

# NEW THEATRE



SCENE FROM ALBERT BEIN'S "LET FREEDOM RING" MARGARET BOURKE-WHITE  
"PRIVATE HICKS" THE PRIZE PLAY BY ALBERT MALTZ • "CHARLIE CHAPLIN IN  
MODERN TIMES" • "BROADWAY TRIES AGAIN" BY JOHN W. GASSNER  
"LIGHTHORSE" VICTOR MCLAGLEN: PROFESSIONAL PATRIOT" • "MID-  
SUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM" BY CHARMION VON WIEGANT

NOVEMBER, 1935 15c

**LAUGHS! LAUGHS! LAUGHS! LAUGHS!**

"Its fun is large and obstreperous"—*Percy Hammond, Herald Tribune*

"Comical enough to provide a rough-and-ready evening"—*Robert Garland, World-Telegram*

"Lusty bit of foolery . . . A good and biting show"—*Richard Lockridge, New York Sun*

"To judge from the laughter in the house it has considerable Soviet solidarity"—*Brooks Atkinson, New York Times*

"A dance on eggs, conducted with boisterous abandon"—*The Nation*



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When Patronizing Our Advertisers Mention NEW THEATRE

# NEW THEATRE

NOVEMBER, 1935

Those who see in fascism and war the chief enemies of civilization have had their greatest fears realized by Mussolini's attack on Ethiopia. Daily we read of the use of all the horrible implements of modern warfare to destroy, torture, maim and kill. Although this terrible war is many thousands of miles away, it is of vital concern to those of us who are against war at any price.

President Roosevelt has declared for neutrality. But we must remember that Wilson was re-elected because "he kept us out of war." Remembering also that Walter Hines Page, ambassador to Great Britain, sent a cablegram to the White House in 1917 stating that the United States *must* enter the war to save the House of Morgan from bankruptcy, it is appalling to find that American capitalists have \$400,000,000 outstanding in loans to Italy. How can anyone feel secure and remote from the conflict of forces in other parts of the world as long as these forces have international entanglements? High finance must be "protected." For war is not an act of God or some Greek "Fate"; it is created by the moneyed men who control governments, who spread propaganda for war because their interests are in war.

The motion picture industry is owned and controlled by the same interests who buy and sell human time, labor and lives with no thought or care for either the sufferings or the lives of others, with interest only in profits. The movies, under their guidance, are preparing the public's mind for war, openly, shamelessly drumming up misguided 'patriotism' and war hysteria in the newsreels and in films like *Red Salute*, *Here Comes the Band*, *Annapolis Farewell*, etc., this rank propaganda justifying imperialist war.

In the theatre, there have been feeble attempts at combating war hysteria. The New York theatre season has opened with two plays intended as attacks against the forces that make for war.

*Paths of Glory* by Sidney Howard, was meant, according to the author, to "annoy Mr. Hearst and his sisters on the D.A.R." We think Sidney How-

ard meant more than that — but how inadequately he has done the job!

The reviewers of the daily papers panned Howard's realistic picture of the horrors of war, but they bent over backwards to encourage the pacifist sentiments of Reverend John Haynes Holmes play, *If This Be Treason*, because they too, are for peace. They praised the play, minimizing its theatrical weaknesses and applauding its anti-war sentiments. Outbreaks of applause during performances of both plays illustrate the deep anti-war sentiments of audiences today.

NEW THEATRE, which speaks for a theatre movement dedicated to the fight against war, welcomes the sincerity and courage of the author and finds it significant that a minister should turn to the theatre to make his message heard. We who are for peace and against war must stand united. But, in this crucial period, with powerful interests working for war, we must be very clear and mutually critical of the way in which we speak from our respective platforms.

*If This Be Treason* is permeated with the *weltanschauung* of a large group of liberal middle-class people who have declared themselves for peace. The audience is led to believe that a president can prevent war. No pacifist president, elected by plutocratic parties, even were he willing to submerge his personal and class interests, would be allowed to act as a free agent. All the publicity, calumny and force at the disposal of American capitalists would be utilized against him *before he could act*.

It is plain that this sort of pacifist pipe-dream is worse than a polite fantasy. It obscures the real causes of wars. It argues that international disputes can be adjusted in the same way as individual differences—by "talking things over," by arbitration or the authority of the law. Does not the war in Ethiopia, with scarcely a pretext for dispute, reveal that this lifeline of hope is short-ended?

A more serious error lies in the symbolical meaning of the mythical president. It is implied that Congress is the real enemy of the people, that lobbying congressmen are the real war-

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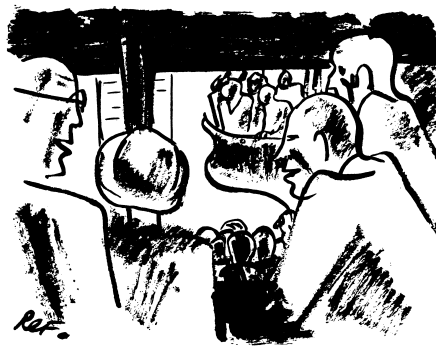
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makers, that Congress should be suppressed to enable the President to act in the people's interest. Let us not be fooled; the day that Congress surrenders its power to a dictator, fascism will grip America.

With the finest intentions, the authors of *If This Be Treason* and *Paths of Glory* have rounded a circle. Resistance to injustice, to war, must come through the president, through the officers, through members of the upper class — the very ones who promulgate wars! This is an evasion. To fight war we must fight fascism which breeds war. We must fight encroachments upon the rights of organized labor, enemy of fascism. We must fight the least infraction of civil liberties, of the rights of labor to organize. We must fight against censorship, for broader democratic rights, rights which will permit the mass of the people to make their struggle against war effective. Our battle is against Hearst and other war-mongers in the films, the theatre, and throughout the nation, against these provocators of war, these American forerunners of Hitler and Mussolini.

Labor in America realizes the need and is eager to support a theatre that will express its social aspirations and channelize the sentiments of the American people against exploitation and reaction, for the rights of labor to organize and fight for decent working and living conditions. NEW THEATRE readers, familiar with the accomplishments of the new theatres in presenting plays like *Peace On Earth*, *Stevedore*, *Black Pit* and *Waiting for Lefty* before trade-union audiences, have reason to welcome a recent act of Mr. Francis J. Gorman, first vice-president of the United Textile Workers of America. Mr. Gorman, after reading Albert Bein's stirring play *Let Freedom Ring*, threw the support of the U. T. W. behind the play. The support of Francis J. Gorman and other A. F. of L. leaders is not accidental. The American federation of Labor, at its National Convention in Atlantic City, N. J., organized Labor Stage, Inc., which will present plays dealing with labor's social, economic and cultural life.

The announcement of the Federation's sponsorship of a national labor theatre such as Labor Stage Inc., indicates that the A. F. of L. has been aware of the tremendous role the theatre can play in advancing the program and ideals of labor. The accomplishments of the new theatres of social protest has served to drive this knowledge home to the A. F. of L. leadership. The step they have taken is memorable and unprecedented in the history of American labor. Another step is necessary, however, for the growth of great national labor theatre movement. All of labor's forces must organize, regardless of political affiliations, in united support of theatre groups that voice labor's protests, demands and aspirations. NEW THEATRE gladly extends its support, and the New Theatre League its services in repertory and audience organization to Labor Stage Inc. United we stand—divided . . .



New Theatre Night at the Civic

New Theatre Nights have proved a great stimulus to the social drama in New York City. *Waiting for Lefty*, *America*, *America*, *Dimitrov* and other outstanding plays of social protest were first given on New Theatre Nights at the Civic Repertory Theatre. NEW THEATRE has acted not only as reporter and critic but also as organizer and producer in these first showings of plays by Clifford Odets, Alfred Kreymborg, Elia Kazan, Art Smith and others. In addition to the pleasure they have given the crowds that turn out for every New Theatre Night, these benefit programs have provided valuable financial assistance to the magazine and the New Theatre League.

The overflow crowd that gathered at the Civic Repertory Theatre on October 12th to see a New Theatre Night of anti-Fascist songs, skits and dances, found a program that suffered from hasty preparation and lack of time for rehearsals. But with the exception of the dance numbers, which were in a rehearsal rather than a performance state, the program was given an enthusiastic reception.

The new theatres welcome the talents of Harold J. Rome and Arthur Arent who contributed five musical numbers from a full-length musical revue called *Dear Mr. President*. With light lines and bright music, these newcomers to New Theatre Nights ridiculed the mis-educators of our nation in *Graduation Day*, Mussolini's baby-production program for Italian mothers in a sexy revolutionary torch song *Room for One*, and the whole peacetalking, war-talking set up in *Peace Conference*. Mordecai Baumann, Billy Sands, Joe Pevney and Edward Kogan sang and played their parts with style and gusto and, seemingly, with no concern for the lack of continuity in the program caused by an unfortunate arrangement of numbers. We shall look forward to seeing the complete revue and advise all interested producers to get in touch with Mr. Rome and Mr. Arent.

Will Ghere (who directed *Waiting for Lefty* and *Till the Day I Die* in Hollywood and was beaten up by fascists for his pains), sang his way right into the hearts of the audience with a number of rich and earthy ballads that he himself had composed for strikers' songs on the picket lines of California.

Ghere also contributed the outstanding acting of the evening in *Snickering Horses*,

an anti-war satire by Em Jo Basshe that was published in the December 1934 issue of NEW THEATRE.

The Theatre Collective's anti-Hearst skit *For People Who Think* (reviewed on page 26) provided an effective closing number.

Several New Theatre Nights are now being planned for November. As the details have not been settled yet, they cannot be published in this issue. We ask our readers to watch for final announcements.

The recent Dunkel Bill ban on the showing of *The Youth of Maxim* invoked by Detroit's police censor, Sergeant J. M. Koller, constitutes a menacing threat to the liberty of all artistic expression. When first the bill was made the law of the state of Michigan, the liberal press, the country over, was unanimous in pointing out that the statute "was the most sweeping challenge to labor in the whole campaign to outlaw all forms of protest against conditions in America." But what people did not immediately foresee was that the Dunkel Bill if enforced would serve to completely suppress any cultural endeavor worthy of its salt.

Walter S. Reynolds, chairman of the Subversive Affairs Committee of the American Legion in his generous interpretation of the bill remarked: "The law doesn't say film, newspaper, magazine or what. It says you can take anything that advocates the overthrow of the government by force." It is difficult to see exactly wherein *The Youth of Maxim*, which incidentally received the plaudits of all the major film critics, endangered the institutions and government of the United States. But the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Detroit Employers' Association, the University of Detroit and the American Party who were largely instrumental in forcing the police to act against *The Youth of Maxim* did not require much proof. It was enough for them that the film had been produced in the Soviet Union.

The Dunkel Bill gives these reactionary elements an instrument of terrible potentialities, an instrument they will not hesitate to employ to the utter submersion and possible extinction of cultural progress, first in Michigan and, if successful there, in the entire nation. All those who believe that a nation's art can only grow in a free and untrammelled atmosphere are urged to send their protests to the police censor, Mr. Koller, in Detroit.



"Room For One"—Anton Refregier

# Salute To War

BY RAY LUDLOW

"Good fun at the Rivoli," chirped Miss Regina Crewe, motion picture critic for the New York American, as *Red Salute* came to town. There was. A New York cop off duty for the afternoon, but evidently inspired by Hollywood's formula for displaying patriotism, hauled off and socked Joseph Lash in the eye. Lash, editor of the Student Outlook, attended the picture with a friend and didn't like it. The two made a *point* of not liking it and booed. Result — a punch in the eye from the cop in plain clothes, when Lash refused to be removed and asked to see the manager.

In the evening, eighteen college students, members of student groups urging a boycott of *Red Salute*, were arrested on charges of unlawful assembly as they picketed in front of the theatre. Ordinarily, such charges would be dismissed as disorderly conduct. But Magistrate H. Stanley Renaud, diving deep into the penal code of New York City, found an unused subdivision.

Picketing is not a violation of the law, he pointed out to defense attorney Edward Kuntz, but creating noise and disturbance while picketing constitutes unlawful assemblage. He ordered the eighteen held for Special Sessions, in bail of \$25 apiece. The charge carries punishment ranging from six months to two years in jail if the students are found guilty.

Good fun, indeed! *Red Salute* is a direct attack on the anti-war spirit in American colleges. It is Hollywood incense to the Army officers who serve these institutions of higher learning as "professors of military science and tactics." These chieftains of the ROTC system are still quivering with rage and fear over the nation wide Student Peace Strike of last April, when more than 185,000 students protested against war and the forces of world reaction which are creating it.

The officers, along with the more reactionary college professors and executives, are frankly worried. They are growing more and more doubtful about the response the campus recruiting booths will get when college students are asked to serve in the next war. And they are fighting back, openly and under cover, seeking to suppress or direct to their own ends, the theoretical campus rights of free speech and free thought which inevitably generate the truth and bring it into the open.

The observant eye can learn from *Red Salute* exactly how to squash campus free speech. The formula has been used, but one hardly expected Hollywood to be so simple-minded as to reproduce it and glorify it. The procedure proves simple. Call the immigration officials and have them check the records of militant leaders of the anti-war student movement; if any are foreign born they can be framed and deported. When the students hold a peace rally, send around an emissary (say,

Robert Young as a soldier), who has the army's best interests at heart, and have him precipitate a riot. Have the cops handy, so when the riot starts they can come in and crack skulls. Throw Americans in jail, and send the foreign born back-to-where-they-came-from!

Such is the high-spot of *Red Salute*, a red-baiting attack on student freedom of thought and expression, and a grinning salute to fascism and war. For sheer unadulterated viciousness it is something to marvel at Hollywood's conception of a college student who is frank enough to say that he doesn't want his guts blown out advancing civilization after the fashion of Mussolini in Africa. The remarkable thing about the anti-war student movement in the colleges is the fact that it is indigenous to the student body, and includes every shade of opinion, liberal to radical. This is proved by the fact that both last April, and in the coming "peace mobilization" planned for Armistice Day, November 11, the organizations sponsoring these events include the national student councils of the Young Men's Christian Association and Young Women's Christian Association, the National Student Federation, the American Youth Congress, the Student League for Industrial Democracy, the National Student League and the Committee on Militarism in Education.

According to Hollywood, a student who belongs to one of these organizations is a sexual degenerate with a hooked nose, born outside the U. S. A., and receiving foreign gold (sic: Moscow) for creating misleading propaganda. The picture also advances the following valuable ideas: that thinking independently is a crime against the nation (Robert Young to Barbara Stanwyck: "Shut up! It's time that you took orders. You've got too many ideas, and none of them are any good"), and that the last war, despite 14 million dead, was quite a picnic and all the soldier craves to keep him happy is another war (Robert Young: "Sure, that's what we're waiting for — another good war!"). Significant is the fact that *Red Salute* was launched at the recent St. Louis convention of the American Legion with, as Showmen's Trade Review reports, "backing and powerful tie-ups with the doughboys." The World premiere was dedicated to the Legion with the blurb, "Here's what the American Legion is shouting about! See *Red Salute!*" Incidentally, this was the same convention which succeeded in accomplishing two things: passing a resolution attacking anti-war activity in the colleges, and turning St. Louis into a wide open bawdy house and saloon!

The odor of Red Salute is so pronounced, however, that when the picture opened in New York city, only the Hearst papers and the tabloid Daily News, had the temerity to recommend it. Mr. Andre Sennwald, of the Times, called it "one of

the wierdest exhibits to come out of Hollywood since that wartime masterpiece, *The Beast of Berlin*. Mr. Richard Watts, Jr., of the Herald-Tribune named the picture by its true title, "propaganda" against the student movement. Mr. Thornton Delehanty of the Post labeled it "a caricature of Americanism," and the critic for the Sun pointed out that "As a defender of 100 per cent Americanism and the present system, even in comedy, Hollywood is a flop."

Only Mr. Gerald Breitigam, substituting for William Boehnel, movie critic of the World Telegram, admitted the film was propaganda, and then undismayed, went on to enjoy the film for its comedy.

He reported, "When I came away from the opening Saturday night I had to wade through a sea of immature boys and girls standing outside the drizzle and dolorously chanting, 'United Artists want war. Students want peace.' Just as if the story of a couple of kids in love and having a mental bellyache could be propaganda for war, or anything else but orange blossoms."

Student groups have recognized the menace of *Red Salute* as real. It is not, as the New York critics supposed, just a sporadic and puerile attack upon free expression in the colleges. It was conceived out of the planned viciousness of the present Hollywood anti-red drive, and its fascist potentialities are greater than the critics realize. Shortly, Hollywood will release a second picture, *Fighting Youth*, with the progressive student movement the butt of a second attack. A third picture, *Riff-Raff*, will shower its misinterpretations on the labor movement on the West Coast. And a fourth, *The Frisco Kid*, will advance the cause of vigilantism, California's historic resort to fascist tactics. Both the National Student League and the Student League for Industrial Democracy, two of the organizations burlesqued in the picture have asked students to take action. In Tulane, La., and in Cincinnati, student picket lines have been formed in front of houses showing the picture. Picket lines are planned for film-showings in Chicago, Pittsburgh, and Madison.

Meanwhile, United Artists, releasing the picture, is worried. In New York *Red Salute* is already doing bad business, and it is sure to do worse in the college towns. According to Variety, when Goucher and John Hopkins student groups protested against *Red Salute* in Baltimore, United Artists warned its publicity man there "to lay off the use of its communistic angles for *Red Salute* publicity." The publicity man wanted to take the signed student protest and turn it over to the Hearst News-Post, where he hoped for big spreads.

The answer is that protest and picketing does work. So long as Hollywood insists on pointing up its films with notes borrowed from fascist handbooks, NEW THEATRE readers are urged to join American college students boycotting such pro-war, pro-reaction products. Stop Hollywood's salute to war!

# A Letter from Hallie Flanagan

Mr. Herbert Kline, Editor,  
New Theatre,  
157 West 44th St.  
New York, N. Y.

Dear Herbert Kline:

You have asked me to tell you something of the new Federal Theatre Project. Your magazine is a friend of the theatre and of the unemployed, and your question therefore deserves the most intelligent answer I can give it. I shall state the problem and the general plan under which we hope to operate. If you or the readers of the New Theatre have suggestions to offer, I shall be glad to receive them.

The Federal Government allocated, as you know, \$4,800,000,000 for relief under the Works Progress Administrator, Harry L. Hopkins. This appropriation included \$27,000,000 for putting back to work musicians, writers, painters, sculptors, and theatre people. For each one of these fields there is a Federal Director; Mr. Nicolai Sokoloff for music; Mr. Holger Cahill for art; Mr. Henry Alsberg for writing; myself for the theatre. Each Federal director plans to work through regional directors for some twelve areas throughout the United States, and because we are eager to work together in close cooperation, we are using, as far as possible, the same regional divisions. Responsible to the regional director, and through him to the Federal director in Washington, there will be administrative directors of individual theatre projects.

Since this plan is for professionals, most of the projects will operate in New York, Chicago, or Los Angeles where unemployment is most acute. Such groups as Actor's Equity, the League of New York Theatres, the Dramatists' Guild, the National Theatre Conference, are sponsoring various units: playwrights' theatres for testing new scripts; Negro theatres in Harlem; a repertory of plays important in American theatrical history; a bureau of research and publication for dramatic material. Other projects are under way for vaudeville and specialty acts in connection with great recreation centers where dance orchestras of unemployed musicians will play for unemployed youth. The plan includes also the remodelling of the historic theatre in Charleston, South Carolina, where the oldest theatre in the United States will house a program reviving the plays done in the first theatrical season in America.

The CCC camp project is itself so vast in nature that one wishes for six years instead of six months to do it justice. Although some travelling companies will still provide entertainment for camps, the Federal project stresses a resident theatre director for each camp, such a director to plan amateur nights in which the camp

members themselves write and perform plays. At present, 35 of the 200 camps in New York, New Jersey and Delaware have such directors, and the requests have come to extend this activity to 2000 CCC camps throughout the United States.

It will be seen that while our immediate aim in all these projects is to put to work thousands of theatre people, our more far reaching purpose is to organize and support theatrical enterprises so excellent in nature, so low in cost, and so vital to the communities involved that they will be able to continue after Federal support is withdrawn.

With this in mind we are encouraging, except for camp or educational projects, a low admission charge of 25c to \$1.00, depending on geography of the unit involved. At the present time both theatre and cinema interests claim that free shows are hurting their trade; it is possible that they may also object to an admission charge on the ground of undercutting; but it seems the lesser of the two evils. We have consulted the representatives from the League of New York Theatres, Actors' Equity, the American Federation of Actors, the Scenic Artists' Union, the Stage Hands' Union; as rapidly as possible we wish to consult all theatrical unions involved. Obviously they would all prefer, as would the director of this project, a higher rate of pay than the security wage of \$30 to \$94 per month depending on skill and the geographic placement. However, we are confronted, not by theory, but by the condition that the same wage prevailing throughout the Works Progress Administration affects, necessarily, the art projects. Certainly the labor organizations can be assured that eighty per cent of the entire allotment will be spent for labor costs; ten per cent for small administrative salaries; and ten per cent for production costs.

During the next few weeks of planning, and later, as the various projects start, we need the active interest and help of every person who cares about the theatre and about the problem of unemployment; we need the support of people who believe, as we do, that there is skill, experience, enthusiasm and intelligence in the theatre people now on relief rolls and in the thousands of theatre people who will cooperate with them. We need the support of people who share our belief that the theatre horizon is not contracting, but widening to include Santa Fe Desert, the Rocky Mountains, and the valley of the Mississippi; widening to include the arts of sculpture, music, architecture, the cinema; widening to include a consciousness of the social scene as well as the social register; widening in short, to include the impossible — that same impossible which has led our contemporaries to soar to the

stars, whisper through space, and fling miles of steel and glass into the air.

We need the belief of all of you who care about the theatre in terms of the art and economics of 1935.

Sincerely,

HALLIE FLANAGAN,  
Director,  
Federal Theatre Project.

## Herbert Kline's reply:

Dear Mr. Flanagan:

First, let me thank you for your prompt and friendly answer. The plans you outline for the Federal Theatre Project are of vital concern to NEW THEATRE. We see in the theatre project a welcome although shamefully belated effort to alleviate the distressing conditions prevailing among unemployed theatre workers. We see, also, an opportunity for the advancement of the drama throughout America as a medium for entertainment and education which will be within the reach even of the lowest paid sectors of our population. We have no fear, since the appointments of such progressive talents as Frederic McConnell, Gilmore Brown, Elmer Rice, John McKee, and Professors Koch and Mabie, among others, that the project will be used as was the New York PWA under Colonel Boothe to further pro-war propaganda.

Although you and your associates have our belief, interest and support in terms of art, ability and sincerity, *in terms of the economics of 1935*, there are several problems that we would like to bring to your attention.

First, there is the problem that you alone cannot settle—what kind of relief and how much? We believe that the sliding relief scales of the WPA are shamefully inadequate, that the American people who have created this country's wealth deserve better than a virtual starvation wage when they are forced to go on relief through no fault of their own. We ask with Alfred Kreymborg, "What has become of all your gold, America?" We believe in and support the efforts of all relief workers to gain more adequate relief. Furthermore, we support the stand of the unions that prevailing wages should be paid to all relief workers. For we fear that the relief projects will prove a menace to wage standards that the unions throughout American industry have established after long years of struggle.

That the progressive elements in the stage unions are conscious of this was evidenced by the large turnout for an emergency meeting called by the Actors Forum group in Equity on October 17th to discuss the drama project and to call for a special meeting of Equity on the subject.

At the emergency meeting, which was addressed by three council members, George Heller, Philip Loeb and Alfred Van Dekker, three points were stressed:

1. The supervision of any project by the New York theatre operators was objected to on the grounds that the drama project is intended for indigent actors in need of relief, and that the project gave the operators an opportunity for practically free tryouts at relief wages thereby excluding the professional actor from one of his main sources of income.

2. The fear was expressed that WPA entertainment at 25c to 50c a ticket in Manhattan and in the theatrical districts of Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, Cleveland, etc., where the commercial theatres still charge an average of \$1.10 to \$3.30 a seat, would have a tendency to depress wages to the Equity minimums in order to meet WPA competition, and, ultimately, might break down prevailing standards for all theatre workers.

3. Finally, as was stated by Philip Loeb, the very existence of Equity and other stage unions is threatened by the creation of a government organized, non-union army of professional and amateur stage workers on relief, who might very easily be taken over, after the project is discontinued, by private managers at wages below prevailing union standards.

The meeting decided to send a resolution to Washington favoring:

1. Equity representation on theatrical projects.
2. No supervision of theatre projects by private producers or by League of New York Theatres.
3. Prevailing union wage rate on projects (\$5 a performance).
4. Special classification to be made in Equity for all people in theatre project.
5. Joint action with other affiliated theatre unions on all problems relating to theatrical relief projects.
6. Organization of committee to study new projects sponsored by Actors Equity Association.
7. Equity members to get priority on theatrical projects.

The stage workers have had to fight hard for their prevailing standards. Everyone familiar with the abominable conditions that prevailed throughout the entire industry before the workers got together in their great victorious strike of 1919 realizes that the stage unions must be guarded against factors that tend to weaken them. The resolution cited above presents, we believe, some valid objections to the present WPA set-up. We, who represent labor in the theatre in our creative work, are as eager as you are to see the drama project get under way at once. But the trade-union questions brought up by these Equity actors must be faced now before the project actually gets under way. As soon as these questions are settled, the stage unions and all other labor forces in the theatre will be able to cooperate to the fullest extent in carrying out the splendid plans you have outlined for the drama project.

Sincerely yours,  
HERBERT KLINE,



Scene from *Sadko*, at the opening of the Moscow Theatre Festival

## A Letter from H. W. L. Dana

From Moscow: descriptions of the Third Theatre Festival, more stimulating, more cosmopolitan, artistically finer, than those that preceded it, the summation of a season of fine work.

From Berlin: (from the correspondent of the Olympian New York Times, which has shown no disposition to publicize the superiority of Socialist culture) a pained review of six Nazi openings which ended "the dullest Summer season within my memory."

From Italy: The season opens with the return of Luigi Pirandello to take up his work as chief theatrical stooze for Mussolini's war machine.

Twenty-four countries were represented by three or four hundred guests at the Moscow Festival, among them the French dramatist, Henry Lenormand; the great Danish novelist, Andersen-Nexo; the English actor, Louis Casson; the American impressarios, Morris Gest and Gilbert Miller, and NEW THEATRE'S correspondent, H. W. L. Dana.

"They seem to have been impressed," Dana writes, "with a vitality, an exuberance, an enthusiasm in the theatres of the Soviet Union, which in many cases they felt lacking in the theatres of their own countries. The sixteen productions of the Festival gave the visitors an idea of the scope covered by Soviet theatres today. Various periods of the world's history were represented in the subject-matter: the days of the ancient Romans and Egyptians

in *Caesar and Cleopatra*; medieval legends such as *Sadko* and *Tyl Eulenspiegel*; the Elizabethan dramatists, Shakespeare and John Fletcher; the nineteenth century Russian writers, Pushkin, Ostrovski, and Leskov; and the contemporary Soviet writers, Gorky, Afinegenov, Romoshov, Kirshon, and Pogodin.

"In the extraordinary drama at the Kamerny Theatre they have woven together into one rich fabric Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra*, Pushkin's *Egyptian Nights* and Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra*, all accompanied by the remarkable new music written for the performance by Prokofiev. In the Soviet Union today, we find a growing tendency to draw upon the vast reservoirs of the cultural resources of past centuries as well as the present. One begins to wonder whether the theatres of conservative countries are really conserving as much of their intellectual heritage as is revolutionary Russia.

"The range of periods in time is paralleled by the range of different nationalities represented in this Moscow Theatre Festival. At a time when fascist countries are preaching and practicing a narrow jingoistic nationalism and are suppressing what they would look upon as 'aliens,' it is encouraging to see in this Moscow Theatre Festival an indication of the wise Soviet policy of encouraging national minorities and giving to every race the right of its own cultural development.

"This scope of subject matter in time



Scene from *Sadko*, at the opening of the Moscow Theatre Festival



and space has given a splendid opportunity for a rich variety of scenic representation. The magnificence of the costumes, the ingenuity of the constructivist sets, the beauty of the lighting effects, and the vividness of the acting have all combined to give an impression of lavish splendor scarcely to be found today in capitalist and bourgeois theatres. It seems as if under the capitalist system no individual theatre manager, since the depression, could afford such extravagant productions as are apparently possible under a collectivist system in the Soviet Union, where the resources are pooled and where the demand for theatre is always out-running the supply. In contrast to the discouragement and enforced economy of the 'theatre crisis' in other countries, it is interesting to see here the apparently unbounded resources put at the disposal of the elaborate productions of plays, ballets and operas.

"In the midst of this wealth of artistic productions, the Moscow Festival seems to have shown comparatively little that could be criticized as 'propaganda.' Those foreigners who had been told that all Soviet plays were propaganda plays and that they all dealt with the proletariat, seemed almost disappointed that there was not more propaganda. Almost the only play dealing primarily with proletarians is, strangely enough, called *Aristocrats*. The 'moral' was never obtrusive or crude, but administered so artistically that the audience was scarcely conscious of it. The Soviet theatres know that only good art is good propaganda.

"In place of any bitter propaganda or the inculcation of race or class hatred, the newer Soviet plays seemed permeated with the spirit of sweet reasonableness and healthy optimism. The blood, murder, and sudden death were confined to Shakespeare's *King Lear*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, and other plays taken over from the past. The new Soviet plays, *Aristocrats* and *Platon Krechet*, were filled with a spirit of reconciliation and the almost sentimental reformation of all the characters, even the most debased. There was a time when Russian literature used to seem, at least to strangers, rather morbid and melancholy and Russian drama seemed synonymous with 'Russian gloom.' Now all that has changed. The most recent Soviet plays are full of vigor and health and comedy, with a tendency towards lightness of touch and exuberant optimism. Even when the subject is tragic, the play is called an *Optimistic Tragedy*, and the 'happy ending' of *Platon Krechet*, with which the Festival ended, seemed designed to leave a pleasant taste in the mouth and to send the audiences home happy.

"In looking back upon this Third Moscow Theatre Festival, we can see in its superiority to the previous festivals an interesting indication of the growth and development of the theatre arts in the Soviet Union. At a time when conservative countries are neglecting the culture of the past and Fascist countries are stifling

the culture of the future, it is interesting to see how the Russian Revolution has encouraged both the culture of the past and of the future. Here the art of the drama seems to be growing and expanding year by year. Greater agility in play-writing, greater sureness in the art of acting, greater beauty in scenic designing and lighting effects, and a keener critical sense on the part of the audience all indicate an advance in the artistic sense of the various elements that contribute to make up the composite arts of the theatre in the Soviet Union."

Shift the scene back to Berlin, where news comes from Weimar, of the arrest of Albrecht von Heinemann, dramatic critic, accused of seditious attitude and sabotage because he criticized the director of the Weimar National Theatre, where Clare Trask, the New York Times correspondent observes of the current season, "There is not a single piece of our day, nothing

that could be even faintly connected up with this year of grace. After having collected about thirty years of much-deserved dust, a renaissance of Dietrich Eckart plays is sweeping the Nazi stage. Practically every one of them has been given a chance . . . for Eckart . . . was Adolf Hitler's mentor and friend." Miss Trask notes another revival, that of a play which failed ten years ago in Cologne, and is just as bad now as it was then. "The German stage must be in a great quandary" she writes, "if it reverts to failures of former days solely because they conform to party and political regulations. There is not a theatre in Germany which is not subject to the severest restrictions. Not only is all dramatic material — author, story, dialogue — dependent on official approval, but also the cast to be engaged, scenic, and costume designers, the stage crew . . ."

This is the kind of national freedom, the kind of culture, the Fascists offer!

## The Ballet Russe

Attendance of dancers at the Ballet Russe should be mandatory. It is true that the company's work is not of the highest technical quality, nevertheless, there is much of value to be carried away.

This reviewer found the "choreographic dramas" *Scherezade* and *Thamar* both dull and sodden. Cut from the same piece of over-embroidered cloth these works are neither exotic nor dramatic. The dancing when it is not unconvincingly orgiastic consists of little more than Oriental posturings. *Le Marriage d'Aurore* and *Cotillon* are considerably superior. Although the dances are strung together on the most attenuated of strings at least they give one an insight into the formal ballet style and strangely arouse a hitherto unsuspected sympathy for that form. *The Three Cornered Hat* and *Union Pacific* represented the efforts of the Ballet Russe in the modern ballet. Unfortunately the ballet disclosed in these two works a complete inability to cope with the problems of its material. The music of deFalla and Nabakoff is fresh, the sets by Picasso and Johnson are imaginative and stirring, but the technique of ballet dancing is as unsuited to the modern creative mind as the futurist movement of a few years ago. It has succeeded in making contemporary material only trivial and decorative.

The libretto of *Union Pacific* is by Archibald MacLeish; it deals with the building of the Union Pacific railroad across Utah; the Chinese start it on the West Coast going East, the Irish start East going West; the two working groups meet and have their pictures taken. For a moment the audience is stirred into believing there is some kind of comment intended when the Irish use human bodies

as ties for the railroad, but that is the sole superficiality of the treatment. The one dance that emerges with laurels is the *Bartenders* dance by Massine. It is the only one wherein the dancer used a modern idiom of expression. His style was suited to his subject, and he created an excellent character sketch. Otherwise the Chinamen in silk blouses remained ballet dancers in costume.

If this is the best that Balanchine, Massine, Fokine can offer we must look elsewhere for modern choreographers, and elsewhere for librettists. The ballet dancers have talent and beauty, Irina Baronova, Tamara Toumonova, Lichine, and Massine but they are dancing within a medium that has fallen behind the tempo of the modern world; there is no recalling the tempo of the past. This choreography is limited; it has neither the dynamic qualities of *Celebration* or the turbulent qualities of *Course*, both produced by the Graham Group.

Yet the ballet maintains its hold on the public; this year is the most promising one for the ballet since the war. The reason for this is that the modern concert dancer has not expanded and grown with the same rapidity as her audiences. Her audience is eager for the dance to have depth and scope and rich theatrical appeal. Therefore the limitations of the concert stage must be overcome. Let the modern dancer use theatre to its fullest; let her engage artists for sets and composers for music; let her choose themes of value and concern for her public and only then will the false recrudescence of the ballet serve really as a strengthener of the modern dance.

EDNA OCKO

# Broadway Tries Again

BY JOHN W. GASSNER

After an inconspicuous beginning with an Italian *Abie's Irish Rose* and an allegedly humorous melodrama, Broadway is at last well on its way through the annual game of stimulating a few people and fooling a great many. It is to be noted, however, that the beginning of the season is not without redeeming features. When one reflects upon the condition of the stage in Germany and Italy, and for that matter in England and France, a theatre that has room for several arresting efforts in a single month is not to be lightly dismissed. It is not surprising, of course, that the country which is the strongest outpost of a declining civilization should be the one to record the most energy on that sensitive social barometer, the theatre. Just as it is unavoidable that this civilization's problems and confusions, let alone hesitations, should become apparent in its art.

Symptomatic is the awakening of the theatre to the live issues of war and peace; two anti-militaristic plays within a month is something of a record. Though they cannot possibly be mistaken for masterpieces, their vitality and sincerity are beyond question. *If This Be Treason*, considered elsewhere in this issue, burns with indignation against the profiteers and politicians who play shuttlecock with men's lives, and entertains a dream of how good will may be made to prevail on this earth. Sidney Howard's dramatization of *Paths of Glory* bares the inhumanity of militarism. Both plays support their thesis with some effective playwriting. *Paths of Glory* dawdles through military maneuvers that Hollywood can present ten times more effectively than Arthur Hopkins. But once the play pulls itself together it presents a second half that commands mounting interest. Where these plays fall short of achieving a maximum effect is largely in their thinking.

*Paths of Glory* is ineffective insofar as it lacks a tragic heightening of its action. This can only partly be attributed to the fragmentariness of its early scenes. Basically the play falls short of tragedy because of its overcautious objectiveness. As a result the dialogue does not sing with pity and anger, the execution of the three soldiers as scapegoats for their battalion, which failed to advance under fire, becomes a special case instead of a basic indictment, and the play has no tragic release. Objectiveness is a greatly overrated virtue when the material demands a definite stand, and it is that very stand that is being consistently avoided in the play. The isolation of the scapegoat tragedy as a unique, unrelated event is almost one hundred percent complete. Not only does the execution of the soldiers depend upon the egotism of one nitwit general, Assolant, but the war itself is treated as a kind of act of God, instead of as a product of



Theodore Hecht, Richard Bennett, Anatole Winogradoff and Burgess Meredith in *Winterset*

distinct and eradicable factors. Therefore the war is accepted fatalistically while thousands of lives are being wiped out and a grave travesty of justice is being perpetrated under our very eyes. Even a posy for Gandhi like *If This Be Treason* is far more challenging. If ever a play cried for the catharsis of passionate rebellion it is *Paths of the Glory*. The novel by Humphrey Cobb was similarly deficient, but the fault was bound to be much more glaring in the theatre.

Maxwell Anderson's *Winterset* belongs likewise to the living theatre and is similarly defeated by its inconclusiveness. This gifted playwright has been riding two differently colored horses for a long time. He has alternated between the full-blooded romanticism of historical tragedies like *Elizabeth the Queen* and *Mary of Scotland* and the sober realism of *Saturday's Children* and *Both Your Houses*. It was in the cards that he should try to fuse the separate facets of his playwriting, to amalgamate the poet and the prose writer, the romanticist and the realist. The effort was made in last season's *Valley Forge*, but the romanticist and the realist did not mix well. In *Winterset* they do not mix at all.

In the winter of his discontent Maxwell Anderson has returned to an old wound, the Sacco and Vanzetti case which outraged his sense of justice and drew from him that spirited, if confusing, collaboration *Gods of the Lightning*. In his new play he is still indignant. He brings his most competent dramaturgy and his most ringing poetry to bear upon the judge whose guilty conscience has unsettled his mind and the embittered son of the electrocuted man

who would clear his father's name. But Maxwell Anderson is not content to treat a contemporary theme; it is his ambition to move on to the eternal verities and he falls back upon one of the staples of the poetic trade, "pure love," with the customary sprinkling of noble sentiments. Rightly enough, *Winterset* sees the futility and hollowness of personal revenge. The corroding single-tracked bitterness of "Vanzetti's" son is an impasse that must be broken through. Therefore, the play provides him with a vapid and melodramatic love affair for the good of his soul, at the conclusion of which he dies grandiosely and self-sacrificingly — and vainly, in a Romeo and Juliet aura! The result is a play that labors like a volcano and brings forth — a mouse. The conclusion is irrelevant; it is more than that — it is an evasion of the logic of the play, which demands that "Vanzetti's" son should substitute social vision for private hatred. His newly-found love might help him to find this solution, but must be subsidiary to it. We may speculate on the mote in the playwright's eye which prevents him from seeing this clearly. Is it not an aversion to the social struggle and a desire to rise above it even at the expense of logic?

The author and his apologists evade the issue when they defend the use of verse in *Winterset*. The theatre can most certainly use exalted and colorful speech for the expression of significant experiences. The trouble with *Winterset* is not its manner of saying things but what it says. Content naturally affects expression, and Anderson's dialogue is weakest when its dramatic direction is weakest, just as the characters



Theodore Hecht, Richard Bennett, Anatole Winogradoff and Burgess Meredith in *Winterset*



*If This Be Treason* by Dr. John Haynes Holmes and Reginald Lawrence

become wooden whenever they are steeped in a miasma of poetic sentiments in which the direction of the play is forced and needlessly complicated. Incidentally, Mr. Anderson shows a surprising ignorance of working-class people, and the communist in the first act is an inexcusable caricature in a play that purports to be a fair-minded idealistic drama. *Winterset* is half masterpiece, half pretentious melodrama and romance. Like last season's *Within the Gates*, the play is significant as a landmark in a very talented playwright's search for meaning in the world. There should be room in the theatre for this search, especially when it is so ably supported by Richard Bennett, Burgess Meredith, Jo Mielziner, who has designed excellent sets, and Guthrie McClintic, who has directed the production as well as it was possible without altering the text.

*Bright Star*, Philip Barry's newest play, makes a less ambitious effort to treat with social realities. Barry's forte has always been his treatment of domestic situations which have given him free play for his moderate talent for neat dialogue and sharp, though narrow, characterization. But even this favorite playwright of the elite has not been immune to the pressure of a troubled world. Essentially, a study of an egotist and social climber who marries without love and is destroyed by his sense of guilt, *Bright Star* does show the operation of his egotism in the larger field of social relations. He sells out to the conservatives, whom he supports politically, abandons his Utopian industrial project, and sells the newspaper that was to be the organ of his social ideals. This play has the makings of a forceful analysis of the false Messiahs, the unsteady idealists and careerists who litter the American political arena. But Barry does not follow the line of analysis that would give his play importance and dramatic force. Instead, answering the call of his early success, he finds shelter in the rarefied at-

mosphere of an aristocratic New England home, and contents himself with a pica-yune domestic tragedy. His egotist, overplayed by Lee Tracy, breaks the heart of his pure-minded starry-eyed wife, a negative woman negatively portrayed by Julie Haydon, who looks like one of Marie Laurencin's wraiths and threatens to melt into thin air while you are looking at her. A fundamental weakness of conception waters down a play that might have had power. It is becoming distressingly evident that Philip Barry's star is all too steadfast in its loyalty to his early work, which was far less bright than his admirers once seemed to believe.

Of the remaining original plays of the month James Warwick's *Blind Alley* is frequently exciting and almost approaches importance. As layer after layer of false front is peeled off by an expert psychologist, the Dillinger of this drama is revealed as a pathetically blind and writhing grub on the dung-heap of poverty and ignorance. He needs hospitalization, not imprisonment. Obviously *Blind Alley* is one of the more intelligent and progressive treatments of a favorite theme of the American theatre. Where it misses significance

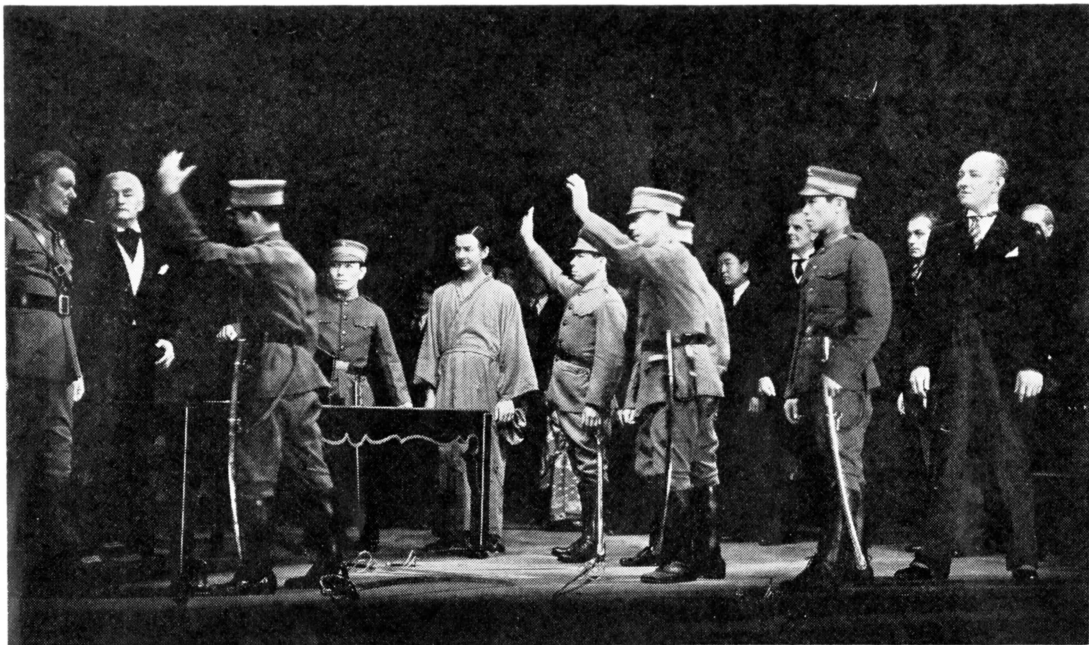
is in its social outlook, which is uncertain and disappointing. It concentrates on a psychological situation, the criminal's incestuous passion for his mother, and so becomes pat and synthetic like all psycho-analytic vivisection on the stage. At the same time not nearly enough attention is paid to the conditions that determined the outcome of this mother fixation. There is a world of difference between the well-nurtured and favored individual whose sadism made him a great surgeon and the sadist who makes a practice of slashing throats. By stressing individual psychology the play ultimately lapses into conventional melodrama, in which the criminal is a monster who must be destroyed by the intellectually superior psychologist. The play, resolving nothing, merely satisfies an audience's craving for thrills as intelligently as possible. George Couloris, who plays the psychologist superbly, labors in vain to maintain the note of pity and social conscience; the text of the play gives him no support.

Of the lighter confections of the month *Remember the Day* is the most saccharine, while the Lunts' *Taming of the Shrew*, reviewed elsewhere in this issue, and *Sweet Mystery of Life* are the most determinedly hilarious. *Remember the Day* invests heavily in nostalgia. Its study of child psychology skims the surface, and it is more than slightly naive and pretentious in its preoccupation with the adolescent moonings of a well-protected normal youngster. The great things expected of him culminate in his becoming a big shipping man not averse to a little lobbying in Washington! His infatuation with his teacher, acted with ease and sensitivity by Frank Thomas, Jr., is a pleasant enough bit of humor and sentiment. The frustration of the school teacher in later years, potentially a stronger theme, is secondary in this play, which adds lack of unity to its other defects.

*Sweet Mystery of Life* is a robust and hilarious farce based on the insurance business. Vigorously projected by its director Herman Shumlin and its principals Gene Lockhart and Hobart Cavanaugh, it illustrates the American brand of humor, which is most itself when it is broad and elephantine. What this kind of humor



Katayev's *Squaring the Circle*, directed by Dmitri Ostrov



*If This Be Treason* by Dr. John Haynes Holmes and Reginald Lawrence



Katayev's *Squaring the Circle*, directed by Dmitri Ostrov

lacks, of course, is subtlety, without which it wears thin and becomes repetitious. The play would be more amusing if it had something to say and if it said it a trifle less strenuously. Still it is distinctly preferable to a dragging importation like *Most of the Game*, which is hamstrung by the genteel British tradition and is constrained to warm a sofa for three acts. John Van Druten's comedy drools for over two hours about a British novelist and his wife who make the momentous discovery that they are no longer in love.

Of the month's Shakespearian revivals, *The Taming of the Shrew*, presented unabashedly as a lark, calls attention to the folk-piece quality of much of Shakespeare's work. Though it deals with bewigged and bediamonded gentlemen it revolves around the salty folk theme of a shrewish woman, dazzlingly portrayed by Lynn Fontanne, and its gusto is that of the *commedia dell'arte* whose principle was fun at any cost for people of every kind. The production of *Othello* did little to bring this lesser drama of Shakespeare's to life. Aside from the beauty of the poetic passages there was little to recommend it to our time. *Macbeth* is another story altogether. There is a deathless theme in this play — namely, the tragedy of rampant individualism and of the itch for power. It takes on a particularly sinister meaning at the present time as a comment on dictators and dictatorships. Unfortunately the Crosby Gaige production failed to cope with the hocus-pocus and witchcraft of the tragedy and missed the dynamic individual and mass conflicts inherent in it. Gladys Cooper's drawing-room Lady Macbeth was painfully insignificant, and Philip Merivale's Macbeth had stature without strength. Someone endowed with courage and imagination could build *Macbeth* into a stirring personal and social drama.

How much can be achieved by forceful direction is shown by Benno Schneider and the Artef players in their new production, *The Reapers*, a drama of the revolt of the Ukrainian reapers in Eastern Galicia. This production should be attended by everyone who cares for creative endeavor in the theatre. It is not easy to grow enthusiastic over the text of the play. It leaves many loose threads, and the caricature of the landed peasantry is altogether too broad. The concluding event, the burning of the fields by the striking reapers, is an inconclusive act of sabotage that would seem to be contrary to the principles of the Communist strike-leader. But the play lives, in spite of its text in the dynamic acting of the players. The folk-setting in the village and the massing of the actors into pyramids converts the play into an exciting dramatic montage.

The season is still too young to draw any definite conclusions. Nor will its cross-section be complete until the Theatre Union, the Group Theatre and other organizations who contributed so much vitality to last season have been heard from. This cannot be too soon for those who pin their hopes on new forces in the theatre.

## Taming of the Shrew

That those actors and managers of the Guild who have some love of the theatre do not boot their subscription audience out the door some night is a courtesy to be explained only by the beacon light of Marxism. Further (by dialectics), the jewelled hand that feeds this former First Theatre of America has come near turning it into a lapdog. Now and then it vaps (*Parade*) or worries (*They Shall Not Die*) at its mistresses, but it does not strain the leash too far. And, not to strain the similie, in plain English, there is an audience which could support the best the Guild now offers, and stimulate it to better, if they were not excluded by the present price scale. They will not see the Lunts' production of *The Taming of the Shrew*, but if they could they would love it, and they would give it a gusto from the house to supplement the vigor which the actors now try to generate by themselves, and, for the play's own good they would be impatient of some of the pretty-pretty trimmings which added to the budget.

"It is entertaining," said a subscriber, feeling the need to judge the play in a sentence as she gathered her wraps, "but it is not Shakespeare."

Which leads to a short, painful, digression: the Merivale-Cooper *Othello*. It is in a tradition which patrially excuses the Guild subscriber in this instance. What she has been trained to think of as "Shakespeare" — and it certainly is *not* "entertaining" — is doubtless just this sort of dignified and unilluminating recitation. Sonorous syllables r-r-roll, and having been told that they are immortal ones puts hands to one's head in a dutiful effort to concentrate on them. But of the play — of a very young girl leaving her father's shelter, crossing the sea to a war-torn island, with only the courage of her love; of a high-blooded soldier lost among the unfamiliar ways of personal problems and intrigue; of a mind so twisted that it can execute villainy with a deadly precision — of these nothing is created. Instead, a pink dress and a wistful smile; staring eyes, a long stride; a sword endlessly pulled up and thrust back into its scabbard — stale outward business played in front of the stuffiest drapery of many seasons.

*The Taming of the Shrew* is a happier story. The Lunts, who contributed the production scheme as well as their own performances, have approached the script creatively (surely the least tribute that Shakespeare deserves), and they have probed it to discover and recreate the full situations, as well as to add embroidery and ornamentation. For example, Alfred Lunt, whose own performance carries this out must fully, gives Petruchio a faint Italian flavor (unfortunately not followed by the rest of the cast). It helps, unobtrusively, to make rich and reason-

able this character of a dowry-bent male-chauvinist. That in Shakespeare's time this was not done (or, if it was, was less necessary, Elizabethan males having their women well in hand) is quite beside the point. The play is played now. Petruchio would marry Kate if she were fifty and had lost her teeth. When he sees her, his blood gets hot, but he goes on guard like a fencer. You can say that most of this is in the lines, but unless the actor does it as well as speaking it, he gives the lie to the lines. Not wholly in the lines, but immeasurably helping them, is Lynn Fontanne's playing of the final scene in which she preaches wifely submission: she plays it not like the defeated shrew forced to parade her beating, but like Petruchio's very witty wife, delighting in the sensation that the two of them are making before the company. Not all the production — though it is the best that this reviewer has seen — keeps this high quality, but the whole has gayety, color, humor, and richness of acting. Too much skill has gone into prettifying it for a spoiled and appetiteless audience. Fine as it is, it could be finer with a vigorous and responsive house.

MOLLY DAY THACHER

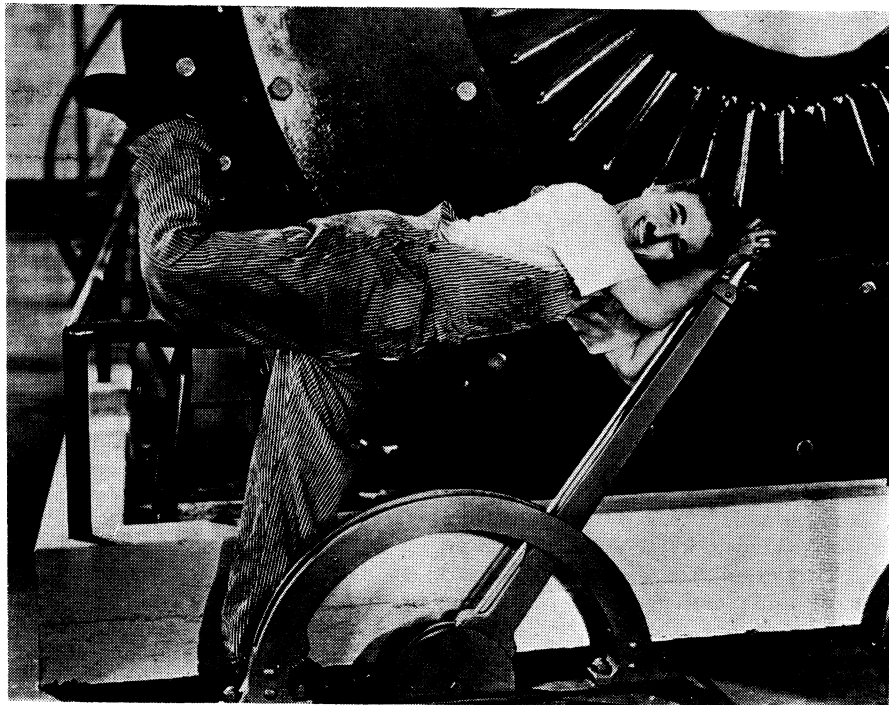


Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne



Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne





# Charlie Chaplin in "Modern Times"

BY JOHN R. CHAPLIN

With Charlie Chaplin's new picture, *Modern Times*, virtually completed, the question of what it is actually going to be assumes vital interest, not only for the commercial movie-press, but also for the thinking public the world over. Chaplin has shrouded his work in secrecy, on the pretext of trying to keep the gags from being told before the film is shown. However, a number of Hollywood correspondents and newspapermen have published stories on what the film was to be.

The late Karl K. Kitchen printed the fact that the film was to be called *The Masses*, and that it was a satire on modern industry. Chaplin countered by a denial that he had told anything about his film to Kitchen, and added that he was not a reformer, but that his film was intended "for entertainment only."

Stories printed in the London Daily Herald, and in the French magazines *Cine-Monde* and *Pour Vous*, further described the sets that Chaplin had built: the main ones are a huge factory, caricaturing the modern industrial plant, and a tremendous prison. In both of these, as the stills of the picture already indicate, Chaplin is equally crushed, equally lost. The very nature of the stills which he had made disproves Chaplin's own earlier statement that his film is to have no social meaning.

The work of Chaplin always has had social significance, though perhaps never quite clearly expressed.

During the recent stay in Hollywood of the Soviet Film Commission, its members were invited by Chaplin to visit his studio, and view his work.

In a story in *Pravda*, Boris Shumiatsky told of the Soviet film men's interview with Chaplin. Some portions of Shumiatsky's article (particularly dealing with the plot

of the Chaplin picture) have been reprinted in this country. But it seems to us that only the article taken as a whole can give a full idea, not only of what the film will be, but also of Chaplin's attitude toward and understanding of social problems in general.

Here is Shumiatsky's article:

Is it necessary to tell how happy we Soviet film-men were, when, during our stay in Hollywood, we received an invitation to visit Charlie Chaplin?

The great actor received us cordially.

"What do you think of the Hollywood climate?" he asked us with a mischievous smile, alluding directly to the Hays Organization which had done all it could to hamper the work of the Soviet Commission.

"In some spots it's pretty hot, and in some spots it's been icy," we answered in the same vein.

"Have you seen any new pictures, or have you seen all you want?"

"Let's be frank, Charlie," one of us said. "We're very simple people, just plain movie people all the way through, and we'd like to see your new film."

"Good, that's just what I was expecting," said Charlie, delighted.

He took us to a comfortably appointed projection-room. The lights went out, and Chaplin made a very funny speech, explaining to us that what we were going to see was fragments of his new film, which he had not quite finished, and was now in the process of cutting.

"I've been finding this job pretty tough," he said. "If you don't object, we'll discuss it after you've seen a few reels."

As you can well imagine, neither Charlie nor we were satisfied with just a few reels; we saw a great many, and were

very deeply impressed with the power that emanates from the great talent of this true master of the cinema.

Chaplin's film is called *Modern Times*.

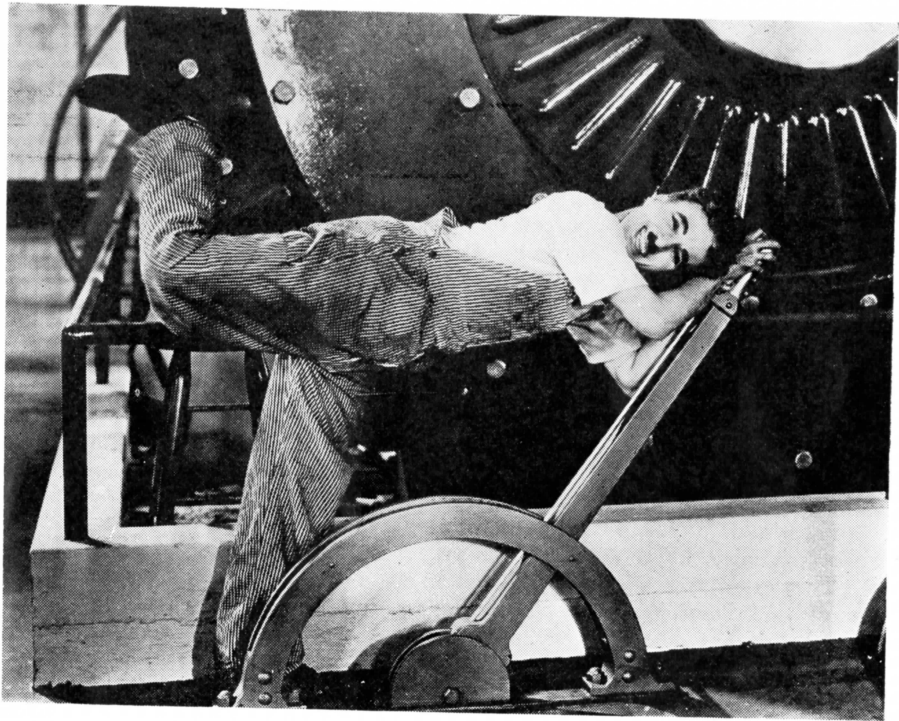
It is the boom-period, which the apologists of dying capitalism call humanity's golden age. We see the director of a great factory in his office. Like a demigod, he rules the kingdom of the machines, where thousands of workers stand pinned to their jobs like convicts in chains.

Chaplin mocks capitalist rationalization excellently. The director does not have to wear himself out by superfluous gestures, or breathe the poisonous air of the factory-buildings, those immense tombs in which the slaves of capital lose all their strength. The director controls everything without having to leave his office. A screen allows him to see everything that goes on in the factory, and a loudspeaker brings him everything he wants to hear.

Among the workers in the factory is Charlie Chaplin. He stands at his job, day after day, year after year, doing only one thing: tightening screws always on the same mechanical parts.

Completely worn out, Chaplin finally quits his job for a second. He is so dulled that, with his wrench, he twists the foreman's nose, which he mistakes for a screw. The buttons on the skirt of a girl employee who stoops over to fix her stockings, also look like bolts to Charlie, and he tries to turn them. The girl runs away, and Charlie after her, through the whole factory. As he goes, he loosens screws here and there on all the machines he passes, and finally causes a short-circuit.

But suddenly Charlie hears a voice repeated by innumerable loud speakers, and on screens on every side of him he sees the picture of the director, indignantly



commanding him to return to his job.

The director is then seen examining a new machine, to be used for the automatic feeding of the workers, thus doing away with time out for lunch. It is decided to try the machine on Charlie. The machine grabs him by the throat and pours a portion of bouillon into his mouth. Try as he may, Charlie can't get away from it. Then, the second course. But this time, the machine turns too soon and pours the food into Charlie's collar instead of his mouth. Charlie twists and jumps, for the food is scorching hot. It is decided to correct the defect of the machine. In doing the repairs, however, the mechanic leaves two screws on the plate. The machine pushes them, along with the food, right into Charlie's mouth. He shouts, and wriggles, and tries to get away. There is talk of again repairing the machine, but the director decides that its upkeep would be too expensive. This is how Charlie lampoons rationalization, and his laughter

sounds out like a satire and an accusation.

Once again, we see the machines: speed-up, speed-up, speed-up. Chaplin can't see anything but screws any more; through the window, he sees a broken-down car with some boards on it; he jumps through the window and runs out to tighten the screws on it. He falls, pulling off the red warning flag on the truck.

As he runs to return it, a group of strikers happen by, running in the same direction, the police at their heels. Chaplin is arrested as the ring-leader, the red flag being taken for a signal for insurrection.

Charlie goes to jail. The world of criminals is kinder to him than the regime of capitalist rationalization. . .

Paulette Goddard is a poor little street-waif. She has stolen a bunch of bananas, which she distributes to a group of children, as hungry as she. She is chased by the police.

In prison, Charlie is seated at mess-table next to a dope-fiend who is being

watched by the guards. The cokey hides his dope in the saltshaker. Charlie takes what he believes to be salt.

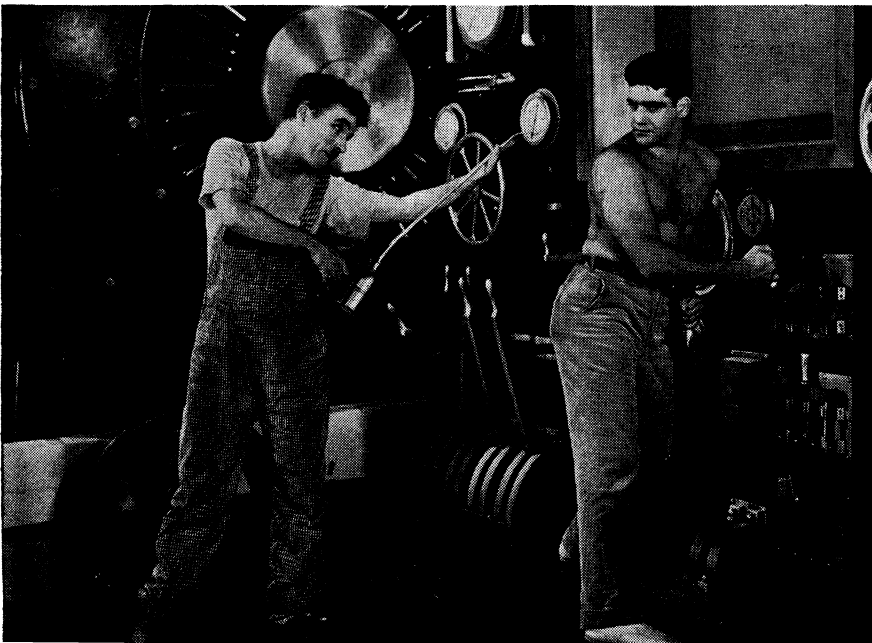
A mutiny breaks out in the prison. Charlie, crazed by the drug, runs over to the mutineers and attacks them violently. For his valor, he is freed.

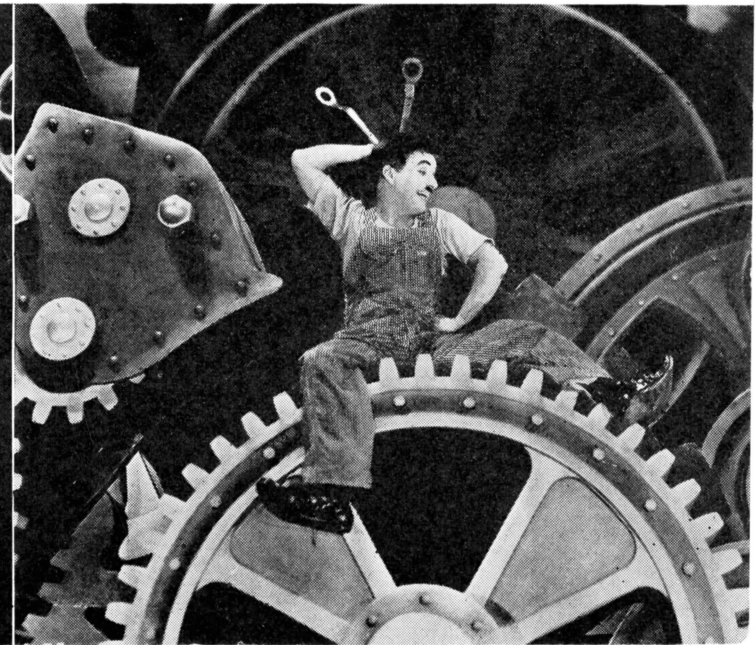
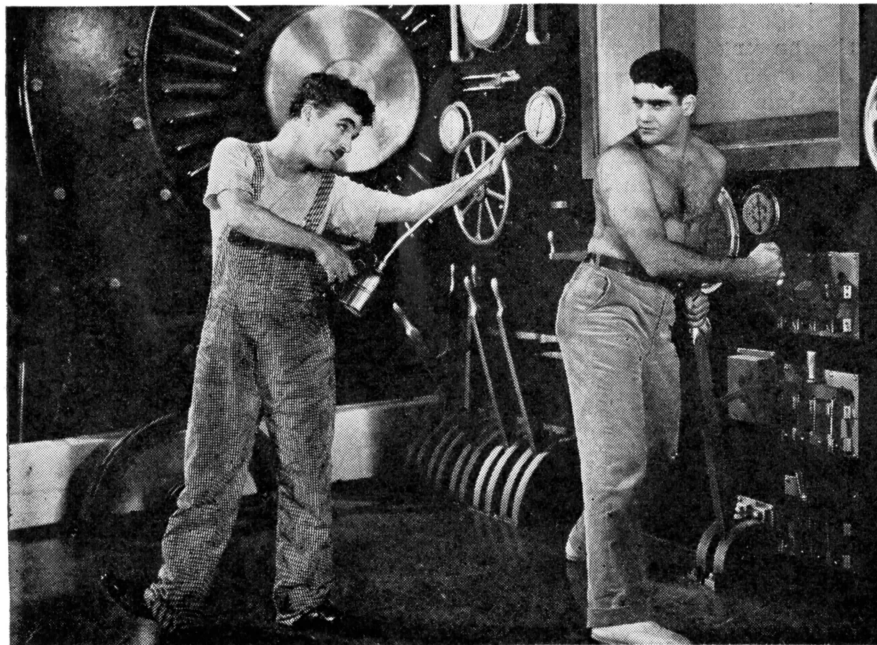
But outside there is only depression and poverty. Charlie tries to go back to jail. Petty larceny is no longer enough for a conviction, because it is too frequent an offense. But Charlie meets Paulette, while the police chase her. He tries to help her, and they are both arrested.

The heroine escapes from the patrol-wagon, Charlie after her. The police are on their trail. Paulette gets away, but Charlie is caught. He is delighted. However, the police recognize his innocence, and release him. At long last, Charlie gets a job as an elevator-boy.

We could not see the end of the picture, which at that time had not yet been shot.

(Continued on page 31)





# Lighthouse McLaglen: Professional Patriot

BY WARREN STARR

Appropriate that Victor McLaglen's next picture will be *Professional Soldier* (story by demon-writer Damon Runyon; production by prodigy Darryl Zanuck at Twentieth Century-Fox; pulchritude by blonde leading lady Gloria Stuart).

And to be wondered at, too, that after his rousing performance in John Ford's picturization of the Liam O'Flaherty novel, *The Informer*, McLaglen should go back to the brand of role that established him as a bellowing mediocrity.

Appropriate — for no other man in Hollywood, and certainly no other actor, has more wholeheartedly and demonstratively rattled the sabre and wrapped himself in the red, white and blue.

To be wondered at — only if you believe that McLaglen's performance in *The Informer* established him as a great actor. But not if you have heard Hollywood tell how John Ford worked on McLaglen to make this great hulk of a man, boastful and domineering in life, play himself—and, at that, had to use methods of which teetotalers might not entirely approve.

The spectacle of McLaglen, as master of Americanism in the motion picture capital, is the more striking because the 6 foot-3 inch, 240 pounder only attained what General Hugh Johnson has called "the simple dignity of American citizenship" as recently as 1933. It was Friday the 13th of January, when Federal Judge George Cosgrave vested that dignity on the flag-waving master of "sez-you, sez-me" screen repartee.

Before that precarious date, McLaglen had been a subject of his Britannic Majesty, George V, by Grace of God. He was born in Bromley, Kent; his father was Bishop of Clermont, South Africa; there he spent most of his early years. A cousin was the Boer War general, DeWitt. During that campaign of imperialist aggrandizement, Victor attempted to enlist, was rejected because he was but 14. Thereupon he betook himself to London where he managed to be accepted for enlistment in the Life Guards.

A period of varied fortunes intervened before the day he heard the first news of the World War in Capetown. He left immediately for London to enlist — of five McLaglen boys, all enlisted. Made a lieutenant, he was sent to Mesopotamia with the Irish Fusilliers. He became Provost Marshall in Bagdad during the war.

All this comes from the biographical sketch he furnishes for studio publicity. The biography points out with almost literal truth that Victor never misses a prize fight or a wrestling match. Before his camera days, indeed, he was more than

midling adept with the gloves and the half-nelson himself. As a professional boxer in Canada, he used to take on all comers, offering \$25 to any spectator of his travelling carnival who could stay three rounds with him. Lloyd Pantages, who gushes tripe for the Hearst feature, "I Cover Hollywood," adds to this, the information that Victor was once heavyweight champion of Canada. Lloyd should know, for McLaglen's own recital states that, after the medicine show, he was with a Wild West outfit, and then, with a partner, obtained time with a wrestling act on the Pantages vaudeville circuit owned by Lloyd's father.

The ring called to him again; he fought Jack Johnson in a six-round no-decision go in Vancouver before joining the gold rush to Kalgoorlie, Australia.

Soldier and soldier-of-fortune, McLaglen admits himself to be infused with the ardor of arms. He likes to have his press releases ornamented with gems like this:

"... always has his ear to the ground waiting for another war to break out... declares it would be hard to hold him in Hollywood if one did."

But Hollywood will hold McLaglen when the war flares out. He is a valuable citizen, even if his creditors and complainants in assault and battery suits do not think so. No man, it must be repeated, has taken his citizenship more seriously. In less than three years of allegiance to the flag of his adopted country, McLaglen has organized a mounted, uniformed troop, the Hollywood Light Horse, has serenaded William Randolph Hearst, talked on Americanism and the suppression of subversive activities, and has crashed the news columns again and again with his patriotic-military-sporting activities. He has shown what an ex-alien can make of American citizenship.

The capitalist press of California customarily writes in very bitter tone of Harry Bridges, rank and file leader of the long-shoremens, moving power of last year's San Francisco general strike and of the mighty Maritime Federation of the Pacific. Bridges is an Australian; consequently, he is "an alien radical," and "honest" workers are urged to have done with him at once. But these representative newspapers, in their own characteristic way, can also be friendly to the foreigner in our midst. Neither in editorial nor in news columns have they ever called for the deportation of Fred Clairns, Irish citizen, and secretary of the Santa Rosa Chamber of Commerce, who directed the vigilante tar and feathering which all but resulted in two deaths recently. The same journalistic fair play has been accorded McLaglen, though ac-

ording to his own statement, he was at work, back in the middle of 1932 while still unnaturalized, forming the *Hollywood Light Horse*, "a military organization formed to promote Americanism and combat Communism and radicalism subversive to Constitutional government."

When the complete history of Hollywood's unofficial military troops is written, heavyweight McLaglen and his Light Horsemen will have to be accorded an important part. They are the progenitors of at least one other similar organization, the Hollywood Hussars, organized by Arthur Guy Empey. With curious persistence, these private armies, formed to defend the flag and the Constitution against subversives, are involved with persons whose Americanism dates back to very recent dates—if it dates back at all.

Thus, for example, a couple of years ago, we find the natty uniform of another of these brigades, the California Lancers, sitting snugly on two "Russian princes," David and Sergei Mdivani, as they marched in and out of Hollywood night clubs. Their wives and breadwinners, Mae Murray and Mary McCormick, actually believed for a time that the Lancers' outfit was the official uniform of their husbands' native land of Georgia. Money from Mae and Mary went to help finance the Lancers. Something like \$900 did the princelings give to the organization; after which they were made captains. Sidelights on the Mdivani-Lancer relations came out during the divorce trials in which the Mdivani boys were severed from their meal tickets and cast loose for a time.

There was also the episode, never thoroughly clarified for even the most astute newspaper men, of the gathering of a private army of three to four hundred arms to serve under these gallants in the event of an attempt to wrest their native Georgia from the grip of the Soviet Union. The boys, with characteristic generosity, had tried to interest a wealthy oil man in the financing of this army of unemployed. In return, the backer was to receive billions in oil plus a princely title—after Stalin had been removed and the homeland captured.

A Lancer captain, Lou Becker, bailiff in a local court, publicly denied that the Lancers as an organization had supported any such venture. He added, modestly, that loyal Lancers were "not supposed to wear their uniforms in night clubs." Minus Mdivanis and other angels, the Lancers are now, alas, no more!

Next important episode in the Hollywood military parade, the McLaglen Light Horse, first made the public prints a couple of years ago. But it had been

building in the quiet, as the publicity releases—issued incidentally by the Columbia Studios—tell. In two years, the organization had grown from 20 to 150 members, including actors, ex-cops, ex-vice and red squad bruisers and Silver Shirts. Additional units were then being organized in Pasadena, Long Beach and Oakland. What is more, “through contacts with similar groups in Brooklyn, New York and Washington, D. C., Colonel (sic) McLaglen and Captain (sic) Empey are enlarging it into a nation-wide organization.”

Yes, the same Arthur Guy Empey who was once a member of McLaglen’s command, drilling the Light Horsemen! A rare combination: The giant, McLaglen, and the diminutive Empey. But here, too, there was a divorce. Empey deserted “mon colonel” McLaglen and commissioned himself colonel of the rival Hollywood Hussars. By fast talking and tall misrepresentation, he persuaded Jack Moss, Gary Cooper’s manager, to lend that star’s name as member of a “strictly social polo playing troop.”

At once the word was blazoned forth—on fancy letterheads, in expensively illustrated booklets, in full column announcements in the Sunday classified ad sections: “Gary Cooper, Founder, announces the appointment of Arthur Guy Empey, commanding Colonel of the Hollywood Hussars.” Among the forty high officers, all suckers for titles, were the Los Angeles Chief of Police and the Sheriff. Nor was the motive altogether one of self-seeking; the uniforms were fantastic, beautiful beyond all dreams; and the organization could make life easier for the Chief of Police and the Sheriff’s office.

That was early in 1935. Exposure of the Fascist potentialities of the Hussars followed; a nation-wide boycott of Gary Cooper’s pictures was threatened by the American League Against War and Fascism. Jack Moss, who today insists that he had repeatedly told Empey to stop using Cooper’s name for promotion purposes, was finally forced to write a formal letter of resignation and to turn the letter over to the press. Since then the Hussars have been meeting, drilling, wearing their uniforms, and have acted as strutting ushers at Wild West rodeos.

At present less than 70 members belong. The Hussars, though they’ve gone through the trouble of incorporating, have decided not to bother with the nationwide expansion Empey talked about so glibly, and Empey has gone back to writing for the pulps and to promoting whatever else he can.

As a matter of fact, Empey has since experienced the one great disappointment in any would-be dictator’s life, that of having the rank and file tell him just where to get off. No matter of life or death was this revolt; it concerned only the little cockade which the Hussars wore on the up-turned side of their hat brims. This little cockade symbolized something



“Some say I’m a Nazi . . .”

or other to Empey; he wanted it *so* much. It looked well on him when he stood before the mirror. But the Hussar’s mighty rank and file didn’t like it. The cockade was voted off, the brim turned down and Empey hasn’t been the same man since.

McLaglen must get a real laugh out of this. Empey treated him with a most unmilitary and unAmerican lack of loyalty. If you want to hear the McLaglen Light Horse run down, talk to Empey. Or rather, just let him talk as is his wont. To listen to the Hussar chieftain, crowned with his rakish campaign hat from which the last vestige of that cockade has been removed, you’d think that the McLaglenites, and not the waterfront workers, were the riff-raff.

Empey, for all his long years of experience as publicity-pursuer and promoter, overplayed his hand. Where Lighthouse Victor kept his troop together for the publicity, prestige and bellicose satisfaction it gave him, Empey figured to play the same game as an ultimate source of gain. The official Hussar booklet clearly pointed toward fascist political ambitions, realizable through a corps of men, armed, mounted and trained in “musketry, lance, sabre, pistol, riot duty.”

On June 26, 1934, occurred a touching ceremony. Under the guidance of Captain Guy Empey—“Canadian war hero,” according to publicity releases—160 members of the Light Horse “voluntary cavalry troop” presented a “handsome silver-hilted sword” to Victor McLaglen, “commanding colonel.”

A climax in the course of McLaglen’s Hollywood Light Horse cavalry came a couple of weeks before Christmas last year. With a sixty-piece band and its own “Comely Cadet Corps,” the Light Horse under Colonel McLaglen came in

a body before the tiled tower of William Randolph Hearst’s Examiner building and “staged a special goodwill serenade in honor of the newspaper.” The C. C. C. of the H. L. H. was a uniformed unit of young ladies wearing smart military uniforms and were under the command of Major Miss Florine Balc.

Following this testimonial for Hearst and his paper, the Light Horse parade marched on to the Friday night fights at the American Legion’s Olympic Stadium. Into the squared ring strode the Commanding Colonel; garbed in full regalia “he looked like a combination of a Canadian Mounted Policeman, General Goering and Mussolini,” according to a sports writer who sat under the flow of ungrammatical oratory.

The Colonel spoke on America for Americans, as heavy ropes of gold braids swung from his shoulder under the prognathic jaw. But the fight fans grew restless. They had come to see the boys push leather, not to hear McLaglen’s hoarse bombast repelling the Reds. Mutterings grew so audible, that McLaglen gave way to loud demands for fisticuffs. He does better, however, before the camera with a director who has the patience to drill his lines into him, one by one.

Not without sacrifices was McLaglen able to stage his Hearst serenade. Even before that unforgettable occasion, a Hollywood scribe—Lloyd Pantages again—confided to his readers that McLaglen “out of his own pocket has been paying for mounts for a troop of ex-cavalry men just so’s he and they can keep their little unit intact.” One might draw inferences between McLaglen’s financial difficulties and his serenade of Hearst; but if the old boy came across it doesn’t show up in any cessation of McLaglen’s worries.

Public appearances of “the little unit” have been colorful. The Light Horsemen “attired in spruce blue and gold uniforms and carrying long lances . . . gave demonstrations of . . . mounted sword play and tent pegging” on various occasions, duly mentioned in the press.

The Light Horsemen thunder on, through new paths. On October 14th, for example, the Los Angeles Times (rockribbed reactionary HooverRepublican) carried a full page streamer, reading “HOLLYWOOD SQUAD TRIPS LIGHTHORSEMEN . . . M’LAGLEN’S IN DEFEAT.” No battle between police of the film capital and the blue and gold horsemarines; no fracas of long lancers versus nightsticks and teargas—just a soccer game at “Vic McLaglen’s Sport Center” with the Hollywood team kicking a victory out of “the screen actor’s Lighthouse club.” The Lighthouse players were not mounted, nor did they carry lances, but the sporting section carried columns in which the names of McLaglen and the Lighthouse were mentioned often and again. McLaglen at the moment is still engaged in an endeavor to popularize soccer or rugby as a relaxation from his newest legal activities.



“Some say I’m a Nazi . . .”

The business of keeping the unit intact has sometimes strained McLaglen's temper, to judge by the little "disputes" which sometimes crop up in the press. McLaglen is being constantly dragged through local courts. At the very moment, for instance, Victor is being sued for \$20,250 for assault and battery allegedly committed in Lighthorse headquarters on John E. Epper, riding academy master of nearby Glendale. He charges that the film star beat him late last August in the Colonel's quarters on Riverside Drive.

This is the third similar action which has been brought against McLaglen. Early in 1932, a film extra, Thomas R. W. Hughes, sued for \$10,382 charging that McLaglen had deliberately punched him too hard during a scene in the shooting of a picture.

In September of last year, Dr. R. C. Mann, oculist, sued for \$13,000, charging he had been literally thrown out of the Light Horse under circumstances strangely resembling, but not quite duplicating, those set forth by Mr. Epper. Dr. Mann alleged that he, then a Lighthorseman with all the privileges thereunto appertaining, had objected to McLaglen's caustic criticism of the riding of Company B during full regalia maneuvers of the troop. McLaglen thereupon ordered the rank and file objector thrown out for insubordination, it would appear, to judge by the testimony offered by the plaintiff in court. Not Victor, but his brother, Cyril, gave Dr. Mann the "bum's rush," it was charged. But he did it too strenuously. "Throw him out", to Cyril, means "throw him out."

American justice has been good to the Lighthorse founder-leader. He won both cases. He is hopeful of beating his third assault case.

Mr. Epper states that he was invited by Colonel McLaglen to the Horseman's headquarters to discuss plans and obtain permission for McLaglen's daughter to ride one of the Epper horses during a show. He says McLaglen called him into the office, locked the door, and then "unmercifully assaulted" him, kicking him, climaxing the treatment by jumping on Epper's chest. Epper, some 100 pounds lighter than the master of the Lighthorse, obviously is not built to bear up under McLaglen leapings. He claims to have escaped only by springing out of the window, then collapsing. McLaglen, for his part, denies everything. He claims he merely shouted at Epper to get out, which so frightened the plaintiff that he jumped out of the window, fell into a pile of kindling and hurt himself.

The Epper case is not only the third assault charge, but approximately the twelfth court action in which McLaglen has been involved. His last legal set-to he won from the drum and bugle corps of the American Legion post at San Gabriel, California. They sued him for \$6,250 breach of contract, asserting they had joined the Light Horsemen on the strength of the Colonel's promise to send them to

the American Legion convention.

Later, they declared, Victor had refused to keep his promise and moreover had taken steps to dispossess them of the fancy uniforms and musical instruments which constituted their equipment as Light Horse musicians.

Several members of the corps posed for newspaper photos, clad only in sheets and carrying trumpets, cymbals and drumsticks, thus graphically illustrating the plight they claimed had been precipitated by Colonel McLaglen. Superior Judge Burroughs, nevertheless, ruled that McLaglen had made no contract binding him to provide the sixty Legionnaire musicians with either transportation, uniforms or musical instruments.

Other legal combats fought by McLaglen in consequence of his Light Horsemanship included two suits brought in the spring of this year. Maud Gorton de Mend and C. F. Bowers were plaintiffs in the first by virtue of their ownership of the Breakfast Club bungalow which they had leased to the Light Horse troop from May, 1934 to March, 1935. They asked \$1,000 damages, charging, first, they had wrongfully been deprived of the catering of five entertainments staged during this time by the troop, and finally that the Light Horsemen had inflicted injuries upon the premises. They listed lighting equipment damaged, broken windows.

A couple of weeks later, George R. Cooper sued for \$524, assertedly due him for sound installations made for the Light Horse. He attached \$600 of Light Horse funds in a downtown bank.

McLaglen is not the only member of the clan whose name and fame have been dragged through the courts because of the patriotic Light Horse lances. Brother Cyril has already been mentioned in connection with the charge of brutal bouncing from the Light Horse premises. Brother Arthur, also a screen actor, recently filed suit for divorce from Marion L. McLaglen, alleging she made disparaging remarks about him to mutual friends, criticizing his membership in the Light Horse. His petition quoted her as saying he was "married to the horse."

The Light Horse has not, however, been a strictly family affair. Nor has McLaglen welcomed to its ranks all of his brothers. Back in March, 1932, occurred the notorious suit of Captain Leopold McLaglen, 6 feet-5 inches, against his smaller brother, Victor. Leopold asked \$90,000 charging that Victor had injured his reputation by telling a credit investigator that Leopold was "no good and should be watched."

Leopold, who claimed to have been holder of a jiu jitsu championship, charged further that Brother Victor had maliciously attacked him in order to wreck his budding screen career. He accused Victor of saying there was room for only one McLaglen in Hollywood. Leopold maintained that he had been the protagonist in many of the military and adventurous exploits Victor now claims as his own.

Victor McLaglen has been a frequent court performer on other occasions, involving suits for unpaid bills, auto accidents and the like. These occasions lack the patriotic and social significance of his adventures as mentor of the Light Horse. At the moment, he has just resigned himself to paying \$886 to the government, after a decision by the board of tax appeals. The croupiers at Agua Caliente, fashionable pleasure resort, had refused to allow him to pyramid his bets at chuck-a-luck, he said. But the U. S. board of tax appeals refused to allow him exemption for the resulting losses.

Breaking off abruptly, for there is as yet no end in sight to this career of illogical mounted patriotism in Hollywood, we leave the last word to McLaglen as reported in the columns of the Los Angeles Post-Record during his court struggle with the sixty disgruntled members of the Legion drum and bugle corps.

"Victor McLaglen, chief light horser of the much publicized McLaglen Light Horse troops, seemed to be sorry today that he had become an American citizen.

"Heaving his nattily-clad six-foot-four bulk angrily about the ante-chamber of Superior Judge Wilson's court, the amateur military commander relieved himself of a long harangue about the amount of trouble his American citizenship has caused him.

"Its got me staggering on the ropes," the actor continued. "Preaching gospel of America first has brought me nothing but a lot of grief and woe. I've had more lousy trouble since I became an American citizen than I had all my life before that!"

"While a bodyguard of a dozen of his hand-picked storm troopers looked on in awe and admiration, McLaglen juttied out his jaw and proclaimed his 100 per cent Americanism. . . .

"Some say I'm a Nazi, and some say I'm a Fascist; but here it is straight: I'm just a patriot of the good old-fashioned American kind."

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*A Slight Case Of Murder.* By Damon Runyon and Howard Lindsay. (48th St. Theatre.)

Obviously put together for the sole purpose of making money, this "comedy" of four corpses misplaced at Saratoga appears too labored to do even that. The movies, for which it is marked, may speed it up and make a better thing of it. With one gag (the corpses), one reformed bootlegger, one Mary Boland character, one representative of a fine old family to be shocked at the noise—the whole thing is a seventh carbon copy of a lot of old wheezes (and badly smudged). More "escape" plays of this grade, and even the race-track boys (who were fooled into seeing this one) will be escaping to the nearest social play.

M. D. T.



# The Swastika Is Dancing

BY EDNA OCKO

In the August issue of *NEW THEATRE*, an article entitled *Mary Wigman—Fascist?* appeared. Many readers, among them outstanding dancers and critics, deplored the lack of factual data in the accusations, and the uncompromising tone taken by the writer. The material was based on a German letter, an appeal to Mary Wigman to leave the Hitler camp and join with those artists protesting his dictatorship. This letter was sent by dancers to the International Dance Bureau in Moscow through Piscator, the world famous theatre director now in the Soviet Union. The dancers asked to remain anonymous, fearing recriminations against their families in Germany. For those seeking the basis for the printed article, the original letter, translated, appears in the Fall issue of *New Dance Bulletin*.

It is to the current issue of the *Dance Observer*, however, that we must turn to find not only the substantiation of all the statements made in the *NEW THEATRE* article, but additional facts that would make inaction on our part seem evasion and cowardice. These facts are now supplied by Virginia Stewart, the American contact woman for the Wigman School in Germany, who conducts the annual dance tour to the Wigman School each summer, and we can be sure her sources are authentic enough. The following statistics are from her letter:

The Tanz-Buhne, under the direction of Rudolph von Laban, is a department of the "Chamber of Culture," of which Herr Goebbels is chief; Goebbels the madman and murderer; responsible for the death of many brave artists who defied Nazi rule, responsible for the outlawing of hundreds of scientists, musicians, composers, artists; responsible for the sending of thousands of innocent victims in all fields to concentration camps. He, then, is overseer and director of "culture" in the dance in Germany. In exchange, perhaps for a tour through fifty-seven cities in Germany and Poland, Mary Wigman is responsible for seeing that each student in her school, entering each class, gives the Hitler pledge. Also, although Mary Wigman, for years, fought the teaching of classical ballet, today classical ballet is *compulsory* for her students.

For one month this past summer a dancers' camp, under the auspices of the Tanz-Buhne, was held in a town near Berlin. Von Laban composed *Camp March* for the group "symbolizing the new work of the dance in Germany today." What new work can it be? Does it deal with concentration camps? Military camps? The Brown Shirts marching? The Army? What other activities are sponsored with any enthusiasm by the German government today?

The Tanz-Buhne plans an International Dance Festival to be held in Berlin in conjunction with the Olympic games in July 1936. (It is important to note here that this festival is planned to take place one month after the International Dance Festival to be given in Moscow and Leningrad by Intourist, to which dancers have already been invited.) "Forty-two nations will be invited to send each its best dance group. It is planned to have the winners of the Festival perform during the Olympic weeks as guests of the German government . . . Mary Wigman will give special classes for Olympic guests." Besides her *Dances of Women* (children, church, and cooking is the slogan for the women of Germany today), Mary Wigman will present new dances and *Totenklage* (*Lament of the Dead*), truly an inspiring index to the entire tone of the Nazi-sponsored dance movement. With this festival, Hitler hopes to bolster up interest in participation in the Olympics, and hopes to forestall potential boycotts by athletic organizations.

How will the dancers in all countries respond to this invitation? At the time of Hitler's ascension to power, all outstanding spokesmen and representatives of the arts in Germany, whether in literature or music or science, in the theatre, or in the film, who were bravely anti-fascist, were sent to concentration camps, or managed to find their way out of the country. Artists like Hans Otto, renowned actor, were murdered by the Nazis. Expatriated in the world today are Hans Eisler, Einstein, Pabst, Piscator, Toller, Brecht, Wolf, but not a single leading dancer of Germany had the courage, the broader vision of the fascist regime and what it meant to culture, outspokenly to defy Hitler. Wigman, von Laban, Palucca, sought refuge under the swastika, supporting without demur the most barbarous, anti-cultural government modern civilization has ever witnessed. What palliating circumstances can be found to condone these people? Fear for their lives? They were too well known to the world for the Nazis to affect any serious harm on them. Fear for their families? They could have found refuge in other countries for their families as well. Fear for their art? Is there a single country that would not have welcomed them as artists and dancers and given them haven? But—the government paid them well, subsidized them, afforded them fascist protection, and they jumped on the nefarious bandwagon.

The German International Dance Festival *must* be boycotted. There must be world-wide condemnation of the activities of Rudolph von Laban and Mary Wigman. What dancer in America today wishes to be the guest of a government that does not hesitate to torture and murder artists

because of their religion, their anti-fascist sentiments, their progressive approaches to art? The New Dance League stands unalterably opposed to war, fascism, and censorship. All members of the League are asked to sign that pledge; all members are now asked to live up to that promise. Dancers who are not a part of the New Dance League are asked to join with the organization in this campaign against Goebbels and his "Chamber of Culture." Just as athletes the world over agitate for the boycott of the German Olympics, so must the dancers, as social-minded artists, whether conservative, liberal or radical, join with the rest of the clear-thinking world and not permit themselves to succumb to the tantalizing and desperate endeavors of the German government, aided and abetted by people like Wigman, to make Germany seem to the outsider, a patron of the arts, and an encourager of free artistic creation.

Mary Wigman is lost. Her greatness is dimmed. She is part of a cult of hate, swathed in a flag that destroys progress and culture. She has betrayed her art for thirty pieces of silver. It is for us who have studied her method, it is for groups like the New Dance Group, who drew their first creative dance strength from the New York Wigman School, to urge even more strongly that all ties be severed between those dancers teaching the German method and Mary Wigman. Let us not blindly include in this boycott all German dancers in America today, who as graduates of the Wigman School years ago still teach her technique. Let us rather persuade them that they, too, must be urged to join with us in protest. This is the first issue on which the entire dance front over the world can be mobilized; let us not permit sentimentality and emotional ties to obscure our vision.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

Because of publishing the complete text of *Private Hicks* in this issue, *NEW THEATRE* was forced to postpone several important articles of the drama section until December. These include: the second part of the Theatre Workshop article on make-up by Tamara Daykarhanova; an article based on the actual "case histories" of a number of drama relief workers; reviews of *Porgy and Bess* and other new musicals; and a feature review of Dmitri Ostrov production of *Squaring the Circle*, the famous Soviet comedy-farce of self-criticism which is now playing at the Lyceum Theatre on Broadway. *NEW THEATRE* invites readers to send in letters commenting on their reaction to plays, movies and dance recitals as we are anxious to renew our "Voice of Audience" department as a regular feature of the magazine.



## Reinhardt's "Dream"

CHARMION VON WIEGAN

Martial, the Roman satirist, once said to an actor: "When I wrote those verses, they were mine; when you read them, they are yours." This is usually the case whenever anyone produces a classic, especially Shakespeare. The text becomes the material out of which the producer hews an image as the sculptor hews a statue out of marble. And just as Booth's Hamlet is another man from Henry Irving's, so the play takes different shapes in the hands of a Granville Barker or a Gordon Craig.

Shakespeare we always have with us; the new element is always the director who interprets and the actors who execute.

Hence the current show at the Hollywood Theatre is significant only as an alloy of Shakespeare, the Warner Brothers and Max Reinhardt. Plenty has been said about Shakespeare and the Warner Brothers; in this case the plum in the pudding is Max Reinhardt.

Before the war Reinhardt was a progressive and creative force in the European theatre. Like Meyerhold and Stanislavsky, he began his theatrical career as an actor; he was trained in Otto Brahm's naturalistic theatre in Vienna. This acting experience was one of his chief assets as a producer; he always retained a special sympathy for the actor, and knew how to transform the drab naturalistic theatre of Ibsen into a frame of luxurious color and life and three-dimensional reality in which the actor could function at his best.

Contrary to common belief, Reinhardt was never interested in ideas; his chief qualities were an exuberant sensuousness, a lusty humor and a lyric sensitivity to externals. This was his quintessence as a showman, and it was shell-shocked by the war. From the moment the cannon began to roar across Europe, Reinhardt receded into his soul; from that moment he ceased to contribute anything new to the stage internally. Nevertheless his theatre continued to expand externally until it reached the elephantine proportions of the Grosse Schauspielhaus. On the procrustian bed of this hippodrome, with its

vast circus stage, Reinhardt stretched out old plays until their structure cracked apart. His sensuous love of color and ornament degenerated into ostentatious display; his lusty humor became vulgar clowning; and his lyric sensitivity became vaudeville bathos. Since his theatre no longer represented a new idea, Reinhardt's immense artistic and technical skill could serve no real purpose; it could no longer advance into undiscovered territory. Reinhardt was surpassed and overtaken by new directors in postwar Germany — Georg Jessner, Jurgen Fehling, and Erwin Piscator.

But it was not the war alone which transformed Reinhardt into an impresario of empty spectacles. *The Miracle* was produced in Berlin in 1913 — and this already sounded the retreat from the theatre of ideas to the theatre of spectacle. Compared with the theatre of Ibsen, this was a retrogressive step. The false and musty mysticism and medievalism introduced by Maeterlinck replaced thinking.

I saw Reinhardt's production of *Midsummer Night's Dream* in Berlin in 1913; I saw his production of the same play in New York in 1924; now I have seen the Warner Brothers version of it on the screen. The film version is by no means worse than the Berlin production, yet it seems infinitely worse. The reason for this is simple: the world has changed radically since 1913. Reinhardt is more or less the same, the production is more or less the same — but the audience is not the same and the theatre is not the same. Both the art of the theatre and the technique of the movies have advanced far beyond the once revolutionary revolving stage, but Reinhardt has not kept pace with that advance. He could not advance because he has never followed a consistent set of ideas. His theatre was composed of a coat of many colors, patched all over with brilliant borrowings. He never had the integrity and singleness of purpose which marks the Stanislavsky theatre, and which enabled it to flourish not only after a world war but after a mighty revolution which changed the whole fabric of society.

The naturalistic theatre of Stanislavsky and of Reinhardt had two things in common, however. They both emphasized the actor, and they both alternated sharply between naturalistic and mystic plays. On the eve of the World War, both theatres tried to peer into the face of contemporary reality and to escape it. Both theatres spoke for the middle classes whose only refuge from the impending cataclysm was art. At the moment when Stanislavsky was taking the Russian intelligentsia into Maeterlinck's mystic forest in search of the Bluebird, Reinhardt took the German Spiessburger into the enchanting glades of *Midsummer Night's Dream*. This was in 1905 — the year of Russia's first social revolution. Germany understood the meaning of that event, yet this was the moment Reinhardt chose to present Shakespeare's eternally glamorous and lovely world, the free life of the imaginary forest, the joys of love and summer and dream, of music and tender lyricism — all opposed to the harsh world of the time. In the same way, Reinhardt later offered the stained-glass beauties of *The Miracle* with its maidens and jongleurs and banquets and jousting and feudal lords and prelates — all on the eve of the world war when everyone who knew anything knew it was inevitable.

The starry dust of such fairy tales for immature adults lulls the bourgeoisie into a false sense of security.

So now in 1935, thirty years after the first production of *Midsummer Night's Dream*, the Hollywood magnates have wakened to the charms of this production. In the sixth year of the economic crisis, with millions of unemployed and with a second world war looming on the horizon, the politicians and bankers are ballyhooing another era of "prosperity," and Hollywood prepares the path to that promised land with the dulcet music, the dreams and the verbal delights of Shakespeare.

For such obvious propaganda it is very useful to have a cultural label; Shakespeare serves better than Dick Powell or Ginger Rogers. And a famous European director, the embodiment of the best continental "art" is more effective than one

of the Warner Brothers. But what about production itself? It is the screen equivalent of the substitute foods which the Germans ate during the war blockade. Adulterated by Hollywood, Shakespeare is reduced to Ziegfeld's Follies in a sense. Had these Follies been intentional, they might have had their own. There is nothing wrong with translating Shakespeare into the terms of our times. If these times are characterized by Follies girls, jazz and wisecracks, let us have them; *Midsummer Night's Dream* after all, pure entertainment; it need not be set up on a transcendental pedestal.

But Reinhardt was not content with entertainment. He tried to go in for reactions at once and ended by going where. He wanted to offer an "art" sop to the sophisticates, crude but to the "vulgar" and cute effects for children. Shakespeare was sacrificed to the box-office in a fantastic way, seeking to reach the lowest common denominator of the vast American movie audience. Reinhardt burst like the prodigal chameleon on the Scotch plaid.

The "art" in this film is a complete failure. The sloppy sentimental interludes, the pompous "arty" settings, the pseudo-terious German folklore effects in the forest are about as artistic as Maxfield Parrish. Fortunately the horseplay is good. Reinhardt cannot ruin Joe E. Brown; the true artist gets a good part of his opportunity. Shakespeare did not have good parts, and Joe E. Brown is an artist. There is a grand style in clowning as there is in tragedy, and Joe E. Brown has style, and within its limits a grand style. He shines like a diamond in a pile of paste jewels. I would be glad to suffer through the show again in order to see the part where the artisans are rehearsing their play of Pyramus and Thisbe. These comic interludes are the best in the entire elaborate production. They are played in the full-blooded manner common both to the Elizabethan stage and to Broadway, although in the performance before the Duke the work of Broadway triumphed in the form



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of the Warner Brothers. But what about the production itself? It is the screen equivalent of the substitute foods which the Germans ate during the war blockade. Neatly adulterated by Hollywood, Shakespeare is reduced to Ziegfeld's Follies in a forest. Had these Follies been *intentionally* executed they might have had their charms. There is nothing wrong with transposing Shakespeare into the terms of our own times. If these times are characterized by Follies girls, jazz and wisecracks, let's have them; *Midsummer Night's Dream* is, after all, pure entertainment; it need not be set up on a transcendental pedestal.

But Reinhardt was not content with pure entertainment. He tried to go in all directions at once and ended by going nowhere. He wanted to offer an "artistic" sop to the sophisticates, crude burlesque to the "vulgar" and cute effects to the children. Shakespeare was sacrificed to the box-office in a fantastic way, and in seeking to reach the lowest common denominator of the vast American movie audience Reinhardt burst like the proverbial chameleon on the Scotch plaid.

The "art" in this film is a complete flop. The sloppy sentimental interludes, the pompous "arty" settings, the pseudo-mysterious German folklore effects in the forest are about as artistic as Maxfield Parrish. Fortunately the horseplay is good; even Reinhardt cannot ruin Joe E. Brown. When the true artist gets a good part he gets his opportunity. Shakespeare did write good parts, and Joe E. Brown is a true artist. There is a grand style in clowning as there is in tragedy, and Joe E. Brown has style, and within its limits it is a grand style. He shines like a diamond in a pile of paste jewels. I would be ready to suffer through the show again in order to see the part where the artisans are rehearsing their play of Pyramus and Thisbe. These comic interludes are the best scenes in the entire elaborate production. They are played in the full-blooded manner common both to the Elizabethan theatre and to Broadway, although in the performance before the Duke the worst side of Broadway triumphed in the form of

pure slapstick. Joe E. Brown plays Thisbe perfectly; he has not been bluffed by the bardolatry of the pseudo-intellectuals into acting unnaturally. In these scenes, James Cagney seems to have been badly directed; yet, strangely enough, there is one scene in which he reveals a new aspect of himself. When Bottom finds the ass's head is gone, when he feels his face and knows he is a normal man again, the effect Cagney creates is not at all funny, but pathetic and rather wistful. Perhaps Cagney has emotional possibilities which Hollywood, specializing in "types" as Ford specializes in cars, has not begun to fathom. Perhaps Cagney is more than a comic tough.

The other actors were unfortunately cast or unintelligently directed. With the exception of Ian Hunter none of them appears to be familiar with Shakespeare's language. What is left of the poet's text is lost in naturalistic hysteria or swallowed like hot soup. In Shakespeare's play the lyric poetry is of great and unusual beauty; in the film it is wholly lost. This would not have mattered, perhaps, if Reinhardt had succeeded in translating verbal magic into visual imagery; we might not miss the words if we got their visual equivalent. But this is precisely what Reinhardt failed to do; none of Shakespeare's dream world is realized either in the dialogue, or the visual images or the acting

The photography, the one field where you might expect Hollywood to triumph, is a dismal failure thanks to Reinhardt's lack of a central idea. The production is a mass of unrelated scenes lumped together without rhyme or reason. The first and last acts in Athens are done in a pompous baroque manner; the Elizabethan costumes fail to create an Elizabethan style. The forest scenes — the body of the play — are in this film a potpourri of historical artistic styles. In immediate sequence — and sometimes mixed up in a single shot — you will see a "real" forest in the naturalistic manner, then silhouettes of the moon in the pine trees in the manner of German Christmas cards, then dazzling gauze screens with stars in the manner of the Munich Art School notion of medieval fairyland, the ghosts of Klinger and von Stuck. Here is a ballet of beautiful girls who look like dancers rather than the fairies they are supposed to be, despite the invisible wires which waft them across the sky. Here are the fantastic gnomes of the conventional German fairyland with papier-mache masks, and real live bears and a unicorn somewhat less real. Here is a vaudeville dance-act where a beam of moonlight is captured by Darkness, while her twisting white arms gradually disappear into the starry sky in the best Roxy style. In fact, everything is here — except a firm directing hand and a sharp eye to hold the film together in some unity.

In this, his first film, Reinhardt still works with the methods of the revolving stage. But the screen is a much more flexible medium than the stage: it permits infinite distances and plastic effects which cannot be achieved in the theatre. Then

why attempt to transfer the technique of the stage to the screen? The camera is relentless; it exposes all the trickery of the stage props and makes them utterly unreal and unconvincing.

Incidentally the camera compelled Reinhardt to abandon one of his greatest contributions to the contemporary stage. Reacting against the drabness of the Ibsen theatre as directed by his old teacher Otto Brahm, Reinhardt introduced brilliant and sensuous colors. The black and white screen robbed him of this advantage; but it also revealed that Reinhardt understood color only in its decorative and external values rather than its plastic values. For, if you really understand plastic, you can suggest color even in black and white. In *The Whole Town's Talking* — Edward G. Robinson's remarkable film of a petit-bourgeois dreaming of power — there was a shot of a room with blank walls, a table, a chair and a hanging light which suggested the quality of a Cezanne canvas.

To film *Midsummer Night's Dream*, you must either stylize the forest and its fairy dwellers or else make the whole thing appear naturalistic. You cannot mix the two in such grotesque contrasts of style as mark the scenes between Puck and Oberon. Poor Mickey Rooney is directed to play Puck in a manner so hysterical that you cannot hear a word he says; the spirit of the forest, the Elizabethan Pan emerges as a gutter snipe. Victor Jory as Oberon effectively conveys the quality of almost sinister other-worldliness; but the Reinhardt trappings ruin his performance; his talent is buried behind that ubiquitous starry curtain. Often in the scenes between Oberon and Puck, the edge of the starry curtain ends in the exact middle of the screen. Behind the curtain, on one side, stands Jory-Oberon; on the other, in a naturalistic set, free of gauze, stands Mickey-Puck. They speak to each other across the border which separates the mystic stage style of prewar Germany and the realistic style of the Soviet film, and you suddenly realize how thoroughly Reinhardt has mixed his hash. Mickey Rooney is not Puck at all; he is a homeless waif from *The Road to Life*.

Does this dualism of style mirror Reinhardt's own artistic dilemma? The theatre of the German petit bourgeoisie has been killed by Hitler. That theatre was liberal, literary, and artistic — and these things are taboo in the Nazi theatre. Reinhardt has lost his natural audience, and, despite his guest productions here, he does not yet know his American audience. It, also, is a petit bourgeois audience. Undoubtedly he has been told that the American petit bourgeoisie is culturally behind the German; he should also have been told, that it is technically in advance of anything Europe has known. Hollywood's technique, however, is sterile for lack of men who can use it in the service of a great, creative idea. Such men exist, but the principles upon which Hollywood is organized frustrates them, as was abundantly evident in the case of Sergei Eisenstein.

# "PRIVATE HICKS"

BY ALBERT MALTZ

The Prize-Winning Play of the New Theatre League—American League Against War and Fascism Contest for One Act Anti-War and Anti-Fascist Plays

PLACE: A midwestern industrial city.

TIME: The present.

*A storeroom in a factory partially cleared for the emergency needs of a strike. On the right there are three cots at right angles to one another. At the left, in a corner, are some piled boxes with "Boller Stamping Mill" marked on them.*

*An overhead drop lamp lights up the scene.*

*The cots are untidy with clothes thrown over them.*

*The entrance to the room is at the left.*

JAMES LEE, private in the National Guard is stretched out on one of the cots. He wears nothing but his heavy underwear. His uniform is hanging over the foot of the cot. He is young, about seventeen, tall, slim almost to being frail, fair faced. From the distance outside the factory comes the blurred noise made by a large crowd of people. It is uneven, sometimes rising to a roar, sometimes subsiding to a low murmur. Occasionally the general din is punctuated by a sharp noise—a police whistle shrilling, the rattle of a motorcycle, the rising wail of a siren, the sound of glass being shattered somewhere in the factory.

LEE turns from side to side and finally buries his head in the pillow, pulling the sides of it over his ears.

JEFFRY SNYDER comes in drying his face and neck with a yellowed towel. He is twenty-two, good-sized, sturdy, with a strong bony face. He is limping and the right leg of his underwear is slit. There is a bandage around his ankle.

SNYDER: (Looking down at Lee) How the hell can yuh sleep?

LEE: (Quickly raising his head) What?

SNYDER: I said how the hell can you sleep?

(Lee looks sourly at him.)

LEE: I dunno. (He buries his head in the pillow again.)

SNYDER: They shoulda sent us back to the armory. (Carefully he dries each ear. Outside the noises are increasing. He stops to listen. Then he sits down. From outside there is a sudden clear yell of "Scab, Scab!" Then the voice is lost in a roar.)

SNYDER: Sounds like it's gettin' tough out there. (He lies down on his back. Outside a police whistle blows twice and then a voice yells "Get back there . . . Watch that roof, watch that roof." Immediately there are a series of low explosions. Snyder sits up. Lee starts.)

SNYDER: Gas guns! Hear 'em?

LEE: (Raising up on an elbow) Yeah!

SNYDER: It's sure gettin' tough out there. (From outside there is a cry of "Gas, Gas!" It is a woman's voice, high, piercing and terrified. Two more gas shells are shot off. Snyder swings around with his feet on the floor. Lee sits up.)

SNYDER: Maybe we're missin' somethin'.

LEE: I ain't missin' anything I don't wanna miss. (He lies back on the bed.)

SNYDER: That's the trouble with a strike. Most times yuh gotta be in the gas squad t'see any action. (He lies down again.)

LEE: That crowd's comin' closer again . . . This ain't a strike, it's a war. The whole town's pilin' in.

SNYDER: I sure bet we're gonna miss somethin'. (He laughs.)

Boy, how'd you like t'go home an' tell everybody you was in Cawley an' didn't see any action?

LEE: Swell!

SNYDER: What?

LEE: (Lifting his head) I'd like it swell! (He lies down again.)

SNYDER: For Chrissakes, you ain't scared, are yuh? (Lee doesn't answer.) Hell, this is more fun n' I ever had in my life.

Wait'll yuh see—I'm gonna join up with the regulars maybe . . . a feller was tellin' me, yuh join up now—if there's a war—yuh get promoted right away.

LEE: That's great!

SNYDER: Aw for Chri—(From outside there is a sudden burst of rifle fire. In one motion Lee sits bolt upright in bed and Snyder bounds to the floor.) Holy Mackerel!—That ain't gas! (He runs out of the room. Lee gets up slowly. There is another volley. Outside there are cries and shrieks and yells. Then the sounds of the crowd rapidly recede. Lee walks up to the door and then back to his bed. A whistle shrills. He lies down. Almost immediately a bugle blows assembly. He jumps up and stands uncertainly. Snyder runs in and grabs for his uniform.)

SNYDER: Hey—that was shootin' awright . . . I looked out of a window . . . Jesus Christ, there's six of 'em layin' down at the end of the street . . . It's a battle!

LEE: Are they dead?

SNYDER: Snap into it. Didn't you hear the bugle? (Lee starts to dress feverishly.)

LEE: How many dead?

SNYDER: Somebody said two . . . I told yuh we were gonna miss somethin'. (Lee stops dressing.)

LEE: I'm under orders to stay here. I got hit by a rock.

SNYDER: So was I. Don't be dumb—they're callin' everybody. (Lee goes back to his dressing.) Don't go out without your mask, kid. Two lunkheads in Company C got caught with their pants down . . . They got 'em laid out inside an' they're rollin' all around the place . . . Where the hell are my shoes . . . It must be the new vomit gas. Yuh eat that, yuh know it plenty . . . (The bugle blows inside the factory. Frantically.) Where's my shoes? Jesus, I ain't got a mark against me.

LEE: Under that bed. (Snyder dives for them.)

SNYDER: Yuh nervous, kid? I hear the first time yuh do any real shootin' yuh gotta change your drawers. (They dress in silence for a moment. Then Snyder grabs up his rifle and shoots the breach.) Me an' Mamie . . . My meat, boy, they're handin' out thirty rounds to each man. (He runs out. Lee hurriedly finishes his dressing. In the factory a whistle blows twice. Lee grabs his steel helmet and rifle and runs for the door. Before he reaches it, it bursts open and a soldier is flung inside. A corporal follows him in, a revolver held in his hand. The soldier is Gerald Hicks, twenty-two years old. He is thickset, good-sized. His face is lean and hard. He wears no helmet and his uniform is half open. Over his left eye there is a long cut, with the blood still wet on it. The Corporal is Cavanaugh, twenty-six, built like a barrel with the face of an unintelligent bulldog.)

CAVANAUGH: Over there—c'mon, quick! (Hicks goes over to the bed on the far side of the room. Lee starts out.)

CAVANAUGH: Wait a minute—

LEE: Assembly call, sir—

CAVANAUGH: I wantcha t'guard this guy.

LEE: What can I—?

CAVANAUGH: (Interrupting.) Orders, yuh dope! (Lee stands still. Two privates push into the room. Petak, the first, is about eighteen; Williams, twenty-three.)

PETAK: Where's Hicks?

CAVANAUGH: (Wheeling.) I told you to go to your quarters!

WILLIAMS: What're you doin' with Hicks?

CAVANAUGH: You're under arrest, don't you know that?

PETAK: You slugged him once an' you ain't gonna do it again.

CAVANAUGH: (In a fury.) What the hell is this, the Boy Scouts? Get out of here! (They stand still.) I'll plug yuh, yuh

bastards! (*He shoves Petak in the face.*) Get the hell out! (*He slams the door on them. Outraged.*) Jesus! (*There is a pause.*) Your gun loaded?

LEE: Nossir! (*Cavanaugh hands him a box of cartridges. Lee loads his gun.*)

CAVANAUGH: Nobody comes in here exceptin' they got a pass from the Major!

LEE: Yessir! (*Cavanaugh puts his revolver back into his holster and saunters slowly over to Hicks. He pushes his helmet back on his head.*)

CAVANAUGH: Well—you pulled somethin' didn'tcha? An' you're sure gonna get a medal for it. (*Hicks looks at him. His face is tight.*) Yuh bastard, I always knew you was yellow. (*He goes to the door. To Lee.*) If he tries t'get out, shoot him! My orders! (*He goes out. Silence. Then Hicks sits down. He is trembling. Silence again.*)

LEE: You're Jerry Hicks, ain't yuh? (*Hicks looks up, then down at the floor again.*) I seen you play on the ball team. I come from Canton, too. (*A sudden shudder goes through Hicks.*) Yuh sick? (*Hicks jumps up and starts to walk up and down the length of the bed. In a low voice.*) Hey—what's up? What're you in here for?

HICKS: (*In a burst.*) Shut up a minute, will yuh?

LEE: Awright—you don't have t'get tough about it. I don't give a damn.

HICKS: I ain't gettin' tough. (*He walks and then abruptly sits.*) I threw my gun down. They told us to shoot. I fired once n' then I stopped. (*There is a pause.*)

LEE: Threw your gun down?

HICKS: Cavanaugh sure clipped me one. My head feels like it's gonna break in half.

LEE: My God—did you say you threw your gun down *in action*?

HICKS: Whatsamatter, you deaf? I'll write you a letter.

LEE: No . . . listen . . . I just . . . Jesus, whaja do it for?

HICKS: (*Jumps up and walks.*) For fun, what do yuh think?

LEE: Well how should I know why you did it? That's a hell of a thing—throwin' your gun down. (*There is a pause.*)

HICKS: I'm gonna get jugged for this awright. (*He walks. To Lee.*) Yuh get the clink for it, don'tcha?

LEE: Naw—they won't do that. Just send yuh home maybe.

HICKS: Maybe!—They'll do more'n' that.

LEE: Aw, no they won't.

HICKS: Yeah? . . . Jeez . . . I stuck my head in somethin' this time . . . (*He walks.*) I'm shakin' all over. (*He sits down and laughs.*) I must be scared or somethin'. (*There is a pause.*)

LEE: Listen, whaja do it for?

HICKS: (*In a low voice.*) Aw . . . I'm sick of the whole damn business. I ain't gonna be a strikebreaker.

LEE: For Godssakes—

HICKS: (*Jumping up.*) That ain't what I signed up for! I ain't a scab! (*He walks.*) My ol' man's been out on strike . . . he had a damn good reason . . . What the hell, if I get a job, I'm liable t'go out on strike too, ain't I?

LEE: But Jesus, throwin' your gun down—that's a hell of a thing. (*There is a pause. Then Hicks sits.*)

HICKS: Don't I know it? . . . I musta been up in the air awright. (*A pause. Hicks jumps up again.*)

HICKS: I'm tellin' yuh twenty or thirty got shot. (*He walks.*)

LEE: Yeah? My God! . . . Yesterday there was a kid I saw—

HICKS: (*Interrupting.*) Yuh shoulda seen it, that's all—yuh shoulda seen it. I don't take that stuff. I just don't take it! (*A pause—his voice is low.*) An' since ten o'clock, that vomit gas . . . right in the middle of 'em . . . They ain't hogs! They ain't wild animals or somethin'! (*He sits. Silence. Suddenly he groans and holds his head.*)

LEE: Your head hurt, huh?

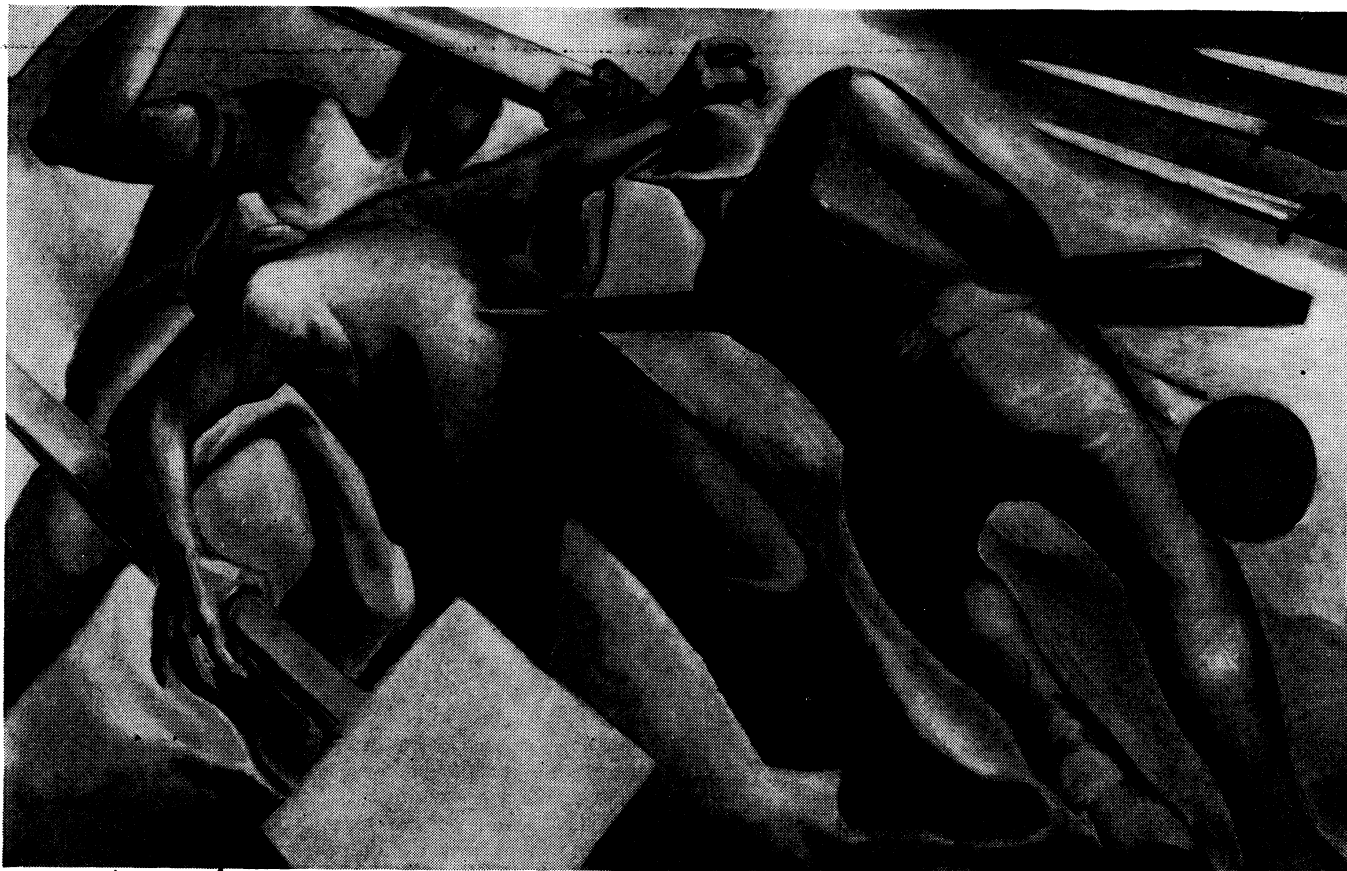
HICKS: Like it was gonna split.

LEE: I'll get yuh some water.

HICKS: Dont'cha do it. You'll get in trouble. They're gonna—

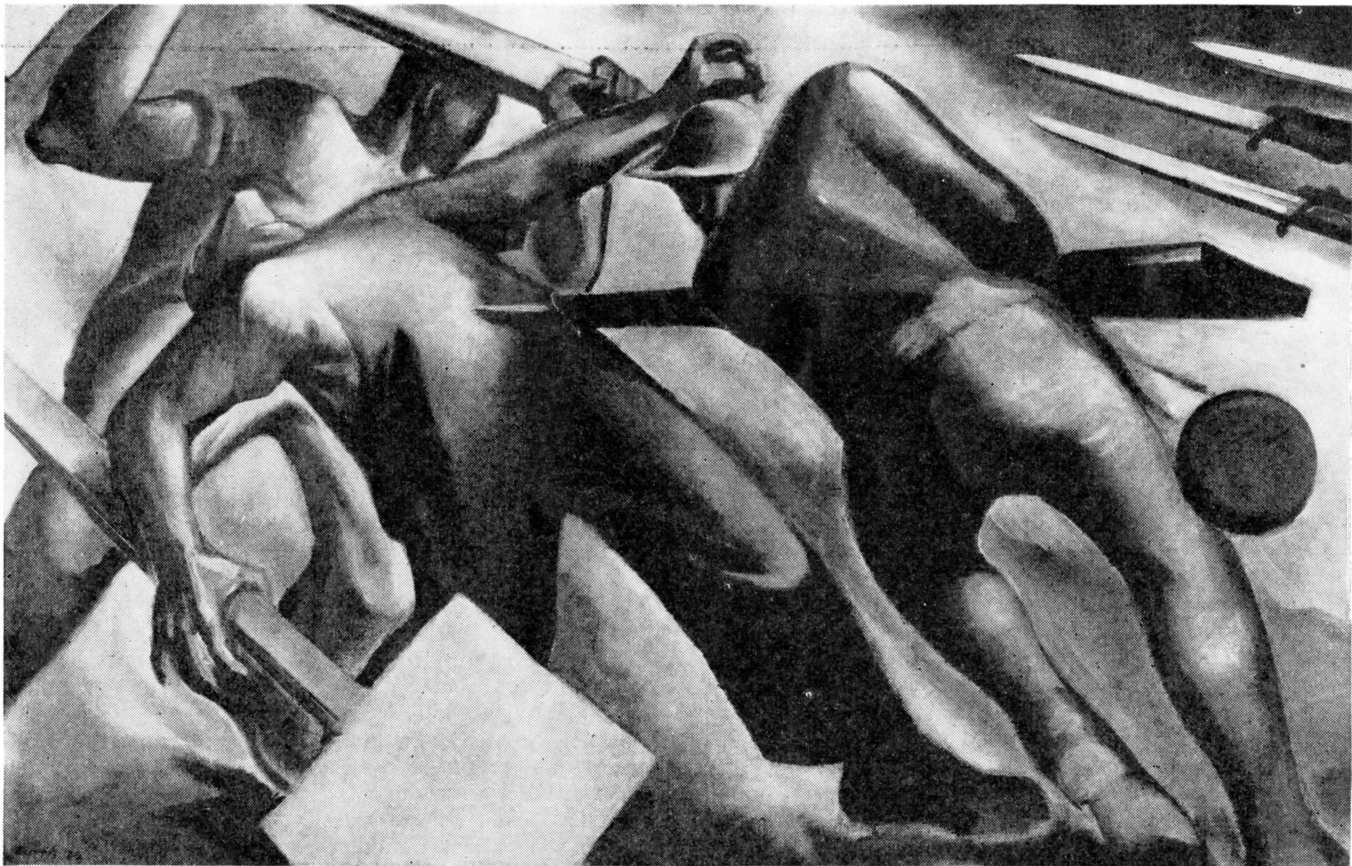
LEE: (*Hushing him.*) Psssst— (*He puts his back to the door. Someone pushes on it.*) Private Lee on guard. Nobody allowed in.

CAVANAUGH: (*Outside.*) Corporal Cavanaugh. Open up. (*Lee opens the door. Cavanaugh comes in with Major Eccles. He is*



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Jacob Burck



THE NEW DEAL

*Jacob Burck*

tall, lean, about forty-four. He wears glasses. A not uncommon type of American business man. A Lieutenant, about twenty-eight, accompanies him.)

CAVANAUGH: (Pointing at Hicks.) That's him! (The Major slowly walks over to Hicks. There is a long silence.)

MAJOR: I know you, don't I? What's your name?

HICKS: Gerald Hicks, sir. Company B.

MAJOR: That's right—Hicks. Your Captain spoke to me about you. You're on the baseball team.

HICKS: Yes sir.

MAJOR: And you've got a good record, too.

HICKS: Thank you, sir.

MAJOR: Thank you? Thank you? What good's your record now? (Hicks doesn't answer.) Do you realize what you've done? (Hicks is silent.) Answer me, boy.

HICKS: Yes sir.

CAVANAUGH: Stand at attention! You're being spoken to. (Hicks stiffens. The Major looks at him, walks away for a pace, comes back.)

MAJOR: (Pointing his hand at him.) I've got a boy as old as you are . . . If he did a thing like that, I'd disown him . . . Did you hear me? (Hicks is silent.)

CAVANAUGH: Whatsamatter, you deaf?

MAJOR: Now don't interrupt me, Corporal.

CAVANAUGH: Excuse me, sir.

MAJOR: There's enough on my mind. (He walks a pace.) Sit down, Corporal, sit down. (Cavanaugh sits. To Hicks.) Well, Hicks, what are we going to do about it? . . . You don't look like a coward to me, eh? Are you? . . . Maybe the Corporal's lying?

HICKS: No sir.

MAJOR: You admit it, eh? . . . Corporal, over again—what did he say?

CAVANAUGH: (Jumping up.) Captain Hymes gave the order to shoot, sir. I repeated it.

MAJOR: (To Hicks.) You heard the order?

HICKS: Yes sir.

CAVANAUGH: The squad fired one volley—then Hicks started to yell. He threw down his gun.

MAJOR: What did he say?

CAVANAUGH: (Reading from a small notebook.) He yelled "Stop it! Goddamit, don't shoot—don't shoot—everybody listen—don't shoot!"

MAJOR: "Don't shoot!" You not only threw down your own gun but you wanted others to do the same? . . . Answer me!

HICKS: I don't remember.

MAJOR: O! . . . that's fine! . . . And two members of your squad stopped firing. You don't remember that, either, do you?

HICKS: No sir. I got hit in the head.

CAVANAUGH: I hit him with the butt of my revolver, sir.

MAJOR: You've got a good natured corporal, Hicks. Another man might have shot you . . . You don't remember! . . . Just got excited! . . . No harm meant? . . . No intention to disaffect the other troops?

HICKS: (Bursting out.) I'm sick and tired of all the dirty work! (There is a dead silence.)

MAJOR: Dirty work? What dirty work?

HICKS: I mean . . . I . . . I don't think the National Guard oughta shoot at unarmed strikers. (There is another dead silence.)

MAJOR: Oh! . . . Well now . . . We're getting someplace! (He takes a leaflet out of his pocket and continues to look at Hicks.) Corporal, this little business . . . where did you get it?

CORPORAL: Just before we got rushed, sir—a man threw down a whole batch of 'em from a roof.

MAJOR: What? Did you arrest him?

CAVANAUGH: No sir. I sent a detail but he beat it.

MAJOR: Hm! (He turns to Hicks.) Hicks,— (Suddenly he wheels back to Cavanaugh.) Where are the others?

CAVANAUGH: What?

MAJOR: The other leaflets? You said he threw down a batch.

CAVANAUGH: I—I don't know, sir. I guess they're still layin' in the street.

MAJOR: For the whole brigade to read, eh? Good work, corporal! Fine!

CAVANAUGH: I'm sorry, sir. There wasn't no time. The—

MAJOR: (To the Lieutenant.) An order to all platoon commanders: Every non-commissioned man in the ranks is to be searched immediately. Anyone found with these leaflets on him is to be arrested. And see that the corner of Post and Williams streets is cleaned up.

LIEUTENANT: Yes sir. (He salutes and goes out.)

MAJOR: If there are any of them left by now! . . . Fine, Corporal! (He turns to Hicks.) This little Valentine, Hicks . . . appealing to the National Guard men . . . "Fellow workers." . . . "Don't scab" and so on . . . Very clever! And what do you think is down at the bottom? "Refuse to shoot at unarmed strikers." Seems like you've been reading things, Hicks. (Silence.)

MAJOR: Well?

HICKS: Yeah—I read it!

MAJOR: You admit it, eh?

HICKS: Why shouldn't I read it?

MAJOR: Why shouldn't you? A leaflet telling you not to obey orders—why shouldn't you read it?

HICKS: There's no law against readin'.

MAJOR: Don't be so cocky, my boy. You haven't been throwing spit balls . . . We're going to do more than keep you after school for this . . . So—no bad intentions—just got excited. And when you told the other men not to shoot, that was a coincidence, eh? (Hicks is silent.) You little liar! (A pause.) Hicks—how many of these leaflets have you given out?

HICKS: None, sir.

MAJOR: Lying again!

HICKS: I ain't. I only had one myself.

MAJOR: Where'd you get it?

HICKS: A man gave it to me this morning. I was on sentry duty.

MAJOR: A National Guard man?

HICKS: No, a civilian.

MAJOR: Don't you know you're not supposed to talk to civilians?

HICKS: I wasn't talkin' to him. He just walked up to me an' said "Here's somethin' for yuh t'read." Then he beat it.

MAJOR: What did you do?

HICKS: (Sullenly.) Nothin'!

MAJOR: Why not? You're under orders.

HICKS: I ain't under orders t'shoot a man in the back.

MAJOR: If necessary you are—you are! Why didn't you go after him, arrest him?

HICKS: I was supposed t'stay on my post.

MAJOR: Yes!—You mean you didn't want to arrest him! (He wheels on Lee.) Private Lee—did Hicks give you any of these leaflets?

LEE: (Straightening up.) No sir.

MAJOR: If you're lying too, you'll be courtmartialed.

LEE: I swear to God, sir.

MAJOR: Did anybody else? Did you hear about them? (As Lee starts to speak.) Wait, now . . . Think about it, son . . . If one or two rats have gotten in here and are wearing our uniforms,—we don't want them to get away with it, do we? You help me set up a courtmartial, boy, and there'll be a commission in it for you.

LEE: I swear to God, sir.

MAJOR: (Furiously.) You swear too much. (He walks away. Suddenly he stops.) By the way, Hicks, what did you do with that leaflet? (There is a pause.)

HICKS: (Slowly.) I guess I stuck it in my pocket.

MAJOR: (Snatching it from him.) You guess! You know damn well where you stuck it. Why didn't you tell me you had it?

HICKS: (Sullenly.) You didn't ask me.

MAJOR: Right up to scratch, aren't you? And if you didn't think you were going to be searched, you wouldn't have told me now, would you?

HICKS: Why shouldn't I tell you?

MAJOR: Yes, why shouldn't you! . . . Hicks, listen to me—if you got this from somebody else, if you're not the center of it, it'll be worth your while to tell me.

HICKS: I told you the truth already.

MAJOR: Then why didn't you arrest that civilian?

HICKS: (Sullenly.) Why should I?

MAJOR: You fool! Don't you realize that man was a paid



agitator? (*Hicks is silent.*) What did he look like? Was he a foreigner?

HICKS: No sir.

MAJOR: Was he a Jew? He was, wasn't he?

HICKS: Naw—he had red hair.

MAJOR: (*Disgustedly.*) Huh! (*He paces.*) Proud of yourself, aren't you? Quite sure you did right? (*He suddenly turns and flings up his hands in exasperation.*) All right! Bust up the National Guard. To hell with the United States. Turn this country into Russia. Is that what you want?

HICKS: Nossir.

MAJOR: But you threw down your gun! You deserted in action! Why?

HICKS: I don't think the National Guard—

MAJOR: Oughta shoot at unarmed strikers.—I've heard too much of that already. What the hell do you care about the strikers?

HICKS: I care a lot. My ol' man's been on strike. Jesus, do yuh think I'd like t'see him shot down?

MAJOR: (*Shouting.*) That's none of your business! You're in the National Guard. You're not supposed to take sides.

HICKS: (*With great excitement.*) Ain't we takin' sides? Ain't the National Guard in here on the side of the company?

MAJOR: No. it's not!

HICKS: Yeah? I been around. I ain't been in China. I seen what's been happenin'!

MAJOR: Keep quiet! Quiet! (*Silence; he paces.*) You don't know what you're talking about. You're being led by the nose. Those goddam agitators stirring everybody up . . . Jews, most of them, foreigners . . . (*He wheels on Hicks.*) Those men don't want to strike. They're being stirred up.

HICKS: (*Sullenly.*) Yeah? When my ol' man talked strike, there wasn't nothin' stirrin' him up but his pay check.

MAJOR: (*Shouting.*) You can't talk like that. What's going to happen if the National Guard men talk like that? (*He walks and then turns sharply.*) We can't have strikes now. The country's trying to pull out of a depression. They oughta be stopped.

HICKS: (*With the same sullenness.*) Yeah? Well my ol' man ain't head of no insurance company. He's a hand moulder in an iron foundry an' he don't think so an' neither do I . . .

MAJOR: Shut up! You've been thinking too much. You're going to think yourself right into a penitentiary. (*Silence.*)

MAJOR: (*The Lieutenant comes in.*) Have any leaflets been found?

LIEUTENANT: Still searching, sir . . . The Mayor's on the phone.

MAJOR: What for?

LIEUTENANT: He wants you to send for more troops, sir. He says—

MAJOR: (*Shouting.*) I don't need any more troops.

LIEUTENANT: He says the whole town's coming out to the picket line, sir. There's liable to be twenty thousand there and there may be a general strike.

MAJOR: To hell with the general strike! What's he trying to do, make a fool out of me? I can take care of the situation with the troops that are here.

LIEUTENANT: What shall I say, sir?

MAJOR: Tell him to mind his own business. Tell him what this city needs is a dose of army control. Damn politicians! (*He turns away.*)

LIEUTENANT: He's already spoken to the Governor, sir?

MAJOR: What? (*A pause. His voice is choked.*) All right, I'll talk to him. (*He turns on Hicks.*) You see what you're doing? How can I tell the Governor I'm keeping order when my own men desert me? What do you think my superiors are going to say about the discipline I exert? (*He goes to the door.*) You think things over, son, and you'd better tell me the truth about those leaflets. You're in a mess. I can tell you that. (*He goes out. The Lieutenant follows him. A pause. Then Cavanaugh pushes his helmet back on his head and saunters up to Hicks.*)

CAVANAUGH: My, my—are you gonna look pretty in a suit of stripes wit' your head shaved? (*To Lee.*) What do they give you for this—ten years or maybe it's only five?

HICKS: Hey, Lee,—where's the smell of skunk comin' from?

CAVANAUGH: Wise guy, ain't yuh? . . . I'm laughin'. (*He goes out. A pause.*)

HICKS: How the hell can a snake like that be a good first baseman?

LEE: Aaah—they put a stripe on a guy an' yuh can't trust him anymore. All them officers! Look at Eccles—gettin' his picture in the papers. Boy, he's hot stuff now, he don't wanna go home an' run an insurance business. (*A pause.*)

HICKS: I'd sure like t'go home. (*He sits down heavily.*) An' I sure ain't. (*A pause.*) I guess I'm gonna be jugged awright . . . Huh, my girl should see me with my head shaved—would I get passed up.

LEE: Aw—don'tcha think about it, kid. They won't do anything to you.

HICKS: Yaah—that leaflet n' everything.

LEE: Say—whereja get it?

HICKS: Like I told Eccles—from a civilian. He musta been a striker.

LEE: Huh! I thought you was bullin' him.

HICKS: Naw—what for?

LEE: Those guys got guts, huh?—comin' up to the lines like that? . . . Say, yuh wanna know somethin'? I heard a coupla guys talkin' about those leaflets. Sure, last night.

HICKS: No kiddin'?

LEE: Sure—but why should I tell on 'em. Hell, they ain't rats. I know 'em from home. Just because the Major's lookin' t'court-martial somebody an' get a promotion.

HICKS: Huh! (*A pause.*) I saw one of those guys shot down. He was big, with a bald top an' grey hair on the side. I know who shot him, too. Right in the belly.

LEE: He won't last long. Not if it's the belly.

HICKS: (*In a low voice.*) Yuh wanna know somethin'? For a minute I thought he was my ol' man.

LEE: What do yuh know? Looked like him, huh? (*Silence; Hicks gets up.*)

HICKS: How'd Cleveland make out yesterday?

LEE: Lost a double header.

HICKS: (*Shakes his head.*) I had two bits on 'em in a pool.

LEE: They're a bunch of cripples.

HICKS: Yeah! (*A pause.*) You gotta job?

LEE: Aw—soda jerker.

HICKS: I ain't had a job since I got outa school. (*He shakes his head.*) All the time I spent hangin' around . . . I wanted to make some jack, too. I got a girl.

LEE: Yuh wanna get someplace yuh gotta have a racket.

HICKS: I been goin' with her three years . . . Her name's Millie, only I call her Dopey . . . she'll think I'm crazy now, awright.

LEE: I wisht I could get a steady . . . but soda jerkin' . . . seven nights a week. Jesus! . . . I sure wisht I could get in a racket. (*He snaps up to position.*) Somebody's comin'. (*There is a knock on the door. He opens it. Nurse Thompson comes tapping on her high heels. She carries a basin of water, scissors, bandage, etc. She is thirty, thin, attractive, with a hard, bright, sexual way about her.*)

NURSE: Major Eccles sent me in here to fix somebody up. (*She sees Hicks, goes over to him and looks at the cut.*) That's not so bad. You won't need any stitches. (*To Lee.*) It'll be better if we're alone. (*Lee hesitates. She smiles at him.*) C'mon, General, stand guard outside. I'll call you when I'm through.

LEE: (*Smiling back.*) Yes ma'am. (*He goes out.*)

NURSE: (*Softly.*) It'll be better if you lie down. (*Hicks lies down. She puts the basin on the floor and sits beside him on the cot. She washes the wound.*) Some sock, eh?

HICKS: Aw—

NURSE: Don't worry . . . two or three days—it'll be all healed. (*She bends over him gently.*) This is going to hurt. (*She dabs at the wound with an antiseptic. Hicks takes a deep breath.*) All over! (*She pats him.*) Some men just can't take any pain. I like a man who doesn't act all over the place. (*She goes for the bandage. Hicks follows her with his eyes. Returning, she suddenly stops and looks at him.*) Well—you're not so bad looking when you're cleaned up. (*She sits beside him again.*) Bet you've got some pretty girl waiting for you back home, eh?

HICKS: (*After a slight pause.*) Naw—I ain't.

NURSE: Say—Well, somebody's missing something . . . Better lift up on your elbow. (*She starts to bandage him, leaning close.*) You know, you're in a jam, kid. (*A pause.*) It's awfully serious, what you did. (*A pause.*) I'd hate to see a nice boy like you go to prison. (*A pause.*) You know what's the worst of it? The Major's afraid there's someone in the National Guard giving out those leaflets. (*Hicks looks at her, looks away, doesn't answer.*) Sure. I heard him talking. He's up in the air about it all right. (*A pause.*) Listen, kid, you won't tell anyone, will you? (*A slight pause. Hicks' face is a blank.*)

HICKS: No.

NURSE: (*Bandaging him.*) I think he found out who gave you the leaflet. (*There is a pause. Then Hicks looks at her.*)

HICKS: No kiddin'?

NURSE: I mean it!

HICKS: (*With exaggerated concern.*) What kin I do?

NURSE: It was someone in Company C, wasn't it?

HICKS: Huh—it was not. I ain't worried now. It was Company B.

NURSE: Company B, eh?

HICKS: Sure.

NURSE: Well you oughta tell him, kid . . . you'd get off easier.

HICKS: Aw—I don't want t'get anybody else in trouble.

NURSE: I know—but why take the blame? . . . I'm giving you good advice. (*A slight pause.*)

HICKS: Yeah, I guess that's right.

NURSE: I'd hate to see a nice looking boy like you sent away . . . Why don't you tell me?

HICKS: Well, I dunno. (*A pause.*) Aw, what the devil . . . Why should I take the rap for somebody else?

NURSE: That's right.

HICKS: Sure—a guy's gotta look out for himself, doesn't he?

NURSE: Of course he has to.

HICKS: Sure . . . It was Captain Pomfret.

NURSE: Who? (*She is so startled she stops bandaging him.*)

HICKS: Captain Pomfret—Company B.

NURSE: I can't believe it.

HICKS: Sure. There's a Red organization in here. They get money from New York an' Captain Pomfret's the leader of it.

NURSE: I can't believe it.

HICKS: Sure . . . Jesus, I found out . . . They got people in every Army an' Navy unit an' in the government an' they're gettin' their orders from General Pershing . . . He's in on it too. (*The Nurse gives a vicious tug on the bandage and stands up.*)

NURSE: Wise guy, huh?

HICKS: (*Swinging around off the bed.*) Sure, an' if you wasn't a dame I'd knock hell out of you. Tryin' t'suck around me. Go on, get out of here.

NURSE: I'd like to see how wise you are in front of a court-martial.

HICKS: Beat it. (*The Nurse stops at the door.*)

NURSE: I suppose I might as well finish that bandage.

HICKS: Go on, beat it. (*She goes out, slamming the door. Lee comes right in.*)

LEE: Hey, whatsamatter with her?

HICKS: Goddam alley bat.

LEE: What'd she do, goose you? (*He laughs.*)

HICKS: Eccles sent her in here to find out about those leaflets.

LEE: No kiddin'?

HICKS: Little tart. I know what her racket is. She's new here an' she's been sleepin' with Eccles so he'll recommend her for a permanent job.

LEE: What do yuh know!

HICKS: Fix this bandage will yuh?

LEE: (*Fixing it.*) Ain't that like all the officers . . . Always gettin' the gravy? Jeez, I wish she'd lose her way an' climb into my cot some night.

HICKS: I wish she'd lose her way an' fall out of a window—That's too tight.

LEE: Okay. (*A pause. Lee lowers his voice.*)

LEE: Say, how about you? You had lotsa women?

HICKS: Aw—

LEE: I ain't . . . That's one reason I joined the N. G. You know,

there's dances once in a while . . . I thought maybe I'd pick up a swell babe . . . (*He is finished with the bandaging.*)

HICKS: Better get back over—Cavanaugh—(*Lee goes back to the door.*) Eccles must be gettin' ready to fry me good.

LEE: No he ain't.

HICKS: (*Sitting.*) Yaah—sendin' her in here—an' all that talk about prison . . .

LEE: Don'tcha think about it . . . Tell yuh somethin' . . . I wisht I had your guts, kid.

HICKS: Aw—for Chrissakes—a lotta good that'll do me anyway—in the can . . . (*He jumps up.*) Jeez, I don't wanna go to prison . . .

LEE: Listen, kid—Psssst— (*He straightens up. The Major comes in.*)

MAJOR: (*Quietly.*) Lee, you'll find Cavanaugh downstairs . . . Tell him to get the men in his squad and wait outside till I call him. (*Lee salutes and goes out.*) Sit down, Hicks. (*Hicks sits. The Major sits on th bed opposite and takes his hat off. He wipes his brow.*) I'm calling the squad for a specific reason. I'll tell you why in a minute. (*A pause.*) No leaflets have been found. Two boys did have them but they picked them up from the street. All this is in your favor . . . Now I want the truth. You swear that you got it from a civilian?

HICKS: Yessir.

MAJOR: And you never saw him before?

HICKS: No sir.

MAJOR: You swear it?

HICKS: (*Almost pleading.*) Yes sir.

MAJOR: All right . . . good. (*He gets up and paces. Then he sits again.*) I want to help you, Hicks. I don't like to see a boy like your ruin himself for nothing. Do you believe me?

HICKS: Yessir.

MAJOR: I've got a boy your age . . . He'd be in the National Guard now if he wasn't at school. And if he made a mistake, I'd like to see him given a second chance.

HICKS: Yessir. Thank you.

MAJOR: (*With emphasis.*) And I'm not anxious to have a blot like this on a brigade of mine.

HICKS: Yessir.

MAJOR: (*Leaning forward.*) Hicks—I want to believe that you threw down your gun because you were excited—lost your head. I want to forget all the rubbish you were talking before. (*A pause.*) You understand me? (*Another pause.*)

HICKS: (*In a whisper.*) Yessir.

MAJOR: Hicks, so far only half a dozen men know what you did. But it'll travel. It can disaffect the other troops. It's bad—and it's got to be stopped . . . There are two ways of stopping it, Hicks. One is courtmartial—make an example out of you . . . The other is to pass it off, forget it . . . Hick's, your squad's outside. If you tell them you lost your head, if you're willing to go back to the lines today, right now, to obey all orders, I'll—

HICKS: (*Choked.*) Nossir. I ain't gonna shoot no more.

MAJOR: Prison, Hicks? A Federal penitentiary for three years, maybe five? That's what it means! I'm not bluffing! You deserted! In war time you'd be shot . . . Prison's a bad place, Hicks. (*A pause.*)

HICKS: (*In a burst.*) Why don't you send me back? Why don't you just kick me out?

MAJOR: No. (*Silence.*) This is the only thing I can do . . . I'm trying to help you, boy.

HICKS: How do I know? How do I know you're even gonna play square.

MAJOR: You've got to trust me.

HICKS: Not after you sent the nurse to suck around me I won't.

MAJOR: (*Jumping up.*) Don't rub me the wrong way, boy. I don't have to answer to you for what I do . . . Don't be a damn fool. It's better for my own record if you go back. Can't you see that?

HICKS: (*In a wail.*) I don't wanna shoot any more.

MAJOR: Maybe you won't have to. I hope you won't. But you've got to go back . . . and you've got to obey orders. (*A pause.*) What about it, Hicks?

HICKS: (*Choking.*) No—

MAJOR: Prison, Hicks? (*He pauses.*) Is that what you want?

(*He pauses again.*) What for, boy? Who are you being a martyr for? The strikers? They don't even know who you are. And you're not going to be a hero. Don't imagine that. Your name won't be in the papers. You'll be a Federal convict for three years and no one'll know about it. The strikers won't know . . . The National Guard men won't know . . . Maybe you'll come out sick. Your record'll follow you . . . No job . . . What for, Hicks, what for? (*Silence, Hicks has crumpled into himself.*) MAJOR: You'll ruin your life, boy. (*Silence. Hicks is sobbing inside himself. Softly.*) I'll call the squad in. And when we get back home, I'll see that you're discharged. It'll be forgotten. (*He pauses.*) I'll call them now, boy. (*He waits.*) HICKS: (*With a low gasp.*) Awright. (*The Major walks to the door and speaks quietly.*) MAJOR: Corporal! Cavanaugh! Bring your squad in. (*He walks back, leaving the door open. He paces. The men file in: Snyder, Petak, Williams, another private, Cavanaugh. Lee comes in last.*) CAVANAUGH: All present, sir. MAJOR: Shut the door. (*It is shut. The Major continues to pace. His tone is quiet.*) Men, something very unfortunate happened this morning. You all know about it . . . I've talked with Private Hicks . . . It was his first time in action, he lost his head and got scared. He's sorry now . . . I'm going to give him another chance. (*He stops pacing.*) Private Hicks, attention. (*Hicks stands up. He looks at the squad and then averts his eyes.*) Is what I just said true? HICKS: (*In a whisper.*) Yessir. MAJOR: Repeat after me: (*A slight pause.*) "I'm sorry for what I did." . . . repeat it, boy. HICKS: I'm sorry for what I did— MAJOR: "For this disgrace to my squad, to my officers and to the National Guard." HICKS: For this disgrace to my squad, my officers, an' the National Guard. MAJOR: "I am grateful for this opportunity to get back my standing." HICKS: I am grateful for this . . . to get back my standing. MAJOR: "I will go back to the line of duty immediately—" HICKS: I will go back to the line of duty immediately— MAJOR: "Ready to carry out all orders—" HICKS: Ready to carry out all orders— MAJOR: "If I'm ordered to shoot—" HICKS: If I'm ordered to shoot— MAJOR: "I will obey"— HICKS: (*In a whisper.*) I will obey. MAJOR: And I will show— HICKS: (*With a sudden cry.*) No, I won't do it. I won't shoot! I— MAJOR: Shut up! HICKS: Don'tcha do it, fellers—don'tcha break the strike— MAJOR: Silence! Silence! (*Hicks is quiet, trembling. The Major glares at him, breathing hard. Silence. Then the Major speaks. He is still looking at Hicks and his back is to the others. His voice is low.*) Squad—attention!! . . . To quarters—march! (*No one in the squad moves. They are staring at Hicks.*) MAJOR: (*Turning his head.*) March! (*There is the barest pause; then the men quickly file out. With his eyes on Hicks, in the same low tone.*) Corporal—those men are to be kept alone. No one is allowed to see them or talk to them. They will be sent home tonight. CAVANAUGH: Yessir! (*He salutes and goes out.*) MAJOR: Private Lee—on guard—fixed bayonet— LEE: Yessir. (*He sets his bayonet.*) MAJOR: Outside! LEE: Yes sir. (*He goes out. There is a long pause.*) MAJOR: (*In the same tone.*) Private Hicks—at nine in the morning—court-martial! (*He stands looking at Hicks. Then he goes out. Hicks is alone. His fists are clenched, his body is tense, he stares unseeing. Lee opens the door and sneaks in.*) LEE: (*In a whisper.*) Jesus, kid— (*Hicks starts.*) HICKS: Yuh better get outside. LEE: The hell with it . . . I wisht I was goin' with yuh, Jerry. HICKS: Naw—(*Silence.*) Listen, will yuh do somethin' for me?

LEE: Sure, what do yuh think? (*He looks hastily out of the door and then back to Hicks.*) HICKS: When yuh get home—look up my ol' man—305 Ash-tabula— LEE: (*In a whisper.*) Yeah, I got it— HICKS: He's gonna think I'm yellow or somethin'. LEE: No he won't. HICKS: Tell'm—what the hell—tell'm I didn't wanna scab. He always usta say a scab was the lowest thing on two feet anyway. LEE: Sure. HICKS: Tell'm—anyway, he wouldn't want somebody shootin' at him if he was on strike—an' the way I figured the guys on strike here ain't different. LEE: Sure, I'll tell him. (*Silence.*) Anythin' else? HICKS: Well—yuh can tell'm . . . if he wants t'visit me or somethin' . . . maybe there'll be a chance. LEE: Yuh want me t' see your girl? HICKS: Yeah—tell her . . . (*He pauses.*) Aw, tell her t' get married or somethin' . . . A guy's gotta . . . do what he thinks . . . don't he? LEE: Sure. HICKS: A guy can't be yellow. LEE: You bet. HICKS: (*With sudden passion.*) Listen—don'tcha let 'em get away with it. Tell every guy yuh know what happened. Tell 'em not t' shoot anymore. LEE: You bet . . . Jesus Christ, if I get my hands on those leaflets, I'm gonna pass 'em around. I'll get every guy in the company t' learn 'em by heart. HICKS: (*Laughs.*) That's the stuff . . . That's okay, kid. That'll do a lot. That'll get places. LEE: Sure, I'll tell the strikers. They'll do somethin'. They'll get it in the papers. HICKS: That's the stuff! That's the way . . . (*He smiles.*) I'm tellin' yuh . . . goin to prison . . . it's awright sometimes! I ain't sorry. I'd do the same thing again. I'd do the same Goddammed thing again. LEE: Sure. (*A pause.*) HICKS: Yuh better beat it, Lee. LEE: Good luck, kid . . . HICKS: Yeah—Good luck to you. LEE: I'll be seein' yuh. HICKS: (*With determination.*) Okay! (*Lee goes out. Hicks is standing. His face is tight.*)

Curtain.

## THE PRIZE PLAY CONTESTS

*Private Hicks* by Albert Maltz received the approval of the judges for first prize in the New Theatre League-American League Against War and Fascism play contest, but second and third prizes have not been decided upon as yet.



ALBERT MALTZ

Announcements of the plays winning these prizes, and the two prize winning plays in the Negro play contest will appear in the next issue of NEW THEATRE along with a critical analysis of both play contests.

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ALBERT MALTZ

Announcements of the plays winning these prizes, and the two prize winning plays in the Negro play contest will appear in the next issue of NEW THEATRE along with a critical analysis of both play contests.

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# Modern Dance Forms

BY PAUL DOUGLAS

It is hoped that the following article will stimulate further discussions on the relative values of our modern dance forms. By no means is this stand that of NEW THEATRE. It presents the personal opinion of Mr. Douglas whose article, by the way, has been considerably shortened because of space limitations. Those who differ with those evaluations expressed by the writer are urged to send in their comment and discussion.

No one has yet written an analysis of the relationship between content and form in the modern dance. As a result, many dancers have merely adopted existing techniques and used them to express material for which those techniques were never intended. Some dance critics have limited themselves to a discussion of whether or not thematic material has been significant and then in an unrelated manner have gone on to an "aesthetic" appreciation of composition, choreography, movement, etc., as though they were two different entities. This approach is completely undialectical because it overlooks the fundamental truism that content and form in any art medium are inseparable. It is my purpose to help clarify and perhaps provoke discussion upon this most vital problem which has been given much thought in the other arts, but seems to have escaped the attention of the modern dance world.

With the exception of the Martha Graham group, there is neither a creative force nor a substantial audience except in the New Dance League. Where else is it possible to see such interest and activity? Like other new movements, the New Dance League has attracted many elements who are using the opportunities presented to them to exhibit their work without understanding the medium in which they desire to express themselves and therefore seizing upon what has already been created without first stopping to analyze whether it could be used. The dance is perhaps one of the most difficult mediums of expression, and to trifle with it is to weaken and ruin its potentialities as a revolutionary weapon.

It is important to trace briefly the evolution of modern dance forms and their relationship to the content or subject matter for which they were used. The modern dance flourished mainly in Germany and in the beginning evidenced itself chiefly in the mechanistic form of the Rudolph von Laban School.

The post-war disillusionment manifested itself in Middle Europe where the modern school, which reached its criterion in Mary Wigman, refused entirely to draw from the world of reality. It assumed a defeatist attitude and found inspiration for its work in mysticism. There was a tendency toward a preoccupation with fate, a

"back to the earth" symbolism, and an appeal for beauty to an objective world completely unrelated to the dancer herself. The social forces which caused this escape were neither understood nor was there an attempt made to cope with them. This resulted in an ego-cult, which rhapsodized "art for art's sake."

The space through which Wigman projects herself is always filled with imaginative spirits of a metaphysical world. Even her affirmations are concerned with chasing away bad spirits of an outer-cosmos. Thus her technique is solely adaptable for the formulation of mystic ideas and has logically become a useful "art" for fascist Germany where Wigman continues to function.

That Wigman's form is of no use to the dancer struggling with contemporary problems is evident when we consider the work of some of her students. Abramovich and Groke were featured recently as Europe's greatest dancers and appeared in New York this winter. Their thematic material was devoid of importance and their movement was confined to hand exhibition. Kreutzberg, who years ago flashed across the horizon because of his superb technical facility has contented himself with a continued repetition of his old dances in which he leaps beautifully but says nothing. Consider too, the promising solo work of Jane Dudley and Miriam Blecher. Originally students of the Wigman School, they have found it necessary to discard the fundamental features of that technique in their modern dances (*Time is Money, Cause I'm A Nigger*).

The Democratic traditions expressed in the Declaration of Independence were the greatest creative force in American art. It produced a Whitman in poetry and Isadora Duncan in the Dance. These great artists believed in the equality of all men and fought for the preservation of those rights attained through revolution. Duncan was the highest development in the bourgeois dance. She had unbounded faith in the values of bourgeois democracy and believed that they could be used for the good of all classes. The technique and forms through which she projected her faith were progressive, in that they were related to the thought content and ideals which she stood for. She rejoiced in the accomplishment of the common man, in the freedom from the yoke of oppression which the Declaration of Independence had supposedly accomplished and which American bourgeois democracy was supposed to foster and develop. To aid her dance she used music most expressive of that ideal which she worshipped (Beethoven, Songs of the French Revolution, etc.). She was consistent too in her constant struggle to glorify the dance as a

healthy, normal, beautiful and natural function of the human body and did more to rid that art of the inhibitions placed upon it by outmoded convention than any of her predecessors. Here chief contribution in the realm of movement was her understanding of the worthlessness of the ballet technique as a truthful expression of her contemporary life.

Her technique was characterized by an erect affirmative stance and a free use of every part of the body, arms extended upward as though accepting and rejoicing in the universality of mankind. The movement was distinguished by a freedom of action and a flowing rhythm and she moved through a large expanse of space. *These fundamental characteristics of her technique are more closely related to our modern dance than the dance forms of any other modern dancer.*

Duncan's limitations lay in the fact that her free flowing gracious technique and her love for humanity was based ideologically on an acceptance of the indestructibility of society as it was then known to her. She was creative just so long as the culture of which she was the highest dance expression was progressive. She broke down when that culture broke down, but her value and importance cannot be underestimated. She showed more truthfully than anyone before her that creation can be beautiful only when it is wholly related to the objective world in which it lives and of whose problems it is an expression.

Not understanding the richness and importance of the material which existed in our own country, dancers such as Ruth St. Denis and Michio Ito, etc., went to the far flung corners of the earth (the Orient, India) for their subject matter. They were able for a while to satisfy the needs of an audience who believed that all the pageantry which they were witnessing was a faithful artistic reproduction of life as it existed outside of America. That the basic problems which existed all over the world were fundamentally alike was unknown to the politically backward and temporarily apathetic enthusiasts of these schools. Ruth St. Denis and her followers were symptomatic of the beginning of a decadent culture unable and unwilling to utilize the life force of their time. Their mystic pictures were untrue because the far flung corners of the earth where they obtained their sources were as much affected by the class struggle as the more advanced countries. There too, the battle between the old and the new was raging and any art that did not express this struggle was unreal and could not survive. The St. Denis School was not rooted in America and it was totally unrelated to anything contemporary. This is obvious to us now, particularly when we remember

that her dancing became so lifeless that instead of projecting dance forms, she had to resort to spectacular pageantry. It is difficult to associate any contributions of hers in terms of movement.

The social isolation of the dance continued even into the years after the crisis had set in, but there were changes in form. The Wigman School because it seemed to represent at least outwardly our machine age greatly influenced the dance in America. Some of the disciples of St. Denis were quick to seize upon the German School as a base from which to develop their own ideas.

The most important figure who emerged from this development was Martha Graham. No longer satisfied with the oriental pageantry of her teacher and yet unaware of the forces within society which were revolting against the destruction of the best traditions in our culture, she became the most developed bourgeois dancer since Isadora Duncan. The very important difference between the two is that Duncan functioned for a rising bourgeoisie and Graham still functions for a declining class, desperately attempting to find values where they no longer exist. Duncan expressed values related to the social forces which were most vital at the time she lived, because to her there was still the possibility of fulfilling the hopes which seemed to be the aims of democracy. Now those hopes and aspirations exist only in the aims of the revolutionary proletariat. Martha Graham being a bourgeois dancer seems to be seeking *external* values wholly unrelated to the dynamic struggle of existing social forces as a source for her material.

Her influence has been so great that those engaged in the development of the modern dance have accepted her success and used her forms without appraising from a dialectic standpoint whether or not her technique can be used in the expression of newer and more vital ideas. They have assumed that because she possesses a great deal of technical skill and perfection in her execution that it is important for them to use at least part of that technique for the expression of their content. Thus, the inseparability of form and content is forgotten by those who in their eagerness to use the dance as a revolutionary weapon seize upon forms which have been perfected for the projection of ideas totally different and sometimes completely at odds with progressive thought and material.

The perfection of Martha Graham's dancing is limited to her own ideology. She will be remembered as the greatest dance exponent of the last stages of capitalism struggling in its final agonies to salvage something out of its chaotic and decaying torment. Her contribution is analagous to that of Proust in literature. Such a contribution cannot be underestimated for it gives us a clear picture of that world we no longer want and a

better and greater incentive for building a better world.

A recent attempt by Graham to apply herself to vital subject matter should be studied. This was in *Panic*, the play in verse by Archibald MacLeish for which she devised the movement. It was a failure because the dance was unrelated to the thought content and idea of the play. Thus instead of there being a synthesis of verse and movement, the dancing seemed superimposed upon the play often distracting from the beauty of the poetry. This was no accident and the result will be similar in all instances where there is no understanding on the part of the creator of the relationship between form and content.

There is discernible in Graham's recent group dances, however, a noticeable change. In *Celebration*, for instance, a greater use of space and more elevation is attained than ever before. This, I believe, indicates the influence of some of her students, who from an ideological viewpoint are more advanced than Graham herself. The change is encouraging. The group has superb technical ability. But it will be wasted unless they continue to depart even more radically from the fundamental features of the Graham dance forms.

It is clear that we must look somewhere else for the beginnings of that fusion of content and form which will make the modern dance a real weapon for the emancipation of culture. I think that the only dancer who has gone a long way in this organic development is Tamiris. She alone has refused to bow to that eclecticism to which most of our younger modern minded dancers are still guilty. She has not sought the assistance of others simply to borrow from them an easy way to synthesize a new technique. Her arrival into the modern dance has been the result of many years of intellectual development and a constant evolution into new forms based upon concepts which were always growing in relation to a greater understanding and intimacy with her objective world. In struggling with these forces she clarified her own position and needs.

Her refusal to adopt bourgeois dance forms is a dialectic negation and in this sense she is the only dancer who is carrying forward the positive tradition of Isadora Duncan. What are the features of her technique?

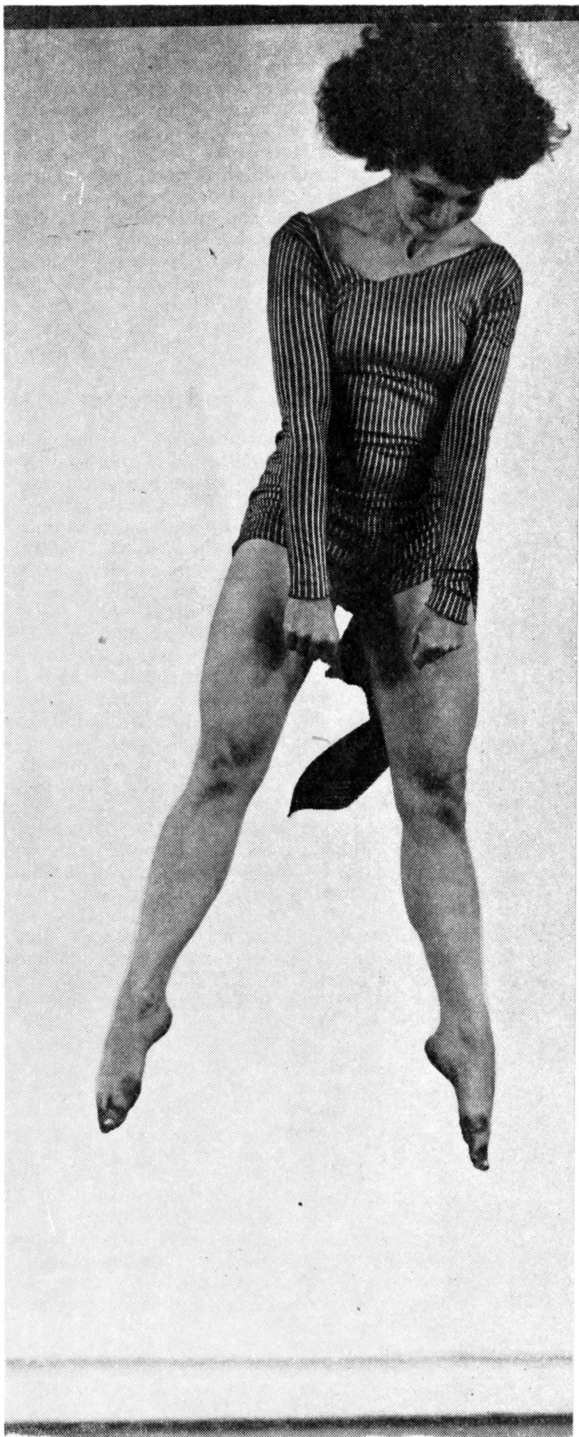
The space through which she moves seems limitless. There is a full use of her entire body in flowing rhythm and it is equally as strong in its mellifluous movement as in its contractions. Candidly aware of the beauty of her body she is unafraid to use it as a valuable asset. Tamiris has seldom sought escape into subjectivism or abstraction. Always conscious of the social forces which were determining her relationship to society, her forms, have never remained static but

are in a constant process of change. Her early work (*Negro Spirituals*, etc., and later Walt Whitman cycle) was firmly rooted in contemporary America. It was always realistic and although she had not yet attained a Marxian understanding of our social problems, she never sought escape from them. Through this natural development she became a modern dancer. Her latest solo compositions (*Flight* and *Escape*) are the most convincing dances she has ever created and they indicate a clarity of preception which promises much for the future. She understands fully that the form of a composition is always determined by the subject matter. And that fundamental truism is the guide to the future of the modern dance.



Tamiris

Photo by Thomas Bouchard



Tamiris

Photo by Thomas Bouchard

# Shifting Scenes

Bert Brecht dramatized Gorky's *Mother* for a Berlin production in 1932. Even then, a full year before Hitler came to power, Fascism was in the air and the cast was forbidden to act the play. In spite of the censor's edict, they went ahead with their production and appeared on the stage reading their lines rather than acting them — the same technique employed by the Newark Collective when *Till the Day I Die* was banned last year.

For a time their ruse succeeded and *Mother* played to enthusiastic audiences, but finally the Nazis triumphed. Helen Wegl, the leading actress and Brecht's wife, was arrested during a performance and the play was banned. Later after Hitler's accession, the cast and authors were forced to flee the country. Now both Hans Eisler who composed the music for it and Brecht are in America, to help the Theatre Union rehearse the play for its opening, November 19. Celia Adler (of the Adler family) will play the Mother. Sylvia Regan, Audience Manager, is already selling several weeks of benefits.

Reversing this international exchange, theatres in Zurich, Prague, and possibly Paris are producing *Engineer*, a new full-length study of a middle class scientist between two class forces. The play is by Rudolph Wittenberg, a German author now living in America, and the Zurich theatre, Volksbuhne, has arranged to tour Switzerland with it. Another piece by Wittenberg, *The Ostriches*, an anti-war play, will be given by the Peoples Theatre in Cleveland on Armistice Day and will be produced in German by the New York Neue Theatre Gruppe and in English by one of the Chicago groups.

## New Theatre Productions

Many working class theatres are doing full-length plays — and doing them competently — while established little theatres are turning to pertinent social dramas. The Cleveland German theatre, a cultural and recreational group whose last production was an 1880 operetta, have taken a big step forward in choosing as their next production, the anti-Nazi revue, *So Leben Wir*. The Boston New Theatre Players completed their run of *Stevedore* with an absolutely even balance sheet — quite a feat for a tryout city — and the Boston theatre can put on its credit side, the skillful handling of its first long play, the new audience that it has reached, and its victory over the unscrupulous and dictatorial police attempt at censorship. The actors are already at work on *Peace on Earth*, while the Negro actors who were attracted to them for *Stevedore* are hunting a play that they can do independently. The Philadelphia New Theatre Studios are working on *Black Pit* for presentation at a legitimate theatre in December. New Haven's Unity Players, with twelve other theatres, are to take part in a tournament of anti-war plays this month. In Los Angeles, the Contemporary Theatre which has had four week runs of *Peace on Earth* and *Sailors of Cattaro*, is doing the first full-length play by its own members. *Formation Left*, by Mildred Ashe and Jeff Kibre who contributed to the Midsummer Review, is about families on relief. Max Pollock, experienced in the theatre and films, will direct. The Yonkers Art Group, 23 North Broadway, a new group that presents plays after one week rehearsal, will present *Intervention*, the Russian drama by Lev Slavin, on November 3rd in celebration of the 18th Anniversary of the Russian Revolution.

In New York, the Theatre of Action, returning to mobile work, have been experimenting with their sextette. The first experiment, *Casey Jones* with pantomime and acting as they sing, is riotously successful. A strike play, *The Triangle*, by Ernest Pendrell, will also be ready for bookings soon. Paul Peter's sketch, *Bivouac Alabama*, is being done by the Theatre Collective. The New Theatre Players makes a division between real one-acts (*One of the Bravest*, *Take My Stand*) and still shorter plays (*On the*

*March*, *Ideal Worker*). They have separate groups to do each type, but all actors join together for the acting class, and for their most ambitious undertaking *Upsurge*, which is a combination of drama, dance and mass chant. The Thalian-Masquers, which meets in the Bronx Y. M. — Y. W. H. A. are casting *Lefty* and invite applicants.

## The New Theatre School

The New Theatre League School will take registrations from now until its opening date, Nov. 4. The aim of the School is to train forces for a new and healthy theatre in America; thus the emphasis is on practical problems from theatre organization to make-up, and from acting to dance composition. Rebel Arts, Socialist cultural organization, also plans a school, announcing an ambitious project for teaching theatre, dance, art, and puppetry.

The Repertory Department of the New Theatre League announces two new plays; *Great American Game* by Richard Pack, the fast and half-comic story of a strike on a baseball team, and *Monkey House*, the satiric tale of a relief worker who builds an expensive shelter for the apes and then has to move in with them because he is dispossessed. Theatres interested in *Take My Stand* are notified that Elizabeth England has made important changes in the script which must be followed if the play is to be produced. Communicate with the Repertory Department.

With the film industry and state authorities, and in some cases the administrations of the colleges, making a concerted attack on freedom of student thought, the formation of a New Student Theatre in New York City deserves immediate support, and is an example to be followed

at once in other cities. "Its purpose is to show that students in high schools and colleges are aware of problems and conditions about them — not only those which affect students themselves, but their parents and their fellow-workers. We wish to leave the old 'escapist-romantic' type of varsity play with which student drama has become associated, and prove once and for all that we are alive to the world about us, and the problems which we will meet after graduation." During Anti-War Week, beginning Nov. 9, the New Student Theatre will present *Question Before the House*, by Doris Yankauer and Herbert Mayer, which was presented by Hallie Flanagan at Vassar last year. The theatre will also prepare short skits and one-acts for which it will take bookings in Greater New York. For information, address the National Student League, 857 Broadway, which sponsors the New Student Theatre.

Readers in the South may be able to secure bookings of the Hedgerow Theatre (Moylan, Pa.), those in the West should try to see it at one of the following dates: Nov. 1, 2, State Teachers College, Kearney, Neb.; Nov. 4, State Teachers College, Peru, Neb.; Nov. 6, 7, under the management of Mrs. Barcus, Chanute, Kan.; Nov. 8, City Teachers Assn., Wichita, Kan.; Nov. 9, 11, 12, 13, A. & M. College, Stillwater, Okla.; Nov. 14, 15, 16, State College for Women, Denton, Texas; Nov. 18, State Teachers College, Weatherford, Okla.; date not set, Tonkawa, Okla. Watch especially for *An American Tragedy* in their repertory.

Peter Frye, long active as a director and a former member of the Theatre of Action, will direct dramatics at Commonwealth College, Mena, Arkansas, during the winter term.

Katharine Ewing replaces Mrs. Flanagan as Director of the Experimental Theatre at Vassar. She was a member of the Repertory Playhouse Associates, and it is confidently hoped that she will continue the tradition of strong social plays at the college. Emphasis will be on training in acting during the first semester, and the first play is Ibsen's *Lady from the Sea*.

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## THE COLLECTIVE—A Review

The Theatre Collective of New York City is now taking bookings for three short plays. *Hunger Strike, For People Who Think, and Till the Day I Die.* The first performances of these plays, prove that the Collective is emerging from its long period of training and introspection with a good deal of promise for the social theatre.

Walt Anderson's news-item account of last year's miners' strike at Pecos, Hungry, opens in the home of Stefan, local union delegate. It proceeds through a general condemnation of governmental tyranny; the decision to undertake the hunger strike; the descent into the mine; three scenes in the mine, alternating with two of women waiting above at the gates — all leading to the government's capitulation; and ends with a scene of celebration in front of Stefan's home, which is interrupted by the report of his arrest as a ring-leader.

As a news report, this strike is static, dramatic only in its implications. The task of the playwright becomes one of translating it into dramatic action. Anderson has failed, we think, to communicate a sense of the tragedy involved.

Similarly undefined is the government which the miners are fighting. The opposition is kept offstage, except for one brief appearance of an army officer. It falls to the lot of the actors, then, to try to give reality to this offstage Iron Heel. The script does not help them. The mention of Premier Combes once or twice serves only to illuminate its fictional quality.

In the same way, the climatic moments in each instance are purely verbal. Even the victory of the miners is dismissed abruptly by having a government official appear and inform three delegates that their demands are granted. Then he marches off, and down comes the curtain. This after the scenes of entombed miners and waiting women! It falls devastatingly flat, because it was never conceived in dramatic terms. The same fault makes ineffectual the opening scene in which *word is brought* that Stefan has been arrested. Surely he should have been arrested on stage.

There is a lack of variety in the pattern of the scenes, and a dissipation of tension instead of a building of it in the sound choruses between scenes. The subject demands a cumulative tension to the climax. Instead, *Hunger Strike* is cut sharply into moments, each a unit, too often bearing little relation to the other units.

Credit for the partial success of the play must go to the actors. Orin Janning's Yosika and Zelda Benjamin's Anna, like John Loftus's performance of Ernst in the Odet's play give evidence of careful and well-balanced work. Edward Kogan's cameraman in Jack Shapiro's skit *For People Who Think* is outstanding for his imaginative and easy acting.

In fact the skit showed the Collective at its best. The players bit into this anti-Hearst farce and played it to the hilt, until line and action merged in that indivisible unit which should be the goal of every playwright, actor, and director. The single jarring note was the heavy under-scoring at the blackout of a point already much better made by satire.

A studio air still lingers over all three productions. The actors are in that stage of training where they are over-conscious and painfully conscientious about details of craftsmanship which are still too new to them to be used fluently and easily. Experience in front of audiences is the only cure for that. They are so concentrated upon themselves that they lack the actor's final gift, the sense of communication and purpose before their audience. In a social theatre, which has a definite promise of social effectiveness this is particularly important — and it should not be hard for the Collective to acquire it.

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## Backstage

*The Awakening of the American Theatre*, by Ben Blake (just off the press) will be reviewed in the next issue of NEW THEATRE.

As we go to press 600 guests are celebrating the remarkable growth of NEW THEATRE at a dinner at the Edison Hotel in New York City. Dr. John Haynes Holmes, Martha Graham, Hiram Motherwell, Archibald MacLeish and Clifford Odets are speaking on various aspects of the American Theatre Today, with Alfred Kreymborg as Chairman and the Theatre of Action supplying the entertainment. The guests include many of the most distinguished names in the American theatre today ranging from Daniel Frohman, dean of American showmen, to creators of the new theatres like Benno Schneider and Alfred Saxe. Actors, directors, critics and producers from the commercial theatre world co-operated with a group of new theatre playwrights in tendering this dinner to NEW THEATRE.

Too late for inclusion in this issue but to be counted on for December are the important reports on the mid-western and eastern conferences of the New Theatre League held in Chicago and New York City respectively late in October. Too late, also, is the opening of the Soviet puppet film *The New Gulliver* which will be the subject of an article by Lou Bunin in the December issue. The film will be presented by Joseph Burystyn and Oscar Serlin at the Cameo Theatre.

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# Trade Union Notes

The Alliance of Theatre and Costume Technicians was initiated a year ago by a group of costume designers. It was expanded to take in all miscellaneous technical advisors, lighting experts, and designers who do actual work on productions but have not been accepted by the Scenic Designers Union with its high fees and exclusive standards. These are the last workers to be organized in the theatre field. Some have worked for as little as \$15 per week — an impossible standard for any theatre worker, with long periods of unemployment between shows — while in the summer theatres, many of them have worked for board alone. Sufficiently trained technicians and designers arrive from the university training schools every year, eager for "experience." It is a managerial practice to use them until they begin to demand a living wage, and then to fire them. The Alliance has two specific aims at present: to set minimum wages for technicians and costumers on Broadway, and to improve summer theatre conditions. Like all theatre unions at their inception, the Alliance is having art trouble: some workers in the field considering themselves above organizing. The sooner these artists join the Alliance, the sooner will they be sure of decent conditions under which to practice their art. The first step is to get in touch with the Alliance.

Not as widely publicized as the young Screen Actors' Guild nor as established as Actors' Equity, the one-and-a-half year old American Federation of Actors is rapidly coming to the fore as the most militant of all actor unions. It has jurisdiction over cafes, night clubs, music halls, vaudeville, carnivals, circuses, and other outdoor shows.

Organized about three years ago as the Actors' Betterment Association, it received its American Federation of Labor charter from the Actors' International in June, 1934 and since then has

made rapid strides towards enforcing its minimum wage scales for actors who work in cafes and night clubs. Most Detroit and Milwaukee cafes are now observing the AFA scale, with written closed shop contracts expected before the year is up. In New York City, the AFA is attempting to line up closed shops with every cafe and night club using talent. In conjunction with the musicians union (Local 802), the waiters union (Local 16), and the stagehands union (Local 1), the AFA is concentrating on the Manhattan area and has already signed up two large cabarets on Broadway.

In the vaudeville field, the AFA is conducting a militant "Save Vaudeville" campaign which includes picketing, demonstrations, mass meetings and publicity. As a part of this campaign, they are holding their annual show at the Majestic Theatre on November 10th. Accusing the theatre circuits of "locking out" the actors, musicians, and other craftsmen, the AFA cites specifically Fanchon and Marco's anti-trust law suit in St. Louis, where they claim that RKO, by threatening to cancel picture contracts, kept the group out of the city's theatres. Recently, the union submitted to Mrs. Hallie Flanagan, Federal theatre projects administrator, a plan for a national vaudeville circuit to give work to the thousands of vaudevillians made jobless when the movie trust gained control of theatre operation.

The AFA is trying to whip into action the thousands of vaudevillians who have been crushed economically and spiritually by the lock-out and by the complete defeat of their White Rats Actors Union back in 1918, when "patriotic" pressure stopped their strike. The Federation now holds the charter which the White Rats gave up several years ago.

[All members of theatrical unions are invited to contribute to this department which is begun in recognition of the need of popularizing and voicing the programs of the stage unions.]

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# Charlie Chaplin in "Modern Times"

(Continued from page 13)

Chaplin told us the rest of the plot. After further adventures, the two heroes see a group of men putting up a building.

"Let's open up a cocktail bar," Paulette says, "because that's all that makes money nowadays."

Charlie, in the bar, becomes head-dancer and entertainer, and Paulette is the cashier. Their romance is idyllic.

This is where we believe we see the weak point of Chaplin's work. His laughter is bitter and strong, but in the positive, constructive part of the film, Chaplin becomes weak: his story doesn't ring true.

A new war breaks out. Once again, the propaganda machine goes into action. The two principals go off to war. Then, they meet again. She has become a nurse and has renounced her poverty-stricken past. Charlie leaves her, goes off alone—the eternal failure, just like in his other films.

"I can't do a thing that's not in my nature," Chaplin tells us. "I am an individualist, and I can't advocate the primal importance of Society and of the State."

He said this with passion, and we felt this was the sore spot of this great creative genius.

We spoke to him at length, trying to prove to him that the intensity of his work, instead of building to a powerful finish, diminished into nothing at the end. He argued with us, refuting our contentions. But when we tried to get away from the film, and talk about more general subjects, he himself came back to it.

"Friends," he told us, "this little conversation that we had today is going to cost me several weeks of thought and of work."

And he confessed: "I can see now how the end of the film, as I outlined it to you, would detract from the rest of it."

We tried to show him that his ideas did not follow out their own logic; and that his pessimistic philosophy, which condemns his heroes in advance, had no foundation in fact.

When we left, Chaplin promised us that he would think the thing over seriously, and in the light of our discussion try to find an ending worthy of the rest of his picture.

Thus ends Shumiatsky's account of his interview with Chaplin. It is the most complete first-hand account of Chaplin's new film available at this time.

As for Chaplin himself, he refuses to make any statements whatever concerning *Modern Times*. He does not even intend to preview the film before its premiere in New York. He had hoped to bring it

to the public without having given any outsider the slightest inkling of what it was about.

Word in Hollywood has it that Chaplin was quite upset when Shumiatsky's article came over here, as he had expected that no one in this country would hear about his film from that source.

Since Shumiatsky saw Chaplin, there have been a great number of added scenes to the picture, and some have been cut out. Has Chaplin changed his ending, as he promised the Soviet film-men that he would? Or has he, as the reactionary Los Angeles Times suggests, cut out the scenes satirizing war, and the ones satirizing religion, which showed Paulette Goddard in a convent?

That Chaplin is one of the greatest creators the cinema has ever known, no one, I think, would deny. Nor would any of his friends or associates deny that Chaplin has, and always has had, vaguely liberal, progressive ideas.

It remains to be seen, now, whether Chaplin has been so conditioned by capitalist society that he is incapable of doing any truly constructive work of a sound, organized nature. Or whether he will be able to rise above Hollywood, above the Hays Organization, and all the restraining influences (which he, certainly, is the only one strong enough to buck), and turn his *Modern Times* into a truly forward-looking piece of work, with an ending based on the comprehension of the role of the working class, and the inevitable disappearance of bourgeois society.

*Modern Times*, when it brings us the answer to this, will tell us once and for all the true stature of Charlie Chaplin. A highly versatile clown? Or a truly great artist? For, certainly, if Shumiatsky and the Soviet Commission could not succeed in crystallizing Chaplin's vague working-class sympathies into something more concrete, more effective, into something real—then nothing ever will.

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# Dance Front

We are glad to hear of the activities of the New Dance League on the West Coast. The Los Angeles section of the League has prepared a symposium on the modern dance, with lectures and demonstrations. Merle Armitage will be chairman, and Lester Horton, Paul Slany, Benjamin Zemach, Michio Ito, Norma Gould and Warren Leonard will speak.

The field organizer of the New Dance League, Edith Segal, is in Detroit at present, working with the dance groups there. Recitals of various groups in Detroit, Chicago, and Toronto are planned which will be presented at each of these three cities and be the first broad movement to establish a Midwest section.

The Dance Group of the Chicago Nature Friends will open its fall dancing season on Monday, September 30th. The classes will be held at the Nature Friends Hall, 209 W. North Ave., every Monday night.

While this seems rather belated, the New Dance League formally welcomes the Dance Guild as an affiliate of the League. The work of the Guild last year, in presenting interesting symposia, and in giving the ideas of the younger professional dancer a hearing in forums and discussions, was a valuable addition to the dance front. The Dance Guild has accepted without reservations the program of the New Dance League and will work with the League on its educational and cultural programs. The first evening of the Dance Guild this year takes place Friday evening, October 25th at the Caravan, 110 East 59th Street.

The New Dance League also officially welcomes Tamiris and her group who asked the League to sponsor them in their first recital of the season, on November 2nd at the Venice Theatre. We feel this is the first step towards establishing closer unity between the League and those professional artists who show definite sympathy with the League's program. This recital will be the first sponsored by the League this year; the second will be a solo recital by various young dancers in the League; the third a group recital with New Dance League groups. All new works will be presented. Those who remember the excitement the solo recital caused last year will be glad to hear that Anna Sokolow, Jane Dudley, Miriam Blecher, Sophie Maslow, Lillie Mehlman will perform, among others. Also, for the first time, the League has prepared a limited number of subscription tickets, whereby for \$1.00 the subscriber receives one \$.55 ticket for each of these three recitals, and for \$2.00, three \$1.10

tickets. These tickets can be procured at the offices of the League, 55 West 45th Street.

The New Dance League School opens in November. This is the first step in the attempt to establish a training school for dancers and teachers who aim to continue working with the New Dance League. Courses in Dalcroze Eurhythmics, Body Training for Actors, Anatomy, Percussion, Music for the Dance, Dance Composition and Group Direction, will be under the direct supervision of the New Dance League; other courses given by the New Theatre League Training School will be open to dancers as well: they include Social Basis of the Arts, Make-Up, Stage Lighting, etc. To members of the New Dance League and Dance Guild, there is a 50 per cent reduction in fees. Out of these classes study groups will be formed, one to make an intensive outline on the history of the dance, another to make a critical survey of modern technique, the results to be incorporated into courses for the following semester.

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# Film Checklist

**BROADWAY MELODY OF 1936:** The best Hollywood piece of the month. With the exception of Francis Langford whose presence in the film is a mystery, the picture provides excellent talents. Eleanor Powell, although she photographs poorly, is a dancer of first-rate standing. The snore-specialist's take-off on the professorial manner is the most hilarious sequence we have seen since John Barrymore, in the *Man From Blankeley's*, imitated the love call of the Egyptian beetle.

**DR. SOCRATES:** The last, we hope, of the G-men operas. Dr. Paul Muni's hypodermic needle does yoeman's work in bringing a band of mobsters to bay. The film serves to prove that no actor can rise above his material. In the case of *Dr. Socrates* the material is of a decidedly inferior order.

**THE RETURN OF PETER GRIMM:** We must confess experiencing a distinct macabre sensation upon seeing this none-too-well preserved corpse traipsing about on the screen. Only necrophiles need attend.

**SHIPMATES FOREVER:** Lewis Stone sounds the keynote of this film when in the course of his farewell address to his crew he says between gulps, "Gentlemen, these are my last words: 'Keep the ship fit to fight.'" *Shipmates Forever*, dedicated to the Naval Academy is intended to keep the mind of America fit to fight. A tedious enlistment film. To be boycotted.

**PEPO:** (Soviet Armenian Film) Somehow the left and liberal press has found it necessary to apologize for this film; an act of supererogation as far as we are concerned. It is such a great joy to come upon authentic music and dancing that even if the remaining material were insignificant, which is far from the case, we would be sufficiently compensated. *Pepo*, although a minor effort compared with the great Russian masterpieces, is well worth seeing.

**LEGONG or THE DANCE OF THE VIRGINS:** Produced in technicolor by the Marquise de la Falaise, husband to Constance Bennett. A pale imitation of previous attempts to force the Balinese to go Hollywood. The musical score in the best "Road to Mandalay" tradition.

**I LIVE MY LIFE:** Rather than strike the sole discordant note in the general rejoicing attendant upon the Crawford-Tone nuptials, let us be content to describe *I Live My Life* as a flashy, high-toned movie wherein Brian Ahearn, a penniless but arrogant archeologist bullies the harum-scarum Crawford into marrying him. Miss Crawford is surrounded by as lovable a family of multi-millionaires as can be seen in a year of fantasies.

**RED ARMY DAYS** (Soviet Film): Unimportant and certainly unrepresentative of the Soviet film exports to this country. The songs are not by Serge Prokofieff, celebrated Russian composer, as the misleading advertising of the exhibitors might lead you to expect.

**THE LAST OUTPOST:** Projected quite the most embarrassingly chauvinist dialogue of the year: "These tribesmen are devils when they go amok. Even their government can't control these tribes when once they have tasted the blood." Rubbishy love-triangle with that celebrated gilder of histrionic lilies, Claude Rains, as the unwelcome third party.

**WINGS OVER ETHIOPIA:** Definitely anti-Ethiopian. As an afterthought the distributor tagged on Emperor Haile Selassie's appeal to the world against Italian aggression but the emphasis throughout the film is on the utter barbarity of the Abyssinians.

**BARBARY COAST:** It seems that the present-day crop of California's vigilantes have nothing on the old boys in '49 when it comes to the lynch rope and tar-barrel. In *Barbary Coast* you will see Mr. Edward G. Robinson's hash settled by as efficient a body of irate citizens as have ever graced a screen. Like all the Hecht-McArthur scripts, the film gives off an aura of seeming brilliance which often prevents the unwary movie-goer from detecting the shallowness underneath.

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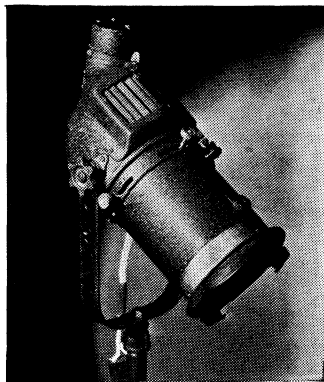
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