

NEW THEATRE

LITTLE CHARLIE, WHAT NOW?

BY CHARMION VON WIEGAND



MARCH, 1936
15 CENTS

OVARRUBIN



CAB CALLOWAY



and his

**COTTON CLUB
ORCHESTRA**

NEW THEATRE

and

PEOPLES BOOKSHOPS

SPRING HOP

with

GALA FLOOR SHOW

at

ST. NICHOLAS PALACE

69 WEST 66TH STREET

SAT., APRIL 18th

\$ 1 50
PLUS
TAX
COUPLE
in advance
only

*Special
Arrangements
for
Boxes*

\$ 1.00 Plus Tax
SINGLE
\$ 1.50 At Door

Tickets at New Theatre, 156 W. 44th Street. BRyant 9-8378. Bookshop, 50 E. 13th Street. AL. 4-5742. People's Bookshop, 115 W. 135th Street, New Theatre League, 55 W. 45th St. LO. 5-9116. Box Office SU. 7-4422. Rand Bookshop, 7 E. 15th Street. Inquire at any Bookstore.

*The
Group Theatre and
Milton Shubert*

present

*The Group Theatre
Acting Company*

in

Theodore Dreiser's

"THE CASE OF CLYDE GRIFFITHS"

*Version by Erwin Piscator
and Lena Goldschmidt*

ETHEL BARRYMORE THEATRE

MAR. 30

*A Stirring Play
About Fascist Italy*

Theatre Union's
New Production

SONS OF ROME

By VICTOR WOLFSON

Based on the famous Novel "FONTAMARA"
Ignazio Silone

Directed by JACOB BEN AMI

CIVIC REPERTORY THEATRE

14th Street and 6th Avenue WAtkins 9-7450

*For Information on Reduced Theatre Benefit
Rates Call Sylvia Regan, CHelsea 3-6894.*

NEW THEATRE

MARCH, 1936

DRAMA

The Man from Brinks • Ernestine Friedl	9
The Federal Theatre Presents • Joseph Manning	10
"Ethan Frome" and the Theatre of Fate • John W. Gassner	12
The Obligatory Scene • John Howard Lawson	18
Eva LeGallienne—Ten Years • Walter Pell	20
Shifting Scenes	30
Five-Finger Exercises • Bob Lewis	31

FILM

Little Charlie, What Now? • Charmion von Wiegand	6
The Pair from Paramount • Alfred Hayes	14
The Movie: 1902-1917 • Robert Stebbins	22
Hollywood's Hundred-Grand Union • George Mansion	25

DANCE

From a Dancer's Notebook • Blanche Evan	16
Dance Reviews • Elizabeth Ruskay	27

Cover by Miguel Covarrubias

HERBERT KLINE, Editor • MOLLY DAY THACHER, Drama • ROBERT STEBBINS, Film • EDNA OCKO, Dance • BEN BLAKE, European Editor • GEORGE REDFIELD, Managing Editor, ELEANOR FLEXNER, Assistant Managing Editor • DAVID CRYSTAL, Business Manager.

ASSOCIATES: L. Berman, Dorothy Dannen, Stephen Foster, Leo T. Hurwitz, Jay Leyda, Ray Ludlow, John Makepeace, Mark Marvin, Louis Norden, Norma Roland, Muriel Ruker, Elizabeth Ruskay, Nat Saunders, Augustus Smith, Robert Steck, Jin Stern, Norman Stevens, Doris Yankauer.

Vol. III, No. 3. Published monthly by the New Theatre League and New Dance League. Editorial and Business Offices: 156 West 44th St., New York City (BRyant 9-8378). Single copy: 15c. Yearly subscription: \$1.50. Foreign: \$2.00. Subscribers are notified that no change in address can be effected in less than two weeks. Illustrations and text cannot be reprinted without permission of New Theatre Magazine. Entered as second-class matter, October 29, 1934, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under act of March 3, 1879. Address all mail to New Theatre Magazine, 156 West 44th St., N. Y. C.

This is an open letter to playwrights.

If you fear war, if you hate reaction, and if you are serious in wanting to throw your weight against them, there is one good way that you can do it: by writing short plays to fight them.

Good long plays are needed of course, and have served to move the theatre into active channels, but the truth is that when your long play, after due delay, reaches production, its influence will be pretty definitely limited to New York City. One long play, *Stevedore*, went on tour to two cities. One long Odets play was taken to Philadelphia. A few local theatres in larger cities have undertaken full-length social plays. But your long serious plays will not even be heard of by the mass of Americans in the places where fascism, race prejudice, jingoism, and tyranny over labor are creeping ahead.

There are throughout the country, some three hundred widely scattered theatres and dramatic groups devoted to the production of social plays and skits. And there are more than three thousand community, college, church, Y, dramatic groups which are ready to include anti-war and labor plays in their repertory. If the available plays were better they would use more of them, for they have found that their audiences wake up and respond to positive contemporary plays.

These theatres penetrate America. They have a variety of audiences, very few of them "already convinced" of the course of action that must be followed to prevent war and halt reaction. A few of these theatres tackle full-length scripts. All of them will do short plays. The more enterprising take their productions to their audiences, playing in assembly halls, schools, strike meetings—reaching people who have known only the movies before.

All these theatres are hungry for good social plays. Requests pour into the offices of NEW THEATRE magazine and League. The response to *Waiting for Lefty* and *Private Hicks* (the most serviceable plays of the new

theatre movement) was almost desperate in its eagerness. Six weeks after we published *Private Hicks* seventeen requests for production rights had been received.

The nature of such theatres presents a technical challenge to playwrights. Expensive scenery is out. Bulky scenery will prohibit travelling productions. Strong situation and plot are needed to help amateurs to carry a play. On the other hand, large casts are usually available, in contrast to commercial productions.

Honest plays are wanted. Not schematic ones. Not trite ones. Not easy glorifications of abstract workers, but careful and craftsmanlike treatment of any aspect of our life which is touched by the disintegration of depression or the reintegration of human forces as they recognize and attack their problems.

Paul Green, Clifford Odets, Albert Maltz, Philip Stevenson, have considered such plays important enough to give their time to, and their belief has been confirmed by the response to their work. Michael Blankfort's one-hour play, *The Crime* will be shown by the Theatre of Action company March 1st. A new playwright, Erwin Shaw, has written the first good anti-war play of many years, *Bury the Dead*. NEW THEATRE hopes to publish it next month and the *Let Freedom Ring* actors are rehearsing it for New York production.

Convinced by the importance of all that we have said above, the following playwrights have pledged to the Editors of NEW THEATRE that they will write one-act plays on social subjects in the course of the next six months: Archibald MacLeish, Dawn Powell, George Sklar, Paul Peters, John Dos Passos, Lynn Riggs. (Mr. Riggs is already at work on a dramatization of the Gallup, New Mexico, strike and frame-up.)

Will you add your promise, and your plays, to theirs?

When you do, NEW THEATRE will reach every key theatre with the news.

It is your opportunity.



They're Still At It

Hitler, it has been pointed out, borrowed Charlie Chaplin's moustache. That he will never borrow any of Chaplin's social ideas, however, became obvious with the announcement that *Modern Times* has been banned in Germany.

Conceivably the title alone is enough to give offense to a dictator who is leaving no blood unshed in his efforts to hammer Germany back into medievalism, culturally and politically.

But it is more than a matter of the title. Chaplin's film is a protest against regimentation, oppression and exploitation. It asks, in its own language, for the end of a world in which individual happiness and the right to its pursuit are abrogated by a policeman's club.

If Chaplin's film can be construed as a protest against life in America, it becomes a doubly strong protest in Germany, where the social phenomena at which Chaplin's whimsical shafts are hurled are twice as bad. Certainly Hitler cannot afford to let a hungry and disillusioned people see their plight mirrored in Chaplin's antics.

The fact that it is still possible to make and to show pictures like *Modern Times* in the United States, is no guarantee that its celluloid body may not feed some future funeral pyre of American culture which will eclipse the Nazi book-burnings.

Regard the wielding of the censor's shears on Chaplin's film! Mr. Will Hays, guardian of our morals, found six scenes too "vulgar" for public consumption. Among them were shots of police brutality, and sections of industrial speed-up.

Regard the proscription of Albert Maltz' *Private Hicks* from a one act play contest sponsored by the Washington, D.C., community center.

The script, submitted by the New Theatre of Washington, was rejected on the grounds that it would provoke "acrimonious discussion."

Regard also, the prohibition of Clifford Odets' *Waiting for Lefty* and *Till the Day I Die* by Dr. W. B. Bizzell, president of the University of Oklahoma.

These three incidents do not constitute the total mass of evidence that there is a growing danger of political censorship.

They are the latest ones.

Equity's Record

We would be as happy as any of you to hear of some fine, forward-looking progressive action on the part of Equity's administration. But the record does not induce us to spend much time in hoping for anything like that.

With the Federal Theatre Project opening up new problems and new opportuni-

ties for actors, with the new screen guilds in a position to use the advice and experience of an older union, with an impulse towards industrial unionism animating big progressive sectors of the theatrical field—Actors Equity has a record for the month now ending of inaction, reaction, and sidestepping.

The most far-reaching ruling promulgated by the Council was one prohibiting Equity members from belonging to any other organization whose aims or policies might conflict with those of Equity. It sounds innocent. But directly, what was intended was to coerce Equity members on the Project to withdraw from the theatrical branch of the City Projects Council, which was serving to represent them, and their fellow Project workers in relation to the administration. At the same time, the Council refuses to consider Project workers eligible to Equity unless they have appeared in a Broadway production, other than a government show. This means that Equity is making it impossible for Project actors to be represented as a single group.

If the Equity administration had from the inception of the Project assumed an actively responsible position in relation to its members there (as Mrs. Flanagan was ready to let them do); if it had protected its unemployed members (as advocated by the Actors Forum) instead of wiping them out of consideration and participation in Equity for non-payment of dues; and if it had made some provision for those Project actors—many of them with long stock experience—who are not Equity members (as Local 802 has done with Project musicians); then today many of the Project actors' problems would have been solved, and they would not, perhaps, need the C.P.C. except as a cooperating body.

Equity has done none of these things. The only motives which can, on the basis of past performance, be attributed to the Council in this case are not in the best interests of its members: admission of non-member Project workers to Equity would mean the addition of militant elements which the Council fears; crippling of the C.P.C. may serve to keep all relations with the Project in Equity's own dictatorial but inactive hands; a ruling against membership in other organizations might be used against the emergence of any informal group similar to the Forum within Equity. The administration constantly and deliberately falsified the nature of the Forum by attacking it as a separate actors' association, distinct from the main body of Equity.

Equity members in their March meeting can present objections to the ruling, though they have not the power to rescind it directly. Members not on Project

should join with those who are, demanding that Equity really represent Project actors in pressing for demands which are necessary to them. And they should ponder the fact that their President Gillmore chose to turn his single appearance before the West Coast branch of Equity into the occasion for a stump speech for his re-election, and, without any opportunity being offered for contradiction, to revive his old slanders against the Forum. Members should think it over. And it is not too soon, considering the mysterious workings of the administration, for them to ask themselves just what sort of representation they want to secure for themselves at the coming election.

It Can Happen Here

The real key to the *It Can't Happen Here* controversy lies in this: although Hollywood is flexible in its moral, political and social attitudes as long as there is money to be made, there is a point at which the flexibility stops. That point is the production of any anti-fascist film.

The fact that a ban on the film was ordered, although later denied, is in itself stirring evidence of how much America needs a good film version of Sinclair Lewis' book.

The glee with which news of the ban was hailed by officials in Rome and Berlin, further indicates the true issues at stake.

Elder Hays, when he jumped from the postmaster-generalship to the czardom of the movies, took great pains to dissociate himself from politics, particularly from the Republican party of which he was a leader. With one stroke, however, he destroyed the impression of non-partisanship which he has labored years to create, with the statement that one of his reasons for acting against *It Can't Happen Here* was that its production might displease the Republican Party. It is interesting to note, in this connection, that Hollywood's method of "staying out of politics" has always been to support entrenched Toryism.

While NEW THEATRE has no proof, its editors, as individuals, are willing to bet their modest salaries that Mr. Hays has important Liberty League connections. Substitute in Mr. Hays' reported statement, Liberty League for Republican Party and you begin to get somewhere in understanding his motives. The Liberty League no longer takes the trouble to deny that it has fascist ambitions. It probably wouldn't even take the trouble to deny that it had an important part in making up Mr. Hays' mind about the ban.

Coming!

It looks as though the best of the season were ahead of us. The four important permanent theatres of New York announce impressive openings for this month.

First, opening March 1st and scheduled for succeeding Sundays, the Theatre of Action will perform Michael Blankfort's *The Crime*, for the benefit of NEW THEATRE and the New Theatre League. It is a very human trade union play, sure to raise controversy in the labor movement, excitement in the audience at large, and especial interest from those who have been waiting ever since *The Young Go First* to see how this important theatre is developing.

Then, March 5th, the Artef will revive a drama which made history in Czarist Russia thirty years ago—*Hirsch Lekert*, a tale of police espionage and terror and the trickery used to draw workers into a government-controlled "labor movement." Benno Schneider, one of the country's most distinctive and gifted directors will be in charge of the Yiddish troupe.

The Group Theatre, towards the middle of the month, is to appear in *The Case of Clyde Griffiths*—much more than an ordinary adaptation of Dreiser's *American Tragedy*. With the co-sponsorship of Milton Shubert and under the sensitive direction of Lee Strasberg, they are working on a basically simple but exciting experimental production of the Erwin Piscator-Lena Goldschmidt version. Piscator, who was the original director of Brecht's *Mother* has made a dynamic many-scene dramatization. (A review of Jasper Deeter's Hedgerow Theatre production of the Piscator-Goldschmidt version appeared in the June 1935 NEW THEATRE.) The form is less arbitrary and more human than that of *Mother*, but it has sufficient similarity in its approach to the audience to make an interesting successor to the Theatre Union's production—and one which at the same time promises to be in much closer rapport with an American audience. The adaptor has used a Speaker (to be played by Morris Carnovsky) who supplies an interpretation of the story which is at once a typical tabloid triangle and deeply revealing of American life. Alexander Kirkland, the young doctor of *Men in White* and the tortured Communist of *Till the Day I Die*, has the title role of Clyde Griffiths. Phoebe Brand plays the working girl, and Margaret Barker the debutante.

The first drama of Italian fascism has been selected by the Theatre Union, to open at the end of the month. It is *Sons of Rome*, made from the fine novel *Fonta-*



ALEXANDER KIRKLAND (CLYDE GRIFFITHS), MARGARET BARKER (THE DEBUTANTE), PHOEBE BRAND (THE WORKING GIRL) IN THE GROUP THEATRE'S FORTHCOMING PRODUCTION, "THE CASE OF CLYDE GRIFFITHS." THE SHADOW IN THE BACKGROUND IS THAT OF MORRIS CARNOVSKY WHO PLAYS THE ROLE OF THE SPEAKER.

mara, in which Ignazio Silone described the bewildered suffering of his peasant compatriots under the fascist regime. The dramatization is by Victor Wolfson. The timeliness of the subject matter is startlingly confirmed by a current dispatch in Ludwig Lore's column in the N. Y. Post:

"... A congress of Italian peasants has ... repeated its demand for the division of Italy's large landed estates among the poor peasantry. As was to be expected, their appeal fell on deaf ears."

Edmondo Rossoni, Minister of Agriculture, and first organizer of the fascist so-called trade unions, was interviewed on the matter. He had been one of the most vociferous in applause of Mussolini's statement in 1920 that "the land is for those who used it."

He was asked, "Why not take care of your surplus population by a system of remedial farm legislation instead of trying to conquer Abyssinia?"

"We cannot deprive our landlords of

their property."

"But," the correspondent objected, "What is there to stop you from taking this land for your poor farmers? You are a dictatorship. If you can send your people to war where they will lose their lives for the greater good, why not deprive the absentee landlord of his land for the same reason?"

To which Sr. Rossoni replied, "We are Fascists, not Socialists!"

And so the left theatre is finding its range: a drama of Italian villagers under fascism (not without relevance to the American farm situation); a recent classic of American life in a new theatrical form; a revival of an historic Russian revolutionary play; a play of the human factors in strike leadership. Add to these the anti-war play, *Bury the Dead*, the varied program of one-act plays which the Theatre Collective has in preparation, and the dimension and scope of the new theatres is an exhilarating fact.



Valente

ALEXANDER KIRKLAND (CLYDE GRIFFITHS), MARGARET BARKER (THE DEBUTANTE), PHOEBE BRAND (THE WORKING GIRL) IN THE GROUP THEATRE'S FORTHCOMING PRODUCTION, "THE CASE OF CLYDE GRIFFITHS." THE SHADOW IN THE BACKGROUND IS THAT OF MORRIS CARNOVSKY WHO PLAYS THE ROLE OF THE SPEAKER.

Little Charlie, What Now?

BY CHARMION VON WIEGAND

"This is the saddest picture I have seen in America," said a Russian girl to me after the premiere of *Modern Times*. I also came away feeling that the pathos of the picture outweighed its humor, that in spite of many amusing situations, the underlying theme was tragedy more than comedy.

I saw *Modern Times* twice. The first time I was part of a sophisticated New York audience, which attends premières. The laughter that greeted Charlie's appearance on the belt as a worker rippled on with scarcely an interruption to the end of the film. It was uproarious at those moments when Charlie was most cruelly walloped by fate—for instance in the scene when the automatic feeder goes berserk and splashes soup and whipped cream in Charlie's face, feeds him steel nuts and buffets him with a wiper; again when he is pardoned from jail and put out of his cosy-corner cell into the cold world; or in the cabaret, when he loses his cuff with the words of his song scribbled on it and faces his audience blankly. It was plain that the audience in the theatre that night did not too closely identify itself with Charlie in his painful situations.

The second time I saw the film was on a holiday forenoon when the house was crowded with people anxious to take advantage of the cheaper morning prices. This time the laughter was louder in some scenes—for instance, when Charlie picks up the red flag from a truck and un-

wittingly finds himself leading a demonstration of unemployed (there were even cheers in the audience at this point); again when Charlie, penniless, consumes a gargantuan meal in a cafeteria and then summons the policeman from outside to come in and arrest him; or when, in the midst of a strike he steps on a board which hurls a brick in the face of a policeman. But in contrast to the first night, there were pauses of tension and uncertainty. The audience seemed puzzled by certain situations and did not know how to respond. I am most anxious to see the film when it is released in the second-run houses and observe the reactions of an audience even less economically secure. But the first two reactions are sufficient to indicate the complexity of Chaplin's new masterpiece—as great a piece of work as he has ever turned out, but no longer in the style of pure comedy.

Modern Times is a melange of satire, comedy, fantasy and tragedy. It is not a unified work of art. Nevertheless, the creative level of this film is far beyond what Hollywood has hitherto produced. Supported by an excellent company, which includes his comely new leading lady, Paulette Goddard, and that lavishly mustached comedian, Chester Conklin, the whole film bears the distinctive stamp of Chaplin's personality. Idea, scenario, production and chief role are all by Chaplin himself. Thus if ever a film had an opportunity to become a unified



"CITY LIGHTS"



"THE IDLE CLASS"



"THE CIRCUS"

work of art, it is this one. Yet it fails to do so. It is interesting to pose the question: Is this failure due to Chaplin (in any one of his capacities as scenarist, producer or actor) or is it due to something far more fundamental?

The critics, in reviewing *Modern Times*, have expressed mixed feelings about it. For the most part the reviewers of the daily press have loudly denied that the film has any social significance and they have insisted that it is merely a piece of uproarious slapstick, with Charlie at his best in the time honored situations and gags. Again other critics, particularly of the weekly and liberal press, have credited Chaplin with a film of social criticism displaying a distinctly leftist approach. Much of the advance publicity emphasized this viewpoint. There is no doubt that the first caption of the film supports this latter theory, for it reads: "*Modern Times* is a story of industry, of individual enterprise—of humanity crusading in pursuit of happiness." This is followed by a shot of a herd of sheep in a runway and then by a parallel shot of a mass of workers coming out of the subway and passing through the factory gates. But this opening theme is not consistently upheld throughout the action—it appears for a moment, then is lost in situations not at all relevant to it, and reappears in ever fainter echoes until the end. Thus the meaning of the film remains *confused*.

On the technical side, *Modern Times* seems slightly archaic. It is true that the photography is beautiful, crystal clear, and as realistic as a Soviet film. But Chaplin persists in using a silent screen; the mode is that prior to the talkies. None of the characters speak.



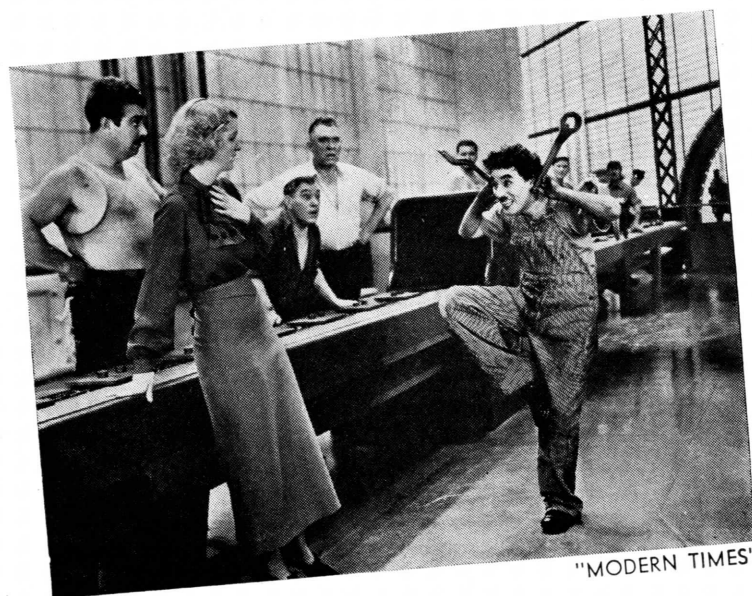
"EASY STREET"

There is, however, incidental music and some sound devices. For the first time in a Chaplin film, there are spoken words, but they come from mechanical contrivances such as the loud-speaker attached to the television screen in the factory or the phonograph which explains the automatic feeding machine. And once Chaplin sings—for the first time we hear his voice and it is a pleasant, resonant voice which I, for one, would gladly hear again. Hence we know now that it is not due to any vocal difficulty that Chaplin refrains from accepting the advance of the talkie, but because he believes his art is dependent on a particular aesthetic, which permits only pantomime.

At times, it is true, the incidental music which underscores and sustains that pantomime is sufficient. But there are scenes which demand dialogue and to refuse it weakens the emotional effect. For instance, in the realistic scene when the gamin's father is killed in a food riot and she discovers the body in the street, we actually see Paulette Goddard's lips frame the words: "My father is dead." At the second performance, I caught several people around me spontaneously repeating the words out loud. Abstention from dialogue at this point, and other similar ones, definitely deprived the audience of pleasure. In such a moment, one film style collided head-



"THE GOLD RUSH"



"MODERN TIMES"

on with another film style: an old convention of a particular theatre was used to strait-jacket a new and more realistic convention of the film. Thus, in addition to a confusion in its theme, we have in *Modern Times* a distinct confusion of two styles in film technique.

What is the meaning of this confusion both in the content and in the form of the film? Does it signify that Chaplin is reactionary in his film technique and radical in his thematic material? Does it signify that he is a bad director unable to control that material? He has been accused of both faults. But I venture to say that it means neither.

Chaplin is the greatest comic artist of our era. As a creative genius, he is so sensitive to his environment that he has acutely felt the impact of the changes which are occurring in the body of our society. He has registered with the accuracy of a seismograph the confusion in the world today and particularly the confusion in the minds of the middle classes. Moreover, he has had the courage to break the old art mould in which his comic genius has always functioned. He has struck out as a pioneer on a new road in search of a new form in film. The confusion in his theme is thus the direct product of our times. The confusion in his style is due to the fact that his old style, in which he conceived the character Charlie, has become antiquated and inadequate; it cannot be further developed to include the present pressing problems which confront contemporary society.

This confusion nevertheless marks Chaplin as ahead of the game and not behind it. *Modern Times* is the first expressionist film of contemporary American life. It is not, however, a perfect example of it. Expressionism is a style in art, which always occurs historically in a period of social break-up. (It had its most recent flowering in post-war Germany.) The structure of *Modern Times* is expressionist; there is no organic plot, no actual development of action involving a set of characters. It consists of a series of scenes loosely bound together by two characters, Charlie, the hero, and his female companion, the *gamin*. Their mutual adventures are played against a shifting background of modern life, which includes the factory, the street, the jail, the waterfront, the hospital, the Hooverville shack, the department store and the cabaret. Charlie is the little forgotten man wandering in quest of happiness across the chaos of our civilization. Each adventure robs him of one more cherished illusion. At the end, empty-handed and foot-sore, alone with his girl, he

faces the open road, still debonair but secretly uncertain about the unknown future.

It is the scenario which keeps *Modern Times* from being a unified, expressionistic work. Its most serious weakness is the lack of any character development at all. Charlie remains fundamentally what he was at the beginning of his pilgrimage. He has learned nothing from his unfortunate adventures, experiences from which the most obdurate and thick-headed individual would conceivably have gained some knowledge or common sense. The reason why Chaplin has not allowed his creation, Charlie, to develop and change with experience is consistent. But to understand it, we must know what the essence of Charlie is, what he has symbolized in the old films prior to 1929. The early Chaplin films, particularly the slapstick reels, were conceived within a small given framework. Within it, the world was basically taken for granted. The director, the character, the audience all accepted certain basic concepts about the world they lived in. It did not occur to them to challenge the pre-suppositions. Hence all three were included within a given framework and the work of art produced by them collectively—although of smaller scope than *Modern Times*—could be a unified production.

Chaplin created a fixed character, *Charlie*, for this old supposedly stable world. His audience was the great middle class of America (which included a large portion of the working class too). The United States has always been the country of middle class *ideals*. In the days before the economic crisis, the worker also felt himself part of this class. He accepted the democratic illusions taught in public school, he shared some of the prosperity of the upper classes, and he emulated the manners of those above him. He believed the doctrine that honesty is the best policy and that hard work will be rewarded. In short he did not feel bound to his class as the worker did in Europe. In that past era so many self-made men attained wealth and position, that the legend seemed true. Lincoln, the rail-splitter who became president, was the ideal hero of our democratic republic. Charlie, the beloved universal character of the film, was conceived out of this legend and he played for this audience. (It is interesting to note that Charlie in *Modern Times*, when he makes his jail cell cosy, tacks up a picture of Lincoln.)

Charlie, when he first made his debut on the shadow screen won immediate favor. He was the common man, always incurably romantic, in that he saw through the hypocrisies and cruelties of

the upper classes, yet aped their costume and fine manners, and accepted their mask of chivalry as bonafide. Because of this, in all his early adventures of failure he continued to cherish the illusion that some day he would find the pot-of-gold at the end of the rainbow. He would escape out of poverty and humiliation into the glittering social heaven above him. His was an eternal quest for that miraculous moment when he would change his battered suit, emblem of shabby respectability, for a new one; when he would cease to pretend and become what he imagined the most wonderful thing in the world—a *gentleman*.

This same Charlie was an incorrigible optimist, as befits a citizen of a country of vast unexploited resources and the highest technique in the world. He thumbed his nose at fate, which always knocked him down on the threshold of paradise—when he thought he had stepped out of his class into the one above it. What made him so funny, so wistful, so mocking was that he reflected the aspirations and the failures of millions of people like him. They saw him fail but they believed that *they* might succeed. They too had a hankering to thumb their noses at their superiors, to plant the custard pie full in the face of their enemies, and to climb over the backs of their fellow men to individual success. Charlie might fail, but they could laugh from their vantage place of seeming security; for there was always the hope that they might be different. Charlie fulfilled their wishes on the *plane of fantasy*.

This early art of Chaplin was thus built entirely on illusion and fantasy. The character Charlie was fixed, the conditions were stable. The milieu was the eternal *now* of fantasy. For no matter how seemingly real—and the early film did not have sufficient development to treat anything realistically—the background of the city against which Charlie performed was actually nothing more than the painted scenic drop bodily transferred from vaudeville to the screen. All those absurd slapstick adventures never took place in the real world but in an imitation of it. In this world of escape which Charlie proffered his audience, everyone might enjoy the most painful failures, the most vulgar gags, the cruelest jokes, and achieve a release of their hidden desires. But if these same things had been acted on the plane of reality, they would have been too painful even for that hopeful and seemingly secure audience of early days.

The rules of the game in this world of fantasy were the same rules which were used in the classic theatres of the 17th

(Continued on page 35)

The Man from Brinks

BY ERNESTINE FRIEDL

Almost since its inception the Peoples Theatre of Cleveland, Ohio, has been very friendly with the Union Buyers' Club, that organization of wives, mothers, sisters, daughters of union men, who, after seeing our performance of *Union Label*, had helped us in many ways; and almost since our inception we had been planning to inaugurate a playwriting group. But this, in the pressure of other work that needed to be done, was somehow forgotten—until the night that the lady from the Union Buyers' Club brought the man from Brinks to our theatre.

He was very quiet, this man—a little tired, a little diffident, but very sincere and earnest. Before he spoke, the lady from the Club told us of the fourteen week strike of the drivers and bank messengers of the Brinks Express Co.; of their desperate need for support; of the benefit party that the Club was giving for them—and asked us if we would prepare and present a play about the strike to be given at the party for the strikers and their sympathizers.

It was the night of our general meeting. All other business had been disposed of. We asked the man from Brinks to speak. He didn't understand exactly who and what we were and we had to ask him questions to get him started. Slowly, by dint of many queries, many explanations, we got the story of the strike—how the local detective agency had been supplying men to work as stool-pigeons and extras; how the regular men objected to working with these professional strike-breakers, many of them with criminal records; how the union had been formed and the four officers fired the next day on trumped-up charges and then—the walk-out of the men, their jobs taken by strike-breakers, the refusal of the company to deal with the union. An old story. We went deeper and learned of the background of all this—of a 96-hour week before the NRA, and the fear that the company would revert to this schedule; instances of drivers being forced to pay \$200 in installments from a \$90 a month salary for accidents not of their making; of men working in a dangerous profession, with no compensation and no security—not even the luxury of being sure of their jobs. In ten minutes we had voted to give the play, Rudolf Wittenberg, author of *Ostriches* our current production, had been put in charge of the playwriting group and there had gathered in the small confer-



A SCENE FROM RUDOLPH WITTENBERG'S "OSTRICHES," CLEVELAND PEOPLES THEATRE

ence room some fifteen people, listening to the man from Brinks.

We had three weeks in which to write the play. A week after the first meeting found our original group down to five. Those discouraged by the intensive work, and those impatient with the painstaking analysis and ground-work which Wittenberg compelled us to go through, had drifted away. But the rest of us, outlining, arguing, discussing, had managed to plan a play.

The actual dialogue was written by three people in collaboration, and was finished only a week before the performance. The whole company gathered to hear it read. This provoked a discussion of ideology. The play as we had written it was criticized because the end did not emphasize the immediate winning of the strike. This discussion forced every member of the theatre to think about these questions of ideology and scope that we, as writers, had been considering. After it, we rewrote.

On Tuesday the man from Brinks, with several of his fellow-strikers, appeared to watch a rehearsal. They were quite overcome with wonder at the thought that we could transplant their lives on to a stage. They were shy because they felt they were not "artists" and had no right to criticize, but we made them understand that we were just workers, like themselves, liable to mistakes . . . Eventually they voiced an objection to the unreality of a scene between a detective and a striker. So we had them go up

on the stage and improvise the scene—or, rather, recall it as it had happened. After they had done this two or three times, we were able to compress what they had given us into one of the most forceful scenes of the play.

After a week's intensive rehearsing, we took our company down to the hall on the appointed night. There, on a bare platform, with no lighting, no scenery, no props but a table and a couple of chairs, we put on our play. Those of us who had been worried, those who had begrudged the extra work and the strain, those who had been doubtful of the advantage of putting on such a play, changed their minds when they heard the response we got. An eager, attentive audience, thrilled at seeing on the stage living people like themselves, talking their language, applauded the strikers, laughed with the militant woman picket, sympathized with the family forced to go on relief—and clapped for us heartily at the finish.

The mere fact that we had spent our time and donated our services in the cause of unionism helped to convince these people that we are, truly, a labor theatre. But more than that, and more than the printed words in our prospectus which say that the "Peoples Theatre is based on the aims of the workers"—we showed that a theatre picturing and devoted to workers can be exciting, entertaining, gripping. We have proved, at least to one audience, that there can be such a theatre, and that it merits their support.



A SCENE FROM RUDOLPH WITTENBERG'S "OSTRICHES," CLEVELAND PEOPLES THEATRE

The Federal Theatre Presents

BY JOSEPH MANNING

The Federal Theatre in New York, having emerged from an initial baptism of red tape, has now lifted four first night curtains. One curtain—that of the Living Newspaper's *Ethiopia*—remains down.

Since Elmer Rice's resignation over the censorship issue there has been no further change in the production schedule. Philip Barber, the new regional director, is pushing through the original program. Thirty-six plays, ranging from Shakespeare to W. H. Auden, are in rehearsal; more than a dozen rehearsal halls, in addition to six theatres scattered throughout greater New York, resound with activity. The Lafayette Theatre in Harlem has been playing to good audiences since February 4th.

Still, it cannot be said that the Fed-

eral Theatre is in full swing as yet. Several of the most important groups still await properties, costumes and theatres. Because of delay and miscasting, several groups will not be able to show the best that they are capable of until their second or third productions.

In terms of accomplishment, the Negro Theatre up to now has outdistanced the other projects. Planned late last fall, this group was one of the first to begin rehearsal. Shortly after the new year the company moved into the Lafayette Theatre. Two shows were then under way: Frank Wilson's *Walk Together Chillun*, and the Orson Welles' adaptation of *Macbeth*. On February 4th the Wilson play opened to an enthusiastic audience. The performance was repeatedly stopped by outbursts of applause. Less than a fortnight later John Houseman, supervisor of the project, was called to a commercial engagement, and the Negro Theatre, headed by Carlton Moss, has become established on a self-governing basis. It is planning an early March opening for the second show.

The Experimental Theatre, on the other hand, has met with interminable delays from the very first—delays not inherent in the organization of the unit. Under the expert guidance of James Light the company has been rehearsing *Chalk Dust* (a brittle comment upon modern educational methods) in the basement of the Daly Theatre. Under the supervision of Virgil Geddes the entire group has moved through the doldrums of interminable delay with notable fortitude and fine morale. Staff meetings are held regularly, the supervisors on this project having been the first to establish conferences for discussing personnel, plays, and the general progress of the work. Recently the

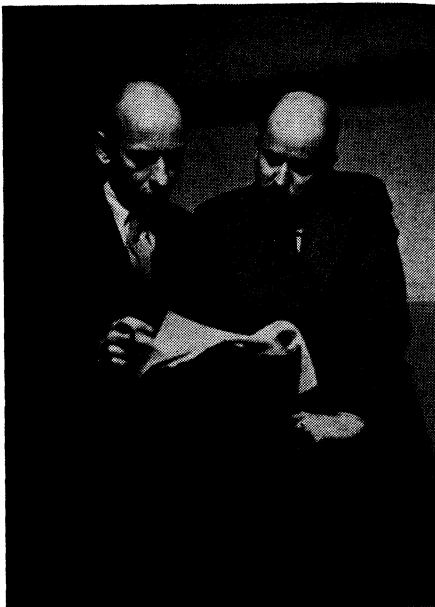
directorial staff devoted a holiday to debating a script endorsed by several members of the group.

The character of the personnel mirrored in such incidents will be shown in the completed production. Against the background of a school room Light has built up a masterful interpretation, with eloquent moments reminiscent of the best achievements of the early Provincetown Theatre.

There are other companies doing a very special type of production which requires extensive rehearsal. The Kleist play, *Der Zerbrochene Krug*, is a good illustration. The German group with John E. Bonn directing has taken this 18th century classic and given it a provocative modern treatment. Bonn, long familiar with advanced European technique, has forged a novelty which is likely to find admirers among those who look forward to the theatre of tomorrow.

A similar tendency to depart from beaten trails is evident in the production of W. H. Auden's *Dance of Death*. This "glorified satire with musical score" is being done by the Poetic Theatre, headed by Alfred Kreymborg. Emile Beilveau, formerly dramatic director for Briarcliff College, is directing. Excepting for a select Vassar audience (which requested a repeat performance) the play has not yet been seen in this country. The Poetic Theatre's second production will be Vachel Lindsay's *The Congo*, a mass recitation by Negroes.

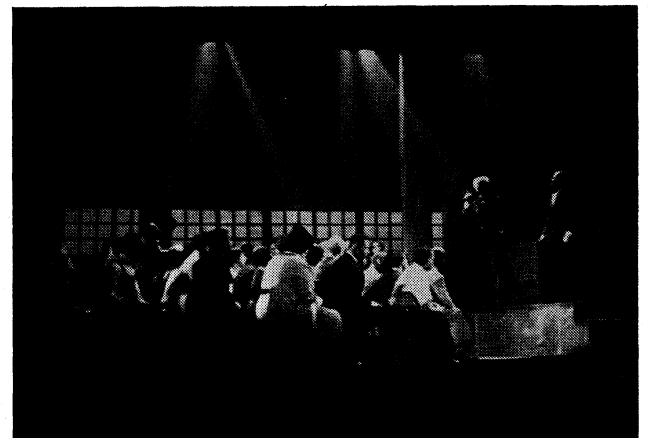
The Popular Price Theatre, headed by Edward Goodman, who has been identified with the growth of the American theatre for twenty years, will follow *American Holiday* with T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, and *Class of '29*, a compact and forceful statement of



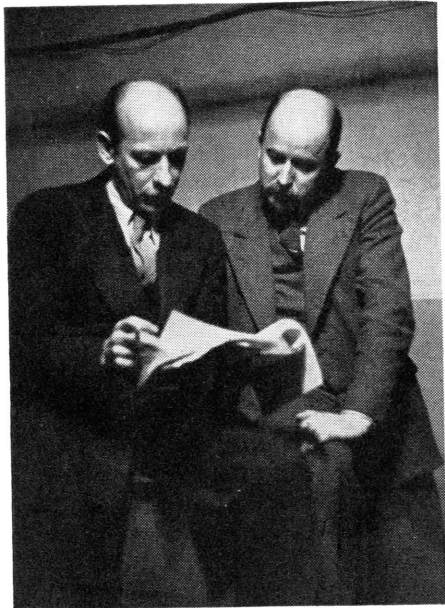
JAMES LIGHT AND VIRGIL GEDDES



"CHALK DUST," THE EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE



"WALK TOGETHER CHILLUN," THE NEGRO THEATRE



JAMES LIGHT AND VIRGIL GEDDES

to a commercial engagement, and the Negro Theatre, headed by Carlton Moss, has become established on a self-governing basis. It is planning an early March opening for the second show.

The Experimental Theatre, on the other hand, has met with interminable delays from the very first—delays not inherent in the organization of the unit. Under the expert guidance of James Light the company has been rehearsing *Chalk Dust* (a brittle comment upon modern educational methods) in the basement of the Daly Theatre. Under the supervision of Virgil Geddes the entire group has moved through the doldrums of interminable delay with notable fortitude and fine morale. Staff meetings are held regularly, the supervisors on this project having been the first to establish conferences for discussing personnel, plays, and the general progress of the work. Recently the

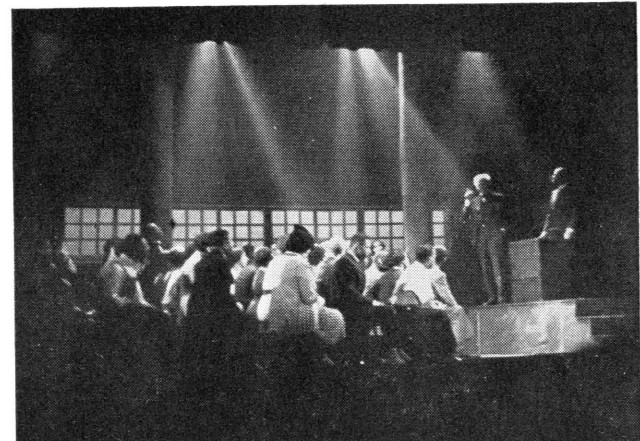
forward to the theatre of tomorrow.

A similar tendency to depart from beaten trails is evident in the production of W. H. Auden's *Dance of Death*. This "glorified satire with musical score" is being done by the Poetic Theatre, headed by Alfred Kreymborg. Emile Beilveau, formerly dramatic director for Briarcliff College, is directing. Excepting for a select Vassar audience (which requested a repeat performance) the play has not yet been seen in this country. The Poetic Theatre's second production will be Vachel Lindsay's *The Congo*, a mass recitation by Negroes.

The Popular Price Theatre, headed by Edward Goodman, who has been identified with the growth of the American theatre for twenty years, will follow *American Holiday* with T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, and *Class of '29*, a compact and forceful statement of



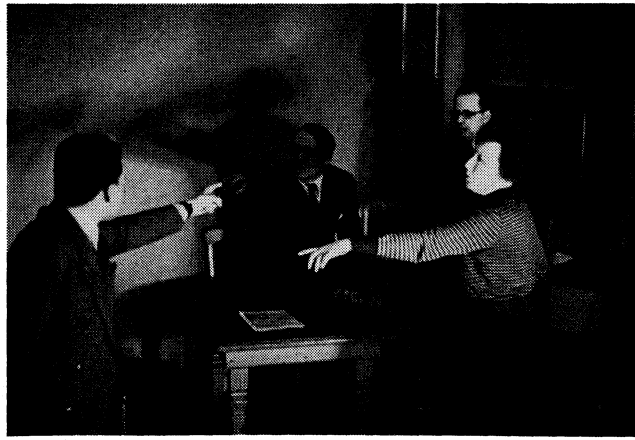
"CHALK DUST," THE EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE



"WALK TOGETHER CHILLUN," THE NEGRO THEATRE



"THE DANCE OF DEATH," THE POETIC THEATRE



"THE BROKEN JUG," THE GERMAN THEATRE

the economic crisis in terms of unemployed youth. The designs for *Murder in the Cathedral* have been made by Tom Adrian Cracraft, a leader in his profession; other members of the same group are Helen Arthur, Agnes Morgan, Halstead Welles and Lucius Moore Cook.

There are also a number of companies whose only aim is good entertainment; groups such as the Melodrama Revivals, Classical Repertory and Operetta. Similar in point of view is the Managers' Tryout, headed by Otto Metzger, whose first production is *Woman of Destiny*. An anti-war play, as is Rudolph Wittenberg's *Die Apostel*, the second production of the German group, the resemblance ceases at this point—*Woman of Destiny* is romantic Broadway, the German play is brittle realism.

There are other groups which are showing promise in rehearsal and which may develop hits, but which considerations of space have prevented me from dealing with here.

The Federal Theatre, in New York, as elsewhere, must not be regarded as one producing outfit dominated by a single dramatic theory. Rather must it be viewed as a small theatre world wherein there is vast diversity in talent, attitude and in the scripts themselves. And each project in turn is a small world unto itself, involving countless variations in talent, ambition and vision. A more polyglot institution can hardly be imagined. German, Yiddish, Russian, Hebrew, Polish, French, and at least one Nigerian dialect, are all in evidence, not only among the actors, but in the scripts. The old and the new are both to be found—playwrights long dust and boys just out of their 'teens—there is no discrimination, no arbitrary barrier. Courageous is the least that can be said of a program embracing such variety despite the non-theatrical limitations imposed upon it by the ever ingenious WPA.

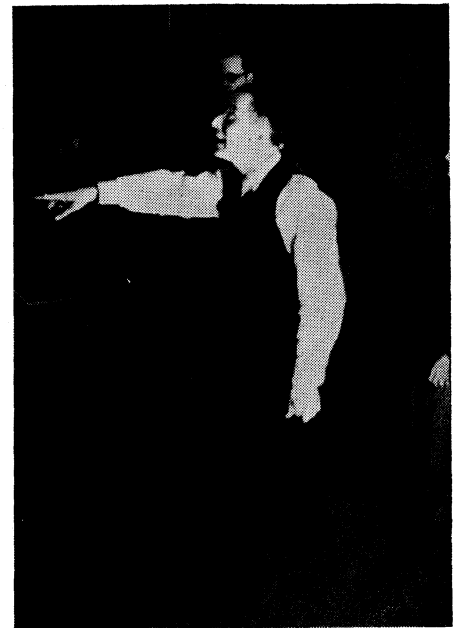
The omnibus nature of the project has made it impossible from the first for all

the plays to receive the same consideration. There were not enough theatres available, nor was the ten per cent purchase allotment large enough to give each play all that it needed in the way of settings, costumes and property.

The often-repeated question, "Why is the Federal Theatre taking so long to get under way?" is difficult to answer simply. If the standards of production were not so high, many of the difficulties might be more easily overcome. However, no director who has given his best for weeks is willing to accept compromise scenery, and a producer with a good thing naturally feels entitled to try and make it perfect, no matter how long it may take. Of course even the best intentions and the finest talent could not forever endure stoppages. Were the early days of the Federal Theatre to continue indefinitely the original plans would die of inanition.

There is little likelihood however, that this will happen. The first few months have served as an apprenticeship for many, and the seemingly insurmountable obstacles have been overcome one by one. Supplies for running operations are now on hand: lumber, paint, tools; the theatres have been renovated and are ready for action. What is more important, the companies have in many instances developed group unity, and professional association has created a lasting spirit of confidence. Considering the size of the Federal Theatre and the numerous personalities, there is relatively little friction. The hardships and trials have served to weld rather than disintegrate. The prevalent attitude is determination to succeed even in the face of challenges which might have weakened or destroyed less conscientious craftsmen.

Nowhere is a lessening of pace evident; instead it is not uncommon to hear managing producers discussing their third and fourth productions, frequently with the attitude that the first show was good practical experience. Most of them take



JOHN BONN

Martin Harris

the realistic attitude that to produce theatre under conditions which often rob the casting director of the right of free selection is not alone a theatre problem but partly a social-economic knot. Desperate situations have occurred, sometimes their solution has partaken of the miraculous. Leads have dropped out in the last week of rehearsal, scripts could not be obtained on the prevailing rental basis, scenery was something short of the producers' anticipation — such crises could be cited time out of mind.

Good theatre is slowly emerging. As a result of Homeric fortitude the drab level of mediocrity has been avoided in countless instances. A generous portion of the promise inherent in the production schedule published herewith will be realized. A theatre for children, a native African company, the modern dance, an exciting and distinguished variety show, a Negro Youth Theatre reviving an important race play—this much is very real.

The Federal Theatre continues; but the
(Continued on page 26)



"THE DANCE OF DEATH," THE POETIC THEATRE



"THE BROKEN JUG," THE GERMAN THEATRE

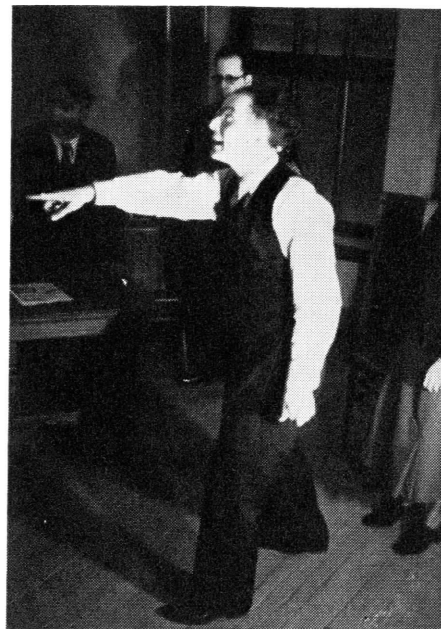
the economic crisis in terms of unemployed youth. The designs for *Murder in the Cathedral* have been made by Tom Adrian Cracraft, a leader in his profession; other members of the same group are Helen Arthur, Agnes Morgan, Halstead Welles and Lucius Moore Cook.

There are also a number of companies whose only aim is good entertainment; groups such as the Melodrama Revivals, Classical Repertory and Operetta. Similar in point of view is the Managers' Tryout, headed by Otto Metzger, whose first production is *Woman of Destiny*. An anti-war play, as is Rudolph Wittenberg's *Die Apostel*, the second production of the German group, the resemblance ceases at this point—*Woman of Destiny* is romantic Broadway, the German play is brittle realism.

There are other groups which are showing promise in rehearsal and which may develop hits, but which considerations of

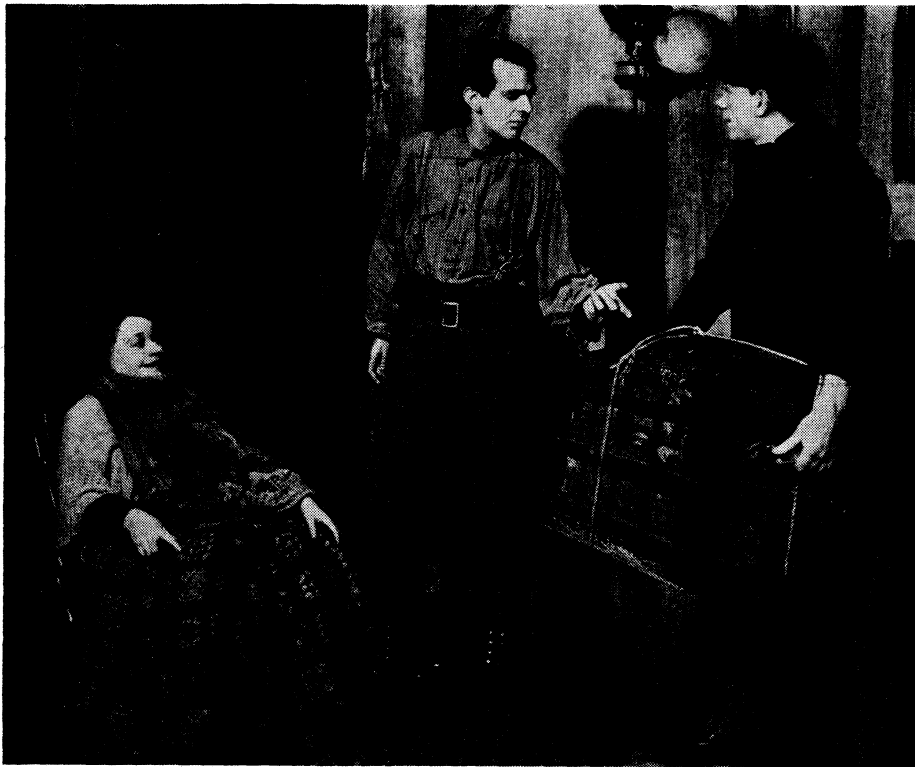
the plays to receive the same consideration. There were not enough theatres available, nor was the ten per cent purchase allotment large enough to give each play all that it needed in the way of settings, costumes and property.

The often-repeated question, "Why is the Federal Theatre taking so long to get under way?" is difficult to answer simply. If the standards of production were not so high, many of the difficulties might be more easily overcome. However, no director who has given his best for weeks is willing to accept compromise scenery, and a producer with a good thing naturally feels entitled to try and make it perfect, no matter how long it may take. Of course even the best intentions and the finest talent could not forever endure stoppages. Were the early days of the Federal Theatre to continue indefinitely the original plans would die of inanition.



JOHN BONN

Martin Harris



PAULINE LORD, RAYMOND MASSEY AND TOM EWELL IN "ETHAN FROME" *Vandamm*

"ETHAN FROME" and the Theatre of Fate

BY JOHN W. GASSNER

Perhaps more nonsense has been written about the role of fate in the drama than about any other subject. If the question were merely an academic conundrum, one could relegate it to the publications of the Modern Language Association. But the situation is otherwise: the treatment of fate is basic in dramatic writing, which is vastly more conditioned by the principle of causality than for instance the epic or the novel.

The Owen and Donald Davis dramatization of *Ethan Frome* brings the question to the fore all the more forcibly because it is one of the most arresting productions of this or any other year in the American theatre. In a small farming community in Northern New England live Ethan Frome and his hypochondriacal wife, Zenobia, whom he had married after she had nursed his mentally diseased mother. One day under the influence of her hypochondria she arranges to have her distant relative, the young Mattie Silver, whose health has broken down in the factory, come and live with them and help with the housework. Mattie recovers her health in the salubrious

country air, and her uncomplaining buoyancy brings a little sunshine into the otherwise drab and arid home of the Fromes, until Frome falls in love with her in his characteristically undemonstrative manner. His wife's eyes, sharpened by her natural suspiciousness, detect the situation even before it is crystal clear to the two pathetically inarticulate lovers. Mattie is sent packing, though she has absolutely nowhere to go. After some vain verbal resistance and a daring, but quickly smothered, dream of abandoning his wife, Frome resigns himself to his fate. But the parting hour is too dreadful to be borne. For him it means a lifetime with an impossible woman; for Mattie parting means not only lovelessness but homelessness, and a return to the dreaded factory for which she was so pathetically unsuited. Recklessness, like passion, flares suddenly, without much preliminary cogitation, on the snow-covered New England soil, and the lovers go coasting down a hill together to their death. Instead of dying, Frome is lamed and Mattie is paralyzed for life. Twenty years later they are still alive,

the two of them and Frome's wife, whom the tragedy and its ensuing responsibilities seem to have cured of her hypochondria. The poverty, as well as the monotony of the household is greater than ever, Mattie's love for Ethan has turned to irrational hate, and hope has vanished utterly for the three people now saddled with each other for life.

This tale makes a bitter story of frustration and puritanic inhibitions. There is further tragedy, for those who understand it, in the abysmal poverty of its people, and in the harshness of the encroaching factory system which is throwing its shadow across their fields. Those who concentrate on the love-tragedy in *Ethan Frome* see only half of the play, only one plane of action, only one collection of protagonists. One cannot separate Zenobia Frome's hypochondria, Ethan's suppressed spirit, and Mattie's bird-like pecking at a few crumbs of life, from the bleak poverty which has cradled these characters and has hounded them throughout their existence. The tragedy that ensues arises to a considerable degree from these circumstances, which might have been perhaps underscored more unambiguously. The grim effectiveness of *Ethan Frome* is produced by a compound picture of man and environment.

Faced with the necessity of abridging the material of Edith Wharton's novel and of hastening its pace, Owen and Donald Davis have strung together a series of clipped episodes, and it cannot be said that the play flows with any ease and freedom. One could wish for more eloquent transitions, especially in the epilogue, which does not explain why Frome's wife allowed her crippled rival to live with them after the accident, and fails to indicate how this hypochondriacal woman became hale and active thereafter. This has indeed given rise to the complaint that the playwrights suffered from the fact that they were hewing a play out of a novel.

At the risk of digressing, this reporter proclaims that he hasn't the slightest patience with the view that one cannot dramatize a novel or that a dramatization is necessarily inadequate theatre. This seems to me pure poppy-cock retailed for the consumption of spiritless and unresourceful playwrights. The classic dramatists, who exploited the fertile narrative field of the Homeric and Cyclic narratives, and the Elizabethans who pilfered Italian story books are evidence to the contrary. Instead of wracking their brains for some attenuated and artificial plot, many of our playwrights might do everyone, including themselves, a favor if they resorted to some honest and sub-



PAULINE LORD, RAYMOND MASSEY AND TOM EWELL IN "ETHAN FROME"

Vandamm

stantial narrative, remembering only to expect no quarter if they fail to measure up to the job they have set themselves. The playwrights responsible for *Ethan Frome* have been comparatively fortunate. Not only have they found rich resources in Edith Wharton's most distinguished novel, but their relative lack of dramatic ingenuity does not in this instance detract greatly from their effectiveness. Their episodic, sometimes well-nigh creaky construction harmonizes with the inarticulate stiffness of the characters, the wintry season and unlovely environment. The construction of the play reflects the mood of the story.

One of the most completely realized productions of the American theatre is a valuable ally to the play. The play could not have been realized on the stage at all without sterling acting, sensitive direction and ingenious staging in the scenic department. Once again Guthrie McClintic proves himself a very talented director with a practically infallible sense of timing. No one who has watched the tense restraint and sudden explosiveness of the scenes between Ethan and Mattie can fail to appreciate the sensitiveness of the production. Raymond Massey's Ethan Frome realizes to the full the hard-pressed character whose inarticulateness suffuses his entire lean body. Pauline Lord, holding her own as his wife, plays the hypochondriac with silken stubbornness, though with a trace of whimsicality that is out of character except in relation to the epilogue, which reveals a healthier strain in her personality. At the same time this seeming incongruity in the portrait of Zenobia Frome supports the view that this woman is not naturally a hypochondriac. She is at least partly the victim of a frustrating environment which poisons people by denying them self-realization in the external world, turning them inward. Ruth Gordon's Mattie is literally heart-rending. Her youthfulness beating ever so apologetically against the blank wall of her poverty and helplessness lingers as an epitome of all the eager life that flickers so vainly in the isolated downtrodden. Place these people in Jo Mielziner's steely snow-covered exteriors and cramped interiors, and you have a production not easily forgotten.

Still, there is a definite lack, a constitutional weakness, so to speak, in *Ethan Frome*, which must not remain unnoticed. Fatalism, as defined by the classic Greeks, was originally a revolt against the naive anthropomorphic philosophy which made human destiny dependent upon the whim or law of some deity or spirit. Fatalism, instead, assigned tragic events to inexplicable chance or destiny and eliminated the gods as causative factors in human

life. This fatalism made Aeschylus formulate a rational theory of heredity and morality, and led Sophocles to focus attention on human responsibility and reason. Nevertheless, this originally progressive respect for fate became antiquated and reactionary with the dawn of the renaissance. The passionate individuality and will-to-power of the renaissance merchant and price could brook no external interference. Destiny became "self-made," and tragic fate, though never eliminated from the theatre, ceased to be a major dramatic factor.

Today, though we have come to distrust and disavow the renaissance type of individualism, fatalism in the theatre has become even more reactionary and stultifying. If despite its unquestioned merits *Ethan Frome* seems unsatisfying, it is because it accepts so much without protest or criticism. Quite obviously to blame the hypochondriacal wife in the play would be flaying the wrong dog. The blame at first glance descends upon the will of the characters, chiefly upon Ethan Frome's and Mattie's resignation to the frustration of their lives. They are creatures of tradition, products of a stultifying environment. Therefore, in a fundamental sense, it is this environment and its inadequacies that must be brought to the bar of criticism. Confining themselves to an aloof, uncritical projection of their story, the authors of *Ethan Frome* deprive themselves of the high art of tragic evaluation. They have set down a case history, from which we may draw certain social deductions, but these are not dramatized. In a very real sense they have not wholly mastered their material. The tragedy becomes cramping and somewhat purposeless, almost guignol in a rustic setting. It becomes wearing on the nerves instead of exhilarating like all true tragedy—for tragedy, rightly understood, is release not merely through the catharsis of watching someone suffer but through creative judgment. Chiefly for this reason one can grant *Ethan Frome* almost every merit except that of greatness. A marvellous case history, it falls somewhat short of tragedy.

"Determinism"

It is enlightening to observe that in the one department in which determinism bears the greatest weight, namely in the social drama, there is the least inclination to succumb to fatalism and passiveness. This is of course due solely to the influence of a dynamic theory of history, in which forces are seen in perpetual conflict and in which a resigned acceptance of the *status quo* is inconceivable. Drama of this order, unlike *Ethan Frome*, is

founded upon the principle that wrong can be righted, and that the world can be changed. Aesthetically, revolt and restlessness are not invariably effective. They can be dramatic only when the issue is broad and significant, which is perhaps the reason why the social theatre tends so often to become heroic, almost epic drama. One thinks of such recent instances as *Roar, China, They Shall Not Die, Stevedore, and Let Freedom Ring*. Certain it is that cantankerousness is not the soul of drama, not even of the militant social variety. Numerous social plays that this reviewer has had occasion to read lacked effectiveness and sometimes even simple interest because the playwrights felt tropical under the collar at the slightest provocation. There was much carping, too little significant criticism, and even less drama.

One playwright who has never lost sight of the conditions of his art and orientation has been John Wexley. Something in this man will never let him write picayune theatre. He has an instinct for the strong clash of character and issues. He has thus far evinced little subtlety and less lyricism, but he has an infallible instinct for the resonant conflict of characters and issues, and a taste for the tang of dynamic speech. He is one of the most forceful writers of our present theatre.

Running Dogs, the main item on the Theatre Union Studio's recent benefit night, though naturally lacking in the scope of such full-length plays as *The Last Mile* and *They Shall Not Die*, belongs among the strongest one act plays of our day. Its very theme, the activity of the Chinese revolutionists, is epic. Being only a one act play (it is not merely a second act, as listed in the program, but also an independent playlet), *Running Dogs* cannot have epic breadth, but its chief episode, in which a revolutionary spy is caught and executed by government troops, is permeated with the heroic spirit, and the issue is the epic struggle of the Chinese peasantry against abysmal poverty and oppression. Soldier and peasant, officer and revolutionary, are brought together until the canvas is packed full. The officers are not picayune sadists, but representatives of a class that treats the people as dirt under its feet. The soldiers in the government army are bewildered children of the people who must think themselves through to a course of action which will change their apparent destiny to remain slaves all their lives. The spy is executed, but he has sown the seeds of doubt in their minds. At the close of the curtain the soldiers beat up his betrayer,

(Continued on page 34)



CHARLES MACARTHUR AND BEN HECHT

The Pair from Paramount

BY ALFRED HAYES

I remember, though it seems a long time ago, how eagerly we awaited the first production of Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur after their break with their Hollywood paymasters. It was not clear whether Mr. Hecht and Mr. MacArthur were to be completely independent of their distributor, Paramount Pictures, or merely a subsidiary organization. But to the world that wanted to listen, Mr. Hecht declared, in full flight from the cloistered vacuum on the coast, that Astoria, Long Island, was to become the cradle of the modern American film art. And it would be the hands of the Messrs. Hecht and MacArthur that would rock it.

Hollywood, as we knew, and as Mr. Hecht informed us, with his usual rhetorical venom that always seemed to have a certain shadow of platitude across it, was a graveyard where writers went to die and hacks lived to a ripe and rich old age. Mr. Hecht, on the other hand, was already a legend of wit and impishness. Mr. MacArthur was a genial madman of the Chicago school of madmen. Was it the Mecca of Moronity Mr. Hecht called Hollywood? Or the Palace of Platitude? We forget the phrase now, but with the establishment of the Long Island studios, their financial hook-up still shrouded in some mystery, a rumor and a belief circulated that Mr. Hecht had at last stopped chasing the elusive dollar-sign and was about to make an aesthetic comeback.

We believed, being young and impressionable, that the Hecht of *Erik Dorn* and *Humpty Dumpty*, of the old Chicago Daily News literary supplement and the Little Review, the iconoclastic and metaphoric Mr. Hecht, the champion of Life (in capital letters) and the foe of the smug bourgeoisie he once caricatured as the Mr. Winkleman of *Humpty Dumpty*, was about to rise out of the graveyard. True, he might be a slightly aged and withered Lazarus, and one who had accumulated quite a pile during his internment, but nevertheless the idol-smasher of old. We told ourselves that after all what he had been doing in Hollywood was simply learning the game, gathering enough of the cash of M.G.M.'s "Ars Gratia Artis" lion or the Paramount pocketbook to establish this haven of the intelligence, this oasis of civilized cinema art which he meant the Astoria lots to be. Announcements were auspicious. Activity and antic ruled the Astoria megaphone. Two wooden dummies were placed at the entrance of the studio and labeled "Supervisors." Today Mr. Hecht had played a prank on Mr. MacArthur. Mr. MacArthur, no less a wit, had then played a prank upon Mr. Hecht. Somebody perhaps had left ice on the dressing room steps; somebody perhaps had jammed a gun into the leading lady's rear end to get that big scene out of her. "The boys" were having a great time, proof in itself that on Long Island Mr. Hecht and Mr. MacArthur were turning out the Great

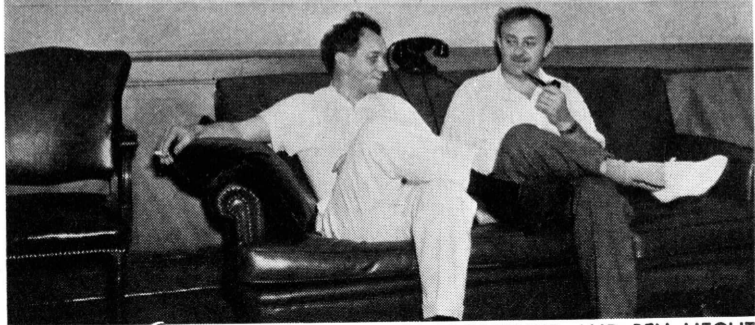
American Film without any of the pretentious solemnity of the Hollywood phonies.

At last, *Crime Without Passion* appeared, the first production of the pair from Paramount. And as we watched Mr. Claude Rains turn his sardonic puss to the window, and gaze scornfully from the heights of his criminal lawyer skyscraper offices at the millions of despicable worms that crawled along Manhattan, somehow the epithets and epigrams Mr. Hecht had put into the mouth of Mr. Rains rang more than a little hollow and more than a little foolish. Somehow we felt that Margo's beautifully husky voice, a voice like a guitar, and her smouldering beauty, did not atone for the clichéd and motheaten murder mystery with Nietzschean trimmings which "the boys" had turned out as their first offer to an expectant public. The photography was fine, but that, after all, was Lee Garmes' and not Mr. Hecht's contribution. The whole thing sounded as though a skillful and talented man was amusing himself writing unusual Saturday Evening Post stories, pitifully thin and pretentiously decorated.

Subsequently, we were amused by Mr. Hecht's verbal bang-ups with the exhibitors in the pages of the Motion Picture Herald. The latter declared that *Crime Without Passion* was a dud, a flop, a phony, and that the hicks who spent their money out in the tank-towns had a tendency to get up and leave, or grow angry at their money's worth. Mr. Hecht, with a fine disdain for the adage "the customer is always right," answered that the average exhibitor in America had the brains of a chimpanzee, the culture of a bushman, and the business acumen of a bailbond shark. Despite the rhetoric, we began to have a suspicion that in this most curious of contests, the exhibitor might have been a good critic.

It was a dull day on which we saw the second Hecht-MacArthur opus, *Once in a Blue Moon*. From the gallery we watched Jimmy Savo cavort through the Russian Revolution, sadly rolling his banjo eyes, wriggling his elastic fingers, full of love and tenderness for the world of man. The film was infinitely whimsical. Wasn't the tale of a little clown lost in the brutality and stupidity of a national revolution the height of whimsy and poetry? Wasn't it infinitely subtle to contrast the heartbreak of the clown as his friend, the truck horse, dies, and the brutality of cauliflower-eared Red army men incapable of such gentle poetry? Between mad, although charming, aristocrats and determined, brawny, and stupid revolutionists filled with dogmas and slogans of revolt, Mr. Hecht

**WHAT IS THE AUDIENCE
DOING ALL THAT TIME?**



CHARLES MACARTHUR AND BEN HECHT

declared himself on the side of the clowns, particularly clowns in love with aristocratic princesses.

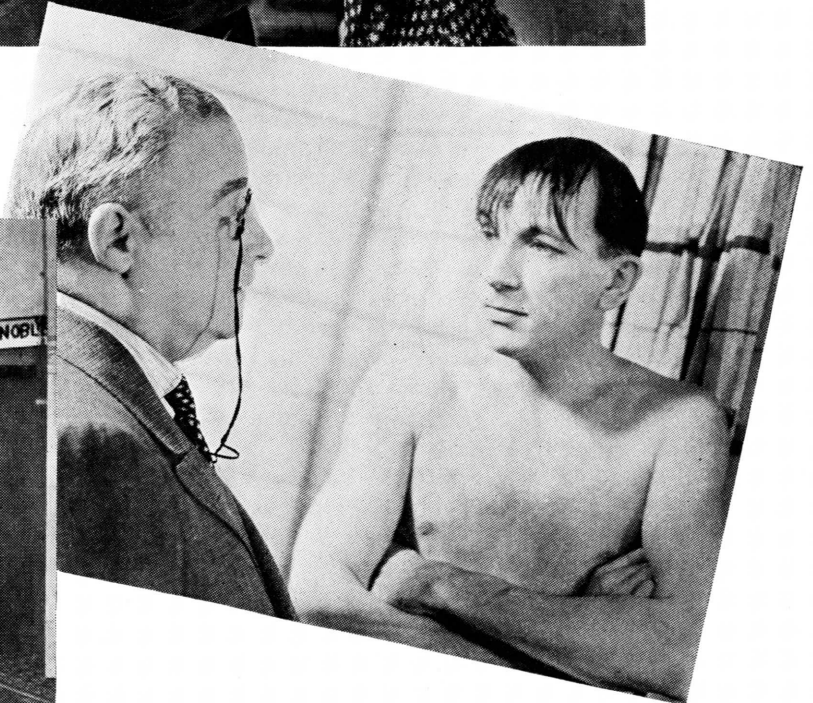
Now we were more than troubled. Was this the dynamite the Astoria studios were to explode on the American screen? *Crime Without Passion*—a murder mystery that attempted to gloss over its mediocrity by dragging in the Greek Furies (special effects by Vorkapich), and heart-to-heart talks between Mr. Rains and his ectoplasm. *Once in a Blue Moon*—so inept that Paramount shelved it after a few calamitous screenings in out of the way places. One exhibitor advertised it as "the worst film he had ever shown," but even that attracted no customers. Was this to be "the boys' art now that they were freed from the dead hands of the Mongolian idiots who ruled Hollywood?"

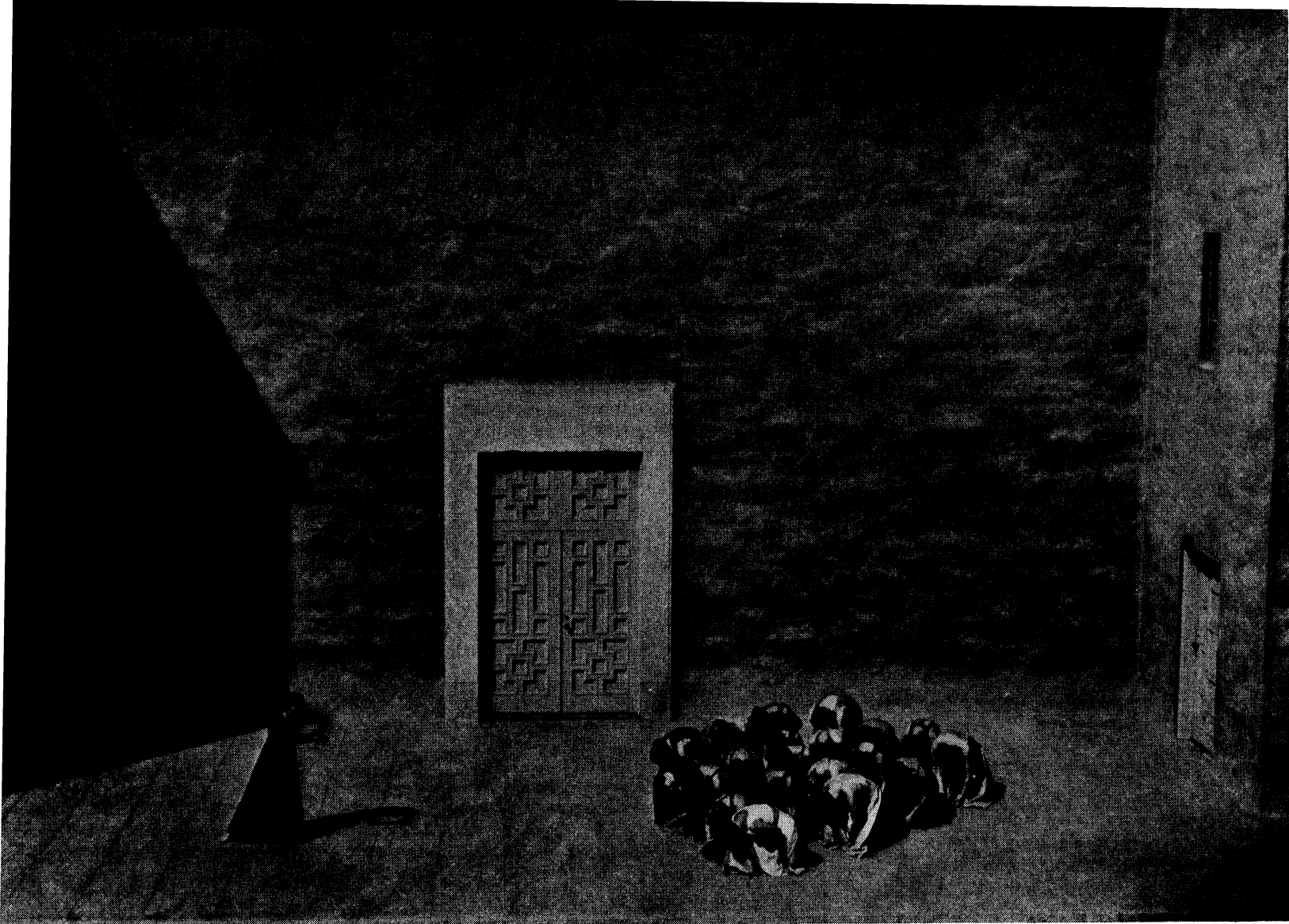
The Scoundrel was *Crime Without Passion* without the crime, without passion, with a phony ending, and with Noel Coward's soprano sarcasm instead of Mr. Rains' bass sarcasm. Surprisingly, Mr. Hecht seemed to have developed a strain of religious mysticism which must have caused acute pain to the copy desk of the Chicago Daily News. Having floated for three days in the salt sea, and returned to the publishing business dragging his weeds behind him, Mr. Coward, standing in rapturous banality, looks at the ceiling where God (according to the script) resides, and fades out in a fade-out of fade-outs. Even a fly-by-night indie would have hesitated on one like that. But since Mr. Hecht had written it, the Mr. Hecht who had lampooned, seared, mocked and derided the Hollywood of fakes, critical and public opinion decided that it must be art, and the hell with it.

Thus, the first three Hecht-MacArthur
(Continued on page 33)



Top to Bottom: Jimmy Savo in "Once in a Blue Moon," Claude Rains and Margo in "Crime Without Passion," Noel Coward in "The Scoundrel" and John Howard and Mary Taylor in "Soak the Rich."





Willard Van Dyke

HANYA HOLM TEACHING A GROUP AT MILLS COLLEGE CALIFORNIA

From a Dancer's Notebook

BY BLANCHE EVAN

Preface: Filled with eagerness and enthusiasm I set out in the summer of 1934 to supplement my studies in the modern dance at the New York Wigman School. A year later, again feeling the pressure of unsatisfied needs, I turned to the studio of Martha Graham. In both I found great treasures often hidden though they were beneath mysticism, dogma, and personalization of an arbitrary nature. But in neither school did I find a solid dance training—one that would satisfy the demands of a young, discriminating, social-minded modern dancer.

While in the pursuit of study, I recorded my impressions and comments. I submit them to print because I believe: 1. That by formulating our reactions to these schools we can clarify *our* needs and find a path to their solution. 2. That we *should* evaluate what these two important systems of modern dance train-

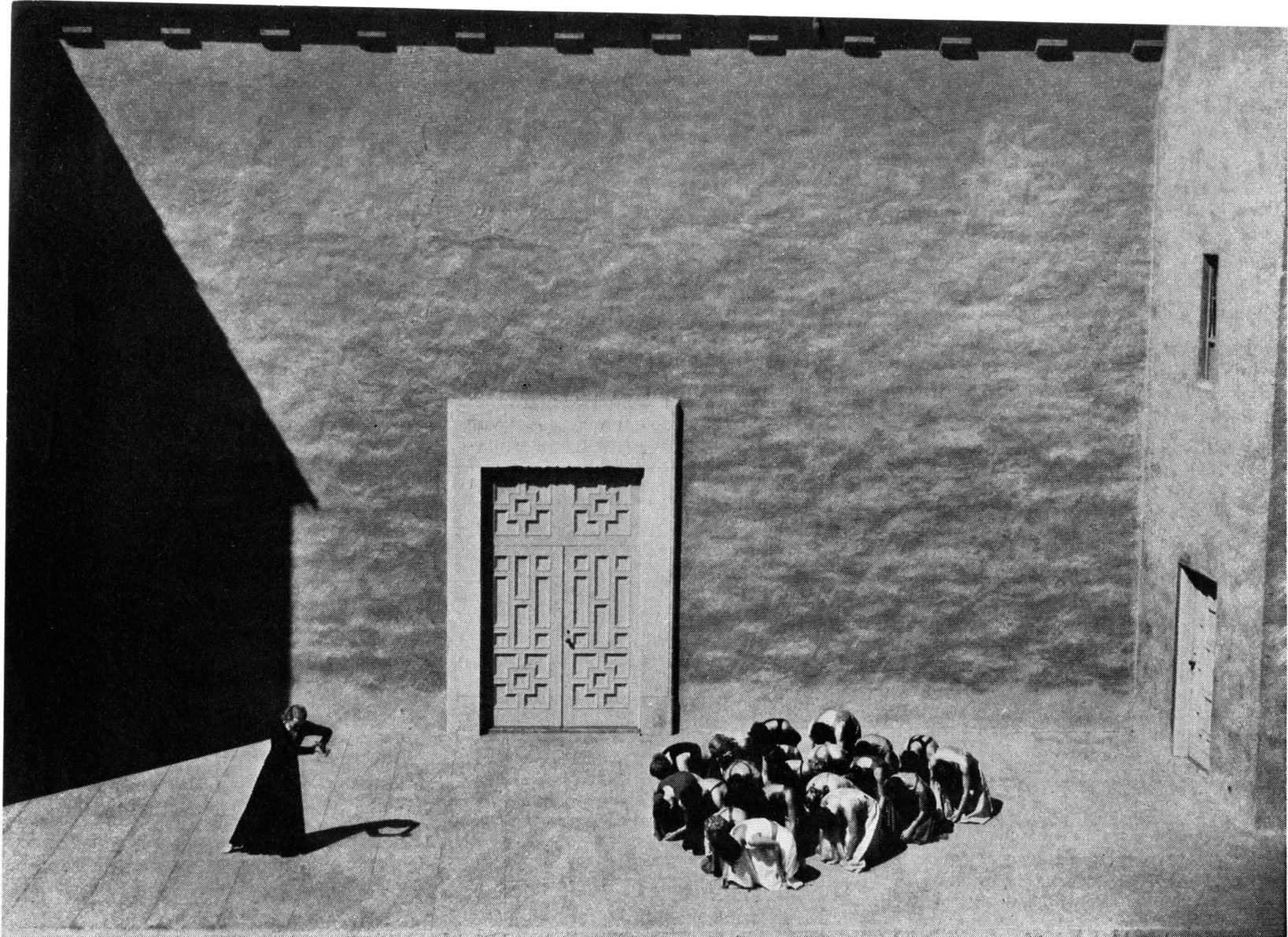
ing can contribute to the building of a modern dance training more adaptable to our needs. 3. That to a great degree my criticisms express what up to now has remained hidden in the minds of many young modern dancers.

An Intensive Course at the New York Wigman School—Summer, 1934. Hanya Holm, Director; Louise Kloepper, Associate Teacher.

Experience 1: I am so excited—I am so exuberant. I'm sure that I have found the place where I can free myself. I shall dance, dance, dance—anything I like, any way I like. I shall lose my self-consciousness. It is only my first day at the school, but already I know it. It's in the atmosphere. When you enter the class, every one is smiling and the lesson starts off with a bang! You feel close to the teacher, and to all the other

students. You form a big circle, you walk with a spring-like action of the leg in big heavy stride, then in light, high steps on half-toe. In this simple way, we were immediately made aware of the necessary union between physical movement and its co-ordinate *quality*. The pianist is great. He plays all sorts of things—improvises to suit the mood exactly—jazzy themes, serious fragments, never the same thing twice. The improvisations just roll from his finger tips.

Experience 2: Today the pianist was away. At first I thought we would have to dance in silence. That would have been difficult, after enjoying the stimulating musical improvisations that usually accompany class work. (Maybe this external stimulus will become a bad habit? Perhaps a professional should not become dependent on outside excitement of this nature?) It turned out to be a



Willard Van Dyke

HANYA HOLM TEACHING A GROUP AT MILLS COLLEGE CALIFORNIA

percussion class. Big and little drums were taken out very carefully from the closet—beautiful gongs, and cymbals and rattles and primitive instruments of all kinds. What a collection! Really fascinating! It's scheduled for once a week regularly. I remember now how much percussion Mary Wigman used for her dances. But why should I learn to play these instruments any more than I should learn to compose music? I wish to be a dancer, not a tympani player. The relation of percussion to movement is interesting but I am inclined to think that the time I have spent in the scientific study of Dalcroze, which clarifies the relationship between movement and related elements of music, was more valuable. Anyway, it was lots of fun.

Experience 3: Lord, did we relax today! The whole trunk just submitting to gravity like a dead weight, forward, back, side, followed by many variations of relaxed swinging in the arms and legs: "swinging the joints, and relaxing the muscles." We even worked the feet in little relaxing, shaking movements. It made the body feel "good." In the succeeding hour called "Pedagogy" we analyzed this phenomenon of "swinging" in relation to "impulse, momentum, gravity, direction." I was glad that a technical analysis was made. It is not a usual occurrence in our classes. Relaxation, we were told, is used to let out energy for a new energy to enter. (Isn't it more probable that after relaxation you would be too tired to let in a new energy?)

This "pedagogy" hour was not really a lesson in pedagogy, though I understand that later on the students actually get an opportunity to practice teaching, using the others in the class as the students. It was rather an informal discussion-hour, directed by Hanya (to be given once every week). The inclusion in the curriculum of classes in percussion, in group work, in pedagogy, is a distinct advance over other modern schools that concern themselves only with dance technique. In pedagogy Hanya tries not only to answer our questions, but to give us a feeling of what dancing is all about. She seems to be primarily a creative teacher, not a creative artist. She dresses in a plain well-worn black skirt and bodice, no cosmetics on her face. Her feet are in and out of the little red leather slippers innumerable times during the hour, as she demonstrates movements, assists a student here and there. All this helps to create a plain working atmosphere. Hanya takes every opportunity to remind us that to be a dancer we must recondition ourselves mentally and spiritually

as well as physically. It is always a shock to those students who regard dancing as nothing more than kinaesthetics. After all, what is the sense of training the body to become a meaningless automation of movement?

Experience 4: No two days are alike and I never know what to expect in class. It is certainly a fascinating method (or is it a lack of one?) for there is always fresh material and unexpected adventure. We have two classes daily, one in improvisation and one in so-called technique. So-called because even the technical classes are built on improvisation. By this means we explore all the possibilities of movement (we find out what the body *can* do, but do we find out what the body *should* do?). There are no set exercises. We never repeat an exercise from day to day. Exercise movements are invented spontaneously each day by the teacher. The lesson ends with student improvisations on the technical "theme." For instance, today our lesson was built on body falls. Louise gave us varied falls to do and then we proceeded to invent our own. We experimented with different dynamic uses of the body contacting the ground: sinking "passively" into it, and then falling "actively": not to submit but to receive an "electric shock" from the floor that sent us bouncing from place to place; running into the ground only to tear away from it, or the opposite, running into space on a crescendo and pitching from this height down to the floor in a kind of final extinction. Lord knows what I did in my improvisations, but I felt I could have performed the most marvelous acrobatic stunts with perfect ease. We had been worked up into a kinæsthetic hypnosis in which we lost all fear. I wonder now how I did it. I wonder moreover how constructive this kind of training is if, in such immediate retrospect, I cannot hang on to any one specific thing,—except that the use of movement in contact with the floor-spatial-level has dynamic possibilities of which I had never dreamt. I have seen several Graham demonstrations at the New School and each year the girls repeated the same six falls—patterns which are known by now as "Graham falls." The girls practice these same falls every day but they don't learn *how to fall* any more than we did today. At least through the Wigman method of improvisation, I am avoiding the pitfall of regarding the dance as an academic vocabulary of technical patterns.

Experience 5: Until today we spent the major part of our time "relaxing." Today we went to the opposite extreme and "tensed" until we burst, until the

whole body thrilled with that vibrancy which accompanies such extreme tension. The two poles of movement, tension and relaxation. At first we thought that tension was purely a physical matter but today the words tension and intensity were used interchangeably. We learned how the physical state of tension was only a means of expressing intensity—the dynamics of movement—the shading. Most of the girls stamped like fury when they were most "intense." They *themselves felt* it (I could tell it by the terrible faces they made) and apparently it did not matter that their movements did not convey anything to anyone else.

I think it is right to stamp and yell your dance *in the studio* if you so desire, even if it doesn't mean anything. It is one of the unique advantages of the school that in it you feel free to get a lot out of your system. To rid your self of physical and mental inhibition is as necessary in your development as an artist as to acquire "technique." Any progressive school takes cognizance of this. But this freedom can become a danger if it is not followed up by creative discipline. For instance in relation to this business of intensity. It would have killed two birds with one stone if we had been asked to choose a specific idea for the improvisation: as, the growth of hysteria in an accident. If the Wigman method included along with "emotional outlet" improvisations, improvisations disciplined by specific themes, the students would avoid the introvertive indulgence of which many of them are justifiably accused. Only by particularizing improvisation can it be of definite assistance in the creation of a dance. Unless we practice a method which helps us achieve clarity in our dance compositions, the free approach to creative form through improvisation will be of no avail. In the end it is the adequate expression of an idea in a communicative form which counts.

Experience 6: For the most part I am still extremely happy at the Wigman School. What tremendous doors are opening to me. It is so strange. Who has opened them? I have done the improvising, I have been experiencing, but it has all occurred under a subtle pressure inherent in the method. That is what I find so wonderful about the school. I don't quite know how it happens but I find myself growing in my feeling for the ecstasy of the dance through the expansion of my own self. For instance, today we worked on the theme of "quiet." Some of the girls interpreted the theme subjectively, quiet within themselves, a theme of peaceful-

(Continued on page 28)

The Obligatory Scene

BY JOHN HOWARD LAWSON

(This is an excerpt from *Theory and Technique of Playwriting*, published by G. P. Putnam's Sons, on February 28th. A review of the book by Charmion von Wiegand will appear in the next issue of NEW THEATRE.)

An analysis of the function of the obligatory scene throws a great deal of light on the structural problems of modern plays. References to the obligatory scene occasionally appear in contemporary criticism, but little seems to be known concerning the meaning or value of the theory. The idea derives from Francisque Sarcey, who was the dean of Parisian dramatic critics from 1860 to 1899. Sarcey was by no means a great critic; he admired the plays of Scribe and Sardou; his opinions, like the plays he applauded, were often conventional and shallow. But in developing the conception of the *scène à faire*, he made a fundamental contribution to our knowledge of dramatic construction. William Archer translates the phrase as the *obligatory scene*, and describes it as a situation "which the audience (more or less clearly and consciously) foresees and desires, and the absence of which it may with reason resent."

Sarcey applied the theory rather mechanically to the well-made plays of his time. But the idea that the plot leads in a *foreseen* direction (foreseen by the audience), toward a clash of forces which is *obligatory*, is far more than a mechanical formula; it is a vital step toward understanding the inter-connection between the logic of events and the logic of the spectator's expectation.

One may at first suppose that the obligatory scene is identical with the climax. Since the action rises to a point of crisis, it seems sensible to suppose that this crisis is the obligatory point toward which the plot is moving. But if we examine the character of construction more closely, we find that this is not the case. The action does not move forward in uninterrupted progression to the point of maximum tension. There is a very important difference between the *expected clash* and the *final clash*. However inevitable the latter may be, it may be completely unexpected. But this unexpected crisis must grow out of events which we understand and follow with increasing attention: the point upon

which our attention is concentrated is the clash of forces which is foreseen because it is made necessary by the logic of the plot.

Sarcey speaks of the attitudes of the audience as one of "expectation mingled with uncertainty." The degree of expectation and uncertainty is variable. But the decisive point toward which the action seems to be driving is the point concerning which there is the greatest expectation and the smallest uncertainty.

In order to be emotionally moved, the audience must be aware of the scope and direction of the events on the stage. The final scope of any action is its climax.* But the spectators do not know what the climax will be; they cannot use it as a standard of emotional value; they cannot test the action in terms of climax. They *do* test it in terms of their expectation, which is focussed on the expected clash—the obligatory scene.

Archer feels that the obligatory scene is not really obligatory: he warns us against the assumption "that there can be no good play without a *scène à faire*." To be sure, he is using the term in a narrow sense. But no play can fail to provide a point of concentration toward which the maximum expectation is aroused. The audience requires such a point in order to define its attitude toward the events. The dramatist must analyze this quality of expectation; he cannot trick the audience by omitting the required situation, because to do so would be to destroy the logic of his plot and to break the bond between his play and the spectators.

Just as the climax furnishes us with a test by which we can analyze the action *backward*, the obligatory scene offers us an additional check on the *forward* movement of the action. The climax is the basic event, which causes the rising action to grow and flower. The obligatory scene is the immediate goal toward which the play is driving. The obligatory scene is rooted in activity. The climax, on the other hand, is rooted in the social conception on which the play is based.†

* The scope of a play's action, and the ways of determining and understanding it, are dealt with exhaustively in other parts of *Theory and Technique of Playwriting*, and particularly in the chapter on *Unity in Terms of Climax*.

† Here again, the reference is to material which is dealt with in other parts of the book, and which cannot be included in the present article. A chapter of the book analyses *The Social Framework*, as the wider system of events in which the play's action is placed, and which finds its most complete expression in the climax.

The Children's Hour, by Lillian Hellman, may be selected as an example of characteristic faults and virtues in the handling of the obligatory scene. The climax of *The Children's Hour* (Martha Dobie's suicide in the third act) is weak, because the social conception which would give meaning and intensity to the suicide has been inadequately developed. Without a social framework, we cannot feel the full impact of the events leading to the suicide; we cannot gauge the effect of the child's gossip within the community; we have no data as to the steps by which the scandal is spread and accepted. Therefore the psychological effect on the two women is also vague, and is taken for granted instead of being dramatized.

The play ignores time and place. The prejudice against sexual abnormality varies in different localities and under different social conditions. We are given no data on this point. Only the most meagre and undramatic information is conveyed concerning the past lives of the characters. This is especially true of the neurotic child. The figure of the little girl burning with hate, consumed with malice, would be memorable if we knew *why* she had become what she is. Lacking this information, we must conclude that she is a victim of fate, that she was born evil, and will die evil.

For this reason the third act of the play ends in a fog. It is impossible to find emotional or dramatic meaning in the final crisis. The two women are broken in spirit when the last act opens. Their lives are ruined because a lying child has convinced the world that their relationship is abnormal. Martha confesses that there is really a psychological basis for the charge: she has always felt a desperate physical love for Karen. Dr. Cardin, Karen's fiancé, who has loyally defended the two women, talks over the problem with Karen and she insists that they must break their engagement. But all of this is *acceptance* of a situation: their conscious wills are not directed toward any solution of the difficulty—it is assumed that no solution exists. Martha's suicide is not an act which breaks an unbearable tension, but an act which grows out of drifting futility. There is a feeling of acid bitterness in these scenes which indicates that the author is trying to find expression for something which she feels deeply. But

she has not dramatized her meaning.

The rising action of *The Children's Hour* is far more vital than its conclusion. But the weakness of the climax (which is basically the weakness of the social conception) infects every minute of the play. The scenes between the two women and Dr. Cardin in the first act are designed to indicate Martha's jealousy, her abnormal feeling for Karen. But the idea is planted awkwardly; the scenes are artificial and passive; the relationship between Martha and Karen cannot be vital because it leads only to defeat.

On the other hand, *The Children's Hour* has an exceptionally strong obligatory scene (the close of the second act, when the demoniac child is brought face to face with her two victims). The false rumor started by the child constitutes a separate line of action, only loosely connected with the triangle situation between the two women and Doctor Cardin. The child's hatred of the teachers, her running away to her grandmother, and her invention of the yarn about the two women, constitute a series of events which build directly to the obligatory scene. But the first thing we notice about this series of events is that it is *too* simple. Several critics have asked whether it is plausible for the child's grandmother, and other witnesses, to so quickly accept her practically unsupported testimony. Certainly there is nothing fundamentally impossible in two lives being ruined by a child's gossip. The situation gives us the impression of being implausible because it is not placed in a solid social framework. The child seems to accomplish her destructive task single-handed. The prejudices and passions of the community, which are the dramatic factor in the story and which make it real and inevitable, are not projected.

What would be the effect on the construction of *The Children's Hour* if Martha's confession had been placed in the first act instead of the third? This would permit unified development of the psychological and social conflict; *both* lines of action would be strengthened. The confession would have the character of a decision (the only decision which gets the action under way at present is the child's act of will in running away from school). A decision involving the two women would clarify the exposition; it would enlarge the possibilities of the action; the conflict of will engendered by the confession would lead directly to the struggle against the malicious rumors in the community. The inner tension created by the confession would make their fight against the child's gossip

more difficult, would add psychological weight to the child's story, and greatly increase its plausibility. This suggestion is based on the principle of unity in terms of climax: if Martha's suicide has been correctly selected as the climax, the exposition must be directly linked to this event and every part of the action must be unified in its connection with the climax. Martha's emotional problem will thus be dramatized and woven through the action. In order to accomplish this, her confession must be the premise, not the conclusion.

The rising action of *The Children's Hour* shows the danger of following a line of cause and effect which is so simple that it is not believable. The indirect causes, the deeper meanings, are lacking—these deeper meanings are hidden (so successfully hidden that it is impossible to find them) in the final scene.

In spite of this, the play has a great deal of forward drive. The author's sincere way of telling her story brings her directly (without serious preparation but with a good deal of emotional impact) to the obligatory scene: Mrs. Tilford is shocked by her granddaughter's story. She telephones to all the parents to withdraw all the children from the school. Martha and Karen come to protest. They demand to be confronted with the child. Mrs. Tilford at first refuses. (Here it almost seems as if the author were hesitating, trying to build the event more solidly.) When she is pressed, Mrs. Tilford says that, being honest, she cannot refuse. One senses that the author's honesty is also compelling her (a little against her will) to face the obligatory scene. The drive toward the obligatory scene is oversimplified, but effective, because it shows the child's conscious will setting up a goal and striving to bring everything in line with it; the second act progresses by showing the direct results of the child's decision. Our expectation is concentrated on the obligatory scene, which embodies the maximum possibilities as they can be foreseen.

But the author cannot show us any rational result of this event, because she has achieved no rational picture of the social necessity within which the play is framed. The last act turns to the familiar pattern of neurotic futility faced with an eternal destiny which can neither be understood nor opposed. One is reminded of the lines in Sherwood's *The Petrified Forest*: Nature is "fighting back with strange instruments called neuroses. She's deliberately afflicting mankind with the jitters." The attitudes of the characters in the closing scenes of *The Children's Hour*, and particularly Martha's

helpless confession of feeling, are based on the acceptance of "the jitters" as man's inexorable fate.

But the detailed activity, especially in the first two acts, shows that the playwright is not satisfied with this negative view of life. The scheme of the play is static, but the scenes move. In the relationship between Karen and Martha, the author strains to find some meaning, some growth in the story of the two women. She wants something to *happen* to her people; she wants them to learn and change. She fails; her failure is pitilessly exposed in the climax. But in this failure lies Miss Hellman's great promise as a playwright.

The forward drive and the arousing of expectation are a vital factor in dramatic writing. But the concentration of interest on an expected event cannot serve as a substitute for the thematic clarity which is embodied in the climax and which gives the play its unity.

Wherever the link between the obligatory scene and the climax is weak, or where there is a direct break between them, we find that the forward movement (the physical activity of the characters) is thwarted and denied by the conception which underlies the play as a whole.

NATIONAL THEATRE CONFERENCE

Mrs. Edith J. R. Isaacs, editor of *Theatre Arts Monthly*, concluded the recent annual meeting of the National Theatre Conference in Chicago with the declaration that the theatre, because it is an international and universally understood language, must be a strong force for world peace, a challenge to which the Conference gave its full and applauding support.

The program of the National Theatre Conference, a federation primarily of university and little theatres, advocates a national, non-profit making American theatre, the development of native playwrights, the circulation of good plays, the building of functional modern theatres, and the broader use of theatre libraries. Its conception of "the theatre as both art and a factor in social and educational life" should lead it to active cooperation with the New Theatre League, whose more explicit aim is to put the theatre's power and beauty at the service of social clarity in the interests of the majority of people. The National Theatre Conference and the New Theatre League should be able to join forces on many of the problems confronting the American theatre today.



Eva LeGallienne —Ten Years

BY WALTER PELL

"Instead of producing rather dull plays by Ibsen because they are by Ibsen, it would be heartening if Miss LeGallienne would join the theatre of 1935. It is rough and uncouth; the years have not polished or sanctified its plays. But it does matter to those of us who happen to be living now. And she is too important a person to be left out of it."

RICHARD LOCKRIDGE, New York Sun

Five years ago Eva LeGallienne's Civic Repertory Theatre loomed large in the theatrical picture. Today her old playhouse is the home of the Theatre Union, and with the remnants of her company she drifts from half-successful road showings to two week stands in New York.

Her last tour was short-lived, and her visit to Broadway was both a critical and financial failure. Why? It is time for a re-evaluation of her ideal of the theatre, an analysis which may throw some light on her present situation, and on the future course open to her.

In 1926 Miss LeGallienne founded her repertory theatre dedicated to "the great plays of the world," to use her own phrase. A careful consideration of what she believes to be "the great plays of the

world" as indicated by her six years' repertory program and the plays which she has produced since she abandoned repertory, reveals great catholicity, but also certain very definite limitations.

Her repertory schedule at the Civic included Shakespeare, Goldoni, Moliere, Ibsen, Chekov, Tolstoy, the Sierras, the Quinteros, Heijermans, Bernard, Sutro, Barrie, Schnitzler, Andreiev and Molnar. It is an impressive list. It includes many of the undoubted masterpieces of world drama. But more careful scrutiny reveals a startling fact. Leaving aside the two Shakespeare revivals, *Twelfth Night* and *Romeo and Juliet*, and the Russian plays, the whole list, with three exceptions, consists either of charming comedies, or of plays dealing with the problems of the individual soul. Not one, with these few exceptions, dealt with the individual in relation to society, to the forces of *life today*. Passionate, tender, honest and true they might be. Some, like the Ibsen dramas, were undoubtedly of supreme importance to the theatre and to the emancipation of the modern mind, *when they were written*; today, in the light of a changed and arduous world, they are only historical and psychological documents, or effective stage vehicles.

The type of production which Miss



"Instead of producing rather dull plays

world" as indicated by her six years' repertory program and the plays which



Eva LeGallienne in Five of Her Roles: Left to Right, Masha in "Three Sisters," Marguerite Gautier in "Camille," Julie in "Liliom," the White Queen in "Alice in Wonderland," and Hedda in "Hedda Gabler."

LeGallienne gave them did little to modernize, immediatize, or in any way regenerate them: often dramatic, scrupulous, and moving, her presentations never gave any hint of a creative re-interpretation or re-evaluation of nineteenth century enunciations of idealism and morality, in the light of the twentieth century. *Camille* and *Hedda Gabler*, as seen on Fourteenth Street, were "great love stories"; *Liliom* and *The Master Builder* likewise. Of a definite point of view towards a parasitic society which forced one woman into prostitution, however glamorous, or allowed another to drive a creative writer into self-destruction and bore herself into suicide, not a trace.

The three plays whose subject matter was an exception to such disregard of social values, were Heijerman's *The Good Hope*, Susan Glaspell's *Inheritors*, and Giraudoux's *Siegfried*.

The Good Hope dealt with the iniquitous conditions in the Dutch shipping business, where men were knowingly sent to sea in rotten-bottomed hulks so that their owners might collect the insurance accruing to them after a catastrophe. It is a powerful play, and its impact, when it was first written and produced three decades ago, is said to have been so terrific that it started a successful movement

for the revision of the Dutch shipping laws. In the light of Miss LeGallienne's record it is safe to assume, however, that she chose *The Good Hope* not for its social significance, but because it was a magnificent dramatic vehicle for her and her company. The same is probably true of *Inheritors*, a fine play about the wide discrepancy between our so-called peculiarly American ideal of free speech and some actualities of life in a mid-western university town in the red-baiting years of 1919-1920—a play, incidentally, which is too often forgotten today as one of the pioneers of our present theatre of social protest.

The Good Hope and *Inheritors* were both produced in 1927. Thereafter, with the exception of *Siegfried*, a vague and intellectual play about the temperamental and nationalistic differences between France and Germany today, the record is bare of anything even remotely savoring of contemporary social significance. Miss LeGallienne might of course say that it was the fault of her audiences, that she could educate them (in the face of the unanimous opinion that she was attempting the impossible, when she founded her theatre) to appreciate Ibsen, Chekov and Goldoni, but not to swallow "social drama." She could point out that with

all the good will in the world she could only afford (since her wealthy backers balked at too great an annual deficit) to produce *Inheritors* thirty-three times, *Siegfried* twenty-three times, and *The Good Hope* for a round sixty performances in five years, as against a record of one hundred and sixty-four showings for *Cradle Song*, one hundred and twenty-nine for *Peter Pan*, and ninety-one for *Camille*.

The answer of course is that Miss LeGallienne never *tried* to build up an audience for plays like *Inheritors*, as she did for plays like *Camille* or *Cradle Song*, because it was the latter type of play which she, as an artist and as a person, cared about. The degree of her personal bias is the more glaringly apparent when we consider the record of the Theatre Guild, an organization never distinguished for its preoccupation with social issues, which was nevertheless more eclectic in its choice of plays than Miss LeGallienne. While the Guild revived *Faust* and *A Month in the Country* and *The Brothers Karamazov*, they also presented New York with Kaiser's *From Morn Till Midnight*, Capek's *R. U. R.*, Toller's *Man and the Masses*, Lawson's *Processional*, Kirchon's *Red Rust*

(Continued on page 32)



Eva LeGallienne in Five of Her Roles: Left to Right, Masha in "Three Sisters," Marguerite Gautier in "Camille," Julie in "Liliom," the White Queen in "Alice in Wonderland," and Hedda in "Hedda Gabler."



ORIGINAL DRAWING BY GEORGE MELIÈS FOR "A TRIP TO THE MOON," (1902)

The Movie: 1902-1917

BY ROBERT STEBBINS

The first two showings of early films by the Museum of Modern Art Film Library provided one of the most stimulating movie sessions of recent years. Quite apart from the interest that the sources and first manifestations of an art have for us, the remarkable thing about these films was their indubitable validity.

Why there has existed such a degree of condescension toward the beginning of the industry is hard to say. Perhaps it was inevitable that most of us should feel little reverence for an art, the lifetime of which coincides almost completely with ours. In any event, the audiences which attended the Museum exhibitions obviously came prepared to howl at the crudities of the first flickers. It may be that

the series of shorts called *Screen Souvenirs*, in which a presumably witty commentator jibes at the dismembered clips from the pioneer films and indulges in spurious sound effects, was in large degree responsible for this frame of mind. Fortunately, the Museum films were projected without benefit of commentator, and many of the audience left with more than respect for what they had seen.

I must confess to a growing feeling of astonishment as the creative vigor of these films became apparent. George Méliès' *A Trip to the Moon*, made in 1902, displaying extraordinary technical adroitness and daring, using at that early date, close-ups, stop-motion, animation and lap-dissolves, proved especially provocative. Here were many of the effects

that modern cinematography prides itself upon, used with incisiveness and cinematic propriety. Where, therefore, was the vaunted technical superiority of the modern Hollywood film? True, Hollywood is infinitely capable *mechanically* but her efforts bear little creative relation to the *technical* requirements of the material at hand.

All the innovations of the early film makers came directly out of conflict with the material which the director had to embody in cinematic form. Mrs. Griffith, in her book of reminiscences, *When the Movies Were Young*, tells how D. W., her husband, evolved the close-up. He had the problem of depicting a particularly deep-dyed variety of villain. Heretofore, the camera, which has a very narrow angle of vision, had always been kept well away from the scene and actors so that every shot included a large foreground of floor or sidewalk. Griffith wondered how he could convey the proper impression of Satanism with all that rug in the way. Suddenly he got the notion of bringing the camera close to the actor's face. At first his cameraman refused. No one to his knowledge had ever done so before. The public wouldn't stand for large-than-life-size detail. But Griffith persisted. There was little studio supervision in those days and so the close-up was included in the repertoire of distinctive movie devices.

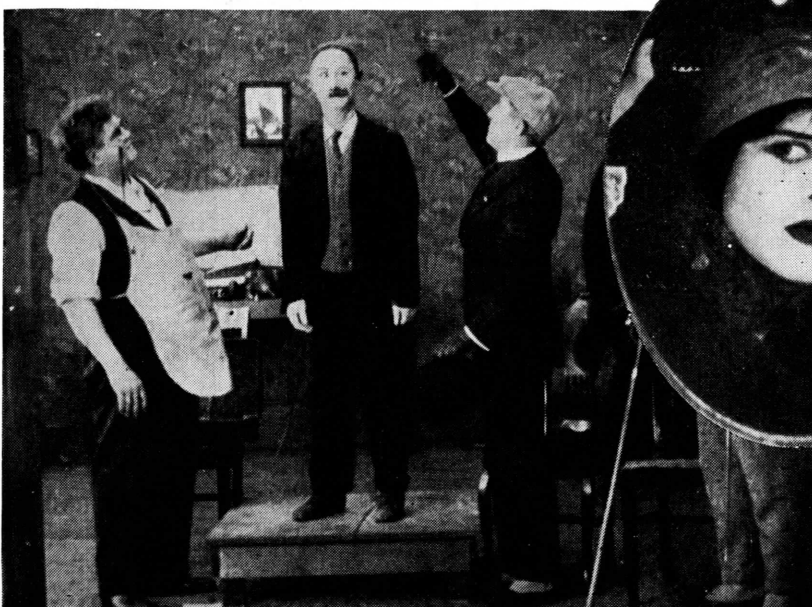
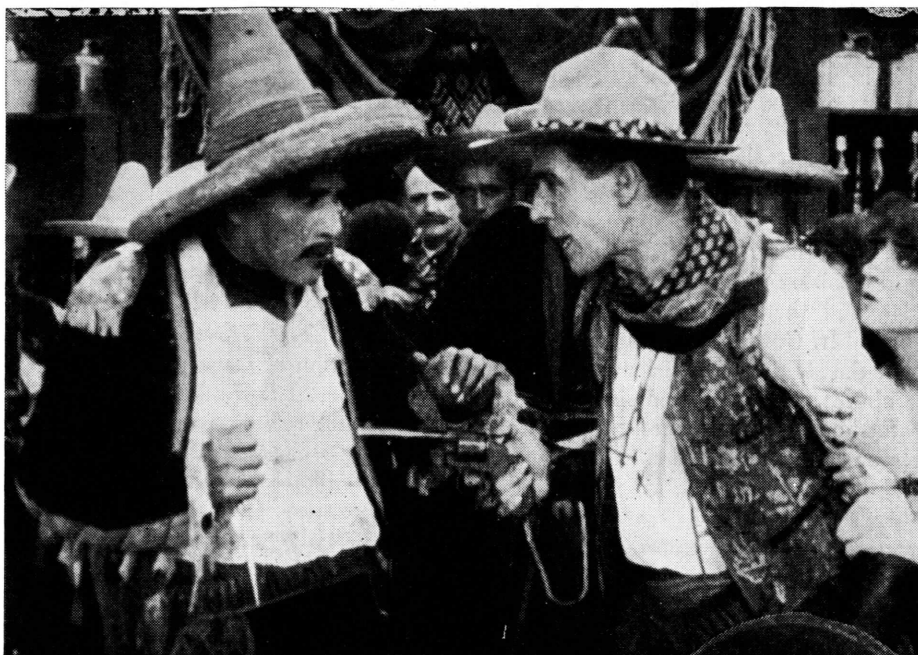
D. W. Griffith was represented on the Museum program by *The New York Hat* (1912) a story by Anita Loos, cast—Mary Pickford and Lionel Barrymore as principals. Among the extras were Lillian Gish, Mack Sennett, Jack Pickford and Mae Marsh. This slender item was certainly not major Griffith, but there was already evidence of his consummate grasp of cinematic principals in the imaginative cutting. Mary Pickford was especially astonishing for one who had forgotten how really ingratiating and wholesome an actress she had been in the years before she turned author.

The technical *brío* and realistic wit of Mack Sennett's *The Clever Dummy* (1917) with Ben Turpin, Chester Conklin and Wallace Beery, was absolutely unanticipated. That overwhelming moment when Ben Turpin, who is being pursued by Beery whose pocketbook he has picked, whizzes out of the frame on his incredible motorcycle brought our sense of complacency with the modern film to a full stop and provoked the question, "What's happened to the movies?"

We do not wish to appear professorial or snobbish. We have never shown sympathy with certain gentlemen of pedantic tendencies who cry, "After the Greeks—nothing!" or who affirm that after the

early miracle plays and the Elizabethans, literature perished in the English-speaking world. Such contentions are obviously untenable, because wherever and in whatever age men come to grips with the material of life and craft, art is the miraculous result. The innovations of the post-war German film artists, namely dramatic lighting and new angles of vision, came about as a direct consequence of a new outlook on life. Life had become a complicated matter. Psychoanalysis, for instance, had revealed the existence of multiple layers of consciousness. The German contributions were the cinematic realization of these new concepts. Similarly, the Russian system of montage, with its brilliant cross-cutting and richness of comment, resulted from the attempt to incorporate the dialectic philosophy of Marx and the new revolutionary fervor into the film. Meanwhile, Hollywood, which symbolizes eclecticism, sat back and contentedly used these cinematic advances to acquaint the American public with the talents of Rin Tin Tin, Jr.

Even such films as *The Fugitive*, produced in 1916 by Thomas H. Ince with William S. Hart, and *A Fool There Was* with Theda Bara, directed in 1914 by Frank Powell, both of which appeared on the second Museum program, displayed distinct creative merit. Ince's superb direction of the crowd of cowboys and entertainers at the bar puts to shame such recent attempts in the same genre as *Rose of the Rancho*, for example. It was amazing to see how varied and yet well coordinated were the actions of each individual in the bar scenes. *A Fool There Was* was chiefly distinguished by the strange intensity it achieved through its lighting effects. In this film, the director, Frank Powell, had the task of presenting a moral concept—the struggle between good and evil. As a consequence, the film resolved itself into a series of contrasts. We are shown a decrepit Edward Jose lying in the ripe arms of Theda Bara and immediately we are taken back to the innocence of his child saying her prayers for Daddy, who is away with that bad woman. The lighting of the film serves the moral purpose with brilliant



FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: MARY PICKFORD IN D. W. GRIFFITH'S "NEW YORK HAT" (1912), WILLIAM S. HART IN "THE FUGITIVE," DIRECTED BY THOMAS H. INCE (1916), THEDA BARA IN "A FOOL THERE WAS," DIRECTED BY FRANK POWELL (1914), AND A SCENE FROM "THE CLEVER DUMMY" WITH BEN TURPIN, PRODUCED BY MACK SENNETT IN 1917. PHOTOS BY COURTESY OF MUSEUM OF MODERN ART FILM LIBRARY.

contrasts of almost complete shadow and startling whiteness. The last scene of the dying Jose is a remarkable example of this type of dramatic illumination.

So that my insistence on merit in so universally derided a film as *A Fool There Was* will not appear sheer wilfulness, let me point out that in Hollywood today, in the vast majority of cases, lighting bears no relationship whatsoever to the content of a film. Bedroom farce, mutiny on the high seas, animal romances—all are bathed in that peculiar pearly luminescence that is everywhere accepted as good photography, but which adds nothing dramatically to the narrative.

One last film in the Museum repertoire demands comment—*Queen Elizabeth*, made in France in 1911 and featuring Sarah Bernhardt and Lou Tellegen. The value of this film is chiefly historical, being largely a straight photographed play of no cinematic significance. At that, it is probably the prototype of similar efforts in pure play transcription, such as *Accent on Youth*, *Petrified Forest*, and Sascha Guitry's *Louis Pasteur*. Only last month, Mr. Guitry informed the press that in his estimation the motion picture should be nothing more than a film play, that the camera should be placed in a rigid position where it can include the stage and then never move. We trust that in Mr. Guitry's next film he will display the logical consistency of Sarah Bernhardt, who after passing out on a fantastic mound of embroidered pillows, gets up to take her bows.

The Museum of Modern Arts Film Library deserves the gratitude of film devotees for this unexpected opportunity to take stock of the present state of the film by comparison with past achievements. Perhaps if a wide enough public will be admitted to the showings, American audiences will be shocked from their complacent acceptance of Hollywood's 1936 claim to movie pre-eminence. After all, the superiority of *Riffraff* or *Black Fury* to *The Goddess* (of which the *New York Times* on January 24, 1916 said, "In the chapter of *The Goddess* released this week, the strikers attack the stockade of the coal barons"), is problematical.

Current Films Worth Seeing

THE LIFE OF LOUIS PASTEUR: A dignified and at times thrilling biographical condensation. Paul Muni delivers his best performance to date. The film has its faults—its structure is occasionally not unlike the animated tableau—a specious historical background. Still vastly superior to the usual output.

MODERN TIMES: Reviewed in this issue.

THE MILKY WAY: Not released in time for March issue.

THREE WOMEN (Soviet Film): Directed by a talented newcomer, Arnshtam—music by Shostakovich. Arnshtam shows the influence of many styles—Murnau, the Americans, and the directors of the Lenin Studios. Film should be seen as an interesting development in Soviet film making. Not a completely successful attempt to evolve a popular style. Superb performances by the three principals, especially Jannina Jeimo.

If You Must You Must

THE PRISONER OF SHARK ISLAND: Good directorial job by John Ford, who is responsible for *The Informer*. The film starts out well with strict adherence to the central theme—the brutality of mad vigilante and military justice—but soon deteriorates into pure melodrama. Knowing what little control directors have over their material, it would be manifestly unfair to credit Ford with the revolting episode wherein Doctor Mudd (Warner Baxter) quells an uprising of Negro soldiers with "Put that gun down, Nigrah!" One of the Negroes replies, "That am no Yankee talkin' just to hear hissself talk. That's a Southern man and he means it!"

THE PETRIFIED FOREST: Straight transcription of stage play with a ball of rolling desert fluff added for atmosphere. We cannot refrain from quoting Harold Clurman's characterization of the play: "A very likable fellow (Leslie Howard) who has never found life worthwhile, principally because love and art failed him, discovers the girl in the middle of the Arizona desert. He immediately decides to die (life is worth while at last) so that Bette Davis can go abroad to study art, which he, in the first place, has discovered hardly worth the candle." I, for one, do not find Mr. Howard's subtle simplicities engaging. Humphrey Bogart performs with some credit as The Killer, if you can overlook his lisp.

ROSE MARIE: Too long by at least a half hour. One might easily forego the incredibly tasteless Indian Dance and a good deal of the "When I hear you calling, yoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo." Jeanette McDonald, whose voice just falls short of legitimacy, is still the most intelligent of the singing actresses.

ANYTHING GOES: Brisk entertainment in a rather imbecilic style. Charles Ruggles, the gangster masquerading as a preacher, has some good lines which, however, he fails to make the most of. Surprisingly, the two song hits, "You're the Tops" and "I Get a Kick Out of You," don't come off. Perhaps the over-deliber-

ate Miss Merman is to blame. At any rate, she delivers the latter while swinging around a night club on a hoop illuminated by neon tubes.

MR. COHEN TAKES A WALK: (Warner Bros., made in England) Featuring the distinguished German emigre, Paul Graetz. Has some amusing sections—principally those wherein Mr. Cohen, who has worked himself up in the dry goods business to the ownership of London's biggest emporium is shown soliciting customers from the front of the store. The sum total of the film advises collaboration between the classes. Mr. Cohen informs his sons, who have temporarily disregarded his admonitions, that a business should be run from the heart and not the head. Apparently, he doesn't realize that heart in a business is what brings the auctioneers at the end of the week.

WHIPSAW: A fairly glossy combination of *Glass Key*, *It Happened One Night* and *The Thin Man*, which serves to restore Myrna Loy to her admirers among which I do not count myself.

On No Account

PROFESSIONAL SOLDIER: Hollywood's idea of a good joke—pairing the exemplary Bartholomew with bullet-spittin' McLaglen. McLaglen furnishes a thoroughly offensive portrait of an American spoiling for a fight. When you consider what a fuss the Spaniards raised because a member of the Guards was ridiculed in Paramount's *The Devil is a Woman*, American complacency with McLaglen misrepresentation is hard to understand. We can't be that disgusting.

IT HAD TO HAPPEN: A decided comedown for director DelRuth, after *Broadway Melody of 1936* and *Thanks a Million*. But could you do anything with George Raft and a script about how the humble ditch digger, turned honest politician, won the heart of Mayfair's most elusive and richest jewel?

THE LADY CONSENTS: Ann Harding deliberately relinquishes that most relinquishable and stubborn of ex-juveniles, Herbert Marshall, to the scheming Margaret Lindsay. Eventually, Marshall returns to his senses and returns to Ann. Everything returned but your money at the box office.

MUSS 'EM UP: A delightful exercise in mayhem, in which the hero continually begs the chief of police to let him beat the truth out of gangland with a rubber hose half filled with buckshot. The hero's assistant delivers himself of such hearties as "Boss, let me break his fingers one by one" or "I'll squeeze his eyes until they pop out like grapes."

Hollywood's Hundred-Grand Union

BY GEORGE MANSION

"Boys, we ought to have some funds to work with," said one of Hollywood's \$100,000-a-year film directors.

All 13 of the directors present dug down into their pockets and delivered a \$100-bill apiece. This was how Hollywood's hundred-grand union, the Screen Directors' Guild, came to be started.

A closed shop agreement had been operating for camera and sound technicians, carpenters, and other crafts in the movie industry, since the first of the year. But the writers and actors, organized into Guilds, still had to obtain studio recognition. The struggles of these two Guilds, headed by such names as Robert Montgomery, James Cagney, Ann Harding and Ernest Pascal, were the subjects of every Hollywood conversation. The situation left only one key group of Hollywoodians unorganized: the directors.

Then, early last month, came the announcement of the Screen Directors' Guild. Heretofore, the directors had been the mainstay of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, a sort of company-union which had lost all standing since actors and writers deserted it en masse. Having been started as an organization which grouped the producers along with their employees, with all the cards stacked in favor of the former, it now has none but the producers themselves left. For, 40 first-string megaphone wielders, 96 per cent of them Academy members, announced the formation of a Screen Directors' Guild and resigned from the Academy. Their announcement came as a bombshell, headlined boldly in the trade papers and discussed at great length at the producers' meetings within the offices of the Hays organization.

Word began to leak out of the several preparatory meetings that had been held by the directors: how the group grew from a small nucleus to the formidable number of 40; how a leading actor had come to them and made them realize that whatever the size of their checks, small or large, if they depended on wage-checks they were workmen and belonged on the side of labor; how another revealed that a producer had threateningly told him that in a few years the screen director would be reduced to the status of the stage director, with very limited authority and a nominal salary.

It was not only the threat of lower wages that drove these men to organize.

Many directors love their work. Many would doubtless be glad to work for less if they were free to make good films. But most of them also have serious grievances as to their working conditions.

What are their demands? They want a freer hand in their work. This main demand is subdivided into four specific points: (1) Less interference from the producers (men generally unable to fill the job of either writer or director, but who supervise both of these as well as all others who contribute to the making of a film); (2) more time to study scripts before going before the cameras, and a greater share in the preparation of the shooting-scripts (many studios at present demand that a director take a script prepared by a writer who, like as not, has no idea of the technical workings of film-making, and shoot it as it is written; the director, because of his experience, feels he must improve on the writer's ideas, but the producers refuse to give him this permission); (3) transference of second units to the supervision of the director, which means that producers will have the right to assign assistants or second-string directors to shoot certain scenes only with the director's approval, and not over his head in an attempt to economize, or to keep the director from expressing his individuality; (4) the right of the director to follow his film through, once the scenes are shot, and participate in the cutting, one of the most important phases of film-making: the piecing-together of the various scenes shot individually. It is a motion-picture axiom that "pictures are made in the cutting-room," and none but a producer would think of denying the director the right to work closely with the technical cutter who is usually competent only to carry out the director's minutely detailed orders.

Further, the directors want to be guaranteed the right to shoot only scripts which they think worth making. They want to be able to turn down assignments, even though they are bound by contract to the studios. Most run-of-the-mill directors have had no part in story selection for many years—but the directors now have before them the new example of Paramount's telling Norman McLeod, a first-stringer, that he would have to shoot what was assigned him, or else.

After these demands had been formulated at preparatory meetings, the organization of the Screen Directors' Guild was announced. The announcing group of 40

was headed by King Vidor, president; Lewis Milestone, first vice-president; Frank Tuttle, second vice-president; William K. Howard, secretary; John Ford, treasurer; and a Board of Directors further composed of Frank Borzage, Howard Hawks, Wesley Ruggles, John Cromwell, William Wellman, Rouben Mamoulian, Gregory LaCava, Clarence Brown, Edward Sutherland and H. Bruce Humberstone. Although the majority of these men get a fairly free hand in making their pictures, they recognized nevertheless the need of defending their less fortunate brothers, and of guarding against the deprivation of their own rights.

These forty top-notchers called a mass meeting of all the directors in Hollywood, which was attended by some 125. This is practically the total number of directors who count in Hollywood. While there are some 200—250 directors in all, these 125 are the ones whose films bring in the money which the producers are after.

From the start, the Directors' Guild has been run on the most open and democratic basis. At a press meeting following this first general session, the Board of Directors announced: (1) 35 more had joined (the next day membership was up close to 100); (2) questions of affiliation with the Actors' and Writers' Guilds, or with the A. F. of L., while they had been discussed, were left open until a more complete representation of the profession was within the Guild's ranks; (3) officers were to be permanently elected only when fuller membership was achieved. In a word, this was an organization for, of and by the directors. The prime movers were asking for no privileges.

While the Board of Directors, and the Guild as a whole, will as yet make no definite commitment as to the eventual attitude of the Screen Directors' Guild, it has already become apparent that from this very first meeting the producers' counter-offensive was active. Cecil B. DeMille, producer-director and vice-president of the Bank of America, argued vehemently against an alignment of the directors *against* producers, and tried to minimize the obvious difference of interests between the two groups. An Academy potentate, he maintained that the directors' ends could be gained only through an organization such as the Academy, where they were grouped *with* the producers, not through a Guild of directors alone. This, in the face of the Academy's

flagrant history of serving the producers to keep their employees in line. Another director kept insisting on settling the question of A. F. of L. affiliation immediately, in an evident attempt to disrupt the new body. (It was later hinted by a trade-paper that he had been prompted to do this by a producer who promised him a production berth if he broke up the Guild.) He came to realize that he had been working against his own interests, and apologized to the Guild Board.

The producers, officially, let it be known they would ignore the Directors' Guild. Nevertheless, their subsidized Academy, which heretofore had never in any way defended the interest of the directors, suddenly talked of developing a standard contract for them. Similarly in the case of the actors and writers, the strength of the Guilds caused the producers to attempt to offer fake concessions through Academy contracts and codes.

The Hollywood Reporter, playing all sides against the middle in an effort to reap more and more "good-will advertising," at first reported the Guild sympathetically, championed the directors' cause. Then it came out with one of its typical editorials, in which, while proclaiming loudly the need for a Guild, it stated that the directors would never be able to get together because "the big ones did not need the protection of the Guild, and the little ones did not deserve it." This attempt to split the organization was, however, unsuccessful.

Two bugaboos hovered over the Directors' Guild: namely, affiliation with the A. F. of L., and cooperation with the other Guilds. A. F. of L. unionism is a dangerous subject. Though a director may speak of himself as a wage-worker, it is not easy for him to comprehend the full meaning of what he is saying, to see how actually in his own case class forces are compelling him to identify himself with organized labor. Exploitation at two thousand a week is apparent, when contrasted with the even huger salaries of producers who contribute not a lick of productive labor, but it still does not reduce a director to the facts of economic misery which awaken less fortunate workers.

Realizing that they must avoid a split on the issue of affiliation until the body had grown stronger, the Board of Directors wisely put the matter off to a future date—while in no way allowing it to be imagined that they opposed the idea.

As for Guild cooperation: Should the three major Guilds get together, it is self-evident that their 6,000—odd members, with their many important names, would be very influential union-brothers

to the 20,000 workers in the closed shop unions. A motion picture federation would then be a thing of the near future. If the directors allowed such an idea to get around, the onslaught of the producers might well have been fatal to the new Guild. Therefore, while still accepting advice from and sharing quarters with the two other Guilds, the directors nevertheless accepted the resignation of Laurence Beilenson, lawyer for the two other Guilds, who had helped them draw up their by-laws. The question of Guild cooperation was thus tabled.

Then the first major misstep of the directors occurred. Major J. O. Donovan, one-time member of the Labor Board under the NRA, was engaged as executive secretary of the Guild. What prompted this is difficult to state clearly; it was obvious that the Guild needed an executive who was not a director, one who knew labor conditions and could represent them in collective bargaining. Donovan, reputed to be a crony of Pat Casey, strike-breaking labor relations executive of the Hays Office, came to the directors, it would appear, with the blessing of the Hays gang.

Despite this misstep, or perhaps through it, the directors, from president King Vidor down to the least assistant director in the Junior Branch, will learn many lessons in social reality. They have already seen the answer of one studio—Universal—to their drive for better working conditions. At Universal, following a new decree, no director will even be approached until the entire script is either on paper or plotted out. This will avoid the necessity of paying the directors during possible re-writing, and will also keep them from attempting to inject any of their own ideas into the screenplay.

Thus far, however, the outlook for the Directors' Guild is a bright one. This organization is a key group to a real closed shop through the entire industry some day. Its policy to date has been cautious and tactically well-inspired. But it will find that the producers never run out of new ideas in their attempts to break a union even as unusual as one comprising \$100,000-a-year men.

In conclusion, let us add that the problems of the Screen Directors Guild are not abstract labor problems. They may affect every person in every country where Hollywood films are shown. If the directors win recognition, it will mean that they will take their rightful place in the films, at least to the highest degree possible under this anarchic economic system. If producer and Wall Street control can be limited by directors solidly entrenched in a union cooperat-

ing with the rest of organized labor and talent within the industry, the directors can play an important role in arresting anti-labor trends in pictures. If the directors recognize this truth, they will understand why the producers, the Academy and the trade-papers have done all they can to split their Guild.

The formation of this hundred-grand union is a brave and important undertaking, one that is about to teach a couple of hundred directors, used to thinking of themselves as living in the lap of luxury, that they really stand beside every other productive worker in the film industry.

The Federal Theatre Presents

(Continued from page 11)

basic plan still remains inadequately tested. Less than one per cent of its potentialities have been exhausted. Adequate test of a government theatre would suggest a generous period of organization, tryouts, adjustment of personnel and audience promotion. A fair evaluation would likewise include the factor of uncertainty and the threat of censorship.

With intelligent cooperation who can predict what the future production schedule of the Federal Theatre may be? The men, the materials and the money exist. They depend for permanence upon a continuation of the enlightened attitude which created the Federal Theatre. Is it too much to ask that in this country, proud of its traditions of freedom and zealous in guarding a free press, a free theatre may become a reality?

The future of the Federal Theatre is the answer to this question: Will it be given a chance to live? The ideal of a vital American stage which was the hope of the original planners of the Federal Theatre will be fulfilled only if intelligent cooperation and interest are shown. If this drama organization is atrophied by curb and censorship, the result will be something less than a solution to the relief problem.

Up to the present moment some very able and conscientious people have tried to make this theatre succeed and still believe that it will. So far as the vision and integrity of the workers on this theatre project are concerned the project is already a notable achievement. There are stories current of superhuman endurance and patience. But just what physical form this earnest effort will take must depend upon the aid received from sources outside the Federal Theatre—from those in the government responsible for its creation and responsible for the continuance of its two sources of life: Money and Freedom.

Dance Reviews

BY ELIZABETH RUSKAY

Doris Humphrey, in a brilliant recital at the Guild Theatre on January 19th, joined the forces fighting for a vital dance art in the theatre.

Miss Humphrey's program consisted of one lengthy composition in two parts—*Theatre Piece* and *New Dance*. Besides the important and very evident advantages achieved by Miss Humphrey through the use of one extended compositional form, it was undoubtedly the content rather than the form, that will make for the profound and "healthy repercussions throughout the dance field," that John Martin has predicted in his review of the recital.

Theatre Piece, as stated in the program, "is a dance of experience in a place of conflict and competition." By means of ingeniously conceived satire, various phases of our present day society: the business world, sports, love, the theatre—all in a corrupt, exploited, and degenerate stage—are brought shamelessly to view. The dance moves in swift progression; each section developing its underlying theme of opposition: individual against individual, group against group—conflict internal and external, organized and unorganized.

Miss Humphrey, as soloist in this part, dances in opposition to the group's jungle ideology with all the deadly sincerity of a person becoming aware of realities for the first time. Her lyric movement stands out stark and beautiful against the gyrating distortions of the mass, and seems to indicate a yearning and demand for a better world. *Theatre Piece* is all-inclusive in its condemnation of our present society. The attack is made through a realistic treatment of specific life experiences so close to the audience's perception as to awaken an immediate response.

New Dance, when seen again in contrast to *Theatre Piece* takes on a fuller meaning. It "represents the growth of the individual in relation to his fellows in an ideal state." Here the movement is well-rounded; groups move in harmony and with co-operation, building not destroying. Miss Humphrey and Mr. Weidman, who initiate the action of their groups in the beginnings of the dance, gradually surrender their leadership and merge into the functioning whole.

Both dances in their more general appeal and broad scope, are the first at-

tempts of this concert dancer to tear down consciously the old barriers that have kept her aloof from the world, smug in a little circle of intellectuals and pseudo-sophisticates. They are the opening wedge that will lead her to her rightful audiences, the masses of people who are eager to know and learn. *New Dance* and *Theatre Piece* incorporate a revolutionary spirit that is rebellious toward the old order and courageous toward the new.

On the Sunday following Miss Humphrey's brilliant recital, Charles Weidman and his group of men presented a program unique in its richness of material. The performance indicated a more serious approach and consideration of dance problems than Mr. Weidman had previously shown. The major numbers of the program included a revised and somewhat shortened *American Saga*, reviewed in an earlier issue, and a newly completed *Atavisms*.

Atavisms, consisting of three parts: *Bargain Counter*, *Stock Exchange* and *Lynch Town*, panoramically sketches the reversion to barbarism in the modern era, from the trivial and the amusing to the deeply tragical. In *Bargain Counter*, Charles Weidman as the powerless floorwalker attempts to stem the invasion of grasping, insanely eager bargain hunters. In *Stock Exchange*, as the chief financier ruling the fluctuations of the market, he rides over the lesser stockholders to his eventual annihilation. Both these dances, however, suffer from lack of proper emphasis. They are unduly long and fail to reach a sufficiently dramatic climax. The same dance patterns are varied to the point where one is left bewildered by the only slightly altered combinations, and annoyed by the over-elaboration of theme. Further cutting and clearer definition of point of view would greatly improve both compositions. *Lynch Town*, dealing with the psychological effect—a vicious hysteria—on the part of a group of spectators at a lynching, moves speedily toward its conclusion. Within the confines of this psychological aspect, the composition succeeds in making a profound impression by permitting the play of imagination on the part of the audience.

Mr. Weidman's sincerity is real and productive. What is looked forward to is a greater unification of material toward his ultimate purpose.

Harold Kreutzberg, in top form, at the Guild Theatre, February 2nd and 9th, characteristically evoked a clamorous response. Endowed with a marvelous gift of projection, his untiring vitality and joy in movement is communicated at once to his audience.

Of the new numbers presented, the suite of *Merry Dances for Children* were by far the best. They combined a rollicking humorlessness with a satirical pointedness that lifted them a little above the level of pure nonsense. Each one, carefully calculated to achieve its climax at just the right psychological moment, gives evidence of Kreutzberg's master showmanship.

Delightful and amusing is this carefree Kreutzberg whose interests have never been inclined more seriously than in a pseudo-religious phantasy. Our only regret is that his contagious hilarity can give us only momentary pleasure.

The Joos Ballet, seen again for the first time since their historic engagement here two years ago in a brief program at the Metropolitan Opera House on January 21st, was received with indiscriminate enthusiasm by the audience.

Only one new number was presented: *Ballade*, a variation on an old French folk theme. Because of its limitation in form, its lack of interpretation and its over-strict adherence to the story, it failed to lift itself above the ranks of a sterile theatrical dance-drama. Like the lighter numbers of the company's repertoire: *A Ball in Old Vienna* and *Impressions of a Big City*, it was beautifully executed, delightfully costumed, too long, and perfectly suited to the tastes of the Golden Horse-Shoe.

The Green Table still remains the outstanding achievement of the group. Two years ago it was "the first ballet produced out of the U. S. S. R. to employ a social theme." Today it is still the only ballet to employ a social theme with such direct simplicity and such real human warmth. In those two intervening years, we in the modern dance have gone far toward developing a synthesis of artistic integrity and social consciousness. Within that short period of time, a new spirit has been awakened. *Panorama*, *Imperial Gesture*, *Theatre Piece*, *Atavisms*, *Middleground*—with their added advantages of a wider range of movement possibilities and a more elastic choreography, challenge the primary position formerly held by *The Green Table*. Nevertheless, with all their new-found strength and courage, with all their artistry and imagination, we cannot truthfully say that there is one which has as yet achieved the universal appeal and understanding of *The Green Table*.

From a Dancer's Notebook

(Continued from page 17)

ness; some objectively, trying to make everything around them quiet. We utilized the themes walking through space. Gradually the whole lesson became transformed into a study of the relationship between the body and space. With eyes shut, we wandered through the room. The quiet became ruffled, balance became shaky, and we had to admit that when the eyes were shut, a terrible fear of space possessed the body. It was a real test of the quiet felt by the dancer, of the mental confidence, and of the command of her body over space—and we could not meet it. We were not really masters over space—we, dancers!

The lesson took on a different turn from the way it had started. We had begun by improvising on a theme and before we knew it we had become involved in the relationship of the body to space. (The flexibility of the Wigman method is inspiring and admirable. There is constant adaptability to the particular needs of individual students.) We tried to overcome our fear of space by moving freely through it with eyes shut—no longer quietly but rapidly and in every direction. This was the severest test of all. Gradually my confidence grew. I began to move through space without restraint in big encompassing strides. For the first time in my life, space became a tangible substance, it became a reality. For the first time I realized what a dark intangible void space is—what a tremendous burden is put upon the dancer! The dancer must *shape* this space. Unless her movement is filled with confidence, unless the movement projects *beyond* herself space remains the awful void it was when we all stood there with eyes closed, terrified to move. Like glaring headlights on a dark road, wide-open eyes are no safety gauge for one's vision of space. Now I know how it is that blind people can dance—and dance with freedom. I shall never again forget what space is to the dancer—I shall never again be afraid or unaware of it. Thanks to Louise for having led me through this wonderful experience.

Experience 7: A lesson on "Vibration." A pulse which seems to govern itself. The percussion began quietly on a steady pulse in a 2/4 rhythm and worked up into many frenzied climaxes. With monotony of the tempo, the contrasting intensity of the drums, the vibration-movement, it was the nearest thing to a primitive worship-cult celebration that I had ever experienced. When the beat became overwhelmingly strong, the feet

and body took on other rhythms built on the ground beat. I went wild, broke into a run,—a run that was stronger than the strongest run I had ever executed in my whole dancing career—then into spinning turns, the body doing all kinds of uncontrolled movements. Yet this happened not as if I set out to *do* a wild dance but as a result of an hypnotic rhythmic state. This is proven by the fact that at times I lost the vibration by consciously *making* a movement instead of letting a movement "happen." Vibration seems the most accessible of all passive states to experience. It is a strange phenomenon because the passivity is periodically broken by intense climaxes, yet the whole has the stable support of the constant ground beat in the steady tempo.

This hypnotic way of achieving power in movement is like a poisonous gift. What you want, happens, once you are really *in* the "state." Everything in my intellectual make-up resents it. Everything in the dance takes on an unreal mysticism that goes against the grain. I begin to feel at a loss. I no longer know where I am. I no longer know where *dance* has its roots—where power begins and where "ecstasy" ends.

* * *

The lessons we have been having I am no longer interested in recording. I am a little tired of "experiences." No new problems present themselves.

First of all we are still "relaxing." In the beginning I found this a relief from all sorts of mental and physical tensions but now that I am freed of them, I'd like to go beyond. Relaxation *cannot* build the power of muscles. My technique is slowly degenerating. We do all leg movement through "swing" which causes action to be carried on through momentum. Muscles cease to work and have the work done for them. I wish we were given technical exercises which would make a demand on *muscular* effort. In ballet you have to spend about a half hour at the bar making your legs *work*. In the Wigman method the technical discipline is non-existent. Little did I think a month ago that I would be *yearning* for those ham-string pains.

The Wigman method obviously has not achieved a balance between discipline and freedom. Today's lesson was on elevation. A number of the girls came down with a thud but no technical criticism was given: only the qualitative one, that their movement had too much *down*

in it. At other times I found the stress on quality in movement very gratifying. It is the only school I know of that makes a point of quality in movement. We had many interesting lessons on contrasts between staccato and legato movement, heavy and light movement, etc. Today, however, when our problem was purely technical, the question of quality was absolutely irrelevant. Their thud was due plainly to lack of resiliency in ankle and knee. All the talk about "height and depth" could not possibly help them. These girls had the best mental intention in the world, understood intellectually the concept of "height and depth" but without knowing the fundamental simple demands of elevation, they simply could not execute an elevation. Hanya's explanation was very refreshing for those professionals in the class who had mastered the technique before coming to the Wigman School. But for the majority it was futile and dangerous. It even left them with psychological frustration about leaping. If only the school would *teach* fundamental technique, as a base, its stress on quality would really be fruitful.

When you go to ballet (I hear this is true of the Graham studio too) you become involved in technique, technique, technique. At Wigman's you become involved in a mystic kind of free expression to the annihilation of technique. The shot which Isadora fired when she threw her toe-slippers into the junk heap thirty-five years ago was signal for the battle which still rages. No peace has yet been made in dance training between technical virtuosity and significant emotionalism. That is another job for us young dancers: to build a new method of training that will do justice to *both* sides of our craft. In present systems they are antagonistic forces; we must make them supplement each other.

* * *

The lesson dealt with the theme of "Ceremonial." Not only a lesson on "Ceremonial" but on the sacrificial quality in certain "ceremonial ceremonies." Why? Because Mary Wigman has been influenced by such ideology and has used it as a source for her own creative work and for her pedagogy. I felt completely removed from this interpretation of a "ceremonial" theme. I wanted to use it as a germ motive for a dance of hypocrisy. That was heresy. I must admit I didn't quite understand what was expected. No one explained. It was taken for granted that we were acquainted with this unpalatable (to me) portion of the Wigman tradition. All the primitive mysticism which I formerly mildly objected to now strikes me with deeper

implications. Real life, real dance, real modern dance is past the stage when it can or should be nourished with mystic primitivism.

Heretofore, when I entered the studio, I completely forgot the existence of the outer world. Today, the isolation of our studio work from this world brought me down with a thud—a real thud—to earth. The ties begin to slip. The bright love I developed for the freshness of the school turns into a brownish sediment. The first eagerness and enthusiasm which I directed toward entering the school now makes a half-turn in the opposite direction.

I regard this period as the "adolescence" of my training during which time personal barriers have been broken down between *me* and *myself*, but at the sacrifice of rearing a new barrier between me and reality. Nothing in this period has taught me the *positive* elements of my craft. "The body as instrument" was merely a phrase, unsubstantiated by the rigorous practise an instrument requires. Improvisation remained an indefinite activity divorced from the definite content. How to find clear movement images for a dance remains an unsolved mystery. How to become skillful, and expressive, and explicit—that is still the problem. How to make a finished dance,

what the elements are that make for good compositional structure—that has not been even mentioned. Instead, there has been so much description of a vague spirit of "ecstasy": the strength of the mood, the spiritual state creating an "ecstatic" state for the production of dance movement. Motion born through emotion. Of course art derives from emotional sources but in *great* art emotion exists not as a separate element from the intellect but integrally bound up with it.

Where is the true between discipline and freedom? What is the relation between basic technique and creative technique, between free improvisation and disciplined improvisation, and between improvisation and formal composition? What is the relation between the modern dance and specific content, between movement that says something clearly and communicatively to an audience—between that and the abstract medium of movement?

These are problems the Wigman system of dancing leaves unanswered. These are the most important problems which face the modern dancers of to-day. Where shall we find the answers?

(The second and concluding section of this article will be published in the April issue of NEW THEATRE.)

The DANCE GUILD

presents a program of

SOLO DANCES

the outstanding professional
dancers in new compositions

Sunday Evening, March 22nd,
1936

35c - 55c - 83c - \$1.10 - \$1.65

For further information:

THE DANCE GUILD
116 East 59th Street

Tamiris School

NOW OPEN

CLASSES: Beginners
Intermediates
Advanced
Concert Group

52 WEST 8th STREET, NEW YORK CITY
GRamercy 7-5286

● RUTH ALLERHAND

● SCHOOL

for the development of
DANCERS
TEACHERS
GROUP LEADERS

● STUDY COURSES

Tuesday—Dance Method I
Thursday—Composition
Friday—Percussion
Saturday—Anatomy-Kinesiology
TECHNIQUE CLASSES DAILY
Fee . . . \$3 monthly
148 West 4th Street New York City

JOIN THE New Theatre League

Amateur and professionals of the theatre should join the New Theatre League to give their support to the new social drama which is rapidly becoming a major factor in the American theatre. Repertory, Booking, Training School and Organizational services are rendered to all members. Write now for further information.

Repertory

20 New One Act Plays
Available Now for Production

Write for Free Catalogue
Published This Month

Two New Plays

HIS JEWELS

By BERNICE KELLEY HARRIS

An evicted sharecropper takes refuge with his family in a church he himself helped to build. What happens when his landlord, a deacon in the church, and other church dignitaries discover the sharecropper makes a warm and appealing drama.

30 cents. Four women. Two girls. Four men. Thirty-five minutes. Royalty: five dollars.

MIGHTY WIND A'BLOWIN'

By ALICE HOLDSHIP WARE

Negro and white sharecroppers forget their ancient prejudices when both are driven off their farms by white landlords. The first short social play to portray convincingly how unity of black and white has been achieved in the South despite traditions of race hatred.

25 cents. (Printed). Three Negroes. One woman and two men. Three whites. One man, one woman, one child. Thirty minutes. Royalty on request.

Social Drama Book Service

(10% Discounts to New Theatre League members)

Stevedore—Sklar and Peters \$.50
Men In White—S. Kingsley 1.00
Awake and Sing
Waiting for Lefty
Till the Day I Die
—Odets Three for 2.00
Paths of Glory—Howard75
Peace on Earth—Sklar and Maltz75
Let Freedom Ring—Bein 1.50
Black Pit—Albert Maltz 1.75
Paradise Lost—Odets 2.00
Armored Train—Tretaiikov50
Florisdorf and Dr. Mamlock—F. Wolf 1.00
History of Theatre—Cheney 1.69
The Dance—Kinney 1.69
International Theatre20

All books on the theatre, the dance, the movies may be ordered directly from the Social Drama Book Service.

Make all checks payable to the New Theatre League.

. . . Now Available . . .

"The Awakening of the American Theatre"

By BEN BLAKE

"A stirring record of the new theatre movement."

ALFRED SAXE

64 pages, Illustrated—25c

QUANTITY RATES SENT ON REQUEST

All theatres are urged to buy quantities of this pamphlet to sell to their audiences and theatre people in their communities. This pamphlet will help win thousands of new friends and talents to the new theatre movement.

National Office

New Theatre League

55 West 45th Street, N. Y. C.
LONgacre 5-9116

Shifting Scenes

An impressive indication of the vitality of the new theatre movement is the rapidity with which progressive groups in New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Detroit and Hartford have won the official endorsement and support of locals and Central Trades and Labor Councils in their cities. The New Theatre of Philadelphia, for instance, not only lined up the United Mine Workers' of America behind their production of Albert Maltz' coal mine play, *Black Pit*, but even won the financial assistance of the stage hands union towards keeping the play going. This significant trend directly reflects the American Federation of Labor's endorsement of the idea of a labor theatre at its last convention. Conscious and intelligent work on the part of all new theatre groups to enlist their local unions, first on the basis of specific plays and secondly on the basis of a larger conception of a labor theatre, will greatly strengthen and further the struggle against censorship, war and fascism.

New Theatre League Conference

Affiliated theatres from all over the country will send delegates to participate in the New Theatre League biennial conference in Cleveland, Ohio, on April 10th, 11th and 12th. Officers will be elected, and policies for the next two years will be determined. A major item will be the tightening-up of the League's organizational structure, so that it may better adapt itself to the changing conditions in the American theatre today. All progressive theatres should send delegates to the conference. Further information may be obtained from Leon Alexander, Chairman of the Arrangements Committee, in care of the national offices of the League.

With the New Theatres

A letter from New Haven reports the organization of a committee to coordinate the various local groups interested in social drama: the Unity players, a Negro theatre, a prospective group in the ILGWU local, the YWCA, and a prospective labor drama group in the Central Trades Council Social Club.

The organization of new theatre groups, and productions of social plays, are reported from a score of cities throughout the country hitherto untouched by the new theatre movement: Fairmont, West Virginia; Bergen, North Dakota; Sioux City, Iowa; Oakland, California; Johnstown, Pennsylvania, and Austin, Texas.

Early in March the New York Theatre Collective will present three one-act plays as its second bill of the season: *Private Hicks*, *The Pastrybaker* by Lope de Vega (translated by M. Jagendorf) and *You Cannot Change Human Nature* by Philip Stevenson, whose prize-winning play *God's In His Heaven* was first produced by the Collective. *You Cannot Change Human Nature* will be directed by Lasar Galpern, who studied with Michael Checkov of the Moscow Art Theatre Studio, and was also associate producer of the State Children's Theatre in Moscow. The Theatre Collective has exclusive rights for the production of all three plays in the metropolitan area of New York this season.

The Pasadena Community Playhouse announces the first American showing of Elmer Rice's *Not for Children*, which will open its spring season on February 25th.

The first production of the newly organized American People's Theatre in New York will be Alfred Kreyborg's *America, America*. Those interested are asked to communicate with Lewis Allen, 1749 Grand Concourse, N. Y. C.

Theatrecraft, a production and study group at 212 East 9th Street, New York, is casting

for new productions on Thursday evenings at 8:30.

The New Theatre in Philadelphia is launching an extensive drive to enlarge its membership and secure contributions to insure its spring productions. Donations should be sent to New Theatre, 311 North 16th Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The Progressive Arts Club of Vancouver won the regional elimination contest in the Dominion Drama Festival in Vancouver in January, and are now entitled to enter the finals in Ottawa next month. Covertly attacked by fascist groups, and threatened by the Police and License Inspector, *Waiting for Lefty* was nevertheless awarded the prize by Allan Wade, the British adjudicator who came all the way from London to Vancouver to judge the contest. Mr. Wade himself said of the play: "It was magnificently performed by the Progressive Arts Club because they combined what the festival authorities call 'dramatic enterprise' with an almost perfect performance. In my opinion the presentation was the nearest approach to professional standards I have ever witnessed by a group of amateurs. It was in a class by itself. There was reality, sincerity and power."

Children's Theatre Conference

The Soviet children's theatre was the subject of a two-day conference conducted by the American Russian Institute at the American People's School in New York City on February 8th and 9th. An exhibit of photographs and elaborate charts and graphs showed the exhaustive work which is being done in Russia in studying the reactions of children to determine the dramatic material and treatment best suited to children of different ages and temperaments. The speakers, Rose Rubin and Lucile Charles, who organized the conference, described the work of Natalia Satz, who founded the first children's theatre in Moscow seventeen years ago. Since then a network of a hundred professional theatres, devoted only to plays for children, has spread all over the U.S.S.R.

Representatives of such varied organizations as the New York Public Library, the New York Housing Authority, Teachers College, the WPA Theatre project, a children's home in Philadelphia, the Soviet private school in Brooklyn, the Theatre Collective, and the National Music League, attended the conference.

Repertory Notes

Mighty Wind A-Blowin' by Alice Holdship Ware, released last month by the Repertory Department, is the second printed play to be issued by the New Theatre League. It deals with the southern sharecroppers and is the first short play to present a convincing picture of the cooperation of white and Negro croppers.

Philip Stevenson, author of *God's in His Heaven*, contributes a comedy to the social theatre: *You Cannot Change Human Nature*. This alternately caustic and comical comment on the liberal members of a Non-Partisan League at the time of the battle of Bunker Hill, will be published by the Repertory Department this month.

Michael Blankfort's new play, *The Crime*, now being produced by the Theatre of Action in New York, will also be released shortly.

The publication of several skits from the left revue *Parade* in the June issue of NEW THEATRE created a tremendous demand for this type of material. The remainder of the revue, including several skits which were omitted from the original Theatre Guild production, and constituting a complete two hour program, will therefore be issued in mimeographed form

this month. Among the authors of the skits in *Parade* are Paul Peters, George Sklar, Kyle Crichton and Emanuel Eisenberg.

If groups presenting New Theatre League plays will credit the organization in their programs, they will be giving material assistance towards building up the repertory department.

The Relief Play Contest

With hundreds losing their WPA jobs daily and being thrown back on relief, and additional hundreds being cut off relief entirely every day, the present New Theatre League-City Projects' Council contest for plays on the relief situation is extremely pertinent. Such questions as the effect of relief on family relationships, on the generation growing up during the depression, on the professional worker and small business man who has been brought into close proximity, and an entirely new relationship to other working people for the first time, affords the socially-minded playwright vital and significant material.

Entries for the contest have already begun to pour in during the past few weeks, as well as hundreds of inquiries in regard to contest rules. Contestants are reminded that the dead line is midnight on March 15th, that the prizes are \$50.00 and \$25.00, and that all entries must be accompanied by a twenty-five cent registration fee and by the playwright's name in a blank envelope attached to the script. Further details may be obtained from the New Theatre League, P.O. Box 300, Grand Central Annex, N. Y. C.

"If This Be Reason"

A full-length revue *If This Be Reason* was presented by the Chicago Repertory Group at International House, University of Chicago, on February 7th.

The first act, *War*, opened with Mark Twain's *War Prayer* and included an impersonation of Madame Schumann-Heink singing *I Wanna Man with a Uniform On, The Army Builds Men*, in which a recruit tap-dances bayonet drill, the goose-step, and ends killed in action, and *I'm an International Orphan*, a song-recitation describing the plight of the orphan, *Peace. The Boys in the Back Room*, adapted from a New Masses sketch, presents the gangsters Spider Morgan, Killer Dupont and their mob planning a war with their brains-guy Stinker Zahara, interrupted by two Senators who threaten them with laws to take the profits out of war. The mob rallies for a march on Washington: "If they can take over our racket, then we'll take over theirs." This was the sharpest piece in an act which ended with a good new song *If This Be Reason*.

The second act, *Art*, contained a sketch in which a German school teacher demonstrates to his class the difference between pure art (*The Dance of the Three Graces*) and propaganda art, "art which has a meaning" (a scene from *Waiting for Lefty*). The lesson is driven home by the teacher leading the audience in the Schnitzelbank game. The third act, *Parasites*, showed *The Patriot*, an impersonation of a demagogue, *National Labor Board*, a song and dance about labor dispute fixers, *Princess Chuchornia's Escape from the Soviets*, which used lantern slides, *Social Justice*, Father Coughlin signing them up in his National Union and stealing his members' pants on the side, and an ambitious sketch, *N.R.A.* Three bankers and three brain trusters in travail produce an egg which is burst open by a tap-dancing Blue Eagle. The dance becomes convulsive, he cries *Strike!* and the bankers call in nine old men in white-beard masks to kill the bird off.

Six hundred professors and students attended the single performance. Their reception of the program indicated that while not all the numbers were successful the evening as a whole bore witness to the increasingly professional standard of the Repertory Group. A. E.

Theatre Workshop

FIVE-FINGER EXERCISES FOR THE ACTOR—1

I will present in this series of articles a number of exercises, gathered from the finest sources, which I have used in directing the Studio Work of the Theatre of Action in New York for the purpose of training the actor as an instrument. Actors, experienced or beginning, need technique as much as a violinist needs his fingering and bowing, whether he be a student or Fritz Kreisler. The ability to uncover and express the real experience of your character in a given scene is the fundamental basis for interpretation in modern realistic acting. In other words, this kind of work is not to make actors out of non-actors, but rather to prepare theatre workers to be able to use their equipment in the most *craftsmanlike* manner for the purpose of interpreting their parts in relation to the concept of the whole production. Also, the problems of the actor are concerned not only with the dramatic-school subjects of diction, gesture and tempo, but also with the training of the senses, concentration, the experience that underlies the lines (rather than simple significance of the words), emotion, relation to objects on the stage, "talking" and listening, connection with the other actors, characterization, imagination, etc.

In conclusion, there is no guarantee that the same recipe, used by two different cooks, will not turn out soups of varying excellence. But, at least, they both will make soup, and not dish-water.

1. Take an ordinary wooden match-box (or aspirin box)—study it for three minutes—memorize everything you see on it—the words, their placement on the box, the kind of lettering, etc.—now put the box away—take pencil and paper and draw what you've memorized—check up on what you've forgotten—don't faint! (Aside from the simple development of your concentration, this exercise has a larger value in that it gives the actor a new feeling of the importance of the objects thus studied, aside from their accepted utilitarian value. This feeling for objects on the stage can be carried to a great degree of usefulness, inasmuch as you could give the whole experience of your character at a given moment through your relation to a certain object.)

2. One half the class sing aloud a popular song; the other half remain silent, but hum to themselves another tune. See how long you can retain your own tune in your head without missing a note.

3. One half the class count upwards to themselves by eights. The other half try to break their concentration by calling aloud irrelevant numbers. Also do this exercise counting backwards.

4. Actor A studies Actor B for a minute or two, memorizing everything about him—his clothes, complexion, color of eyes, kind of tie, etc. A turns away from B and gives a complete description while the rest of the class checks on him.

5. Study a painting. Then put it away, and see it on the bare wall or ceiling. (You may some day have to look at a mess that the scene designer or property man has splashed onto a canvas and say "What a wonderful Picasso!" and you will be glad to be able to substitute a painting which you have studied and which you think is wonderful. Incidentally, this last exercise is valuable also for the training of the memory of vision and as such, leads us into the subject of the second article, *The Training of the Actor's Five Senses.*)

I would appreciate letters of comment from studios and actors interested in this series, suggesting topics to be taken up, and asking questions.

BOB LEWIS

WIN \$1,000 FIRST PRIZE!

for writing titles for these 3 cartoons

ALL CASH PRIZES

SECOND PRIZE \$250
50 third prizes \$5 each

TOTAL VALUE
\$1,500



CARTOON NO. 1



CARTOON NO. 2



CARTOON NO. 3

HOW TO WIN: All you have to do in order to win the \$1,000 first prize or one of the other fine prizes is simply to write a title for each one of the three cartoons appearing on this page, and mail them in, together with \$1 for a 10-weeks' subscription to the *New Masses*. Sit down now, study the three pictures, then write the titles you think fit them best and mail them in together with a \$1 subscription to the *New Masses* Contest Dept., Box 76, Madison Sq. Sta., New York, N. Y.

RULES:

1. Anyone (except employes of the *New Masses* or their families) is eligible to enter this title contest.

2. The contest opens January 23. Titles must be received at the *New Masses* Contest Dept., Box 76, Madison Square Station, New York, N. Y., on or before April 15, 1936. Awards will be made as soon after the end of the contest as the titles can be considered by the judges.

3. You need not use the attached coupon, although it is most convenient, but in order to be eligible in the Title Contest, your subscription for 10 weeks for the *New Masses* with \$1, the subscription price, must accompany the titles you submit.

4. In case of a tie of two or more, then the judges

will ask for a competitive twenty-five-word descriptive essay on the three cartoons. Their decision on the essays will be final.

5. All contest entries will be acknowledged as received.

6. The title winners, by acceptance of the prizes, unconditionally transfer to the *New Masses* all rights to the winning titles.

7. The judges will be Michael Gold, editor of the *New Masses*, Robert Forsythe, noted satirist, and Gardner Rea, famous artist. They will award the prizes on the basis of the best set of titles submitted. Their decision will be final. No additional cartoons will be printed in the contest. All you need to enter is right here.

Mail this Coupon Today!

NEW MASSES CONTEST DEPT., Box 76, Madison Square Station, New York, N. Y. N

Enclosed is \$1 for a 10-weeks' subscription to The *New Masses*. Here are my titles for the cartoons in your prize contest:

No. 1.....

No. 2.....

No. 3.....

Name.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

NEW MASSES TITLE CONTEST

Eva LeGallienne—Ten Years

(Continued from page 21)

Beyond any doubt Miss LeGallienne performed a great service to the theatre when she proved that there existed an audience of people of small incomes who were hungry for the theatre, and this in an era when Broadway ticket brokers were demanding (and getting) ten, fifteen and twenty dollars a pair for orchestra seats. It was Miss LeGallienne's weakness, and inconsistency, however, that she never asked herself whether this audience, composed of white collar workers, moderately-circumstanced professionals, and students might not be interested in a different type of play from that to which she herself was addicted, and whether certain glaring inconsistencies in the world today did not demand expression in such plays, to such audiences.

Nor does she ask herself this question today, when the crisis has sharpened people's consciousness of social, economic and political problems. The Group Theatre and the Theatre Union, and a new group of playwrights: Sklar, Maltz, Peters, Odets, Bein, Kingsley, and others, are reaching an audience which may have been only a potentiality at the time of the Civic Repertory, but is now clamoring for plays that touch its life and problems.

All these developments Miss LeGallienne continues to ignore. Since she has left Fourteenth Street, her record of plays, on tour, in New York, in repertory or in "straight runs," is as follows: *Alice in Wonderland*, *Cherry Orchard*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Master Builder*, *Doll's House*, *L'Aiglon*, *Cradle Song*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Rosmersholm*, *Camille*, and the Quintero brothers! In other words, the same general type of play to which she devoted herself in the pre-crisis era. (By way of comparison, over the same period of years the Theatre Guild offered its audiences *American Dream*, *Both Your Houses*, *They Shall Not Die*, *Rain From Heaven* and *Parade*.)

Such a record speaks worlds for her devotion to what she has made her own particular cause, but very little for her connection with life around her, or her consciousness of the new task for the theatre if it is to remain alive. American life today faces issues which positively scream for utterance in the theatre. Miss LeGallienne does not hear them.

Her point of view is all the more arresting in the light of her continued ardent advocacy of a National Theatre. She has the mechanics of such an institution

all worked out; they were recently elaborated by her in an article in the New York Times. Presumably she would like to be associated with such an enterprise in a managerial capacity. One cannot but admire, as before mentioned, her ability, her integrity, and her persistence; but in the light of her past record one shudders to imagine what a replica of the *Comedie Francaise* she would make of it. Is the American National Theatre to be a mausoleum for the European classics?

Since 1926 she has presented only four American plays: *The First Stone* by Walter Ferris, *Dear Jane* by Eleanor Hinckley, and *Inheritors* and *Alison's House* by Susan Glaspell. In part this was no doubt due to the special conditions of repertory, which, by limiting the number of performances of any one play, also limited the royalties an author might expect. Most authors preferred the gamble of a Broadway production, a long run or a flop, to Miss LeGallienne's policy of insuring her least successful play a certain number of performances by interspersing it with plays more popular at the box-office. But if Miss LeGallienne wants to organize a National Theatre, had she not better hasten to prepare herself for such a responsibility by showing a little interest in plays about the modern scene, and by occasionally producing the work of an American playwright? If that means the temporary sacrifice of repertory, is it not a compromise worth making?

The truth is that Miss LeGallienne's preference in plays is but the reverse side of her whole personality, background, and method of revolt against the commercial theatre. Her background is that of a "cultured liberal"; and her approach to the problem of a worthwhile theatre is purely individualistic.

The Civic Repertory Theatre in the days of its existence, was never anything but Miss LeGallienne's theatre. She conceived it, raised the money which kept it going, chose its plays, staged them and often played the leading roles. When she tried to play smaller roles, her public, essentially a personal one, protested.

In a collective and truly ensemble organization, none of these things could happen. No one actor could make or break its fortune; no one person would have to carry an impossible physical and nervous strain of responsibility and unceasing activity for eighteen hours a day, as was the case with Miss LeGallienne. Lastly, any aggregation of players and

directors, collectively thrashing out their policy, their artistic credo and their choice of plays, might presumably stand some chance of attaining a more realistic point of view towards their work; its relation to their own lives on the one hand, and to their audiences on the other.

It is worth noting that a further result of Miss LeGallienne's lack of any definite artistic or social point of view (beyond that of producing "great plays") was manifest in her company. An actress and director of undoubted ability and discrimination, who did not want to "star" at the expense of her fellow players, she was never able to assemble a more than second-rate company around her, or to hold the talented players who joined her company at one time or another: Nazimova, Ben Ami and others. There were also promising young players who emerged from her Apprentice Group, such as Burgess Meredith and J. E. Bromberg, and then left her for Broadway. That she could not afford to pay good actors Broadway salaries was not a final answer, since she *was* able to offer them reasonable salaries for six and seven months of the year. The Group Theatre has been able to hold an astonishing proportion of its personnel on a moderate salary scale, because its artistic program has offered them opportunity for steady personal growth and participation in a genuine collective. These two things Miss LeGallienne's theatre lacked.

She had a school, true enough, a free school for young beginners in the theatre, unique of its kind, and of great value, but of even greater potential value. Miss LeGallienne herself was so harassed and over-worked (again because of the individualistic set-up of her theatre) that she had little time to devote to the students, or even to map out their work, which was entrusted for the most part to younger members of the company. Nor was her own conception of acting sufficiently articulated or systematized to be of service to students. The result was that the value of the Apprentice Group may be summed up in one word: inspirational. Of lasting training, there was very little. As for the company itself, though Miss LeGallienne was able at times, particularly in the Checkov plays, by sheer force of her personality, and her own devotion and enthusiasm (a purely personal force, again) to spur them to ensemble playing far above their usual capacity, individual and collective, *as a whole* they were never more than a *supporting* company.

In summing up, although it contains much of both discrimination and devotion, Miss LeGallienne's ideal of theatre

is inevitably vitiated by certain traits of individualism, of vagueness, of isolation, which remove her from the living theatre. They have condemned her, if not to artistic sterility, at least to a more and more limited function in the theatre, in inescapable contrast to the ever-increasing social and artistic significance for which collective organizations like the Group Theatre, the Theatre Union, the Artef, the Theatre Collective, and the new theatre groups all over the country, are preparing themselves. They are rooted, through their plays and their audiences, in the living present.

By the very fact that she had the courage, the integrity and the vision to turn her back on "stardom" and on the commercial theatre, Miss LeGallienne has laid herself open to the demand that she go even farther, that she emerge from her ivory tower, that she throw in her efforts where they are so badly needed, not in embalming the theatre of the past, but in building the theatre of the future.

The Pair from Paramount

(Continued from page 15)

productions were, save for their photography, distinguished by their irrelevance, their pretentious emptiness, and their failure to approach even the cinematic standards of the Hollywood product. It is doubtful if one moron turned over in bed, if one fathead (of which the world, Mr. Hecht contends, is full), if one little Winkleman squirmed in alarm because of "the boys'" attacks. Nobody seemed to mind; nobody seemed to care; nobody was alarmed by the invasion of these "civilized" wits; Paramount released the films and footed the bill, and "the boys" went on playing pranks on each other, writing *Jumbo*, shipping out *Barbary Coast*, raking in the coin, thinking up plots, picking out good-looking leading ladies, hitting the Sunday sections with their latest release about "the activity and impishness" on Long Island. Meanwhile, with no publicity and no gags, John Ford did *The Informer*.

Today, if you wish to, you can stand outside the Astor Theatre and take a look at the billing Hecht and MacArthur have given themselves in their latest film, *Soak the Rich*. In silk top hats, "the boys" (from their cartoons) declare:

"We're the gents that wrote the yarn
And here's what it's about.

Class ideas don't mean a thing
When Love Kicks 'Em Out!"

After informing us that the lawyer who committed murder in *Crime Without Passion* was the mental superior of the worms in the street, that the little clown and the children of *Once in a Blue Moon*

were the really lovable heroes of the world, that the megalomaniac of *The Scoundrel* was ultimately redeemed for his sins by the voice of God coming out of the ceiling, Hecht and MacArthur's latest contribution to world thought is the notion that Cupid has no ideology or political opinions, campus unrest is only a variation of youth's eternal restlessness and social protest is an illusion. "Chateaubriand said the state rests on the shoulders of the poor," Mr. Tulio, Hecht's mouthpiece, remarks. "Every generation or so the poor sigh. What we are passing through now is one of the sighs."

Yet even as an attack on the student movement, the film is unimportant. I refuse to believe that any one will credit Mr. Hecht's collegiate radicals with any reality, or will be amused by his malodorous observation, "Revolt is the latest form of necking." Nor will people be entertained by a film that is cut like cardboard, not celluloid, that is even speechier than their other films, and, if possible, more platitudinous. Perhaps the estimate of the Showmen's Trade Review could stand as the final word on *Soak the Rich*. "As a companion piece," counsels the Review, "to a fast outdoor or a modern romantic, it may provide a good bill of entertainment." In other words, second fiddle to a horse opera.

And so, after all, it was no Lazarus who arose out of the Hollywood grave when Hecht-MacArthur left. The corpse simply moved to Long Island. We may remember years and years and years ago that Mr. Hecht refused to evade charges of literary obscenity in Chicago and valiantly defended the freedom of the artist from censorship, that Hecht himself once showed signs of being an artist. But that was in another country, and besides, the wench is dead.

GERALDINE CHANIN

(of the Benno Schneider School)

CLASSES IN RHYTHMICS

Steinway Hall, Studio 615
Murray Hill 4-6869

ELSA FINDLAY

MODERN DANCE EURYTHMICS

64 East 34th Street
New York—Ash. 4-2090

VOICE and SPEECH

For Stage and Platform
Individual and Group
Instruction

HELEN CROSS
287 W. 4th Street
CHelsea 3-8806

Just Published

LET FREEDOM RING

A Play in Three Acts

By ALBERT BEIN

Based on the Grace Lumpkin Novel

"To Make My Bread"

PRICE \$1.50

OTHER PLAYS OF SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

LITTLE OL' BOY	
By Albert Bein.....	75c (Cloth, \$1.50)
PEACE ON EARTH	
By George Sklar and Albert Maltz	75c
SAILORS OF CATTARO	
By Friedrich Wolf.....	\$1.50
PATHS OF GLORY	
By Sidney Howard.....	\$1.50
BOTH YOUR HOUSES	
By Maxwell Anderson.....	\$2.00
AMERICAN DREAM	
By George O'Neil.....	\$2.00
THE LAST MILE	
By John Wexley.....	\$2.00

Send for Free Catalogue of Plays

SAMUEL FRENCH

25 West 45th Street, New York
811 West 7th Street, Los Angeles

CARNEGIE HALL

SUNDAY EVE. APRIL 5th

One Night Only

JULIEN BRYAN

Speaking in Person

With All New Motion Pictures

"SOVIET RUSSIA 1935"

See the great strides made during the past year in food production, recreation, housing, transportation, fashions, aviation, nurseries, schools, the theatre—with scenes from "Aristocrats," remarkable production of Moscow Realistic Theatre.

AN EXCITING DOCUMENT
of
HISTORY IN THE MAKING

All seats reserved, tickets at box office beginning March 22. Popular prices.

"Ethan Frome," and the Theatre of Fate

(Continued from page 13)

revealing in that action and in their oblique half-formed sentences that at least some of them are approaching a parting of the ways. For dynamic change in men's thinking and behavior constitutes the life-blood of militant social drama. And men can create destiny through the application of their reason and collective will to their environment. Far from harboring fatalism, a deterministic view of society which is allied to the principle of active change, encourages heroic resolve and self-assertion.

The kind of theatre that is so vividly realized in *Running Dogs* can of course overshoot the mark. There is little likelihood of its succumbing to the abracadabra of the nebulous philosophizing which has wrapped plays like *Winterset* and *Within the Gates* partly or wholly in an operatic fog. But it is less easy to evade Rover Boy robustness and boy-scout optimism. In his one act drama *Wexley* has happily escaped this pitfall, exercising a crisp restraint in his dialogue and in his climax, which luckily does not force through a slap-dash conversion. At the worst he fails to avoid a few clichés and shibboleths. The Theatre Union Studio's necessarily hurried and circumstantially limited production could not fully realize the potentialities of the script, which I have had the unfair advantage of reading. Though there were valiant individual performances by Harry Bellaver, Harold Johnsrud, Robert Price and others, all the actors were seriously limited by their understandable inability to appear Chinese. A properly trained Chinese cast could accomplish wonders with the play, especially after a little pruning and pointing up of the text.

The Musical Revues

Somewhat belatedly, perhaps, this reporter would pay homage to the American theatre's premier industry. Those of us who comment on the American theatre with lengthy analyses of the chemistry of serious drama must sooner or later do penance for our errors. This is as opportune an occasion as any, perhaps all the more so since the month has seen that epitome of musicals, the *Ziegfeld Follies*.

Another reason is that returning from the Theatre Union Studio's Sunday evening, the first half of which was a revue, this commentator found himself wondering about the economics of the musicals. Here on a bare stage was a program that aroused much interest and yet represented the most infinitesimal fraction of the

cost of a Broadway musical, leading one to wonder whether the successful commercial revue must be so flagrantly lavish as to consume the production costs of five or six possibly excellent comedies and tragedies. We conclude that it apparently must!

All the revues are based on the greatest common denominator of the theatre—namely, that mystical entity known as "entertainment," which apparently increases in direct proportion to the production cost and the "conspicuous consumption" which it represents. Luxuriousness means happiness, hence entertainment for all who have had their eye on the main chance. The Theatre Union's rudimentary revue, even if primed to a perfection it was far from possessing, would never have a chance on Broadway. It is altogether lacking in conspicuous consumption. Shortly before the writing of this piece this reviewer found himself lumped with those who are unsympathetic to entertainment in the theatre. Though he liked such lighter confections as *Pride and Prejudice*, *First Lady* and *Lady Precious Stream* a good deal more than many a sombre play of the season, the reviewer felt particularly uncomfortable because he was on the point of admitting that a great percentage of all the reviews he has seen has been so much spinach. A crazy-quilt of dance numbers, wheezes about sex, torch songs, bromides, pageants and acrobatics, interspersed with some satire, cannot be aesthetically satisfying as a whole. It is and remains pastiche, and one may well resent the reverence which is exacted by its pretentiousness, the absence of which was one of the most commendable characteristics of the old Garrick Gaieties and Neighborhood Playhouse revues. Logically, a musical can be entertaining only in its separate parts. But here too we confess an inability to be entertained a large part of the time.

This year's vintage of the *Ziegfeld Follies* contains a capital skit on the government spending program, *Of Thee I Spend*, a passable if somewhat scrambled *surréaliste* ballet, a deft solo dance, *Night Flight* by Harriet Hctor, and a perfectly marvellous juggling act by Stan Kavanaugh—items that give this revue a comparatively high standing. *George White's Scandals* enjoys a hearty squib on radio advertising, *Soup*, with Bert Lahr at his best, and a few passably neat numbers. *Jubilee* is moderately amusing at the expense of royalty and Johnny Weissmuller, and also better coordinated

than most musicals, which resemble nothing so much as a well-lighted alphabet soup.

So much on the credit side. But think of the debit columns. Omitting indifferent numbers, largely present to meet the exigencies of musical revue technic, regard the hoary sentimentality of Fanny Brice's *He Hasn't a Thing Except Me*, the ineptitude of a number like *The Sweepstakes Ticket*. Leaving the *Follies* for the *Scandals*, note the surface smut of the *Mind Over Matter* item in which a gentleman's libido fails him in the crucial moment and he has to descend the ladder, the psychopathic utilization of breasts for eyes in one choreographic atrocity or the melodies which are adequately described by such titles as *I'm the Fellow Who Loves You, I've Got To Get Hot* and *May I Have My Gloves?* Proceeding to the refinements of *Jubilee*, one notes the poverty of the idea when distended to fill an evening, despite the valiant efforts of Melville Cooper and the perfectly superb Mary Boland.

Nevertheless the fact remains that a vast majority of the audience prizes these confections beyond anything else—a phenomenon of no little significance. The average revue, although endeavoring to give something to everybody, would seem to rest its appeal upon a few specific principles, in addition to the general one of conspicuous consumption. The revue aims to relieve the spectator of the necessity of close attention, a boon which alone would earn dividends, and operates on the theory that an audience is badly in need of an aphrodisiac. In the uninspired life of the average client the latter assumption may not perhaps fall wide of the mark! The three musicals here considered have an approximately eighty per cent sex content. Finally, the revue engages in generally tepid satire which does not shake the complacency of the well-fed customer and shares his prejudices. Thus in the *Scandals* "everything is okay" and "anything can happen," capital punishment is a joke, the Ethiopians fight Mussolini with an arduous tap dance, poor boys get rich girls, "life begins at sweet sixteen," and the unemployed, in a "boondoggling" number, are enjoying the manna of home relief as a respite from the dull business of working for a living. *Jubilee* regurgitates the familiar bromide of the little man—namely, that the monarchs of the world haven't such an easy time of it after all, and the sumptuousness of the *Follies* reflects the social ambitions of its clientele. Thus we arrive at the mathematics of the art of the musical revue. Money plus sex makes money, as every wise man's son doth know.

Little Charlie, What Now?

(Continued from page 8)

and 18th century—particularly the *com-media dell' arte*. Chaplin, brought up in the English music hall and the American vaudeville, was in the direct line of that tradition, which has given us the ballet, the pantomime, and much of vaudeville. This old classic theatre, which may be traced, if you will, as far back as classic times, was a theatre of improvisation and of pantomime. It specialized in a set of stock types of characters. The actors improvised the action on a given theme without any text. The character remained fixed, unchanging; the situation always changed, thereby furnishing the element of novelty. The action took place on the plane of fantasy.

Chaplin is the only actor of modern times to create such a successful universal character. Adhering to the strict classic rules, he made Charlie. He preserved the eternal mask of a fixed set of characteristics and a fixed costume—the little man with the derby, the cane, and the broken-down shoes, striving in the midst of poverty to retain the gentility and courtesy which he believes are superior attributes; searching with a romantic heart for beauty in the most sordid and unlikely spots on earth. Charlie belongs with Scaramouche and Harlequin, characters of an earlier age, which outgrew their creators and assumed reality as symbols of their time.

The movie in the period when Chaplin first began to act was silent. It was unrealistic. It employed theatrical sets as a background. It provided the ideal conditions for this classic art. The human voice achieves stylization best in song; it would have shattered the illusion if the fantastic person Charlie had spoken. Chaplin wearing the mask of Charlie became the greatest pantomime artist of our epoch. The plastic quality of his face permitted him the most delicate nuances of feeling visually. His infinite grace of movement and the precision of his gesture placed him beside the outstanding dancers of our time.

The last years have seen a revolution in our film technique. The silent movie has been displaced by the talkie. Photography has become so supple a medium that it rivals the texture and the plastic form of painting. The result has been a great advance in cinema art and this new art has been built on *realism*. The Soviet film was the first to include a much larger segment of reality within the conventions of the film. It founded a new school of producers, added a much wider field in thematic material, and posed a

demand for a realistic school of acting far beyond any achieved so far in the Western European or American theatres. Thus the restrictions of the medium which Chaplin employed in his early films have been abolished.

Chaplin's last film *City Lights* already presaged change and posited the necessity for his leaving the old form and striking out for a new one. *City Lights*, however, was conceived and made before the economic crisis.

The year 1931 marked a historic turning point in the fortunes of the vast majority of people in the United States. The depression, which so largely affected the middle classes, has changed the audience, which loved and followed Charlie. A deep rift has occurred. Those who still have a stake in the system and believe they can salvage their security, will amalgamate with the classes above them. The others—the vast majority—have had their economic basis wiped out; their standard of living has dropped. They have had to give up their dream of rising in the social scale; instead they are being pushed down. There are millions of unemployed. There are millions on government relief. A new generation is growing up which has not been able to find a place for itself and for whom the old illusions are meaningless.

Therefore in making *Modern Times* Chaplin faced a serious dilemma. He had to deal with a changed technique in the cinema and a changed audience. As a result he had to choose a new theme. But he had on his hands a fixed character—Charlie—who belonged and existed within the limits of a given art. In short, Chaplin has had the same difficulty in turning a corner in his art, as little Charlie has in turning a street corner in the film.

Modern Times thus represents Chaplin's crisis in art. It is a film, done on a large canvas which grapples with the fundamental problems of our times. Its hero, however, is still the optimistic, lovable Charlie—a clown.

But against the background of modern times a hero cannot be the pure clown. Poverty, unemployment, hunger are serious themes—they are the stuff of tragedy. Only from the vantage ground of security can they appear comical. Chaplin is acutely aware of the tragic implications of his theme. He knows that you can no more have pure comedy than pure poetry today. We live in an age of transition and the world is passing through a crisis which will involve a

RANDOM HOUSE HITS IN BOOK FORM



END OF SUMMER

By S. N. Behrman

FIRST LADY

by Katharine Dayton
and George S. Kaufman

BOY MEETS GIRL

By Sam and Bella Spewack

PARADISE LOST

By Clifford Odets

DEAD END

By Sidney Kingsley

EACH VOLUME \$2

THE PULITZER PRIZE PLAYS

Complete texts of all the plays
1918-1934, \$3.50

AT ALL BOOKSELLERS OR
RANDOM HOUSE
20 East 57th St., New York

NEW DANCE LEAGUE of Southern California

presents

HORTON
DANCE
GROUP

at a time and place to be
announced

for March 1936

York 9387

7377 BEVERLY BLVD.

LOS ANGELES

CALIF.

struggle between two totally different concepts of society.

This is the reason for the confusion in theme and in style in *Modern Times*. Aesthetically the film moves in two planes—that of reality and fantasy. Sometimes they run parallel but more often there is a head-long collision between them. Chaplin has endeavored to preserve Charlie intact. He has tried to preserve the classic form. But he has also had to admit a new world of reality,

New Dance League SCHOOL

NEW TERM
MARCH 1st

MODERN TECHNIQUE,
BALLET, PERCUSSION,
COMPOSITION, ANATOMY,
GROUP DANCE, DALCROZE,
TAP, DANCE HISTORY.

Registration — Monday and Wednesday
10 A.M. to 5 P.M.
55 West 45th St., N. Y. C. LO. 5-9116

NEW YORK SCHOOL OF THE THEATRE

Evening Course

Directed by Harry Coult

Technique of Acting

Fundamentals Improvisation
Make-up

Rehearsal and Performance

Spring Session—\$7.50 per month

CARNEGIE HALL, N. Y.
Columbus 5-2445

NEW THEATRE SCHOOL

SPRING TERM

March 9th to June 20th
Registration Closes March 7th

28 Outstanding Instructors
18 Subjects, Beginning and Advanced
Classes

COMPLETE COURSES in

ACTING
DIRECTING
PLAYWRITING
STAGE TECHNIQUE

NEW SUBJECTS this
semester include:

The Negro In The American Theatre, Children's Theater, Costume Design, Speech Improvement, Experimental Directing, and a Class for Children.

• Lowest Tuition of any comparable theatre school • Discounts to members of New Theatre League and affiliated theatres • Special consideration to trade unions and other organizations.

Classes Limited — Register Now!

FREE Descriptive Catalogue Upon Request.

55 West 45th Street, New York City
LOnacre 5-9116

(Established by New Theatre League)

and the two are inimical. One must destroy the other.

The first sequence of *Modern Times*, in the fantastic factory, is delightful satire with a social sting. Words are unnecessary here. The humor is light and gay and for this reason many things like the speed-up, the regimentation, the prying boss, the feeding machine, which in reality would be painful are simply amusing. A worker going mad from the speed-up is a sad subject, but kept strictly within the old formula, it becomes delightful pantomime.

But in the next sequence, we are dropped onto the plane of reality. We see the inside of a jail. We are taken out of doors on the waterfront. This is a picture of a real background. We meet the hungry little gamin stealing bananas. She is a real child and a pathetic one—not a stock character, whom we know. In a way, the fact that Charlie meets this gamin symbolizes Chaplin's desire to come in contact with reality in his art. Throughout the following scenes of mutual adventure, we feel the difference between them as characters. The gamin is a real girl who has waked in a dream and met a dream character—Charlie. She might have met Santa Claus just the same way. She is practical—she finds a home even if it is a hut in Hooverville; she has a few romantic illusions; she doesn't think it wrong to steal bananas and bread. She is a proletarian of the city streets. She is delighted with Charlie—his fantastic chivalry, his fairy tales of a dream cottage. But as a real character she demands to speak, to tell her story. Her pantomime is never convincing since it is a convention of fantasy applied to a realistic character.

When Charlie leaves the jail, where he has been sent for inadvertently picking up a red flag and leading an unemployment demonstration, he puts on his old garments of gentility. He is again the gentlemanly bum. After we have seen him as a factory worker, this shabby fellow seems ridiculous, particularly in the scene with the policeman. Hence the scenes of demonstrations and strike are not excessively funny. (These shots included newsreel pictures and a part of Charlie's audience took them seriously. They enjoyed it most when he got the better of the cops, but they wished him to do this on purpose, while as a matter of fact Charlie participated in the demonstration and the strike only by accident. In a critical and real situation, an audience demands of its hero purposeful action.)

But as the action progresses on the plane of reality, Charlie's situation be-

comes too serious for his gentlemanly pretense, for his costume. We do not believe in this costume for the illusion which created it is not shared by all the audience anymore. Just as the film juggles two planes of action and thus creates an emotional confusion in the reactions of the audience, so Charlie juggles his costume. Half way through the picture, there occurs a break. The plane of reality recedes. Charlie reverts to his old self. The action slows but the funny business is increased. The old slapstick becomes dominant. There are many more laughs, but there is no doubt that the most comic sequences in the film are for the most part repetitions of his early works—*The Skating Rink*, *The Nightwatchman*, *The Floorwalker*, *The Singing Waiter*, etc. These sequences bear the same relation to the film as the autobiography of literary men to their work. It is a necessary résumé at a critical turning point.

Throughout the film, Charlie remains the same wistful romantic lonely individual and this in spite of his experience in a factory as a worker. Here Chaplin misses one of the most progressive elements of the machine—the discipline it imposes and the collective spirit it awakens in the workers. We do get suggestions of this collective spirit in the demonstration and the strike but we do not participate emotionally, because the character Charlie never does.

Moreover, if Charlie had experienced these new emotions, he would be changed by his experience. But he is a fixed character. Hence the dilemma of the director. In the film, if Charlie had stayed long with the gamin, he would have changed in spite of himself. But the director, believing he must keep faith with his audience, insists that he hold to the familiar character with its fixed characteristics, ignoring the fact that the audience is not the same old audience.

To the end, Charlie remains the same lonely little *individual*. We leave him at the cross roads, in his old suit, with a bromidic optimistic caption. But we too have been through his adventures and we don't believe that things will be better for him, that he will ever become a gentleman or improve his fortunes. If he learns nothing from experience, he will only run into more troubles and we will lose patience with him. At best, it is a sad ending.

What is Charlie going to do next time? Get rid of his antiquated costume and the things it stands for, join with his fellow men in distress, with whom he so deeply sympathizes? (But if he should do the latter, he would no longer be the Charlie we have known in the past—the little knight-errant of the shabby derby.) His

wistful but optimistic romanticism is as out of date in the world today as was Don Quixote's tilting at windmills. His audience for the most part has had to give up their optimistic illusions. He faces an aesthetic crisis. To follow his audience, now so sharply divided, he will have to choose which half of it he wishes to reach—the secure upper minority, or the vast majority of common folk from whom he has always drawn his strength. If the latter, he will be forced to leave his respectable shabby suit behind or deed it as a farewell gift to the secure minority. I for one believe that as a character, he has enough vitality to live on without it. I would like to see him change and grow in the realistic new film world, and to hear his voice speak for him. *Little Charlie, what now?*

(Several days after the above article had been set up in print, the author's point of view received unlooked-for substantiation from the words of Mr. Chaplin himself, who declared in a press interview held on February 19: "I shall probably veer away from my tramp role some day. I just can't make him talk. He is a vestige of the silent days."—The Editors.)

Books

SHERLOCK HOLMES. By William Gillette. New York: Doubleday-Doran, 1935. \$2.00.

Embalmed in this book is one of the classics of the popular theatre. Based on the stories of Conan Doyle by William Gillette, who also made the rôle of Sherlock Holmes famous from coast to coast, this play began its career in the fall of 1899 and became a recurrent item in the American theatre. Gillette disarms criticism when he writes in his preface that the play "makes no pretension to literary achievement." It is purely a stage-piece with a "universal appeal"—namely, with the combined appeal of discovery, ingenuity, suspense and sentiment. Nobody would say that the play is not for children, but neither will one begrudge it to adults. It is the most innocent of narcotics.

DANIEL FROHMAN PRESENTS. AN AUTO-BIOGRAPHY. New York: Claude Kendall and Willoughby Sharp, 1935. \$3.50.

Daniel Frohman needs no introduction to followers of the theatre. As America's oldest and most prolific entrepreneur of the stage he has had more justification, as well as provocation, to set down his recollections than any other writer on the theatre. Little can be said for the literary style of the autobiography, which is, alas, as scrambled a document as it is possible to conceive. At best it is genial and not too fatiguing. One could also wish for a more critical evaluation of the drama. Mr. Frohman's book gives little inkling of the fact that the theatre has a definite relation to society and that the stage underwent a major transformation in his time. History was being made, but Mr. Frohman, though otherwise an alert observer, appears to have been untouched by it.

J. W. G.

June 15 Through July 11

Intensive Course in
Dance Technique
and Composition

**MARTHA GRAHAM
LOUIS HORST**

For information address:

Dini De Remer, Secretary
Martha Graham Studio
66 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

**BLANCHE
EVAN**

IN A LECTURE-
DEMONSTRATION
WITH DANCE FILMS

Sun. Mar. 8, 2:45 P.M.
The Caravan, 110 E.
59th St. Adm. 25c.

Creative Arts Centre

A Privately Endowed School Offering Instruction to Talented Men, Women, and Children with Limited Finances.

Training, under the competent supervision of well-known professionals, in all branches of the Theatre, Fine and Applied Art, the Fields of Writing, and Photography is available without charge.

Instruction is almost entirely along practical lines, with theory minimized. A fully equipped motion picture studio, rehearsal halls, laboratories, and an experimental theatre are available to students. Class sessions are held both during the day and evening.

25c weekly per subject is the only charge, and this is to help defray the cost of materials, equipment, and text matter. Beyond this sum there is nothing else to buy or to subscribe for.

REGISTRATION FOR SPRING TERM: MAR. 10th to 31st

Subjects Include:

Technique of Acting for Stage, Screen and Radio—Costume and Scenic Designing—Stage and Screen Direction and Lighting—Stage Dancing—Voice—Speech—Diction—Make-up—Commercial, Portrait, and Motion Picture Photography—Film Cutting and Editing—Scenario Writing—Sound—Life Drawing—Sculpture—Commercial Art—Fashions—Advertising and Publicity—Theatre Management—Journalism—Short Story—Novel—Playwriting and Radio Continuity—Mss. Marketing and Criticism.

Special Classes for Children

For Further Information:

219 West 58th St., New York

Telephone: CIRCLE 7-5218

PROGRAM of NEW DANCES



presented by

LILLIAN SHAPERO
AND HER DANCE GROUP
MAURICE RAUCH • PIANIST

CIVIC REPERTORY THEATRE, 14TH STREET AT 6TH AVENUE
SUNDAY at 8:45 p.m. MARCH 22

Tickets \$1.65, \$1.10, 83c, 55c on sale at the box office



Theory and Technique of Playwriting

BY
**JOHN
HOWARD
LAWSON**

Author of "Processional," etc.

A Complete Guide for Playwrights

This comprehensive and brilliant study of what a play is will be the standard work of its kind for many years to come.

PART I. The History of Dramatic Thought examines Aristotle's theories of the drama, the theories current during the Renaissance, the 18th Century, and the 19th Century, including a thorough review of Ibsen, with special reference to social determinants in the history of the theatre.

PART II. The Theatre of Today discusses the dualism of current thought; George Bernard Shaw, critical and technical trends, Eugene O'Neill, the technique of the modern play, and the relationship of the drama to the basic patterns of thought which determine the playwright's method.

PART III. Dynamics of Construction provides a complete and illuminating explanation of the laws of conflict and dramatic action; the precise meaning of unity; the process by which a playwright selects his material; the social framework in which the dramatic action is placed.

PART IV. Mechanics of Construction goes into the nature, utility and rationale of continuity, exposition, progression, the obligatory scene, climax, characterization, dialogue, and the audience.

Mail this Coupon NOW

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
2 West 45th St., New York City

Gentlemen:

Please send me a copy of **THEORY AND TECHNIQUE OF PLAYWRITING**. Enclosed find \$2.75 check money order. I will pay the postman.

Name

Address

City..... State..... NT3-36

Backstage

Beginning with the April issue of **NEW THEATRE**, Molly Day Thacher gives up her post to go on the Associates' Board, and Victor Wolfson becomes Drama Editor in her stead.

Mr. Wolfson comes to **NEW THEATRE** with a varied theatre background. He is a member of Rebel Arts, and author of the forthcoming Theatre Union play *Sons of Rome*. Last fall he directed the same organization's production of *Mother*. He has also worked in the West Virginia coal mining districts, organizing theatre and playwriting groups among the miners.

NEW THEATRE feels that a large share of its success in the past year and a half is owing to the hard work and wise leadership which Molly Thacher has brought to her position as Drama Editor, and that her continued association with the magazine in a more general capacity will be no less valuable.

NEW THEATRE's one act plays continue to enlarge their sphere of influence. On January 26th, the prize-winning Albert Maltz play *Private Hicks* was broadcast over station WEVD by members of the *Let Freedom Ring* company, who had previously given the play on two New Theatre Nights. The broadcast was one of a Sunday evening eight o'clock series of social dramas presented by Theatre Union players. Aaron Stein, radio critic for the New York Post, in commenting on the broadcast, remarked: "It is an exciting play and it was acted with an expressive versatility which is rare enough in radio drama. Its most arresting quality, however, was its importance. The crisis in the life of a National Guardsman whose reaction is human rather than military when he is ordered to shoot down strikers was presented with a tragic impact, the force of which showed up most efficiently the inconsequential tenuousness of the ordinary run of dramatic broadcasting. It was only when we heard through the microphone the voice of full-sized tragedy that we realized fully the pettiness of what radio considers its somber moments. This series cannot be recommended too strongly to any listener who might care to hear good actors present examples of playwriting that is more concerned with having something to say than with being safely inoffensive."

Following its success at a series of New Theatre Nights, Samuel French has published Paul Green's *Hymn to the Rising Sun* in pamphlet form. Both the Green play and *Private Hicks* were first published in **NEW THEATRE**.

JOIN
NEW WORLD DANCERS
CLASSES
SUN. — 11:30 a.m.
MON. — 7:30 p.m.
8:30 p.m.
• MERLE
• S. DAVIS
• H. WEINER
• S. SILVERMAN
5 SOUTH 18TH STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

The PHOTO LEAGUE

Sect. of N. Y. Film & Photo League

Announces a Course in

ELEMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY

Begins March 4th at 8 P.M. Sharp

REGISTRATION DAILY (except Sun.) from 10 to 5, and Mon. and Wed. evenings from 7 to 10.

31 E. 21st St. GRamercy 5-9582

A TRIUMPH:

First American Recordings of WORKERS SONGS!



GROPPER
LIMBACH
SEGAL
WARSAGER
WOLFE

did the labels!

Hanns Eisler
Mordecai Bauman
Felix Groveman
The New Singers
Lan Adomian
Marc Blitzstein

did the records!



1. RISE UP
IN PRAISE OF LEARNING
2. INTERNATIONALE
FORWARD WE'VE NOT FORGOTTEN
3. UNITED FRONT
SOUP SONG

Each double-faced record 75c postpaid

TIMELY RECORDING CO., Dept T
235 Fifth Ave., New York, N. Y.

Send me

1 2 3

Name:

Address:

MUSIC LOVERS— 100,000 of the finest records in the world on sale at 50c & 75c per record (value \$1.50 & \$2). The Symphonies, Chamber Music, Operas, etc., of Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Mozart, Wagner, etc. Mail Orders. Catalogue.

THE GRAMOPHONE SHOP, INC., 18 E. 48TH ST., NEW YORK

VERNON GRIFFITH

and his

CLUB VALHALLA ORCHESTRA

is still among the best that can be obtained

237 West 148th Street New York City

EDgecombe 4-8792

CLASSIFIED

RECORDING SERVICE

High-fidelity phonograph records for singers, musicians, composers, dancers, orchestras and choruses. Recordings made at concert halls or our studio. Permanent, unbreakable records, absolutely no needle scratch. **WHITE RECORDING STUDIO**, 141 WEST 72nd ST., N. Y. C. SUsquehanna 7-0207.

CLASSES IN MODERN DANCE TECHNIQUE, 3151 Breckenridge St., Pittsburgh, Pa. Mayflower 8043.

NEW DANCE LEAGUE SCHOOL will give scholarship to pianist-composer. Apply Thursdays, 5 to 9 P.M., 148 W. 4th St.

THE NEW THEATRE SCHOOL library needs copies of *Workers Theatre* for 1932 and 1933 to complete its files. Can you help? Notify immediately. 55 West 45th St., LONG-acre 5-9116.

SPECIAL OFFER!

Good only
until midnight
**MARCH
25th**

10 months of \$1 NEW THEATRE for 1

Only 10c a copy if you subscribe before March 25th

We're making this unusual special offer to start our campaign for 5,000 new subscribers off with a bang. Until March 25th you can subscribe to NEW THEATRE for 10 months for only \$1. After that subscriptions go back to the regular rates of 8 months for \$1 and 12

MAIL THIS COUPON BEFORE MARCH 25th

NEW THEATRE, 156 West 44th Street, New York City

Enclosed find \$1.00. (Check or money-order preferred.) Please send me NEW THEATRE for ten months, beginning with theissue.

NAME

ADDRESS

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

months for \$1.50. *This offer saves you 1/3 of the newsstand price—5¢ on every copy.*

At 15¢ a copy NEW THEATRE is bargain enough. But at 10¢ a copy you just can't afford *not* to get it regularly. Don't neglect this opportunity. *This special offer will not be made again.* Mail the coupon and a dollar NOW. Remember, only orders postmarked NOT LATER THAN MIDNIGHT MARCH 25th will be filled at this special price. All orders postmarked after this date will be filled at eight-month subscriptions.

PRESENT SUBSCRIBERS PLEASE NOTE:

Regardless of when your subscription expires, you may take advantage of this special offer to renew it for 10 additional months.