germans; it was a technique adapted to the petty bourgeois intelligentsia in pursuit of its own soul across the chaos of



A scene from *S.S. Glencairn*, one of Eugene O'Neill's early one act plays of the sea. Photograph by White.



German society before that same intelligentsia had split into Fascist and Communist partisans. Eugene O'Neill, also a member of the petty bourgeois intelligentsia, unconsciously selected a method appropriate to a period of crisis in the halcyon days of the twenties in America and thus prophesied all unawares the coming economic and social crisis in a period of apparent prosperity and stability.

### III.

At the time of its first production, many people believed that in *The Emperor Jones* O'Neill had intended to champion the cause of the Negro. As a matter of fact, he was not at all interested in the Negro and his actual problems in the United States. Nor did he ever make any pretence of championing the Negro as a member of an oppressed race caught in the toils of imperialist exploitation. He used the Negro as a symbol of the lost paradise of the primitive world, a world as much a part of the white race as of the black. His interest in the Negro as a hero derived merely from his quest for happiness, and an unsuccessful attempt to solve it by a return to primitive nature. It is O'Neill himself who is hidden behind the black mask of Jones.

The story of the play may have been derived from some legend of the strange emperor Christophe in Haiti but O'Neill had no interest in the actual island of Haiti. He found there merely a jungle backdrop. Nor had he any interest in the history of the struggle of the Negroes of the islands. In a recent Soviet novel, *Black Consul*, the struggle of the islands for independence in the period of the French revolution has been depicted. Against its social background, we see the full stature of that heroic Negro leader, Toussaint L'Ouverture. What a contrast to Emperor Brutus Jones, who is given all the vices and none of the virtues of the whites. Contrasted with him is Smithers, the white cockney, a thief and degenerate, who nevertheless feels himself the superior of Jones. O'Neill implies that white supremacy will always exist, that the human being is not capable of progress, that life does not change. The ex-pullman porter, who has acquired civilization, put back in his native environment, retrogresses to savagery and his aboriginal fears. With O'Neill, the Negro is always represented as a degenerate savage or ineffectual neurotic.

## The Negro As Symbol

In the one act play *The Dreamy Kid*, we see a young Negro gangster who has committed murder but who has a sentimental and superstitious fear of leaving his dying grandmother and this fear leads to his capture. In that play of miscegenation, *All God's Chillun Got Wings*, the hero is a studious and sensitive Negro but the peevish and malevolent destiny which governs O'Neill's cosmos allows no way out for him, anymore than for the Emperor Jones or the Dreamy Kid. This

story of a mixed marriage raised a storm of protest at the time of its first production. But on examination, it is apparent that O'Neill only superficially departed from the prejudices of his class as regards the Negro. If he had intended to poise the problem whether there could be a happy marriage between a Negro and a white, he would have chosen two equals to mate; the conflict would thus have been all the more intensely dramatic. Instead O'Neill leaned over backward in his attempt at fairness and in this action reveals his prejudice. For the story sets forth how Jim Harris and Ella Downey are doomed to fail from the start, but the failure of their marriage is not due to a difference of races but to a difference of culture. Brought up together on the East Side pavements, Jim, the Negro boy, and Ella, the Irish girl were childhood sweethearts. But when they meet years later and marry, life has dealt very differently with them. Ella has been a prostitute and has been deserted by her lover, the gangster Mickey, after she has born their illegitimate child. Jim, on the other hand, is a sensitive, educated man, well off from the money his father earned trucking. Ella accepts Jim because he can give her security but grows to hate him because she feels inferior to him both in culture and character. This arouses her race antagonism and she tries to keep Jim down in order to keep her self respect. She centers her neurotic conflict around making him fail at his law exams. She can maintain her white 'superiority' only by making clear to him that he is too stupid to pass the white man's test.

O'Neill sends Jim and Ella to Europe, as if to demonstrate that even in France where race prejudice is of a milder form, such a mating cannot be happy. But what are the facts? Jim's greatest weakness is a social one, for while he has educated himself, he has remained emotionally and sentimentally attached to the values which he acquired in the tough neighborhood on the East Side. Jim's education and money should have freed him from his old milieu and enabled him to find a place among the intelligentsia, but he himself believed that the Negro is actually inferior to the white man. He accepts Ella's prejudiced judgment as the truth. He allows her to keep him from social life in France, where they might have been accepted. The fact is that Ella is less ashamed of her Negro husband, than afraid that before people who do not accept racial prejudice, she will be shown up as his inferior—which she actually is. The play ends with Ella triumphant and secure in carrying out her neurotic pattern of receding back to childhood. Thus she solves the conflict between her desire for a child and her hatred of bearing a child whose father is black. And thus she also effectually keeps Jim from leaving her and escaping to an environment where he can succeed and be happy. The moral to be drawn from *All Gods Chillun Got Wings*, is retro-

gressive and reactionary, and the apparent openmindedness of the author makes it even more so.

That the Negro is used in the O'Neill plays as a symbol of the primitive nature of man becomes clearer in the *The Hairy Ape*. Here the hero is a white worker with a hairy chest who discovers that he has no place in the world as it is made today. Again O'Neill employs an expressionist method, a sequence of swiftly moving scenes, in place of the solid act, which organically unfolds and develops an idea. Theatrically this is one of his most successful plays. The action moves with speed and inevitability, but it is a retrogressive and disintegrating action as in *The Emperor Jones*.

Yank, a stoker on a transatlantic liner, symbolizing the machine age, is insulted by a passenger, a girl of the upper classes. He discovers that he does not 'belong.' He sets out to get revenge on the girl's rich family, to find his place in the scheme of things. Violent and anarchic in his rebellion against society, Yank is repudiated by all—even by the I.W.W. He becomes an outcast everywhere. After a series of futile attempts to find a place, Yank lands at the zoo. The gorilla, symbol of the primitive past of man, repudiates him too. Yank is strangled to death in the gorilla's hairy arms.

On the surface *The Hairy Ape* may appear to be a proletarian play. It deals with a worker proletarian, who is exploited and cheated. But actually the hairy chest of Yank is another mask disguising the petty bourgeois intellectual. The play voices the terror of that intelligentsia in a disintegrating bourgeois society; the proletariat is represented as brute force without intelligence and without culture; the upper classes are represented as shallow, cruel and cold. Unable to make a choice between the two classes, the petty bourgeois intellectual regresses to the old primitive world, but the path backward from organized bourgeois society to nature in the raw leads not to happiness but to death. The simple happy savage of Rousseau is an Utopian dream in our modern industrialized world, and the intellectual who seeks that ideal of the past meets only with disaster.

## Flight to the Past

But O'Neill is unwearied in his quest. If nature yields no satisfactory solution for human society, there is the flight backward to the romantic past of actual history. O'Neill has written two historical costume plays. The first of these, *The Fountain*, is a weak play, judged both as drama and as poetry. Yet because of its weaknesses, it conceals less and the symbols are easier to decipher. Ponce de Leon, Spanish conquistador, forsakes a life of conquest and governing to set out in search of the lost fountain of youth. The quest for his lost youth leads Ponce de Leon into an ambush prepared by the Indian chief he has

tortured. Kneeling at the supposed fountain, de Leon sees his aged face reflected back and falls to the treacherous dagger. He loses his illusions along with his youth and finds a sorry consolation in the knowledge that the new generation will carry on.

In *Marco's Millions*, O'Neill essayed a satire on the American Babbitt who knows what he wants and gets it. But O'Neill's humour is saturated with sentimentality worthy of Babbitt himself. Marco, sets out for the empire of Kublai Khan to enrich himself and his brothers. He comes, he sees, he conquers all the material riches of the emperor. But Marco has never had a soul and when the greatest prize of all, the love of Princess Kuchachin, symbol of beauty, is offered him, he passes by unaware and unmoved. The princess so slighted marries a potentate and dies slowly of disillusionment, and Marco, who has guided her to her new kingdom, returns home to Venice to wed his bride and to surfeit in riches. But the death of beauty makes Marco's triumph a hollow one, for a death of the spirit is worse than a death of the body, O'Neill seems to imply. Therefore happiness cannot lie in the material prosperity of the American bourgeoisie.

#### IV.

Again O'Neill is undaunted by the failure of his historical quest. If the farm, the sea, the jungle, the romantic past offer no happy solution, there is one refuge praised by all the romantics — passionate love between man and woman. Early in his career, O'Neill chose this theme in a play which failed in production. Romantic love in *The Straw* keeps a sick girl alive and gives her hope in life. But that romantic passion is no more than a straw, O'Neill demonstrated later in another play which was never popular. *Welded* sets forth the conflict between passion and the individual ego. Michael, an oversensitive intellectual, and his wife, Eleanor both demand that marriage allow them individual expression. When it does not, they try to separate but find that passion has welded them together. With or without personal happiness, they are doomed to remain together. *Welded* is in no wise as convincing as its great model *Totentanz* and Strindberg has wrung deeper values from the sex struggle.

*Desire Under the Elms* is O'Neill's best play of romantic love, perhaps because other themes are interwoven with this *leit-motif*. Two rivals, for the old New England farm of Ephraim, are his young son, Eben, and his newly married wife, Abby. Abby is a realist who wants her corner and security in the world and will wrest it at any cost. When her step-son Eben stands in her way, she determines to have a child by him and to pretend to Ephraim that it is his own. But an unexpected factor is the sudden passion which develops out of the relationship between Eben and Abby and sweeps them to destruction. To prove that she has no longer

has a desire for the property and that she genuinely loves Eben, Abby kills their child. Eben overwhelmed with grief, summons the sheriff in revenge. But when he sees the law parting him from Abby, he relents and accepts his equal guilt. Victorious in their love, they go to accept justice. In its psychological pattern, we have a close analogy to Ibsen's *Rosmersholm*, where the stranger Rebecca West, having taken possession of Rosmer and his home, even to driving his wife to suicide, is overcome in the moment of success by Rosmer's ideas of guilt and expiation. So the girl Abby, who was unhampered by moral scruples, instead of killing old Ephraim kills her own love child and becomes a penitent sinner ready to suffer for her passionate love for her step-son. It is the old stern morality of New England which conquers the free spirit of Abby. *Desire Under the Elms* contains some of O'Neill's best poetical passages—rich in Biblical imagery and scenes of rural beauty.

### The Far Land of the Soul

Midway in his career, O'Neill's plays are divided into two kinds. The early plays dealt with the external world and its problems—the farm, the sea, the quest for gold, sexual passion, love of power, etc. In the later plays, the action shifts sharply from the world outside to "far land" of the soul.

In this internal country of the soul, secure from such pressing problems as the conquest of nature or of poverty, in a milieu increasingly prosperous and urban, the characters of O'Neill's later dramas devote themselves to contemplation of their inner lives. The unseen realm of the soul is mysterious and glamorous; it is a country which has already been skillfully charted by Chekov and Schnitzler, European spokesmen of the petty bourgeois intelligentsia. O'Neill now sets off for it on a new expedition in search of his lost happy innocence. *The Great God Brown* and *Strange Interlude*, the most mature and complete products of his art, are the treasures brought back from this far journey into the invisible regions of the unconscious over which presides, as Pluto over the land of the shades, the great psychologist of the decaying bourgeois class, Sigmund Freud.

O'Neill's journey was not however a scientific expedition which brought new data of universal value to human conduct. Using Freud's charts to find his way in the land of the unconscious, O'Neill has actually explored only the outlines of a neurotic pattern common to the petty bourgeois intelligentsia in the United States.

O'Neill's use of symbols and of masks and other allegorical devices is often confusing; the meaning behind them has not been fused into a universal meaning which can arouse emotional response in multitudes of people; they are addressed to a small audience of bohemian intellectuals. O'Neill's invasion of the unconscious was a continuation of his old

quest for happiness and love. But love has ceased to be, as in the *Desire Under the Elms*, a physical passion; it has become a metaphysical presence containing subtle under and overtones plucked painfully from the heart strings. Love has been dissected into its constituent parts, in order to more minutely analyse its essence. There is sensual love, soul love, intellectual love, and the love of God and each of these has its variations and gradations like the changing tints of a sunset. Man, in search of the lost harmony of pre-natal bliss, gazes into the mirror and beholds his own image reflected, not merely one image but multiple and varied images, as in the looking glasses of an amusement park, each one distorted and different but never the essential soul of himself.

O'Neill's flight into the "far country" of the soul has its cause in the actual world. Is it not analogous to the escape of art in the same period into the world of the abstract? Profound social causes underlay this trend in America. It had occurred in Europe somewhat earlier. The fact is that the middle class intelligentsia, chief creator of the bourgeois arts, had been deprived of a major economic and political role in society. Hence unable to function normally in the body politic, it was forced to create a world of its own, where in fantasy it could assume supreme power. It thus promulgated the theory of the freedom of the creative artist; it isolated that artist in an ivory tower far above the dust and tumult of the political arena. It jealously guarded his mythical freedom, which was in reality an exile, and pretended that it was *desired* when it was actually enforced by external circumstances. The sincere bourgeois artist was imprisoned in the tower to struggle there with his own internal conflicts; thereby he was prevented from discovering the social conflicts which were the primary cause of his own psychic disorders.

O'Neill, like all sensitively aware artists, has suffered greatly from the splitting of the world into two opposing planes—outside and inside. His plays mirror the dualism of the position of the bourgeois artist perfectly. Because of this dualism, which he has sought to visualize by the use of devices such as the mask, the aside or the actual splitting of a character into two roles, his dramas have never attained to the heights of great tragedy. Another playwright who has been obsessed with the same problem—a most acute problem for the petty bourgeois intelligentsia—is the Italian Luigi Pirandello. He has externalized it in terms of reality and unreality and used theatric devices with more adroitness and philosophical slight-of-hand than O'Neill. That his slight-of-hand should land him in the Fascist camp can be no surprise.

O'Neill's characters throughout remain two dimensional. The problem of experiencing depth and space in the graphic arts is closely akin to the problem of the will in the drama. The heroes of Shakespeare's tragedies are

men of power and action, their wills in conflict with real obstacles. The mad Lear on the heath in the storm evokes a scene of tremendous perspective both in the spiritual and in the actual world. Content and symbol are fused in one complete unit. In the whole theatre of O'Neill, we must search to find one character delineated with a strong will, striving to attain a specific end. Anna Christie, in some respects the most rounded portrait in all the plays, exhibits a seemingly definite will and a determination to gain her ends. But the last act is fumbled—actually the author wrote several endings for it—and it does not seem inevitable. Anna's marriage to the Irish sailor does not seem to solve her problem or fulfill her complete desire. Abby's strong will in *Desire Under the Elms* is broken by her discovery of love. Marco Polo alone seems to set out for a goal and to attain it; but it is a shallow and meaningless goal which the author condemns and abhors.

## V.

In O'Neill's plays, life divides itself into two planes—the material world, which he represents as base, greedy for gold and power, shallow and dull; and the unseen world of the soul where he depicts man struggling for higher values and failing gloriously. Now the actual world's prizes of gold and power are sour grapes for the petty bourgeois intellectual, who must content himself with the shadowy realm of the soul. Here he is allowed untrammelled freedom to conquer "higher and better" values. Here he may assume the masks of power and nobility, but in his heart he is aware all the time that what he really desires lies across a forbidden wall. In the O'Neill theatre, the Babbitt the successful bourgeois, is the fool and the villain; the dreamer who fails nobly, is the hero. At bottom, the dreamer is actually the Babbitt too, albeit an unsuccessful one. And the hero-dreamer's revolt is doomed from the start to futility, for it is based on flight.

One of the most moving of O'Neill's plays, *The Great God Brown* contains passages of profound insight and poetic tenderness. Yet it contains no solution to O'Neill's quest. Therefore he takes revenge in depicting the Great God Brown or Babbitt as envious of the artist-dreamer, Dion-Anthony. Dion, dying, wills to the Great God Brown his tragic mask—his noble aims and dreams. This mask poisons the life of the Great God Brown; he ceases to be content with his material soulless existence and he craves to win the love of Margaret, the *ewig-weibliche* soul of woman

Babbitt is defeated by the Bohemian artist; he is forced to accept the artist's values; he, too, develops a soul—and his soul becomes the source of Babbitt's bitter discontent with the cheap, material paradise of his worldly success. In the end, the soul of the artist Dion takes possession of the Great God

Brown and destroys him. This modern miracle play externalizes the conflict in the soul of the petty bourgeois intelligentsia.

As a fable of the decay of present society, the play is truer than O'Neill perhaps intended; as theatre, it remains confused, the action will-less, emotionally unsatisfactory. The playwright is himself uncertain about the meaning of the dramatic symbols and the conflict which they present. All the O'Neill heroes are divided against themselves and are therefore incapable of absorbing the outside world in its depth and complexity; hence they never experience life in its fullest. Their eyes are always filled with undeciphered dreams. Yet they keep passionately affirming how they have loved, lusted, and lived. As a matter of fact, they have been so pre-occupied

with their internal problems that they have not even glimpsed the world of living reality.

As a foil to these hero-dreamers, these introvert knights of the nocturnal soul, O'Neill sets up a series of so-called 'normal' people—Sam Evans, Marco Polo, Billy Brown, Peter Niles. Seen through the introvert eyes of their creator, they are nothing but lay figures, shallow, stupid, dull, immature. Yet, in order to be just, or perhaps for the sake of good theatre, he always portrays them as "good."

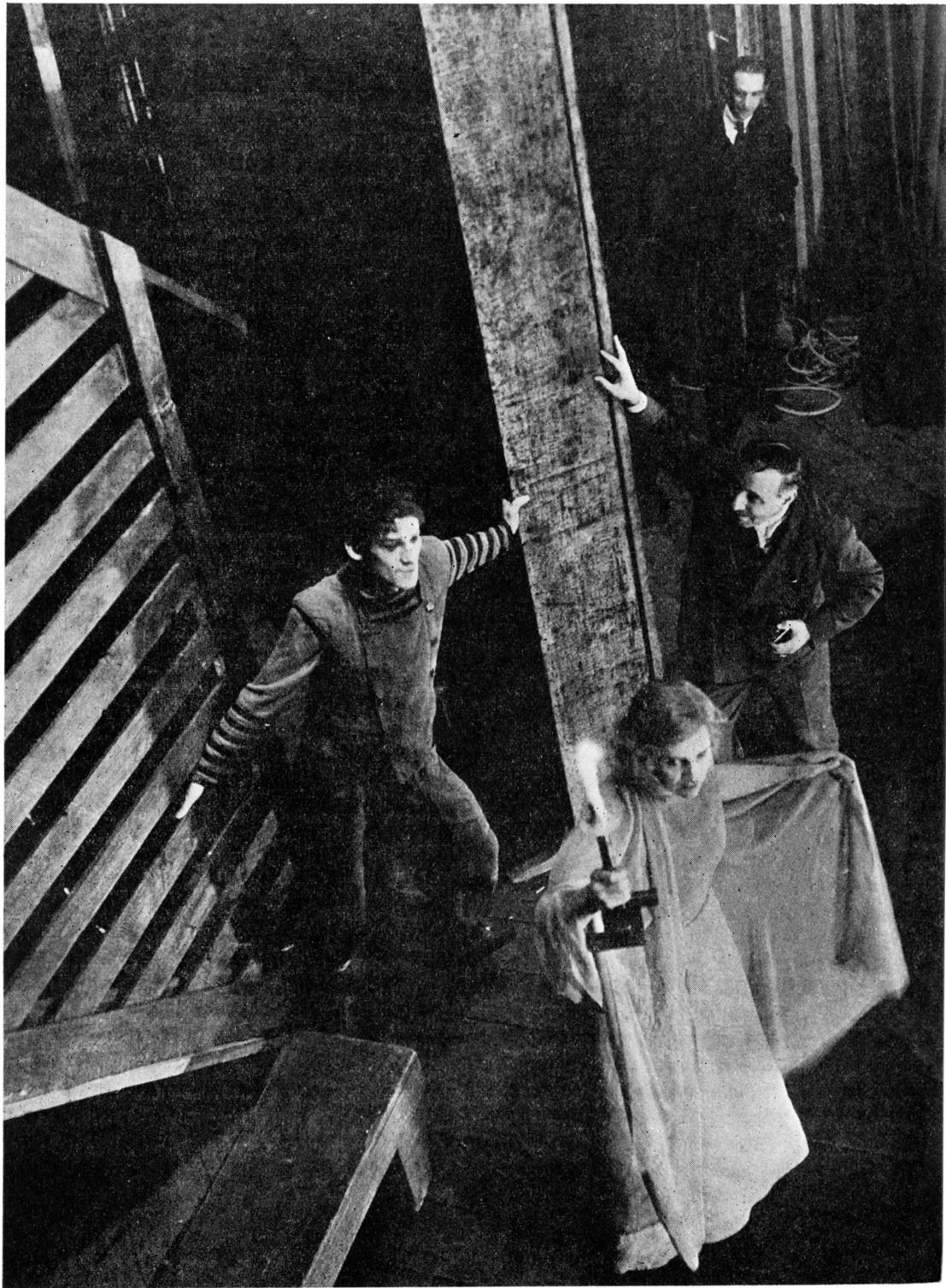
In *Strange Interlude*, O'Neill has attempted to come to grips with the unconscious. The *aside* is used to reveal the internal life of the character. Planes of existence assumed to be parallel and contradictory are externalized by the *aside*, just as they were externalized

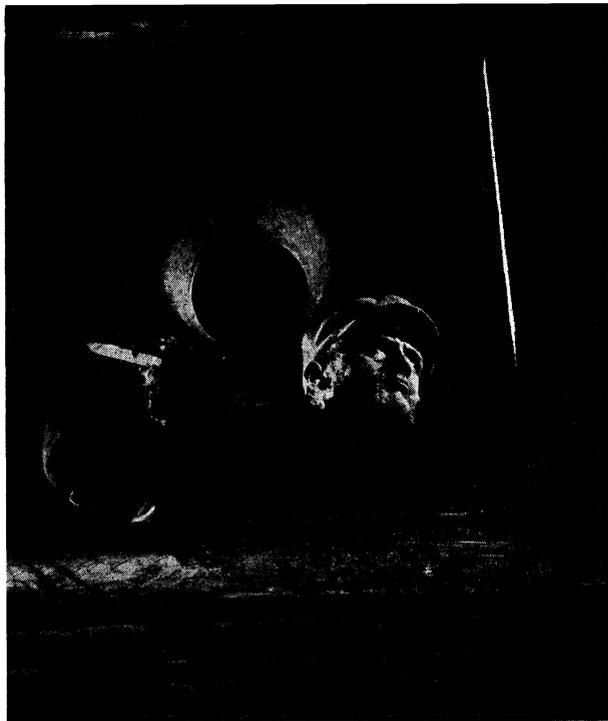
(continued on page 30)

*Desire Under the Elms*, Tairov's Vakhtangov Theatre, Moscow.

Margaret Bourke-White.







## Directing the "Non-Actor"

BY V. I. PUDOVKIN

In discussing the realistic aspect of the actor's work in the cinema, it is necessary to consider the tremendous amount of experience that the cinema has acquired in its work with "non-actors." (I consciously avoid the term "type.") Nothing can be further from my mind than to give credence to the theory that the cinema does not require specially trained actors. Such a theory was at one time ascribed to me, even though throughout my connection with the cinema, in every one of my films, I worked with trained movie actors as well as with old actors from the theatre.

The question here, however, is not my "theoretical heresies." The question here is: how, in working with "non-actors," we came in contact and examined in practice the realistic behavior of a man not trained in any theatrical school; why such behavior has its place in a film and at times should even be used as an example to be imitated by the trained actors.

What method did I follow in working with "non-actors?" My method consisted first of all in creating in each given piece for the "non-actor," such realistic conditions as called forth the response which I strove to achieve.

Take, for instance, the young Communist who played in the conference scene in the last reel of my film *The Deserter*. The boy in this role was a very timid person. The circumstances under which he was being filmed as well as his realization of the demands that were to be made upon him by the director excited him easily and confused him.

I purposely exaggerated the circumstances which confused him because I was thus able

to achieve the necessary color. When I praised him liberally for his excellent acting, when I made him get up to receive applause, the fellow could no longer hold back—although he tried very hard—a marvelous broad smile full of satisfaction which eventually gave me an excellent piece for my film.

Here, you see, all the realistic conditions of the filming were similar to those that were, in the main, eventually reproduced on the screen; the confusion of the young Communist who is unexpectedly elected to the presidium of a mass meeting and his unrestrained pleasure when his name is greeted with cheers.

Of course, this was not real acting. The boy lacked the conscious creative impulse. This experience, however, may be of practical use to the actor should he want, together with the director, to find a realistic basis for his work outside of his creative imagination.

In the theatre this realistic basis is in most cases either imagined or achieved through the magical "if" invented by Stanislavsky.

Stanislavsky writes thus about this "if": "The actor says to himself: 'All these decorations, scenery, make-up, etc. are fake. . . . I know it and I have no business with it. . . . These things are of no importance to me. . . . But . . . if all that I am surrounded with on the stage were to be the truth, that's what I would do, that is how I would react to this or that phenomenon.'"

According to Stanislavsky the actor begins his real creative life with this magical "if." Perhaps this is true of the theatre; theatricalized acting is, after all, one of the major aspects of theatrical art. In the cinema if this

"if" exists at all it assumes a different form and is connected primarily with the montage treatment of the particular part.

I recollect another typical incident in my work with "non-actors" which occurred when I worked on *Life Is Beautiful*.

The following scene occurs: A father meets his little son, a young pioneer. They haven't seen each other for a long time. It is early morning. The boy has just got out of bed. He stretches his limbs. When his father asks him, "How's life, Vania?" the boy turns his face to him and, instead of answering him, smiles an affectionate confused smile.

It was an extremely difficult effect to achieve with a ten-year-old boy. (In the cinema, even the most reactionary director of the theatrical school will not risk using in such a part a grown up actor or a woman made up as a boy, as it is often done on the stage.)

In working with the "non-actor" one cannot depend upon rehearsals. Mechanically rehearsed movements are, in general, bad. Also, to find the necessary creative method for a man who has no special training and to apply this method repeatedly is unthinkable. Hence, it is necessary even in such a complex case to be able to account for the character of the "non-actor," to create for him such circumstances which would produce the effect required by the director as a natural and inevitable response.

In this case I thought of the following: First of all I decided to make the boy experience real pleasure from the process of stretching his limbs—to make him feel the necessity for stretching. I made him bend down until he

touched his  
this pose until

"Then," I  
real pleasure  
need."

I purposely  
my doing so  
ing interested  
actly this int  
achieve the s

As I expect  
I sensed it a  
after I permit  
was stretchi  
would interrup  
tion: "Well,

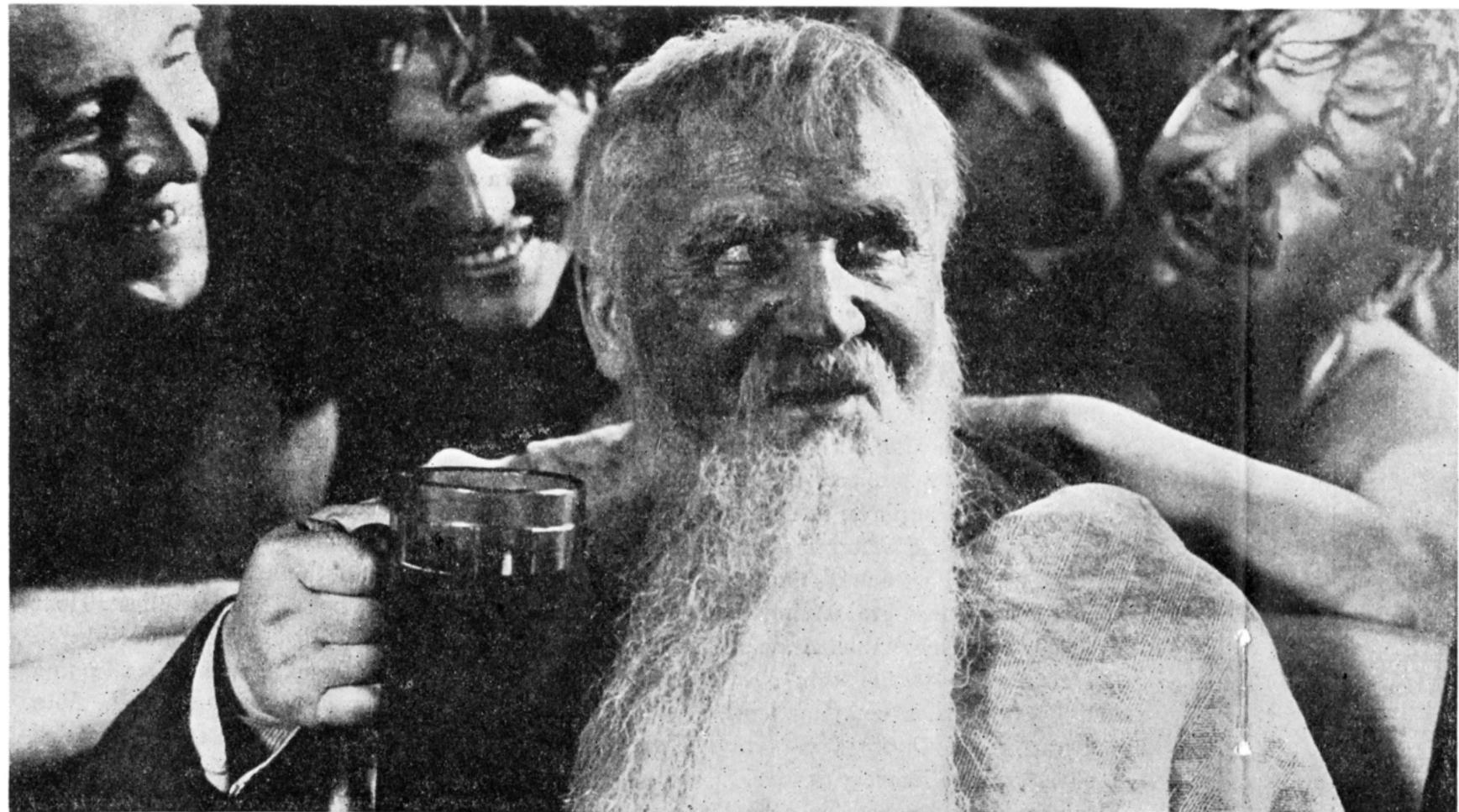
No one w  
filming. The  
realized that  
an approving  
of the strang

To rehear  
wanted to cat

The camer  
stood bent d  
I permitted  
expressed sa  
physically r  
scheme was s  
question and

Of course,  
first. But I  
right and I w

In working  
must be ing  
sure, one's r  
method of w  
can one's ex  
be eventually  
ing. I believ  
can be of pra  
a part, in his  
of his inner f



## NEW SOVIET FILMS

Left—"PEASANTS," Friedrich Ermler's great saga of the Russian peasant in the struggle for collectivization. Awarded the Order of Lenin at the Moscow Cinema Festival in 1934. Produced by Lenfilm.

Below—stills from "PEPO," first Soviet Armenian talking picture soon to be released.



touched his toes and told him to remain in this pose until I permitted him to rise.

"Then," I said to him, "you will experience real pleasure and this is just the effect that I need."

I purposely explained to him the reason for my doing so because I counted on his becoming interested in the experiment. It was exactly this interest that I needed in order to achieve the second part of my task.

As I expected, I aroused the boy's interest. I sensed it at once. Then I figured out that after I permitted him to get up and while he was stretching his limbs with pleasure, I would interrupt him with the following question: "Well, Vania, do you feel relieved?"

No one was allowed to speak during the filming. The boy was well aware of that. I realized that he would have to answer me with an approving smile, a little confused because of the strangeness of the situation.

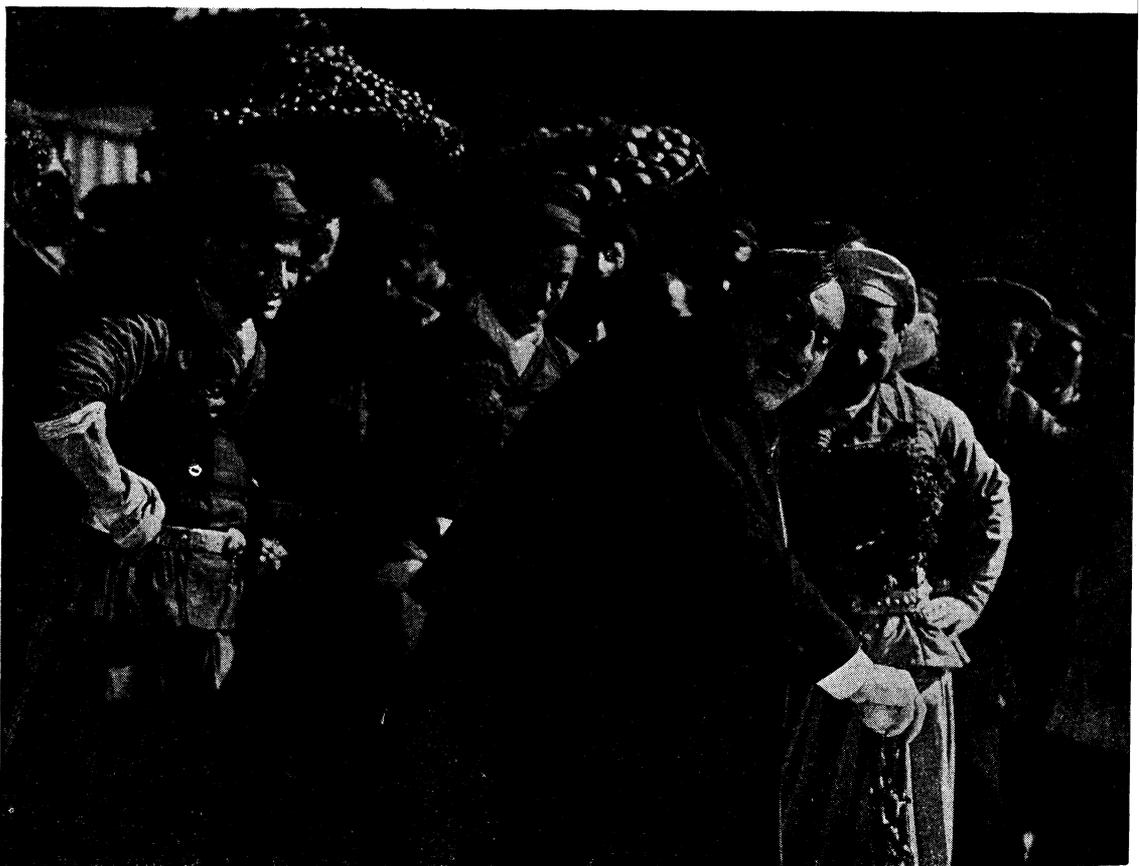
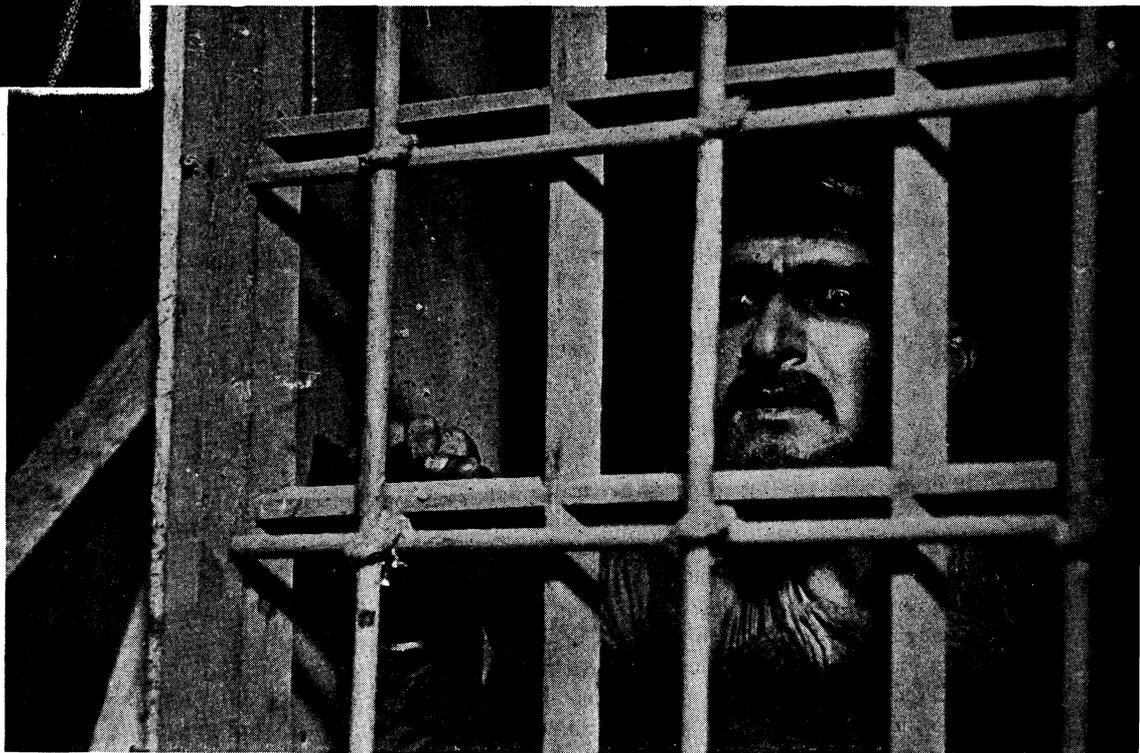
To rehearse, I repeat, was impossible. I wanted to catch the freshness of his response.

The cameramen began to work. The boy stood bent down for a long period. Finally I permitted him to straighten out. His face expressed satisfaction, both because he was physically relieved and also because my scheme was successful. Then I asked him the question and received a wonderful smile.

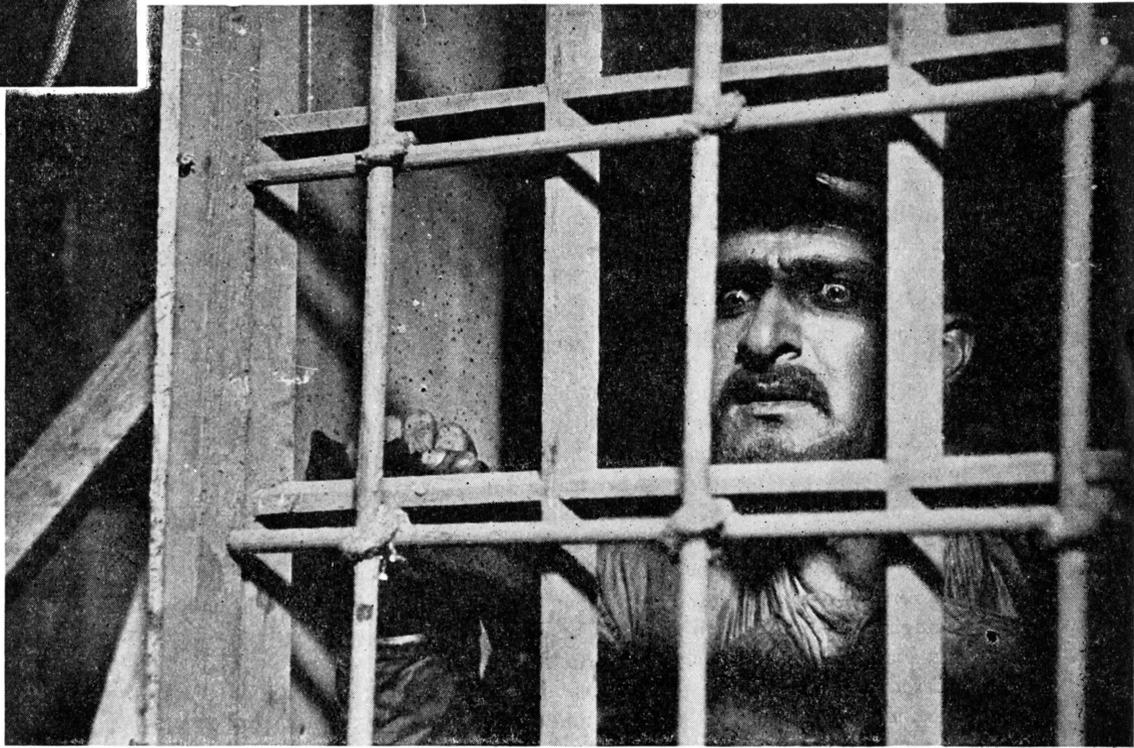
Of course, I might not have succeeded at first. But I knew that it would come out all right and I was not mistaken.

In working with a "non-actor" the director must be ingenious and imaginative. To be sure, one's results cannot be turned into a method of working with actors in general. Nor can one's experiments with the "non-actors" be eventually developed into a school of acting. I believe, however, that this experience can be of practical help to an actor in creating a part, in his search for an external expression of his inner feelings.

(Continued on page 27)







# Footlights In Filmland

BY RICHARD SHERIDAN AMES

Considered theatrically, Hollywood is Southern California, although the film town is faintly suburban to the normal life of the nation's fifth city. Like Los Angeles, Hollywood has citizens who work and raise families, but its civic responsibility is toward thousands of curious pilgrims who come to witness the cinema and its folk, hoping wistfully to find them as outrageous as the fan magazines report. Hollywood itself is theatrical; so much so, in fact, that there is little dramatic energy left to function behind the proscenium.

The studios have their own top-heavy chores to perform and they have enlisted most of the creative talent of the world's theatre at one time or another. One would think there might be an overflow, an informal and steady contribution of creative theatre into numerous, untenanted local playhouses, but that is not true. With but few exceptions all legitimate theatres in Southern California are feeders for the motion pictures.

Every first night is attended by a swarm of flesh-peddlers intent upon selling the play or its actors to specially invited film potentates. Much of the audience is recruited from tourists who pay to see not the drama but the stars in the foyer.

Los Angeles does not possess an enlightened, loyal legitimate theatre audience. It is too remote to be considered part of the "road" though its people rally to the occasional visiting star and are curiously spendthrift when offered almost any Shakespearian fare. Within the far flung city are all kinds of audiences: sentimental mid-westerners who remember John Drew; a group which liked the John Golden sort of play; Hollywood bohemians and transient worldings who can stomach anything from *The Green Bay Tree* to Shaw, and a handful of people who seek intelligent drama, though they have lost the theatre habit. Then there is an unfortunate younger generation which has never been in a theatre.

Any local producer has to consider these audience factors and they are potent, no doubt, when he thinks of risking his money on a new production. Public apathy is so general that the professional theatre cannot really be said to exist in Southern California. Henry Duffy frequently supplies New York hits, nicely mounted, which succeed only when they boast star names. Civic enterprise brought Max Reinhardt's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* which played to thousands in a natural setting. The advertising appropriation accounted for the phenomenon. This fall Reinhardt may offer *Twelfth Night*, and it is even hoped that Hollywood may be host to Gordon Craig next year, in which case lavish expenditure may be put to better pur-



*Armoured Train* by Ivanov

Pasadena Community Playhouse.

pose than in 1934. Reinhardt did put on a swell show and his torchlight processions over the mountains have been exceeded only by Mt. Aetna's last eruptions.

Most of the Los Angeles theatres are dark currently and even the picture palaces provide very little "flesh" entertainment. The capital of the motion picture is almost exclusively entertained by its home-grown film shadows. The situation would appear hopeless but for the largely unheralded efforts of sincere and ambitious laboratory theatres.

Whatever his faults, Gilmor Brown, managing director of the Pasadena Community Playhouse, fills a niche as the patron saint of drama in the Southwest. During difficult times he has allied his activities with Hollywood, effecting an interchange of players, directors and props, and leaving a taint of commercialism on a world-renowned organization housed in a completely equipped theatre plant.

The Playhouse was originally backed by Pasadena fortunes but Mr. Brown is eclectic in his own tastes. His dowager customers would withdraw their support if he went too far to the left or offered the hospitality of his stage to the Workers' Theatre. Yet he has dared his bourgeois audience with items such as Ivanov's *Armoured Train*, Rolland's *Wolves*, Afingonev's *Fear*, Flavin's *Sunday* and *Amaco*, and the first American production of Ibsen's *Love's Comedy*.

This summer the Playhouse offered all ten of Shakespeare's chronicle plays, presented consecutively for the first time in an English-speaking theatre. The undertaking was entirely successful since the performances were

lustily and not overly reverent. Fashioned and performed by youth, the productions were the most invigorating treatment the Bard had received in these parts for years.

In sixteen years Brown's theatre has presented 700 different plays, the American record for one theatre. The Playhouse is kindly disposed toward new plays, even those concerned with social justice, but the lack of them hereabouts is only too evident.

Pasadena has erred badly in pretentious and clumsy tussles with clap-trap *Cavalcade* and "prestige" productions like its world premiere of *Lazarus Laughed*. These very bad imitations of extravaganza were better left to Morris Gest or his like, when a suitable Maecenas can be found. They gave the Playhouse publicity, but accomplished nothing. Better, by far, have been careful productions of most of the Shaw comedies, major O'Neill works, animated revivals of former American play hits beginning with the *Virginian*. The Playhouse followed Hoyt's *A Texas Steer* with Anderson's *Both Your Houses*, affording excellent contrast of two types of political play.

Paul Muni has graced its stage and Douglas Montgomery was brought up there. Its manifold activities, including a bustling school and tryouts on smaller stages, dilute the energies of its capable directorate, and it cannot be said that the Pasadena theatre has any definite direction. It is not preparing the way for the new social drama, and its standards in producing the old are constantly shifting. Pasadena harbors several hundred pre-Hoover millionaires whose bonds and currency fill its bank vaults. It's not exactly where you'd expect to find revolutionary the-



*Armoured Train* by Ivanov

Pasadena Community Playhouse.

atre, yet its most publicized citizen is none other than ex-socialist Upton Sinclair! Sinclair's brand of Utopian liberalism took a trouncing in California last November. Yet the response to his political crusade indicated that the state is not the sole preserve of the reactionaries. Nor are potential theatre audiences composed exclusively of those who can afford aisle seats.

Beginning as the Rebel Players, some years ago, what was later to become the Workers' Theatre in Los Angeles, offered *The Belt* and *Squaring the Circle*. During 1934 *Stevedore* and *Peace On Earth* were offered with considerable response on the part of the public. Jascha Frank, who directed *Peace on Earth*, was given exactly \$7 for his production, which managed to run four weeks, with an encouraging press. *Sailors of Cattaro* was given an enthusiastic production in a small theatre this Spring, and Clifford Odet's one-acters, *Waiting for Lefty* and *Till the Day I Die* dared Hollywood itself, by appearing boldly in one of its major showhouses. The Odets plays were able to find only part of their rightful audience, but their directors, Will Ghere, learned to his dismay how powerful their content was. He was ambushed and brutally beaten by "Friends of New Germany."

Various attempts to develop a flourishing New Theatre in the Los Angeles metropolitan area have encountered obstacles. The city is the center of far flung distances, without unity. It is no easy task to bring together diverse thousands who would eagerly rally to the support of a united front, revolutionary theatre. The material is here, but it needs welding. Perhaps vigorous leadership of the New Theatre League representatives will soon provide the necessary momentum.

While the film industry licks its chops after a highly satisfactory swill at the nation's box office during 1935, the literate citizens of the movie capital have to attend the theatre in books and periodicals. Despite Eastern doubts, many Californians are mentally acquisitive, eager to see plays which grapple with realities and suggest social solutions. Superficially California's citizens may appear to be a quaint race of Lotus Eaters, yet the ordeal of Tom Mooney, the Sacramento trials, San Francisco's general strike and the bloody iniquities in Imperial Valley haven't inspired political docility. Only last fall 800,000 bewildered voters registered their disgust with the regime whose economic philosophy is not so wholesome as our sunshine. A great many of them now realize that they tumbled for a Utopian scheme, and are now ready for honest labor party leadership.

They are, so it seems, ready and eager for plays which will enlighten and fortify them in their urgent quest for a rational social program, the deliverance of America from capitalistic self-interest and its political vortices. It is up to the new social theatres to supply them with such plays.

## "Midsummer Revue"

BY JOHN R. CHAPLIN

The Los Angeles Contemporary Theatre (past productions, *Peace On Earth*, *Sailor of Catarro*; in preparation, *Black Pit*, *Strike Song*, *Let Freedom Ring*, *The Young Go First*, *In New Kentucky*, and a revival of *Stevedore*) put on its first original production for one performance, Sunday, August 11th. It was a red revue, titled *Midsummer Revue*, the first of a series of quarterly revues. These will serve as try-outs for acting and writing talents in the group, and a recruiting-ground for its major productions.

Most striking achievement was the jam-packing of the large Mason Opera House for the performance, though there had been not a line of advertising and only dribbles of newspaper publicity. Some 2500 people filled the auditorium, coming mainly from revolutionary sympathizers; but many prominent motion-picture personalities also attended, and several hundred people new to the radical movement.

The revue itself can hardly be too highly lauded. While future editions will be made up entirely of locally written and produced sketches, this first one included such outside work as Friedrich Wolf's *Floridsdorf*, the Peter Martin—Erskine Caldwell *Daughter*, and Bernard Nixon's *Bird of Paradise*. Local items were a dramatization of the *Peat Bog Soldiers*, staged by Herbert Rappaport; *Case History*, by Jeff Kibre, taken from an actual relief-case; *Moscow Agent*, the most excruciatingly funny skit this reviewer has ever seen on any stage (Herbert Smith appeared as the typical "red agitator," with bomb and soap-box, and went through several minutes of speechifying in a gibberish that resembled no language civilized or uncivilized, accompanied by the most remarkable and convincing of gesticulations—and the climax, ripping the bomb open and strewing its contents like posies, had the house in convulsions); John Storm's *School For Vigilantes* showed great promise of what might be expected from future locally-written satirical skits; and Benjamin Zemach's masterful ballet, *Victory Ball*, outstanding hit of the season in the Hollywood Bowl, capped off a well-nigh perfect program.

With several score performers in the various features, and a staff of able technicians, Contemporary Theatre may well be said to have achieved a radical theatre group that the West Coast can be proud of. It is a permanent organization, and one that is getting right down into the life of the people out here. While past productions, imported plays, were still viewed in a somewhat aloof and detached esthetic light by local theatregoers, *Midsummer Revue* is tied right in with local events, and none can avoid its agitational message. It is moving and close-to-home.

This trend of relating the revolutionary theatre to the local scene will be carried forward in the first major production of Contemporary Theatre in late September. *Formation Left*, a play centering around the dole and relief projects, written by Jeff Kibre and Mildred Ashe will open the Theatre's season. After such productions as *Midsummer Revue* and *Formation Left*, the more documentary productions, mentioned earlier as "in preparation," will take on a much more definite revolutionary importance in the eyes of local audiences.

The revolutionary revue is not an easy form, true enough, and may be almost impossible of achievement in some localities where insufficient talent is available. But if *Midsummer Revue* be any indication of what the radical theatre can offer outside of New York, then the revolutionary revue is destined to become, in short order, a real and effective weapon on the cultural front.

### PLAY CONTESTS

The International Union of the Revolutionary Theatre announces an international play competition. The rules are as follows: While there are no limitations as to subject matter, plays against war and fascism are especially invited. There are no limitations as to theatrical form. The prizes are as follows: First prize, 10,000 roubles; second prize, 4,000 roubles; third prize, 2,000 roubles. The competition closes August 1, 1936. Awards will be made not later than January 1, 1937. All plays by American playwrights should be sent to the IURT in care of the New Theatre League.

The jury of the Felix Cohn International Competition for the Best Childrens Play has awarded a prize of 1,000 roubles, or a stay in the Soviet Union for that amount, to Ruth Burke, an American writer, for her play *Pioneer Jack and the Beanstalk*.

The \$100 prize contest sponsored by the New Theatre League in conjunction with The National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners for the best play about Angelo Herndon, young Negro working-class hero condemned to twenty years on the chain gang by a pre-Civil War statute in a Georgia court, and for the best play on Negro life, is drawing wide attention. Information about the contest, which closes October 1st, may be secured from the July and August numbers of **NEW THEATRE** or by writing to the Repertory Department. The same applies to the \$200 Prize contest for plays dealing with war and fascism, sponsored by the American League Against War and Fascism and the New Theatre League, which also closes October 1st.

# A New Approach to Film Making

BY RALPH STEINER AND LEO T. HURWITZ

Last winter Lee Strasberg, one of the directors of the Group Theatre, gave a course in theatre direction at the Theatre Collective school. We, as film makers, with no opportunity to learn the principles of our craft except by (expensive) trial and (mostly) error derived so much benefit from his patient, brilliant, analytical lectures that we are moved to present something of what we have learned to other film makers. With no film school in America led by an Eisenstein we feel that revolutionary movie makers must go for help to theatre workers like Strasberg and others who have thought deeply on the problems of films.

Although we film makers have problems some of which relate to those of the theatre and others which are of necessity different, since we work in a different medium, this course has given us what amounts to a completely new approach to both. In addition it has given us concrete methods of attacking a number of these basic problems. Not only did we get a clearer view of the main objectives toward which we have been groping but also an equally clear indication of the means by which they can be achieved in terms of the screen.

In the first place Strasberg emphasized the necessity of getting at the basic meaning of the scenario — of defining with the utmost clarity what must be said with the film as a whole. For instance: two theatres in Moscow produced Gorki's *Yegor Bulatchev* and though in both the actors spoke the same lines each theatre gave the play an entirely different meaning; the Moscow Art Theatre produced a play about the death of a man by cancer; to the Vaghtangov Theatre the same play was not only about the death of a man but also the disintegration of a whole class of society. Strasberg gave us a method of research to determine the basic idea of the script when it is not discoverable from the scenario itself. This research tries to determine what in the life and time of the author led to the writing of the scenario and effected and conditioned its contents.

Secondly, with the basic idea determined, Strasberg suggested a method of applying it to the production in order to obtain interest and reality: how the basic idea determines the style; how to work on the problem of the sets and background in relation to the idea; how to work with the actor and how to invent his activities.

Third, he made us conscious that every step in film making must be related to an audience. He made us realize that the film is *theatrical* — that is, it communicates its

This article is based on a report given at the conclusion of Lee Strasberg's course.

meaning by the recreation of dramatic situations in filmic time and space, and depends for its effectiveness on the emotional involvement of the audience in these situations. That unless this audience response is obtained, films, however profound and socially important in subject, will be lifeless and socially ineffectual.

The significance of this whole approach to us and to other film makers can be better understood by indicating our previous histories as film makers and the major influences which effected our point of view. There were three main factors in our development each of which contributed influences of definite positive value but each of which also warped our basic attitude toward the film medium.

*The Formal Revolt from Hollywood*—During the twenties we grew disgusted with the philistinism of the commercial film product, its superficial approach, trivial themes, and its standardization of film treatment: the straight-line story progressing from event to event on a pure suspense basis, unmarred by any imaginative use of the camera, unmarred by any freshness in editing or any human or formal sensitivity. Our reaction, which we shared with the young generation of experimental film makers, was a more or less aesthetic revolt from the current manner of film production. The important thing, we felt, was to do those things which the film was capable of, but which the commercial film didn't and couldn't possibly do. There seemed unbounded possibilities for the use of the films as a visual poetry of formal beauty.

The potentialities of the camera were explored: angles, lens distortions, camera tricks; the play of light, the magnificence of objects and objects in motion; the eloquence of things, rhythmic possibilities, and symphonic treatment. . . . It was a period in which much was learned and explored about the technical resources of cinematography and montage, but the whole emphasis was on the beauty, the shock, the effectiveness of OBJECTS, THINGS—with no analysis of the effect on an audience. In fact, the quick demise of this movement is proof that the audience got next to nothing out of it, though, certainly, technical advances were made. It could lead to nothing else but ivory tower aesthetic films, unrelated to contemporary life. The film had been depersonalised, inhuman; the THING, technique and formal problems were supreme. Even people were considered externally, as objects rather than as human beings. Those who went through this period had for a time a definite mark left on them even though they came out of it disillusioned into a more salutary field.

*Pudovkin's Film Technique* — The second main influence was Pudovkin's book, *On Film Technique*. The book itself, one of the first and best theoretical analyses of the film medium, satisfied an important need in the young and immature art of the movies. But its whole concern quite naturally was with the special problems of film technique, those problems that *differentiate* the film from any other medium. It did not concern itself with the basic dramatic principles that are *common* to all the theatrical arts. We made the error of overlooking the fact that Pudovkin was presupposing this base, and we considered the book a Bible of *film principles* rather than a series of collected essays on *film technique*. It is easy to see what errors might flow from laying the entire emphasis, as we did, on the secondary principles of film technique without grasping or even realising there exist the primary dramatic principles without which a theatrical art cannot affect and involve an audience.

Pudovkin's concern with the end problems—the detailed shooting script, the taking of the shot and the final editing—did not give us the basis for the primary step—the conception and rendering of the story, mood or idea in dramatic terms (theatricalization).

What we came away with from Pudovkin was briefly this: The basic thing in movie making is *editing* (montage). Editing gives life and meaning to dead strips of film by virtue of the context—just as a sentence in a poem vitalises and gives new meaning to the individual words that, taken by themselves, are lifeless and without overtones. The content of a shot is relatively unimportant; its effect is the result of what comes before and after, the elements that react with it. You can take a shot of a man with a blank expression, as Kuleshov did, and edit the same piece of film with a shot of a plate of soup, or a woman lying partially nude on a bed—and the same piece of film takes on two different meanings in the different contexts. In the one he appears hungry; in the other he appears lustful. The whole series of Kuleshov-Pudovkin experiments in cutting and the principles that were deduced have a tremendous value, but, in so far as they taught us that the content of the shot was unimportant, that the meaning of a sequence depended on editing, they gave us an approach which led us off on the wrong track.

This point of view "made it unnecessary" for us to think about the main problem of film making: the theatricalization of human ideas and situations (*mise en scene*)—in the words of Leo Strasberg, ". . . the creation of circumstances which make a scene possible,

alive and full of suspense . . . the building up of the circumstances, character, etc. so that the action becomes not only plausible but necessary. . . ." Pudovkin, as a movie director, is brilliant in his invention of such circumstances and activity, but in his book he is concerned not with the problem of their invention but largely with the technical problem of how they are executed in production and editing. For example, in his book Pudovkin describes how he made an extraordinary scene in *Storm Over Asia*, the scene at the trading post where the hero brings in the valuable silver fox, which is envied by all the other trappers. Pudovkin does not tell us the process of the theatricalization of the scene with all its circumstances from the scenario; he rather describes *how* he got the special effect that he wanted by using jugglers and magicians to fascinate the crowd of trappers with their tricks, and photographing their hypnotically fascinated faces without their knowledge. He edited this piece of film with some shots of the valuable silver fox, and the effect in the film was to make the fox appear tremendously valuable in their eyes. It can easily be seen what the effect of this type of emphasis on the *technique of execution* (the results obtained by placing together unrelated pieces of film to create a new unity), would have on film makers who did not first understand the primary dramatic problem of constructing the scene in space and time from the words of a scenario. Our whole orientation was toward editing or montage and toward special filmic techniques, without understanding that these were only the *means* for the shaping and communication of a *basic dramatic stuff*. It reemphasized our already formal approach.

As a result of this attitude we were unable to understand or utilize the problems that were sent to us from Eisenstein's classes in the Moscow Film School. One of the problems was to stage, to create, the *mise en scene* of a situation in which a soldier comes back from two years at the front to find his wife with a new-born baby. We could see no profit in attempting to conceive this situation for the stage, nor how it would aid us in the making of films. Had we been asked to do a shot by shot camera script of the incident we would have seen some point in it. We did not realize that the staging—the invention of activity and circumstances to recreate the scene in space and time — was a necessary step before a shooting script could be made. Without this step a shooting script might result in an interesting camera and montage treatment, but would never bring the situation to life for an audience.

*The Documentary Film*—It is natural, out of this background, after the first flush of excitement in the purely formal experimental film, and after we arrived at our conception of the movie as a class weapon, that our interest would be concentrated in the documentary film—the film that catches reality on

the wing as it passes by. In making a documentary film, as we then conceived it, you photographed the event and the things that were relevant to it, and then by means of clever editing you could do most anything in making the film effective. In brief this was our approach: You were going to do a film about the Scottsboro case, or New York Harbor. You knew what the film was going to say. Then you took your camera and attempted to capture completely as you could the most meaningful visual aspects of reality. Then, to the cutting room, where you pieced the film together in a brilliant and cogent montage to make it a moving document of life. Only somehow it was never really moving. At best it turned out to be a conceptualized statement, a film concerned with objects and the purely external manifestations of people without their emotions or motivations, a pamphlet on the screen, to which you could say "yes" with your mind, but your emotions weren't involved.

In our documentary films, we relied on the idea that photographed reality contained its own dramatic punch, and while it is certainly true that documentary material has a finality and incontrovertibility and carries with it a special persuasiveness, we did not realize that this was not enough to involve an audience's emotions, to create drama. We did not realize that even in a documentary film it is still necessary to use theatrical means of affecting an audience—suspense, build, dramatic line, etc.

With this background and the feeling that something was missing, we entered Strasberg's course in direction. The specific techniques applicable to all phases of film making, from scenario writing to directing the actor, which we found there, we have tried to indicate briefly. But most important of all we found a basic approach toward film making, which if put into practice can raise the revolutionary film far above its present low level. We learned that the film as a dramatic medium cannot merely concern itself with external happenings even though they be revolutionary happenings, but must embody the conflict of underlying forces, causes. That to achieve this, the making of a film involves not merely: (1) knowing what you want to say, (2) a scenario, and (3) shooting and cutting it, but the intermediate steps of theatricalizing the events through the invention of circumstances and activities which transform concepts, relationships and feelings into three dimensional happenings that are plausible, effective and rich in significance. Only in solving problems does it seem likely that a film conduit can be constructed which can carry our revolutionary viewpoint to an increasingly receptive audience, one that is really moved because in the life on the screen it finds its own aspirations and struggles, its own failures and successes, its own truths.

## Directing the "Non-Actor"

(Continued from page 19)

This creation of circumstances that call forth a natural response may help the professional actor a great deal when he plays in natural parts.

In discussing the question of the "non-actor" it is also necessary to point out the following: If in the cinema it is impossible to replace the specifically trained actor with an "accidental person," it is equally impossible, because of the great number of characters involved, to make films with trained actors only. Not to use people who have no specific training is out of the question. This will become obvious from the following figures: the number of small episodic roles in the theatre average from about 15 to 20; in a film we have an average from about 80 to 100 shots of various people, each one of sufficient significance in itself. Tiny episodic parts that occupy no more than about 20 seconds or one minute sometimes solve very complex problems, hence demand a high quality of execution.

A mass scene or a crowd on the stage eventually becomes something inseparable from the whole show. In the cinema, on the other hand, as we know, it is divided into large sections. The composition of the crowd as a whole is shown through its parts. In shooting on a large plan, realistic acting is demanded from each individual actor as much as from the actor playing the leading role.

On the stage a minor episode may be only of partial importance. Sometimes it serves as a connecting link; sometimes merely as background. In the cinema, however, because of the audience's constant concentration upon all the details of the film, such secondary linking moments do not exist.

In a film, if it has a sharply defined rhythmic construction, each tiny piece must be executed with the greatest perfection. One should also consider this necessity for high quality in the light of the limitations of the movie industry which cannot at all times have the services of an unlimited number of episodic actors. One can, of course, point to Hollywood which has the services of thousands of extras who live constantly on the lot. I don't believe, however, that such a system could be adopted in the Soviet Union. Since our movie industry is being developed as an art which reflects a maximum of reality, as the number of natural filmings — which means that various cinema groups have to travel to various parts of the country—grows, it becomes increasingly difficult to take along a large group of actors whose function is to play only in one-minute pieces.

Accordingly, the director shall always be faced with the necessity of utilizing people whom he can find in remote places removed from the center. The importance of making use of the "non-actor" in the cinema, I repeat, can be denied only academically by repeating the abstract theory that "the cinema is for the actor."

(Translated by Leon Dennen)

# Prospects for the New Theatre

BY MARK MARVIN

"If you own a hundred thousand francs worth of craftsmanship, spend five sous to buy more," says Stanislavsky, quoting Degas, "There is no art which does not demand virtuosity"

—*Shifting Scenes* by Hallie Flanagan.

Today increasing tens of thousands of Americans are turning to the new theatres with great expectations for the season of 1935-36 feeling that the theatre and the drama which they have learned to accept as their own will surely burst forth into significant maturity in this period. The new theatres must develop their art to meet the requirements of this growing audience.

Despite the great accomplishments of the new theatres—particularly the four professional groups which have made the outstanding contributions—the Theatre Union, the Group Theatre, the Artef, and the Theatre of Action, there should be no fear of vigorous self-criticism, of a measurement of present deficiencies. There is a danger that the new theatres may be tempted to let past successes disrupt the disciplined development they so urgently need. Particularly dangerous is the feeling that what social drama has to say is so important that it matters little *how* it is said.

The pitfalls that confront the new theatres may be summarized under the general heading of a *philosophy of poverty*. This includes not only a poverty of the physical means of production—of theatres, stage sets, lighting equipment, etc.—but also a poverty of effective creative work due to the lack of competent artistic leadership and, in some cases, to the failure of the groups to undertake theatre work as their major activity. The Theatre of Action, the Artef, and the Group have succeeded in establishing permanent and disciplined companies devoted to the dramatic arts and equipped to study, work, and experiment. They have made rich use of the well-stocked stores of past theatre history and experience and, as a result, each of these theatres has evolved its own creative style, and kept abreast of the finest new technique in the theatre. They have brought forth directors who have known how to unify and enrich their work. Theatres suffering from the philosophy of poverty have not been resourceful enough to obtain and utilize the necessary physical means of production, nor have they been able to win the aid of the workers in the little theatres and universities who are really looking for a theatre which they can respect for its artistic as well as its social purpose.

Articles in *NEW THEATRE* have stressed our basic weakness, the lack of good plays. It has been pointed out that the chief weaknesses

are two-fold: lack of clarity on the part of the playwrights of the actual nature of the social forces they are trying to dramatize, and a lack of mastery, and often of the bare essentials, of the technique of playwriting. (See *Writing For Workers Theatres* by Herbert Kline, *NEW THEATRE*, December, 1934, for a full analysis of early repertory—and March issue for analysis of plays in the play contest won by *Waiting for Lefty*.)

When a play of the quality of *Waiting for Lefty* comes into our repertory it creates an international sensation (*Lefty* is now being played or is in rehearsal in European countries, in Mexico, U.S.S.R., etc.). Odets has shown us how the writing of a play on a particular trade union subject can be universalized by highly perfected art so that its appeal will be international in scope, and serve also as a stimulus to the militant trade-union movement throughout the world.

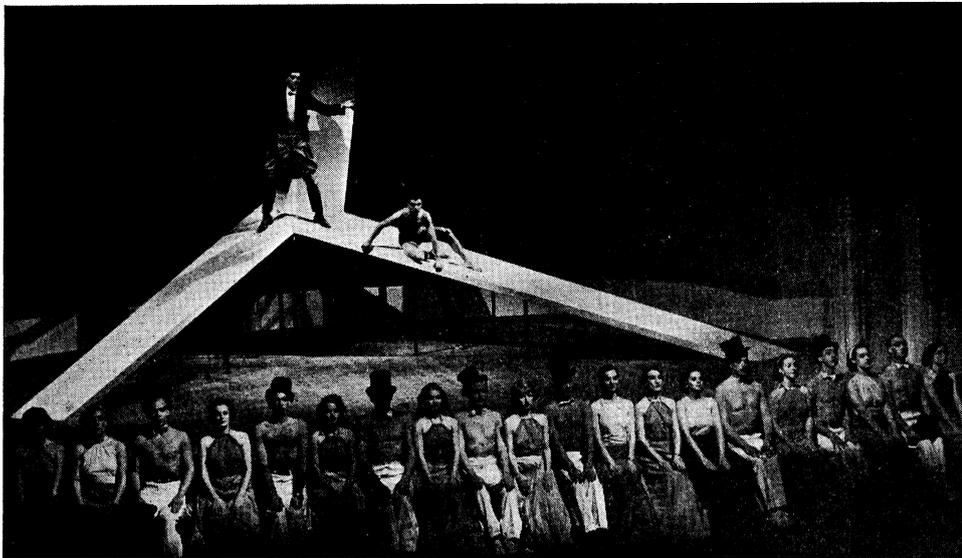
Besides the dearth of plays for the new theatres, producers are turning to the new social drama because of the demands of audiences everywhere for plays that dramatize the vast social problems of the day. New plays have been written or are being written by John Howard Lawson, Albert Bein, Paul and Claire Sifton, Sidney Kingsley, Em Jo Basshe, George Sklar, Clifford Odets, Rudolph Wittenberg, and others. But as most of these plays are intended for Broadway production they will not be available for some time to the nationwide network of the non-professional new theatres. Albert Maltz alone among the established dramatists is working on short plays with these theatres in mind. The two play contests now being conducted by the New Theatre League should bring in several important plays. In addition, the League is arranging for the translation of the plays of such outstanding European dramatists as Brecht, Wangenheim and Wolf, among others. This brings us to the important and as yet unanalyzed problem of producing plays from the established repertory. Dramatists of the past and present have dealt powerfully with social themes and though their conclusions may be different than those of the new theatres their works merit production consideration. Certainly where the outstanding social dramatists from Ibsen to O'Casey are known only by name there are great prospects for the new theatres which include the work of such men in their repertory.

This does not mean that the suggestions above, most of which require the development of permanent theatre organizations and repertory companies, imply an abandonment of the militant agit-prop theatres. The permanent

theatres should develop mobile shock troupes which will be available for easily staged bookings in workers halls and picket-lines. Certainly creative artists like Alfred Saxe of the Theatre of Action should devote part of their time to the development of this art-form which was originated in the workers theatres. However, we must now face the fact that with a few exceptions (*Newsboy*, *Free Thaelmann!* etc.) the short mobile form has still to develop to a level which will result in a popular theatrical form. This is no doubt due to the failure to assimilate native vaudeville, abased as it now is, and folk-lore and humor. Attempts have been made to use native vaudeville and humor in *Charity*, *House of Agriculture* and *Parade*, but much more needs to be done.

The new theatres must break completely with the philosophy of poverty attitude of playing at theatre. Audience organizations that will insure the future of the new theatres must be established during this coming season. The new theatres must issue the proper publicity to local and national publications, and particularly must secure and develop the best writers possible to write up their activities in *NEW THEATRE*. Authoritative documentation of the new theatre movement, begun with the pamphlet *Censored* and with Ben Blake's new pamphlet issued this month, must be continued. The national office of the New Theatre League must rely on the groups far more than previously to support the concentrated work necessary if the repertory and other services are to develop as they must to keep pace with our rapid growth.

Though the new theatres have worked under tremendous handicaps and have come through many hardships that would have daunted any theatre movement that did not have a working-class backbone, though these same theatres have helped change the course of American drama today, they must recognize the immediate need for careful re-orientation in order to meet the demands of audiences which are growing not only in size but in appreciation. By mastering their craft, by broadening their policy, those new theatres located in places where there is little or no legitimate theatre have the possibility of becoming the center of a broadly supported people's dramatic culture in their communities. Such theatres rooted in the trade-unions and other mass organizations will be a tremendous incentive to the development of the American drama and to the united front struggle against war and fascism. The new theatres, breaking with the old philosophy of poverty handicap, will take the road to a higher stage in the development of the drama as a creative social art.



*The Dance of Death*, by W. H. Auden.

Vassar Experimental Theatre.

## Shifting Scenes

### Auden at Vassar

In *The Dance of Death*, W. H. Auden is dealing with pretty exciting stuff. Unfortunately it is not put together in a way to make a very exciting or important dramatic production. It has, let it be understood at once, color and rhythm, occasionally biting satire and infectiously gay verse; it has, also, the sound enough premise (revealed not by the action of the play but through the announcer who tells you about it beforehand) that a class—by implication the capitalist class—is dying. This class, incidentally, is made to include all sorts of people who are inflicted with capitalist psychology, rather than the owning as opposed to the working class.

That this amusingly esoteric poem is not a play was proved by the competent production of the Vassar Experimental Theatre on August 2nd. Perhaps Mr. Auden never intended it to be a play. The first words are: "We present to you this evening the picture of the decline of a class"—and as a descriptive poem it is indeed highly successful—the visual imagery is delightful—but somewhat tiring for a whole evening. The cast of the Vassar summer theatre played it with a vitality and obvious enjoyment that in some ways made up for its obscurity. The director, Hallie Flanagan, was also the designer of a simple triangle set that was not only beautiful in itself but was admirably suited to the needs of the play. It became in turn a bathing resort, a life saving station, a speaker's rostrum, a ship at sea, and a stage background. Mr. Clair Leonard's music was more than adequate—it is to be hoped that it will be repeated elsewhere. The dances, composed by Lucretia Barzun and performed mostly by Mr. Philip Gordon—although better than what one usually finds in small or many large theatres—were weak, lacking in conviction. This lack of strength was due, I think, not so much to a lack of technique on the part of Mr. Gordon as to uncertain choreography resulting from an uncertain idea of what it was all about.

As for the play itself, they did their best to endow it with some sort of dramatic clarity. A second performance was given right after the first for the benefit of those who wished to understand it better. The small minority that availed itself of the privilege was rewarded, first of all, by a far more spirited performance and secondly by the sharpening of small points that always comes of repeated perusal of many-layered poetry. One also becomes surer of the descriptive sequence: the search for a new life, the acceptance, instead, of war and a fascist dictatorship, the disillusionment and retirement first into the

heart of nature and then into the heart of man, the dying of "death" (who has been their leader in various forms until then) and the liquidation of them all by the entrance of Karl Marx—an off-stage voice they made him at Vassar—and two young communists. But numberless repetitions could not give the "play" what the author had left out of it—a rising action, a climax, real characters—and as for the conflict, it is intellectual rather than emotional and seems to reside not in the play at all, but rather, in the head of Mr. Auden.

DORIS YANKHAUER

### "Lefty" Strikes at Hudson's

"Lefty strikes at Hudson's!" This was the slogan used by the New Theatre Union of Detroit when it performed *Waiting for Lefty* under the sponsorship of the Carpet and Linoleum Mechanics Union, Local 34, A. F. of L.

Twelve weeks ago the Carpet and Mechanics Union, Local 34, went out on strike for higher wages, better working conditions and union recognition in two of Detroit's largest department stores—Crowley-Milner's and J. L. Hudson's. The Local knew it was undertaking a big job and that it would need support to gain a victory. As Mr. Harry Pulver, Business Agent of Local 34 said, the Local found out who its friends were during the course of those twelve weeks.

When Mr. Pulver approached Mr. Frank X. Martel, President of the Detroit Federation of Labor, and asked him for the use of the Federation's headquarters for his performance, Martel refused because he objected to the play. The Local insisted on sponsoring our presentation of *Lefty*, in spite of Martel's objections.

As the Local was very busy with the strike, we made all the arrangements—rented the hall, got out leaflets and contacted unions. The Local gave us delegates credentials, as representatives of the strike committee. We had only three days in which to contact the unions and mobilize our audience.

A meeting hall atmosphere was prevalent in the small auditorium where *Waiting for Lefty* was presented by the New Theatre Union before an audience of about 150 people, mostly rank and file union men. Before the play went on, Mr. Pulver greeted and thanked the New Theatre Union for cooperating with Local 34 and making this evening possible. He then introduced Mr. Lewis Fall, of the New Theatre Union, who expressed our solidarity with the strikers and explained our purpose as a theatre.

Mr. McKie, President of the Ford Local of the A. F. of L., spoke on the importance of union-

izing the entire J. L. Hudson department store. The Secretary of Local 34, Mr. James Ross, reviewed the progress of the strike, stating that the strike at Crowley-Milner's was settled, with about an 80 per cent victory. The strike at Hudson's is still going on. Hudson's is a hard nut to crack—definitely anti-union. Edsel Ford has an interest in this store.

Then *Waiting for Lefty* was presented to this small, but very enthusiastic and appreciative audience. The scenes that held the greatest appeal for them were the Joe-Edna, Sid-Florrie, Labor Spy and meeting hall scenes, because these were closer to their own lives and experiences. The Interne and Laboratory Assistant scenes (the Young Actor scene was eliminated), although very well executed, were more or less remote to this audience.

We capped the evening off by having everybody in the audience sing with us Write Me Out My Union Card, adding our own final verse:

"A union town Detroit shall be  
A union town Detroit shall be  
A union town Detroit shall be  
A labor slate to victory  
Time to fight those hunger blues away"

Mr. Pulver then surprised us all, by leaping up on the stage and calling on the audience to give three rousing cheers for the New Theatre Union.

As a result of this booking there is a possibility that about 30 locals of the A. F. of L. will sponsor another showing of *Waiting for Lefty* this fall in order to raise money to send delegates to the convention of the Painters Union.

The friendly relationship established by this single performance has made us all realize more than ever the importance of working and performing for the trade unions.

CAROL STANDISH

### "Take My Stand"

Rehearsed in a tenement apartment with director, playwright and cast who do other work in the daytime, performed without previous rehearsal on any stage, *Take My Stand*, a new one-act play by E. England, was given an exciting preview by the newly organized Brooklyn Labor Theatre at Brookwood College on August 18th. Watching this production one is again overwhelmed by the realization that the workers theatre is the only one with life in it. Struggling against great odds, this group of workers on an unaffectedly simple stage creates real theatre. The play concerns a young man in a factory who discovers that there is a class struggle, and that there is no neutral position in a strike situation. This is told entirely and convincingly in dramatic terms. The vitality made up for occasional slow moments resulting partly from too conscientious exposition and partly from bad timing. A bit of business at the end, not in the script, could be happily omitted. These faults will undoubtedly be corrected in time for the opening at the Little Theatre in Brooklyn on September 9th. The Brooklyn Labor Theatre, under the direction of Kumar Goshal, deserves enthusiastic support. It marks the beginning of the workers theatre movement in Brooklyn, a city with sparse cultural activity and a huge potential audience for such a theatre.

HERBERT MAYER

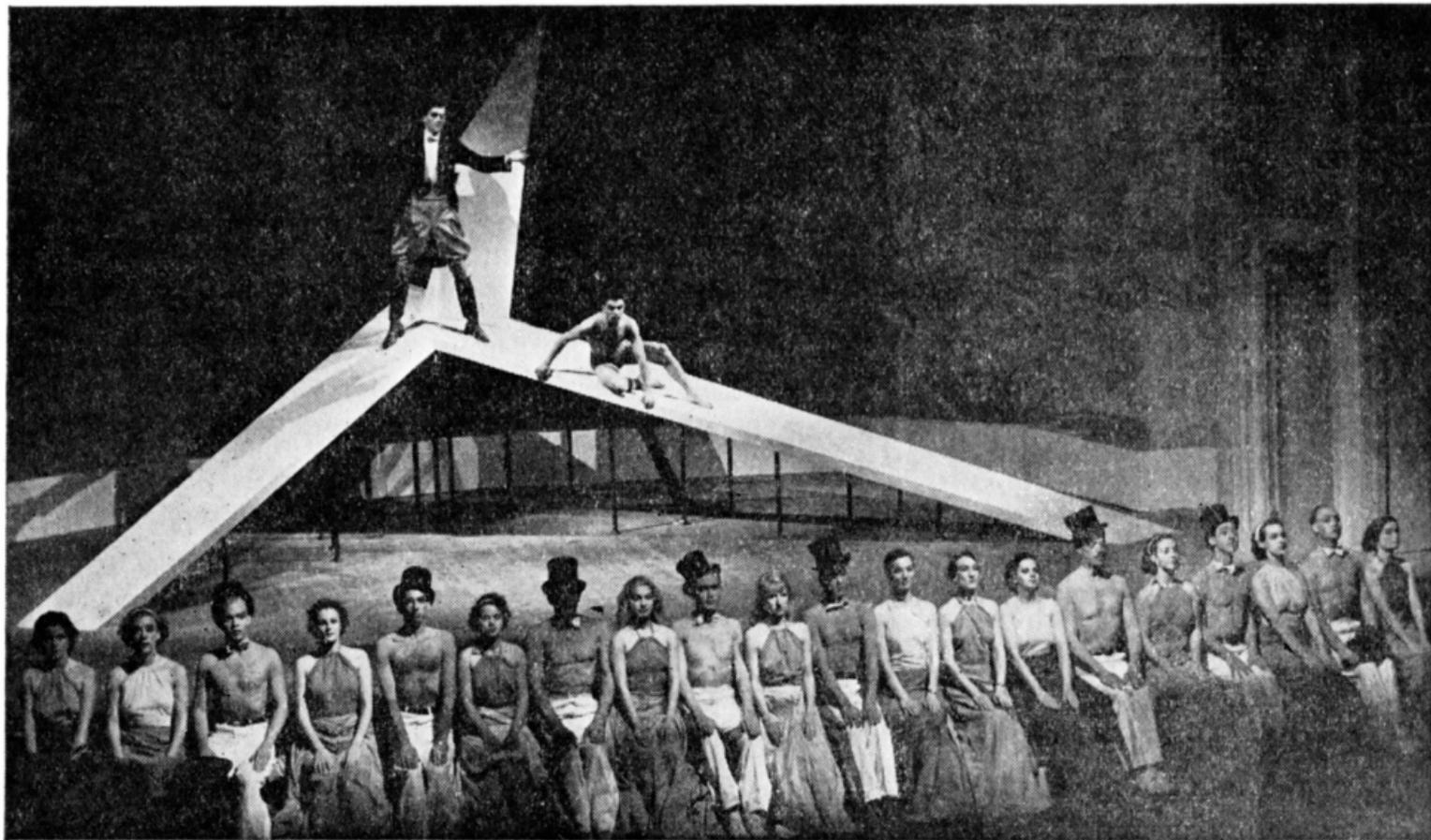
### Ryan: Red-Baiter

The new theatre movement has grown up as an integral part of the American labor movement and has received its artistic stimulus largely from the struggles of labor. Social theatre workers were consequently appalled by a slanderous attack printed in the July issue of the Labor Chronicle, the mouthpiece of Mr. Joseph P. Ryan, ultra-reactionary labor leader, fifteen-thousand a year head of the Longshoremen's Union.

One out of eight pages in Mr. Ryan's puff sheet is devoted to the anonymous Hearstian article headlined "Reds Run Theatres in Three Hundred Cities."

NEW THEATRE, the New Theatre League groups, and the new playwrights are all targets of the venomous pen of the Chronicle reporter: "Clifford Odets is not the first talented writer to make a

(Continued on page 34)



*The Dance of Death*, by W. H. Auden.

Vassar Experimental Theatre.

# The Fokine Ballets

BY BLANCHE EVAN

I went eagerly to the Stadium this summer in search of the "miracle" of choreography of which John Martin spoke in his review of *Scheherazade*. During the progress of the performance my eagerness was very quickly transformed into disappointment. The "tired business man" has as his weekly fare, in almost any movie house presentation, this kind of pseudo-choreographic miracle. The handling of ensemble was weak in comparison with any one of the Jooss ballets, and painfully weak in comparison with the least interesting of Humphrey's or Graham's group compositions. How monotonous the repeated use of cliché poses—Maxfield Parrish equally in evidence in the Oriental setting of *Scheherazade* and in what the program notes termed "pure dancing," the presentation *Elves*.

It is true that ballets like *Scheherazade*, created in 1910, were considered extremely radical from the point of view of dance form. It is true they were of immense importance in the development of the art of the dance and as a vehicle for the best musicians and stage designers of the time. But that is no reason why they in themselves could not have been integral pieces of choreographic form able to stand the test of revival. By analogy, the paintings of Picasso and Braque who also were the insurgents of their time have already become classic. Again one must disagree with John Martin when he says that only the passage of time will give these ballets "sufficient mellowness of perspective to assume a place in any permanent repertoire." Ballets like *Scheherazade* do not hold within them a single germ to make them worthy of resurrection as great works of choreographic art in the present or in the future.

The reason for this consummate failure of so widely heralded a ballet as *Scheherazade* embraces the historical, technical, and social phases of ballet in general.

*The Degeneracy of Ballet*—The Perugini definition of the art of ballet is "a series of solo and concerted dances with mimetic actions, accompanied by music and scenic accessories telling a story." Any balletomane in the world will tell you that without the complete harmony of all these elements, a ballet performance must be a failure. The ballet school which is the nucleus of ballet theatre production has followed in America a direct line of degeneracy. The Russian ballet masters who emigrated to America forced ballet into this degeneracy by commercializing their schools, by eliminating all study of the expressive medium of ballet, which is pantomime, by allowing mere children to work in toe slippers before any muscular development had taken place, and finally by emasculating the artistic forces of ballet until only

the skeleton of technique was left. Without the combination of great pantomimic artistry with technical skill, the art of ballet cannot exist. The performance of Fokine's pupils at the Stadium proved this. Even if Fokine's choreography for *Scheherazade* were great, his dancers who to-day are prepared to execute only the correct number of "steps" (and this is being generous to the cast) cheapen and vulgarize the work by their utter ignorance of mime and by their complete lack of sensitive interpretation. The love scenes of Zobeide, the heroine of *Scheherazade*, executed in the manner of the Folies Bergeres, are a good example. The same choreography handled by Karsavina and Nijinsky must certainly have shone to better advantage. Stripped of the assistance of great expressive artists, the Fokine choreography does not stand as exciting, pure formal design. It becomes in this case decidedly barren and banal.

*Motivation in Creation*—It is not chiefly that there is "unemployment and social upheaval" to-day, as John Martin says, that we cannot be "seriously carried away" by the revival of *Scheherazade*. It is rather that at the time of its creation, in 1910, the motivation for creation had no attachment to reality. Not only was it detached from the contemporary scene. Fokine did not even interpret the atmosphere in which it was placed, but merely presented a conventional viewpoint in a stereotyped setting. Isadora Duncan also went to a foreign source for her material. But in her case, she strove to capture the spirit of the Greeks, rather than merely to reproduce a Greek scene.

Sunk in the subsidies of the Imperial Court of Russia and in the capitalists' court that followed Diaghileff, Fokine believed he could shut his eyes to the burning realities of the world in which he lived. In 1910, there were the same preparations for war as there are to-day; the same savage persecution of racial and religious minorities as occurs in Hitler Germany. Five years before, the Russian masses returning from the Russo-Japanese War had fought a bloody civil war. Such was not the material that the Russian choreographers chose. Unlike the great Russian writers of the same period, such as Gorki, Fokine worked with themes arbitrarily and depended for their vitality on the gorgeous decor of Bakst in which they were dressed.

There was nothing real in the motivation and nothing enduring in the results.

Ballet can have a wide appeal because it is the most inclusive of the theatre arts, embracing as it does dancing, mime, music, scenic accessories. But it will never achieve a mass audience, it will never be great, until it finds its themes in reality, either in the

present world of events, or, if it chooses to work with historical material, in the field of keen interpretative history, or in the rich traditional folk material of the world. The reaction of the audience to the ballets presented at the Stadium is proof of this: The ballets were received very unenthusiastically. The general apathy was only slightly disturbed by weak applause for occasional technical feats. (It is a compliment to the modern dance that the sequence of a number is never broken by the intrusion of applause rendered for mere acrobatics.) The theatre may be the legitimate home of fantasy, but only that fantasy deeply rooted in the earth can make an audience part of it.

Despite the new activities of ballet, the Monte Carlo Ballet Russe, the Fokine Ballets, the American Ballet Company, despite the backing of wealthy patrons, ballet will not live unless its directors and its choreographers are willing to forego their courtly dreams of the nineteenth century. The *Alma Mater* work presented by the American Ballet, a careful satire on college life, caught a vibrant reaction from the audience that none of the *Reminiscence* ballets were able to do. Both choreographed by Balanchine, the former spoke to the audience in contemporary terms, whereas the latter tried unavailingly to carry it back to an atmosphere of gilded halls and purple clad page boys—an atmosphere with which it could feel no bond whatsoever.

Moreover, the ballet organizations will have to wake up intellectually before they can develop further. The following quotation from Moliere actually appears in the American Ballet Program sold at the Stadium (25c and worth it for the laugh). It is inconceivable that Moliere's satire should be cited as a serious credo in the year 1935:

"All the ills of mankind, all the tragic misfortunes that fill the history books, all political blunders, all the failures of great commanders, have arisen merely from lack of skill in *dancing* . . .

"When a man has been guilty of a mistake, either in ordering his own affairs, or in directing those of the State, or in commanding an army, do we not always say: So-and-so has made a false step in this affair? . . .

"And can making a false step derive from anything but lack of skill in *dancing*?"

Moliere. *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*.

Wouldn't it have been wonderful to have prevented the tragic misfortune of fascism by teaching Hitler to delicately point his toes, or Mussolini to change his military stride to the flowing walk of Duncan? Of course, we might try to teach them to leap backwards from Ethiopia!

Fokine, Balanchine, Massine — you must forget the past that served its formal purpose. Give America new ballets of its time. Discard the loves of Zobeide and dance the love and desire and struggle for a new life and a better world in which to create and live.

# Martha Graham's "Panorama"

BY EDNA OCKO

As a result of a month's intensive work at the Bennington School of the Dance, Martha Graham and her Concert Group, with twenty-four students of the school (among whom were many members of the New Dance League), presented a fifty-minute ballet *Panorama*. It is a tribute to Miss Graham's gift as director, and to the dancers' professionalism, that in so short a time, a unit could be trained to present an opus of such vast and significant proportions; that, in addition, this group used with ease and facility a double stage executed by Arch Lauterer, and *mobiles*, movable stage decors, designed by Alexander Calder. These items alone would be worthy of comment were it not for the fact that *Panorama* marked the first occasion when Miss Graham, outspokenly, through program notes as well as theme, joined forces with those artists in America who find social comment the basis of their work.

*Panorama*, the program notes read, "endeavors to present three themes of thought and action which are basically American", the first, *Theme of Dedication*, treats of Puritan religious fanaticism, the second, *Imperial Theme*, of Negro exploitation, the third, *Popular Theme*, of the awakening social consciousness in the contemporary scene. Here is a subject that would faze all but the most courageous of choreographers, or the most convinced of thinkers. That Miss Graham is both is proven by her sensitive handling of so extensive a canvas within the limits of a medium which, until this time, she has arbitrarily kept free from all stage or theatrical appurtenances. Now she used these to great advantage as aid in presenting her ideas.

The social comment in this work, unfortunately, does not parallel, in clarity of conception, the remarkable ability of Miss Graham to integrate comment into dance patterns at once thrilling and beautiful. *Panorama* is still no doubt in the process of crystallization, and this accounts for many weaknesses, particularly in the third section. Surely here, the most insurgent, the most rugged, the most contemporary theme of all required an ending that was powerfully heroic and unquenchable. Here should have been a dedication far more sweeping than the first. The popular theme, as Miss Graham conceived it, sought to remain too conscientiously within national confines. To feel, at this time, that a peoples' theme which has broad, universal implications must end on a distinctly national note is unpropitious, or else evasive. The boundaries of America have been broken through by the unity of the workers the world over; they are not arbitrarily determined by the singers of Yankee Doodle. This Miss Graham does not yet grant. And this awakening of social con-

sciousness should have permeated also the subject of Negro exploitation in *Imperial Theme*. Not only would it have made the dance timely in view of Mussolini's impending attack on Ethiopia, but it could have been a far truer picture of the Southern locale in America in which 'superstition and strange fears' are no longer the outstanding characteristics of the Negro.

Despite these ideological discrepancies, however, one can see to what great planes Miss Graham's work will reach when one realizes how far and in how short a time she has already traveled away from *Dithyrambic* and *Primitive Mysteries*. Even in *Panorama*, her first open avowal of sympathy with the growing forces of social protest, there are unforgettable characterizations. The dignified opening of *Dedication* made way for a vividly fantastic grotesquerie on hymn and prayer. And in this section also appeared some of the finest dancing of the evening; the hex dance of Anna Sokolow and Anita Alvarez. The recurrent primitive theme of the second scene and the opening phrases of *Popular Theme* were equally stirring portions of the cycle. The solo work of Miss Graham was of its usual high calibre; throughout the entire work she remains a motivating, albeit abstruse, force interpenetrating the group and moulding it. In the first scene she seems propelled by some sort of ecstatic self-communion. As the imperialist in the second she stalks through the group, wielding a red gash of handkerchief as symbol of the blood of the workers who alternately sway in ritual, or bow in tortured fear to the brazen and imperious Moloch demanding sacrifice at the altar. The solo in the third section is that of the agitator who, separate from the group,—a separation which seems false,—animates it to action.

There is no doubt that this marks for Miss Graham the first of a series of full-length

## ● RUTH ALLERHAND ● SCHOOL

for DANCERS TEACHERS  
GROUP LEADERS

all fees: \$3 monthly

Tuesday - Thursday - Friday  
Theory - Technique - Solo Dance  
General Training Daily

● GROUP Mon., Wed., Sat.

Re-opening, Sept. 16th

148 West 4th St., New York City

ballets dedicated to themes of contemporary importance for the American public. As yet, the major part of this public has never seen Martha Graham. They should, since their attempts at understanding and interest will not only serve to clarify for the dancer many of the ideas that still remain abstract intellectual sympathies with her, but also they will receive new conviction as to the potency and scope of the modern dance.

## BLANCHE EVAN

SCHOOL OF THE DANCE

■ RE-OPENS SEPT. 23

Technique

Improvisation

Formal Composition

SEND FOR CIRCULAR

■ 116 E. 59th ST., NEW YORK

Wickersham 2-5057

YOUNG MEN'S HEBREW ASSOCIATION

Presents  
**30** OUTSTANDING EVENINGS FOR **\$5.50**  
(\$7.50 for non-members)

15 Sunday evening dramatic and dance recitals by the nation's foremost artists, and 15 of the most significant pictures ever produced, now available to you in one Major Subscription Series at this low cost.

BEGINNING SUNDAY EVENING, SEPT. 15.

DANCE RECITALS:

Martha Graham; Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman; Benjamin Zemach; Paul Hakon; Elsa Findlay; Anna Sokolow; The Men of the Dance.

DRAMATIC RECITALS:

Cornelia Otis Skinner: The Artef; The Group Theatre; Molly Picon; Celia Adler; Remo Bufano; puppets; Noah Nachbusch; Ben Ari; Mark Schweid.

CINEMA GUILD RECITALS:

Series will open with Chapayev Sunday evening September 15th, at 8:45. Also: Courses offered by Harold Clurman, Cheryl Crawford and Lee Strasberg of the Group Theatre. Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman, Hanja Holm, Anna Sokolow, John Martin, and Elsa Findlay. Inquire about rates.

Y. M. H. A. 92nd Street and Lexington Ave

I am enclosing check or money order for \$5.50 or \$7.50.

I am a member of the Y. M. H. A.

I am not a member of the Y. M. H. A.

Name .....

Address .....

# Redder Than the Rose

TO NEW THEATRE:

To the readers of the NEW THEATRE who do not read the Dance Observer it must be evident by this time that Henry Gilfond is synonymous with all that is jingo, fascist, and reactionary in the dance world. At least, the NEW THEATRE can scarcely be accused of a laxity in its efforts to identify all that is evil and petty-bourgeois with the writer. For what reason? It is difficult to determine, since surely his writing, and especially his writing concerning the workers' and the revolutionary dance movements, carry no such intentions, are quite to the contrary; and further, because there can be little self-aggrandisement derived from such limpid gyrations as have appeared to assail this writer in your columns.

First, Edna Ocko, your dance editor, saw fit, some months ago, to label the writer a "red baiter", and brought to serve for such an attack such ingenious argument as "He just doesn't make sense," improved upon this with the generously acute he "lowers the literary and critical standards of the Observer," and topped it with Mr. Gilfond has "epic poetry and an unpublished novel to his credit." (Publishers please note.) Obviously, any attempt to refute such argument should be fool-hardy, without office, and, certainly, could scarcely have bearing on the premise that Mr. Gilfond trails, has trailed, or will trail "a terpsichorean red herring", and the writer's simple response was to continue his argument thru the channels of his own paper despite the request from the New Dance League (Lee Stanley, Press Dept. N.D.L., to the Dance Observer, Feb. 13) that Mr. Gilfond refrain from further reviewing its efforts.

It must be said to Miss Ocko's credit, however, that she did misquote the writer to the effect that he named the alliance of dancers with the revolutionary movement escapist, and the writer, perhaps, should have replied earlier, except that it should have been necessary for him to take into account such other impeccable arguments as already have been mentioned, which should have been much too embarrassing, and rather presumptuous on his part, since the NEW THEATRE is no organ for lengthy self panegyrics.

Enough for Miss Ocko who has an eye for people on the fence, in two worlds; and where did she ferret all that not particularly interesting personal gossip about Mr. Gilfond? Or, and this perhaps the bone, is it that Henry Gilfond is fed on Nazi gold, or from Mussolini's Roman coffers, or is it Hearst, himself, that is lining his pockets?

Albeit, in the August issue of the NEW THEATRE, Mr. Bill Matons delivers himself of a lecture on vital ideas, fascism, and censorship, addressing his paper, as it were, to the same Henry Gilfond. And this time I am ridiculously misquoted to the effect, "Fascist, jingo, and reactionary elements, he (Mr. Gilfond) asserts, are to be feared only by those who actively combat them," a completely fantastic statement which has never, and could never have appeared in either my speech or my writing, and continues, "Don't bother them, he infers, and they won't bother us," as equally an extravagant statement, and as fantastic, and completely without reason, since I infer nothing of the kind, and certainly should never intend it. Nor am I quite able to decide how a reader might have arrived at such conclusions so utterly foreign to the writer's viewpoint.

"Why any of these dancers (New Dance League concert, April 7) should run into difficulties with any fascist, jingo, or reactionary elements," I wrote, "is completely a mystery to this writer; and if there were any element of anti-war or anti-fascist sentiment . . . it was harder to find than the rusty old needle we're still after in the hay."

Evidently, I am not opposed to anti-war and anti-fascist and anti-reactionary sentiment; and evidently, my argument was that the concert was woefully weak from this political angle.

Further, in the same review, I said, "Politically, then, there was no single purpose, and for the most part there was rather a complete absence of

economic thinking in creation," which was a further attack on the same front.

More, I accused the dancers of sentimentality, and insisted that "the dancers were rather much involved with the not too profound defeatisms," which I am sure have no place in a militant anti-fascist or revolutionary program.

As for the suppression of "vital ideas," it was the thorough lack of such ideas that prompted the statement concerning the difficulties with fascist elements.

Mr. Matons further suggests that Mr. Gilfond advises artists to "pooh-pooh the warnings of the New Dance League." Where, Mr. Matons, did you discover the sentence? And as for the organization of artists to fight "with all its vitality" against reactionary forces, it is exactly because this vitality has been so sentimental, weak, and compromising that I have directed what criticism I have at the New Dance League.

The New Dance League has grown so fat with an infusion of confused, politically, dancers, and dancers who offer not the slightest indication of other than a surface economic comprehension, that, philosophically, its belly is in the way of its feet. Witness the concerts presented April 7, and April 21. House-cleaning is in order.

For myself, I sincerely hope some day to be able to review a workers' dance concert that is as effective and as vital as a workers', as a proletarian, unit should be.

HENRY GILFOND

(We are very glad to open our pages to Mr. Henry Gilfond. He forestalls all response by professing such complete sympathy with the work of the New Dance League that we can merely deplore our own obtuseness in not understanding in the first place. The fact remains, however, that Mr. Gilfond permitted himself, in the pages of the Dance Observer, a series of antagonistic, confused, and destructive statements, which served more perhaps to discredit his critical acumen than the work of our dancers. These statements could not go unchallenged, and exception was taken to them, it seems, not only by a single individual. Mr. Gilfond has yet to prove that he was at any time misquoted in NEW THEATRE. There is no possible reason we could have for flaying the work of one who so staunchly maintains interests identical with our own, save that he has assumed an ambiguous position which, on a paper as removed from our point of view as the Dance Observer, is downright misleading. There is a danger in being redder than the rose; it places one very often square in the camp of the enemy.—THE EDITORS.)

TO NEW THEATRE:

The recent experience of dancers in Astoria, Long Island, while working on the film *Sweet Surrender* proves what sweet surrender the dancers open themselves to as long as they remain organized.

Engaged for a modern dance number *Impassionata*, this group of dancers numbering eighty allowed itself to be buffaloes into signing a blank contract that made no specifications whatsoever as to hours and pay. They had been assured ver-

bally by Sarah Mildred Strauss, Dance impresario and Michael Meyerberg, her manager, that the pay would be \$5.00 for an 8 hour day. On the set they discovered they would have to work overtime. (On one day, the overtime actually amounted to another full 8 hour session.)

In reply to the company's demands, Miss Strauss, her secretary and Mr. Meyerberg displayed the typical evasiveness of an unscrupulous outfit. It was only by a hastily organized strike and walk-out, just as the cameras were ready to grind out a scene that the dancers could wring a promise of partial payment for overtime. That the company's demands were not more comprehensive is to be attributed to their lack of experience—a fact they will realize. No better object lesson for the necessity of a strong Dancers Union could be desired.

A Member of the Company.

# -15-

## Labor Day BOOK Specials

1. Coming Struggle for Power — Strachey (\$3) now \$1.05
2. What So Proudly We Hailed — Gauvreau (\$3.50) now \$1.95
3. Stevedore—Peters and Sklar (\$1.50) now \$ .50
4. Communism in the United States—Earl Browder net \$2.00
5. Redder Than the Rose—Forsythe (\$2) now \$1.60
6. Where the Ghetto Ends—Dennen (\$2.50) now \$ .95
7. The Menace of Fascism—Strachey (\$2.25) now \$1.00
8. Fascism and Social Revolution—Dutt (\$1.75) now \$1.25
9. The Soviets in World Affairs—Fisher (2 vols. \$10) now \$3
10. Voices of October—Kunitz, Lozowick, Freeman (\$4) now \$1.25
11. History of Feudalism—O. Trachtenberg net \$1.00
12. History of Pre-Class Society—Nikolsky net \$.75
13. And Quiet Flows the Don—Sholokhov (\$3) now \$1.95
12. Fatherland—Karl Billinger net \$1.25
13. Armed Intervention in Russia — Coates (\$3.50) now \$2.50
14. Iron Heel—London (\$1.75) now \$.50
15. Ideal Marriage—Van De Velde (\$7.50) now \$6.00

and hundreds of other specials at the

## WORKERS BOOK SHOPS

and Circulating Libraries

50 EAST 13th STREET, NEW YORK

369 Sutter Ave., 25 Chauncey St.  
4531 16th Ave., Brooklyn, and  
699 Prospect Ave., Bronx

Write for free catalogues; the Guide to Readings in Communism 3c, by mail 5c., discounts on quantities. Join our Circulating Library 15c a week or 3c a day on any book.

## What a Life!

Open Air Theatre  
Buffoon Troupe  
Dance Recitals  
YOU TAKE PART!  
\$16 a week, \$2.75 a day  
ALgonquin 4-4611

## CAMP UNITY

Room 201, 50 E. 13th Street, N. Y. C.  
Wingdale, New York



All the plays of

# JOHN M. SYNGE

together with all of his poems, essays and translations,

are now available, complete, in a single handsome compact volume of 625 pp. published by

**RANDOM HOUSE**  
\$3.50



Also published by Random House:

## Three Plays by CLIFFORD ODETS

*Awake and Sing! Waiting for Lefty. Till the Day I Die.* \$2.50

## RAIN FROM HEAVEN

By *S. N. Behrman*

"Its brilliant author's most brilliant play."—ROBERT GARLAND, *N. Y. World-Telegram*.

\$2.00

**RANDOM HOUSE**

20 E. 57 St., N. Y. C.

# The New Film Alliance

The growth of the new theatre movement to a point where it has become of paramount importance to the life of the American stage is well recognized by critics and theatre people, both professional and amateur. This success is due admittedly to the fact that plays produced or sponsored by this movement have dealt effectively and entertainingly with the realities of everyday life.

For some time it has been felt that there is equal if not greater need for a film organization that will serve the same ends as the new theatre movement. For this reason a group of organizations, including the Film and Photo League and Nykino, and individuals familiar with the motion picture and the problems inherent in its production and distribution, have formed the New Film Alliance, Inc.

There can be no doubting the vital necessity of such an organization in a field that involves a weekly audience conservatively estimated at seventy-five millions. The motion picture ranks with the school system and the newspaper as one of the greatest social determinants in contemporary life. To-day, however, the motion picture industry is virtually a monopoly under the domination of finance capital and accordingly it resists the infiltration of any material that honestly presents the social ferment.

It is well recognized that the social mood of our population offers a challenge to the motion picture medium. Stern judgment and realistic intelligence is obviously required if the motion picture is to utilize its resources and fulfill its function for the greatest social benefit. The commercial film has failed to do this. Either consciously or unconsciously it has devoted its efforts to pandering to vulgar tastes and exploiting themes divorced from the real life of the American people, or it has been dishonest and reactionary in its treatment of important problems. The New Film Alliance hopes to remedy this tragic situation.

The purpose of the New Film Alliance is:

1. To bring a new orientation into the motion picture and to employ its artistic potentialities to the end that contemporary problems may be dealt with honestly and an intelligent guidance offered to a film-going public which more and more is demanding adult entertainment rather than continued reiteration of outmoded, hackneyed and adolescent themes.

Such a new orientation is necessary because commercial producers, who recognize no responsibility other than that of securing financial returns, have frittered away the possibilities of their medium on the trivial, and have taken an obviously superficial approach to basic problems of everyday life.

2. To encourage new talent and to offer

enlarged opportunities for independent production and creative effort, both inside and outside of the film industry.

Such a course is required because the motion picture industry, although it has seized every opportunity for exploitation and profit-making, has stifled real artistic endeavor and has avoided its responsibility for setting up training schools, apprenticeships, etc.

3. To encourage the use of motion pictures as a medium in the effort being made today to expose and combat the evils of war, fascism and censorship.

To accomplish these ends the following steps are planned:

*Production:* The New Film Alliance proposes to set up a nationwide organization of independent, experimental and amateur film producers; bring them into productive contact with one another; provide technical and artistic criticism of scenarios and completed films by experts; sponsor, distribute and give guidance to these productions; aid in the formation of new groups and provide them with facilities for securing scenarios, talent and training.

*Distribution:* The New Film Alliance aims to establish a nationwide non-profit-making organization of audience groups reaching even to small towns and farms and provide them with 16 mm. and 35 mm. prints of new films made by affiliated producers and old films of merit which have been shelved by commercial distributors. The revenue from distribution of films produced by affiliated groups will be returned to them for utilization in further production.

*Exhibition:* The New Film Alliance periodically will present closed membership showings of film classics, censored films and new films of artistic merit not commercially released.

*Projects:* 1. The New Film Alliance intends to institute lecture series in the history and social aspects of the motion picture as well as film theory and technique; and work towards establishment of a competent film school for the training of film makers in the various aspects of production.

*Projects:* 2. The New Film Alliance plans in the near future to publish a magazine embodying its program and objectives. Until that time it will avail itself of space in **NEW THEATRE**.

All production groups, either independent, experimental or amateur; all film societies, cinema appreciation or exhibition groups and all individuals subscribing to the main purposes of the New Film Alliance, are invited to correspond for further information with Merritt Crawford, Executive Sec'y., New Film Alliance, 110 West 40th St., New York City.

## THE QUEST OF EUGENE O'NEILL

(Continued from page 17)

by the use of the mask in the Great God Brown. There are flashes of beauty and deep insight in this play, but during nine unwieldy acts, lengthened by the asides, which actually reveal nothing which could not have been dramatized in the action and conscious dialogue, the plot stagnates. O'Neill presents us with a beautiful neurotic heroine, Nina Leeds, whose passionate quest for fulfillment in love is the main theme of the drama. But this quest ends in a smug hanging on to comfort and contentment. Nina's life becomes shallow, worthless, meaningless; her only contribution to life is her illegitimate son, Gordon, palmed off on her husband by her lover and herself, in order to keep the husband "happy." He must be kept "happy" because he is so "good" and, above all, because he is "successful."

Nina's life is uncreative in every respect. Not one of the men with whom her life becomes entwined receives anything from her. Sam, her husband makes money in spite of her. Darrell, the lover, neglects his work as a scientist and physician, to hang on to her apron strings. Marsden, the old-maidish platonic lover, accepts her in place of his mother. Not one of these men is able to make a satisfactory and definite decision in any crisis. Whenever any character in the play acts, the action is usually one that would never be dictated by common sense or realistic aims. Nina's whole life is a series of decisions which complicate existence without helping anyone. They are supposed to be motivated by noble aims, but only because they deprive her of what she really wants. After her husband's death, when she might marry her lover, she prefers to drift into marriage with Marsden. This will enable her to spend the rest of her life doing nothing in a New England garden, while waiting for death to liberate her from a death-of-the-spirit as complete as Marco Polo's, who never had a soul to worry over.

The emptiness and superficial character of the society portrayed in *Strange Interlude* becomes most clear in the boat race scene of the last act. Yet O'Neill does not look at his characters with a critical eye or analyze their threadbare ideals. If, like Ibsen in *Hedda Gabler*, he had laid bare the tragedy of a wilful and beautiful woman whose only choice was in a barren marriage, the material might have been interesting. But in the twenties in the United States, there were many choices for a woman like Nina Leeds; we must assume that she preferred a loveless, secure marriage based on deception to facing the full implication of her passion for Darrell. We are therefore unmoved when, all the characters are assembled for a grand climax to see Nina's son Gordon win a collegiate boat race! There is no action at all, for the characters have wavered so long, that life offers them nothing but disillusionment as experienced by Darrell or the idiotic enthusiasm for

puerile school boy matters that satisfies Sam.

Other playwrights have dealt with such aimless and actionless people and made drama out of their inertia and neurotic fears, but O'Neill does not step back far enough to see these people against their social background. Never are they as vigorous as the flesh and blood creatures of *The Cherry Orchard*. Never do they think beyond themselves of the problems of their fellow-men. The idealistic *Three Sisters* suffered more genuine pangs of soul in their provincial exile than do O'Neill's moderns on the decks of yachts, on top of pent houses in the metropolis or wandering on the clipped lawns of Long Island estates. Of what use to visit the fantastic world of the unconscious when the secrets brought back are no more valuable than this dried sea-weed of desire and these broken shells of lost hope? O'Neill has found no buried treasure in this Saragossa sea of the soul. This is cheap dross like the treasure sought for so many years by the hero of *Gold*, who knew all the time that what he was seeking was brass.

### VI.

Perhaps O'Neill has surmised that for all his inimitable diving, he has brought up only brass; from now on, at least, he forsakes the invisible world of the unconscious and attempts to enter the real world of modern times, which has been made and moulded by the industrial revolution.

O'Neill's quest led him to turn to the machine age. This may have been a reaction from the immediate post-war period, when the American intelligentsia, echoing a kindred mood in Europe, revolted against the machine. The too sensitive souls of Babbitt's sons fled to exotic countries and became expatriate. The stay-at-homes built their Bohemian shelters against the standardized society made by the machine. But as prosperity increased and the petty bourgeois intelligentsia profited by it, they became more reconciled to the machine, which brought blessings to them as well as to the big bourgeoisie. Poets like Hart Crane were pioneers in building bridges from the world of traditional poetry, whose images stem from an agrarian world, to the new world of industry as yet uncharted in the poet's geography. Sensitive to these reactions, O'Neill essayed to write a play showing the machine as a moloch. He dramatized the conflict in a series of abstractions. In *Dynamo*, the machine is presented as a monstrous god, jealous, relentless demanding of his followers in return for services rendered absolute faith and the sacrifice of all instinctive desires including love. While employing modern symbols like hydro-generators O'Neill actually speaks in the accents of the pre-industrial myth. If he had visualized the machine as life-destroying in the hands of exploiters, as useful in the hands of producers and workers in society, the myth

might have had modern connotations. But the story of Reuben Light, his conversion to atheism, his murder of his sweetheart, his self-immolation on the machine solved no problems for anyone. The story had no application; it was merely a study in psychopathology. Hence *Dynamo* remains a meaningless fable, unless one is supposed to deduce that chastity and atheism are fundamentally necessary to the control of the machine. *Dynamo* has no more real roots in the modern world of reality than has the pseudo-Biblical-classical drama *Lazarus Laughs*.

### Away from Reality

The plays now show an increasing inability to face reality altogether. They indicate a desperate need of an escape; and carry their quest into another world of shadows, a world beloved by the romantics—the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome. This turning to the dream of the golden age enshrined in poetical tradition indicates an end to rebellion, a return to more conventional paths.

Although O'Neill has forsaken the Hades of the unconscious depicted in *Strange Interlude*, he has not left behind Freud's prescriptions. He applies them now to interpreting the classical Hades, where dwell the pursuing furies of man's guilt. He chooses the Electra myth made modern by Freud's famous complex to write a classic trilogy in the manner of Attic tragedy.

*Mourning Becomes Electra* sets forth the tragedy of a decaying New England family in the period following the Civil War. The trilogy divided into three full length plays—*The Home Coming*, *The Hunted*, *The Haunted*—closely follows the story of the doomed house of Atreus.

The classical legend recounts how Agamemnon, leader of the Greeks, returned from Troy and was murdered by his wife, Clytemnestra and her paramour, Aegisthus. The killing was an act of revenge for Agamemnon had sacrificed Iphigenia, Clytemnestra's youngest daughter to assure Greek victory over Troy. In return Electra and Orestes plot and carry out the murder of their mother and her paramour to avenge the murder of their father.

Attic tragedy based on this legendary history contains implications lost to modern audiences. For the Athenian spectator, the plays of Euripides and Sophocles had a meaning far beyond any single family tragedy of blood; they were ritual dramas whose choruses recounted the social history of the Greek race and celebrated a tremendous legendary event—the transition of a Greek society from the matriarchal forms of the Orient to a newer society based on man's domination through the city state. Greek drama enclosed a whole world with a religion and ethic of its own, dominated by the idea of inevitable

fate. In Attic tragedy, murder was not conditioned by mere personal pique or revenge, but by far wider social issues. Clytemnestra killed because she did not accept the mores of Thebes, and because she could not forgive her daughter's sacrifice for a cause she did not believe in. She personified an older form of society in which woman was not yet relegated to the family hearth alone. But her children, Orestes and Electra, belonged to the new order and they had been deprived of social position by the murder of their father, the king. Clytemnestra's crime was not the killing of her husband but the destruction of the head of the state. Electra's act was dictated by the need to obtain her portion of power and her brothers in the city state. Here passion is inseparable from politics.

## Athens and Broadway

O'Neill has built his version of this tragedy on purely personal motives without any profound social significance. Despite its mastery of a brooding, decadent mood, his trilogy remains merely the chronicle of the crimes of a New England family. It could, perhaps be interpreted as a study of the decay of the puritan mores in contact with pagan ideas; but it is so individual a tragedy that it has no general application to American life. Its inept chorus of New England small town folk is merely an extraneous decoration in the archaistic fashion; it adds nothing to a tragedy which in itself is not inevitable. In the reconstruction period, it was not necessary for Christine (Clytemnestra) to murder her husband, the returning general, in order to commit adultery, nor does Lavinia (Electra) need to murder her mother's lover and drive her mother to suicide, in order to find her place in the sun. She could easily have gone away and married or, if she desired her mother's lover, there were other means of revenge. More normal alternatives of action were open to all the characters than the one they chose of murder and blood or which their author chose for them, in mechanical imitation of the Attic pattern. O'Neill's *tour de force* makes the characters too abnormal and different to awaken either pity or terror in a modern audience. Their demise occasions not regret but belief. The real purpose of tragedy is thus forfeited. *Mourning Becomes Electra* remains an archaistic nightmare of the golden age.

It is conceivable that a dramatist might achieve an effective tragedy of fate with a modern setting but O'Neill's trilogy does not achieve it.

The glory that was Greece becomes one more blind alley on the road to happy innocence. More elaborately constructed and technically more concentrated than his early plays, the implications of the trilogy are less vital and less emotionally exciting.

## VII.

From pseudo-Attic tragedy O'Neill reacted by writing a successful Broadway comedy. This was scarcely his intention, but *Ah, Wilderness* is a play uncorroded by the bitter acid of pessimism. In it, O'Neill has succeeded, for the first time in creating characters in three dimensions with the juice and savor of actual people. It is a boyhood comedy of happy youth placed in America in the halycon days of 1905—long before the world war and the economic crisis — in another golden age now vanished forever.

But what does O'Neill choose to reveal as the "real life"? He depicts a Babbitt family in a small town; with approving good humour, untinged by criticism, he delineates the smug, conventional, everyday life of these people with round of church socials, Fourth of July picnics, movies, small gossip, drink and repressed sex — a typical Grant Wood painting of American "national" life.

In this Main Street, from which at the beginning of the twenties, all the Carol Kennicotts revolted, from which O'Neill's own rebellious dreamers fled to sea, the playwright settles down with a good natured, middle aged shrug of acceptance. Like Emperor Jones, he has gone around in a circle and has come out of the jungle at the same place he started from—the Main Street of Zenith with its Babbitts. Only a decade before, he had slammed the back door of respectable middle class society, and like Ibsen's Nora had gone forth to see the world. Now he has returned, a contrite prodigal in the well pressed clothes of success to be admitted with honor into the front parlor, there to repent at leisure his associations with outcasts, sailors, workers, prostitutes, Negroes, free women, artists.

*The dreamer O'Neill has capitulated to the Babbitt O'Neill thereby reversing the story of the Great God Brown.* Back in the fold of middle class society, O'Neill embraces the most obvious, bigoted conventions of his class, and exhibits an intolerance, which a cultured, bourgeois advocate of the status quo who has never questioned the fundamental postulates of capitalist society would blush to admit.

It now becomes quite clear that O'Neill's original revolt from middle class standards never involved a real break with bourgeois society. Rather it was an adolescent upheaval, a flight to Bohemia common among the youth of the middle class, usually ending in a return to the conventional grooves of society. Every one of O'Neill's plays, read in the light of his total developments, exhibit signs of a conflict never resolved. This was no other than the conflict of the petty bourgeois intelligentsia prior to the present economic crisis, when it had not yet found a political role, when it hated the big bourgeoisie and yet hated to be pushed down into the ranks of the proletariat. O'Neill was the spokesman for this tragic dilemma of the petty bourgeois intelligentsia which in the end will be compelled to choose between Fascism and Communism. It is for this reason that his characters exhibit the split will, which destroys the unity of drama. The duality of his characters is forced on them by their position in society.

With *Ah, Wilderness*, O'Neill solved the conflict for himself by returning to the status quo. He thus regained the audience, which he once forsook. But what effect has his capitulation had on his art? Exhausted in will by a sterile quest, he has become incapable of any action significant enough to create drama.

The plot of *Ah, Wilderness* is so petty that it scarcely sustains the burden of the action. For over two hours we witness the spectacle of an old maid and her bachelor friend, engaged for years to marry, and again deciding not to marry; we witness the sorrows of an adolescent boy, who because of his "radical" ideas, loses his childhood sweetheart and rebels against home restrictions, gets drunk, almost sleeps with a tart, and returns to the narrow path of duty and prospective conventional life and marriage.

There is no struggle, no action, no plot and no ending. There is however homely humour and well-worn successful theatrical devices. Life has become so static that O'Neill's drama dies of sheer inertia. There is not even the suggestion that beneath the shallows of this everyday life, a more significant drama exists

Preliminary Announcement by  
**FILM AND PHOTO LEAGUE**

Registration any day 9 to 5,  
Wednesday evening 7 to 9

### PHOTO SCHOOL

Two Elementary Courses  
One Advanced Course  
(if number of registrations warrant it)  
Each course contains 12 classes  
FEE: \$5.00

For more information write, phone or call at  
the Film & Photo League, 31 East 21st  
Street—GRamercy 5-5982

COMING SOON!  
NEW THEATRE PAMPHLETS—No. 1

## The Awakening OF THE American Theatre

By BEN BLAKE

68 pages Illustrated

The fascinating story of the New Theatre movement, told in full for the first time, by one of its founders.

Authoritative Indispensable  
Order now from:

NEW THEATRE LEAGUE  
P. O. Box 67, Sta. O.  
New York, N. Y.

which might be called forth in a crisis, as there is in the drama of Chekov and Schnitzler. If "wilderness were paradise enow" it is a dull vacuous paradise bought at the price of imagination, thought, and action—a hades worse than the medieval conception of hell. Now the tables have been turned: the Great God Brown has given *his* soul to Dion Anthony. Truly did Proust observe that in the second half of his life, a man is often the opposite of what he was in the first.

Huysmans, on completing that bible of decadence, *A Rebours*, said: "After such a work, one of two things were open to me—either the muzzle of a pistol or the foot of the cross." This is the dilemma that now confronted O'Neill. Over-sensitive, burdened with nostalgia, his color-loving, lyric soul could never submerge itself completely in the Babbitt ranks. He might put on the mask of Babbitt temporarily, but even the Babbitts would not be fooled. They would never accept him as one of themselves. O'Neill's quest has led him ever along a path of retrogression; now he has no other alternative but the church into which he was born. By returning to it, he returns to his mother and to that perfect love which could not be found elsewhere in the world. Hence it was inevitable that *Ah, Wilderness* should be followed by *Days Without End*, a miracle play of escape from the terrific dilemma of the middle class intellectual in American society today.

## Farewell to Life

O'Neill is above all a sincere artist at the height of his maturity; he has felt the full impact of this dilemma, but he has evaded the responsibility thrust upon him in his role of spokesman and artist of the petty bourgeois intelligentsia.

Like so many others, including the distinguished author of *The Waste Land*, O'Neill has sought shelter in the violet shadows of Catholicism. *Days Without End* can scarcely be termed a play. Rather it is a public confession, a final melodramatic gesture of hopeless terror. The poet discarding the mask of the Emperor Jones, Yank, Marco Polo, Ponce de Leon, the Great God Brown, Lazarus, Eben Cabot, Lavinia, Nina Leeds, and falling like a contrite child before the altar, cries out of a broken heart—"O son of man, I am Thou and Thou art I. Why hast Thou forsaken me?"

So sharp has become the conflict in O'Neill's soul that he has divided the hero of *Days Without End* into two people to be played by two actors. John and Loving are two halves of the same personality split apart—a modern Faust and his Mephisto. They are doomed to struggle against each other in a deadly duel, yet the plot chosen to set forth this internal combat is puerile and dull: it concerns itself with the material of all parlor drama, domestic adultery; the action has

become even more static than in *Ah Wilderness*. A frayed plot depicts how John Loving makes money for his adored wife while trying to satisfy his repressed creative urge by writing a novel of his problems. In this age of crisis, we are invited to the voluptuous soul writhings of a hero in a luxurious duplex apartment over the "enormous" offense of a casual and momentary adultery, from which even pleasure was absent. At the moment, there arrives a long lost relative, a fatherly priest, who takes over all burdens. When John Loving has driven his wife to the verge of dying by indirectly revealing his great crime, he promises to be good and join the church, if she is saved by his prayers.

## Art and Propaganda

There is something obscene in this hero's preoccupation with sex and soul, reminiscent of the Russian intelligentsia in the decadence following the defeat of the 1905 revolution. During that reaction, there occurred the same mystical vaporings and swoonings in the arms of the church, a church which at the moment was helping to organize the gangs of Black Hundreds to terrorize and kill the Jews and the workers. So in 1930 in New York City, we observe John Loving, over after dinner coffee impeccably served, politely give up his last gesture of revolt. In the world-duel between the priest Baird, who stands for the most obvious and reactionary elements in the Church, and Mephisto-Loving, the play reaches its climax—a climax infected with the triteness and inaction of a bad propaganda tract. How odd that these authors who always demand the divorce of propaganda from their sacred art should be the first to commit the offense they decry, and without any subtlety whatsoever!

The split personality of John caught between the shafts of his alter ego, Loving, and his friend, the Priest Baird, delivers himself of this argument:

"Freedom demands initiative, courage, the need to decide what life must mean to oneself. To them (most people) that is terror. They explain away their spiritual cowardice by whining that the time for individualism is past, when it is their courage to possess their own soul which is dead—and stinking. Oo, they don't want to be free. Slavery means security—of a kind, the only kind they have the courage for. It means they need not think. They have only to obey orders from owners, who are, in turn, their slaves."

These are the ideas of Dostoyevsky's *Grand Inquisitor*, diluted and weakened. Here O'Neill pronounces verdict on himself, who has evaded the issue facing every intellectual in America today, whether he be a writer, painter, musician, or professional worker. The

bourgeois intelligentsia, along with the workers, must face all the implications of the present crisis.

Europe's recent political history indicates the fate of the American petty bourgeois intellectual in the future. Until now, the intellectual had a choice: he might take a stand with the working class and their fight for freedom or he might retire into his ivory tower and hoist up the drawbridge in order to contemplate culture remote from the raging class conflicts. As the crisis deepens, the intellectual in order to live is compelled to abandon neutral territory. In the battle of the classes no man's land becomes untenable. To remain in the ivory tower demanding democracy and freedom, when these ideals are being destroyed all about us, is to take sides with decaying capitalism. To attempt to evade the issue is to tread the path of fascist sterility. Despite all pacifist and humanitarian principles, the liberal intellectual, will have to orient himself in the coming struggle for power. Otherwise if he does not perish physically, he will perish in the spirit.

O'Neill cannot evade the issue. Hiding in the church, he lies in the house of reaction. His hero John declares: "We need a new leader, who will teach us that ideal, who by his life will exemplify it and make it a living truth for us. A new savior must be born who will reveal to us how we can be saved from ourselves, so that we be free of the past and inherit the future and not perish by it."

John chooses the church and its security; his Mephisto twin, Loving, dies at the foot of the cross. But this cross is merely a way station for the petty bourgeois intellectual. The church is unable to solve the enormous economic problems of the world today. The choice can only lie between Fascism and Communism. Either society must be changed or it must go backward into chaos and reaction.

The split that is already occurring in the ranks of the petty bourgeois intelligentsia in America is fast losing O'Neill his audience. He was the leading dramatist of the twenties when the American bourgeoisie was the successful Marco Polo, economically prosperous, spiritually dead. Envious of the upper classes, contemptuous of the proletariat, and distrustful of itself, this class sought solace in sex, psycho-analysis, alcohol and art—an art as remote from the reality of its own life as it was from the social reality as a whole. O'Neill was the poet of this class in the twenties. Today the petty bourgeoisie is making its choice between the capitalist mirages of the moment and the camp of the proletariat. There is a great, living, grateful, and thrilling audience awaiting those creative artists who choose to stake all for a new creative world. Out of the struggle for that world must necessarily stem a new and vital art, such as America has not yet dreamed of, but this art will move in a direction opposite to O'Neill's hopeless quest for mystical peace.

# NEW MASSES 15-WEEK EXCURSION \$1

## Read This Itinerary

TO GERMANY. Glimpse the heroism of the underground struggle against Fascism. To FRANCE, into the "Red Belt" round Paris. To ENGLAND, through the eyes and pens of John Strachey and R. Palme Dutt, eminent Marxists. To CHINA, whose Red Army marches daily nearer to final victory. To JAPAN, and into the secrets of the On-to-Soviet movements.

TO THE SOVIET UNION, with Joshua Kunitz, now there, who will write brilliantly and delightfully of the fulness of life in a Socialist society.

TO CUBA, to look into the sweet mess the sugar men of Wall Street have stirred up. TO TERRE HAUTE, to the WEST COAST, to the NEW YORK WATER FRONT. Into the MINES and the STEEL MILLS, and on down to DIXIE, where share-croppers are fighting for a living, and even the right to live.

TO WASHINGTON, all around the run-around and up and down the alphabet of the NEW DEAL'S schemes to sell-out the workers and the middle-class.

TO THE MOVIES, with Robert Forsythe, whose devastating satire also deals with other subjects, and Peter Ellis.

TO THE ART GALLERIES, with Stephen Alexander, to look for the "social viewpoint." There's plenty of what we mean in our own columns, in the work of Burck, Gropper, Limbach, Mackey, Redfield, and other important revolutionary artists.

TO THE BOOK SHELVES, to read about new revolutionary novels, poetry, plays, and short stories. By writers like Isidor Schneider, Granville Hicks, Rolfe Humphries, John Howard Lawson, Rebecca Pitts, Ben Field, Stanley Burnshaw, Josephine Herbst, and a long list of others equally fine.

NEW MASSES economists and writers understand what they're talking about. They aren't afraid to tell the truth. They can even afford to be funny. Where else can you find such a stimulating and enlightening excursion into the why's and wherefore's of the world today? Fifteen weeks of NEW MASSES for \$1—Don't miss it.

Use the coupon

MAKE YOUR RESERVATION TODAY!

Here's  
your  
ticket

NEW MASSES, 31 East 27th Street, New York, N. Y.

I want to go on your fifteen-week excursion into the world today. I'm enclosing \$1. Please send me NEW MASSES for 15 weeks.

Name .....

Address .....

City and State .....

Occupation .....

## Film Check List

*Call of the Wild* (United Artists—Clark Gable, Loretta Young, Jack Oakie)—Will be highly objectionable to admirers of the Jack London story. Typical Hollywood adventure romance. A splendid St. Bernard labors to no avail. The scenarists have proved too much for him.

*China Seas* (M. G. M.—Jean Harlow, Wallace Beery, Clark Gable)—An incredible combine of *Dinner at Eight*, *Grand Hotel* and some torture scenes all tossing about on the China Seas. Anything spent on this film constitutes an act of undeserving charity.

*The Crusades* (Cecil B. DeMille for Paramount)—DeMille the irrepressible! A genius of bad taste with the courage of his convictions. The film is a confusion of props and malaprops. The reassuring thing about DeMille is that you can never go wrong. You know what you're getting and you have only yourself to blame.

*Annapolis Farewell* (Paramount)—A straight plug for the military service. Intended to be an enlistment "leg up" (boost) in the charming phrase of the Miss Cecily Courtneidge, British recruiter extraordinary. Film was made with the full cooperation of the United States Navy. To be boycotted.

*Golden Taiga* (Amkino)—Interesting only as an example (unsuccessful) of the new Soviet adventure film. Poorly produced by a director of documentary films with no previous experience with enacted material.

*Soviet Journey* (Amkino)—Three miscellaneous Intourist films of varying merit. Contains an excellent clip of last year's sport festival in Moscow.

*The Farmer Takes a Wife* (Fox)—Hi-o, the derry-o, the audience takes the rap! A self-conscious and affected backward glance to America in the innocence of its childhood.

*Peasants* (Amkino)—Won first prize together with *Chapayev*, and *The Youth of Maxim* at the Moscow Cinema Festival. Now showing at the Cameo, New York City. A film that must be seen. To be reviewed in next issue.

*Alice Adams* (R. K. O.—Katherine Hepburn, Fred Stone)—Katherine Hepburn at her worst. Fred Stone brings an inappropriate and immobile stage technique to the film. The younger Adams (Frank Albertson) emerges from the general unpleasantness as a person of some savor and reality. Contains a laughably idealized portrait of that distinctive Hollywood prop—the kind, understanding, all-forgiving employer—Mr. Stone's boss.

*Dante's Inferno* (United Artists)—An egregious example of false advertising. Why Dante? Why not Anthony Adverse? Why not anything but a film so tedious, so commonplace?

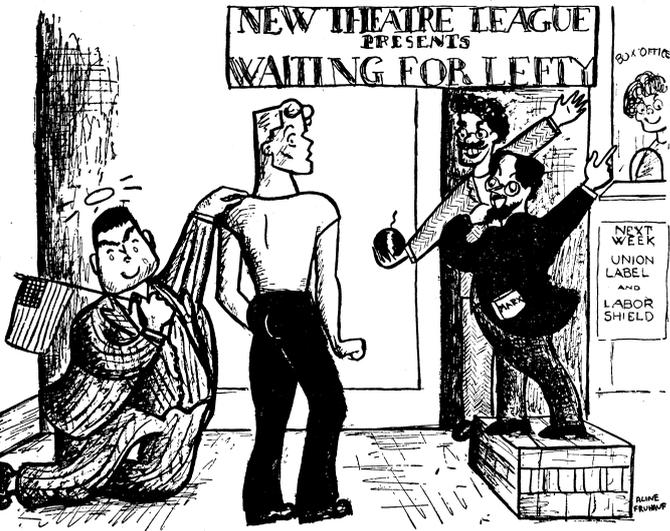
*Accent On Youth* (Paramount—Sylvia Sidney, Herbert Marshall, Philip Reeve)—A straight and unimaginative translation from the stage-play of Samuel Raphaelson. Technically the film commits all the errors of the early talkies.

*Mad Love* (Universal—Peter Lorre)—Psychopathia Sexualis treated in the New York American Sunday Supplement manner. Peter Lorre, dehumanized, is made utterly repellant. Those of us who admired his superb performance in Fritz Lang's *M* left the theatre thoroughly disheartened. Once more Hollywood proves the graveyard of promising and sensitive talents.

*The Irish In Us* (Warner Brothers—James Cagney, Frank McHugh, Pat O'Brien, Allan Jenkins)—This film subjects its audience to a shameless barrage of all the bromides that have ever been palmed off as the true Irish character. Cagney wins the girl from his brother but not until we have been regaled with a succession of knock 'em down, drag 'em out brawls that somehow pass for humor. Allan Jenkins is amusing as the punch-drunk pug who can't hear a bell ring without slugging anything within arms reach.

*Alibi Ike* (Warner Brothers—Joe E. Brown)—The best film of a month of unrelieved mediocrity. Naturally the Ring Lardner original made all the difference in the world. Joe E. Brown is perfect to the last pitchout.

NEW THEATRE LEAGUE  
PRESENTS  
WAITING FOR LEFTY



Aline Fruhauf

## SHIFTING SCENES

(continued from page 25)

fool out of himself in a striking way." . . . *Waiting For Lefty* holds legitimate unionism up to obloquy. . . . Those who know Odets great play realize that *Lefty* calls for militant trade unionism.

Today in three-hundred American cities and towns, workers, students, writers, artists, professionals—all of different creeds, races, and political beliefs—have united under the banner of the New Theatre League to build theatres against war and fascism and censorship. But to the Chronicle these theatres are composed of longhaired bohemians and faddists, "willing tools of communism" who have "embraced the Russian show business!" And the Theatre of Action, the Theatre Collective and the Artef, Ryan's paper would have you know, "have each given a group of neurotic gamblers something to fuss around with and be arty about."

Last but not least, the Chronicle makes this earth-shaking exposure: "NEW THEATRE speaks highly of all things Russian . . . especially of the Stanislavsky Method." Watch out, you actors—this Stanislavsky Method, it's un-American, unpatriotic, subversive!

The New Theatre School, conducted by the New Theatre League, will open its fall term in collaboration with the New Dance League, offering a series of courses devoted to the technique of the dance and theatre. An expansive reorganization is taking place, enabling the school to take care of larger registration curriculum and faculty.

A special feature of the New Theatre School will be a series of courses covering two terms developing specialization in a particular field of dramatic art, such as Acting, Directing, Play Writing, or Stage Technique. After successful and regular participation in the scheduled courses, the student will receive a certificate entitling him to work as a specialist with one of the new theatre groups. Single courses are also conducted for those not desiring such intensive training.

The curriculum is composed of courses in the technique of Acting, Directing, Introduction to the Art of the Theatre, Make Up, Voice Training, Theatre Management, Dance Composition, History of the Dance, Percussion Accompaniment for the Dance, Dance Scenario and Directing, Music for the Dance, etc. and courses designed to meet the needs of group leaders as well as the individual. The courses will be conducted by outstanding specialists in the field of the theatre and dance. All classes will emphasize practical training and special arrangement is being made to provide for visits to stages and rehearsals of professional and little theatres.

The fall term will be from October 7th to January 31st. Registration is held September 23rd to October 4th from 4 to 7 P.M. Information and catalogue may be obtained through the New Theatre League, 114 W. 14th St., CHelsea 2-9523.

On August 1st there was a cloud-burst in Cleveland. Water filled cellars and covered street floors. Traffic was tied up, all business at a stand-still. From a flooded stage and with soaking clothes the People's Theatre went through with its scheduled performance of *Waiting for Lefty* and scenes from 1931 and *Man and the Masses* before an enthusiastic capacity audience. . . . Five performances of *Lefty* have been sold-out to labor unions which have written pledges for future patronage.

The Chicago Repertory Group's (formerly the Chicago Group Theatre) special July 26th performance of *Waiting for Lefty* under the auspices of the Federation of Architects, Engineers, Chemists and Technicians (A. F. of L.) was sold out long before curtain time, with 500 people waiting outside the theatre. After the first performance, the hall was cleared and a second performance given! . . . The Repertory Group is now laying plans to become a full time collective theatre. At the moment, it is rehearsing a new edition of *Capitalist Follies* and planning a production of the dock scene from *Peace on Earth*. . . . The Vanguard Players (formerly the John Henry Players) and the Richard B. Harrison Players are rehearsing *Stevedore* under the direction of Pearl Pachaco and Leigh Whipper, who is now in Chicago with *Three Men on a Horse*. The Richard B. Harrison Players have just completed an excellent production of Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion*. The Vanguard Players are also at work on a new production of Kreymborg's *America*.

Philadelphia's New Theatre Studios are rehearsing *The Great Philanthropist*, *God's In His Heaven* and *Exhibit A* for a showing September 26th before an invited audience of labor leaders, heads of cultural organizations and member-subscribers to New Theatre Studios. On September 28th the plays will be presented at a New Theatre Benefit Night.

Mandolin players, choristers, dramatists — all members of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union—supplied the bulk of the entertainment during the August 3rd weekend at Unity House, Local 10, N. Y. Cutters gave a fine performance of Eugene O'Neill's *Bound East for In Union There is Strength*, by Fania Cohn and Irwin Swardlow. The ILGW dramatic groups are under the direction of Mark Schweid.

*Stevedore*, Paul Peters' and George Sklar's drama of the Negro dock workers in New Orleans, will open at the Repertory Theatre Boston on September 17th. Produced by the Boston New Theatre Players, staged by Charles Flato, with sets by Carlene Murphy Samoiloff, *Stevedore* promises to repeat its New York and London successes.

The Midwest Theatre Conference and Festival will be held in Chicago, October 11th-13th, 1935. Registration blanks, questionnaires, and all information can be obtained from the Midwest Office of the New Theatre League, 20 West Jackson Blvd., Chicago, Ill.

The New Theatre League and NEW THEATRE magazine announce a long needed service for October: a "Theatre Workshop" section, edited by the artistic council of the League. "Theatre Workshop" will publish technical articles and illustrations dealing with production problems of the theatre groups. Since "Theatre Workshop" is being established at the request of the groups it is now up to them to cooperate with the artistic council to make this new department a practical, helpful, and interesting guide.

**BRUGGI** 152-54 West 44th St.,  
New York City

SANDALS ..... 75c

CATERING TO MEMBERS OF THE  
NEW DANCE LEAGUE

On Six or More Pairs.....10% Discount

The Repertory Department of the New Theatre League announces its plans for the publication of the first catalogue of plays of the social theatre. The entire repertory of the New Theatre League, as well as other plays of social interest will be listed and reviewed. Orders for this catalogue, which will be distributed free, should be placed now.

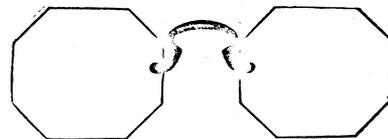
Several new plays have been released this month by the Repertory Department, outstanding among which is its first printed play, *Take My Stand*, by E. England, an exciting textile mill strike play (25c). *Question Before The House*, by Doris Yankauer and Herbert Mayer is the second important release of the Repertory Department. This rapid moving and realistic play of student life, initially produced by the Experimental Theatre of Vassar College, is the first original full length play published by the Repertory Department.

*One of the Bravest*, by E. V. Abeles, prize-winning anti-Nazi play at the National Theatre Week competitions, produced first by the New York New Theatre Players, has also been published this month (30c). *There Will Be No Performance*, by Lajos Egri, and *Waiting for Louise*, by Richard Pack, the first, a pointed comedy about social playwrights and their creations, the second, a satire on *Waiting for Lefty* as the censors would like to see it, are two of the lighter features published recently (10c and 15c respectively).

A short, moving play-skit, *Free Angelo Herndon*, by Irene Paull and James Thompson, suitable for production anywhere, in the open or in halls and theatres, has also been released this month by the Repertory Department. Production of this playlet will prove a valuable contribution to the campaign for the freedom of Herndon, whose case comes up in the Georgia courts in the next few weeks (5c).

Two excellent anti-war monologues, *Steel Gas* and *All Quiet* (15c), as well as a short anti-war play, *Gas* (10c), are also available now.

## Save the Pieces!



### Broken Eye Glasses Repaired

LENSES DUPLICATED  
AND REPLACED AT A  
VERY MODERATE CHARGE

Eyes examined and glasses fitted  
by registered optometrist.

## H. P. ALEXANDER

OPTOMETRIST

Established 1900

HOTEL LATHAM  
4 East 28th Street, New York City

Tel. CA 5-8300—Open Evenings  
Until 9



# CENTURY LEKOLITES

Precision-control Spot and Floodlighting Instruments

Economically Priced

Complete catalog on stage lighting on written request

**CENTURY LIGHTING EQUIPMENT, INC.**

Size Ranges: 500 to 5000 watts

419 West 55th Street

New York City

## LABOR THEATRE

The LABOR THEATRE of Brooklyn is organized to present to the workers of Brooklyn and New York plays that are vitally related to their lives. Being a workers' theatre, it must rely on the support and cooperation of workers. For information concerning benefits, etc., write to the LABOR THEATRE, 159 Division Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

\* \* \*

BMT Subway to Atlantic Ave.—Pacific Ave. All IRT Subway to Nevins St.

\* \* \*

Box office open Sept. 2 for reservations.

\* \* \*

Eves. at 8:45. Mat. Sat. at 2:45.

PRESENTS  
**TWO NEW PLAYS**

**TAKE MY STAND**

By E. ENGLAND

• • •  
**UNTIL WE TURN**

By LOUIS VITTES

• • •  
For Three Weeks only, beginning  
September 9th, 1935

At The  
**BROOKLYN LITTLE THEATRE**  
126 St. Felix Place, Brooklyn, N. Y.  
(Next to the Brooklyn Academy of Music)

Prices: 35c, 55c, 83c and \$1.10

Mat: 35c, 55c and 83c

~~~~~  
**"THE BIGGEST PLAY OF THE YEAR" ★★★★★**

*Burns Mantle, News*

HERMAN SHUMLIN presents

**The Children's Hour**

By LILLIAN HELLMAN

"I imagine this is a play that cried aloud in the hours of the night, pleading to be written. Well, it has been written, and Mr. Herman Shumlin has endowed it with a gifted cast, a fine production and his own fluent and affectionate direction."

—ROBERT GARLAND,  
WORLD TELEGRAM

"One of the most straightforward driving dramas of the season."

—BROOKS ATKINSON, THE TIMES

"The season's dramatic high-water mark. A fine, brave play."  
—Robert Benchley, *New Yorker*

**MAXINE ELLIOTT'S THEATRE** 39th St. E. of B'way  
Eves. 8:40—50c to \$3  
MATINEE WEDNESDAY and SATURDAY 2:40—50c to \$2

## TAMARA DAYKARHANOVA'S SCHOOL FOR THE STAGE

THE MOSCOW ART THEATRE method of acting, adapted to the needs of the American stage, available to young men and women seeking thorough training for the theatre.

TECHNIQUE OF ACTING, stage make-up, voice, body development, diction, dialects. Rehearsal Group for actors. Private and class lessons. Coaching for parts.

SPECIAL EVENING SESSION

FALL TERM BEGINS OCTOBER 4, 1935.

For further information  
Frances Deitz, Managing Director,  
29 West 56th Street, New York, N. Y.  
Telephone: COLUMBUS 5-5834

### SPONSORS

Richard Boleslavsky  
Michael Chekhov  
George Cukor  
Hallie Flanagan  
Rosamond Gilder  
Mr. and Mrs. Norman Hapgood  
Arthur Hopkins  
Edith J. R. Isaacs  
Auriol Lee  
Eugenie Leontovich  
Kenneth Macgowan  
Alla Nazimova  
Carlotta Monterey O'Neill  
Rosamond Pinchot  
Paul Reimers  
Cornelia Otis Skinner

# All of Clifford Odets's Plays plus New Theatre for 1 year for only \$2.50!

“Awake and Sing!”, “Waiting for Lefty” and “Till the Day I Die”, all in one big volume!

Here is a bargain of bargains—the three outstanding plays of the year, complete with production notes, *plus* a full year's subscription to New Theatre, *all for only* \$2.50.

This new beautifully printed and handsomely bound Random House edition of Odets's *Three Plays* sells regularly for \$2.50. A subscription to New Theatre costs \$1.50. *This combination offer saves you* \$1.50.

Only a few copies of Odets's *Three Plays* are left at this special price. To be sure of getting your copy, we suggest that you mail the coupon below *immediately*.

**A \$4 VALUE FOR ONLY \$2.50**

**Only A Few Copies – ACT NOW!  
MAIL THIS COUPON TODAY**

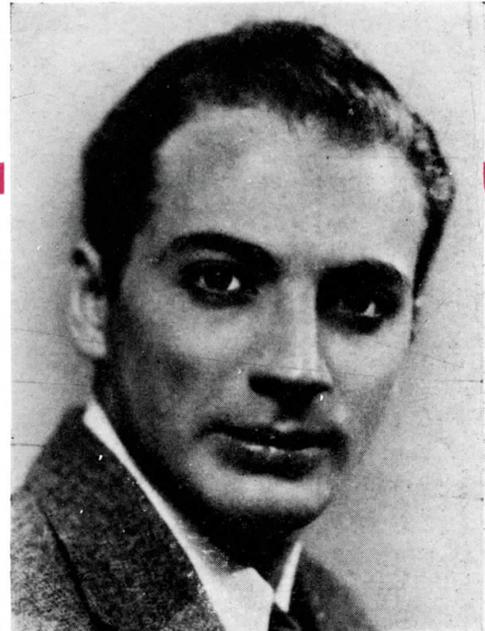
NEW THEATRE, c/o Box 67, Station O  
New York City (Phone, WAtkins 9-5473)

I enclose \$2.50. Please send me an autographed copy of Clifford Odets's  
*Three Plays* and NEW THEATRE for one year.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY ..... STATE .....



CLIFFORD ODETS

*Every copy of this  
handsome volume  
autographed by  
CLIFFORD ODETS*

Clifford Odets will autograph every copy of his *Three Plays* sold through this combination subscription order.

Odets has been acclaimed by the New York dramatic critics as the year's outstanding dramatic "find." Richard Watts, Jr., of the *Herald Tribune* says, "Mr. Odets's talent for dramatic writing is the most exciting to appear in the American theatre since the flaming emergence of Eugene O'Neill."

John Mason Brown of the *Post* in reviewing *Waiting For Lefty* and *Till The Day I Die* wrote, "You cannot fail to realize that Mr. Odets is holding—nay, commanding—your attention, and that as an emotionalist he has a sweeping, vigorous power which is as welcome as it is thundersome when encountered in our theatre . . . Mr. Odets seems to have employed a machine gun rather than a pen."

Every person interested in the new theatre and every theatre group should have a copy of these three plays. Take advantage of this opportunity to get the plays and a full year's subscription to America's most vital magazine of the theatre arts for only \$2.50.