

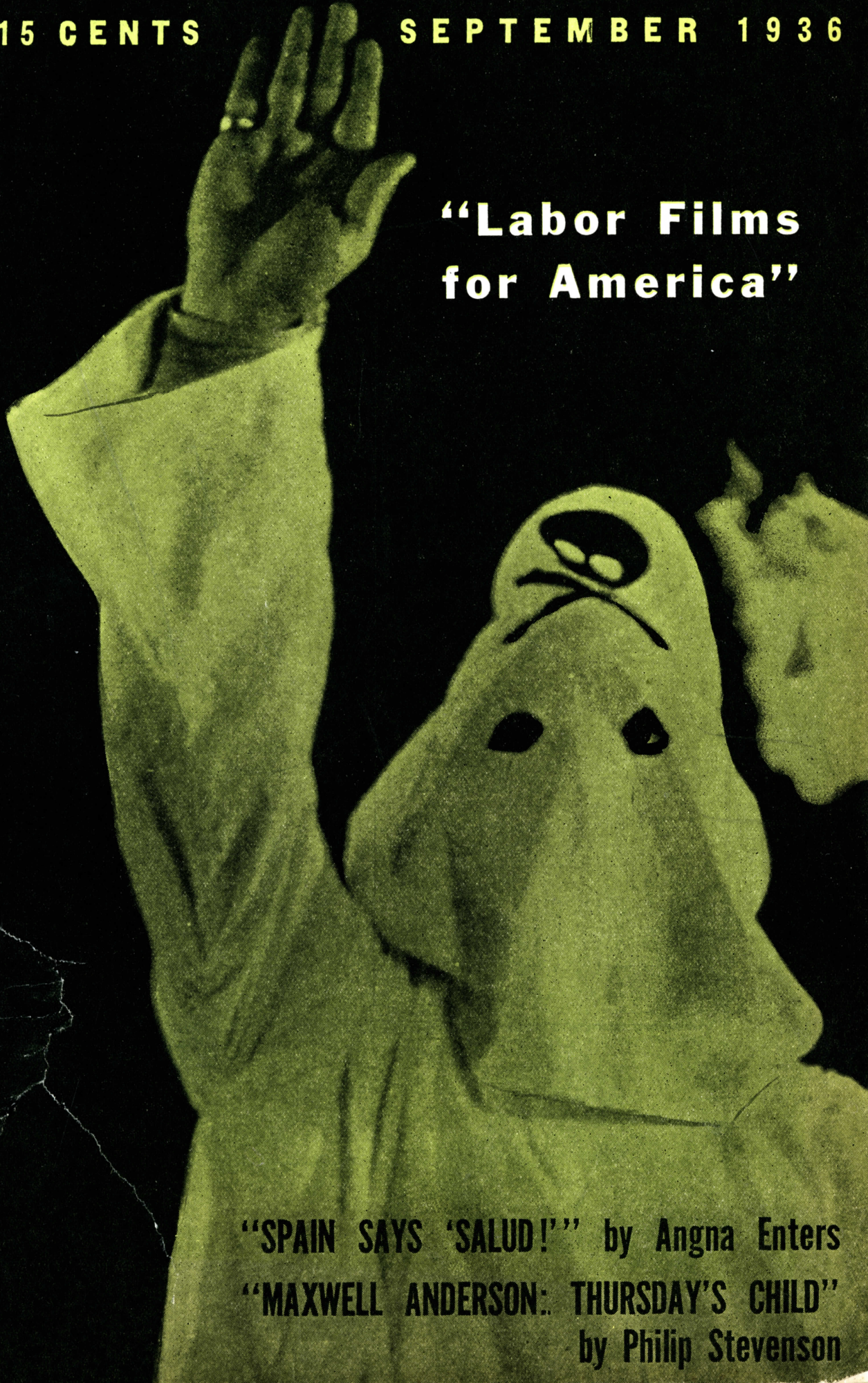
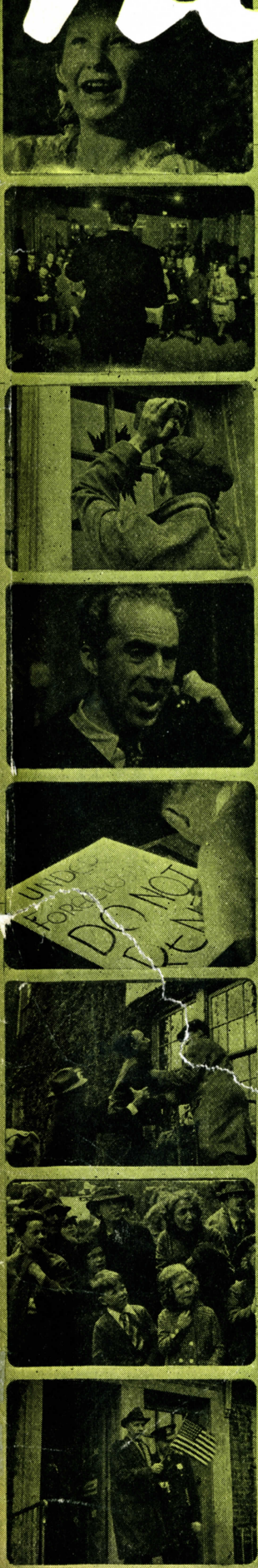
New Theatre

15 CENTS

SEPTEMBER 1936

**"Labor Films
for America"**

"SPAIN SAYS 'SALUD!'" by Angna Enters
"MAXWELL ANDERSON: THURSDAY'S CHILD"
by Philip Stevenson



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NEW THEATRE

SEPTEMBER, 1936

What American newspaperman in Spain, marching with the Loyalists, or dining with the Rebels, has even remotely approximated the remarkable reportage of *Spain Says "Salud!"* by Angna Enters? This dancer and mime needs no introduction to the American theatre public. Her eyewitness account of the mobilization of the little town of Malaga against the fascist advance is so superb and stirring a document that NEW THEATRE, proud to publish it, urges the article as compulsory reading for all.

No amount of radio or press interviewing could pervert this artist's impressions. Shipboard reporters, aware that the microphone was carrying her words to countless radio listeners, despairingly sought to neutralize her honest insistence on the amazing courage and discipline of the Loyalists. She admits being horrified at the dishonesty of the "impartial" news agencies. These agencies are probably finding the prize fighter Uzcudun's story of being threatened by Communists because he had a "clean shirt and smoked good cigars" better copy.

The Malaga Miss Enters writes about, now in the center of the struggle, is in all probability a shambles. The workers who formed the funeral cortège for their murdered comrade a few weeks before the fascist coup are now fighting for their lives in defense of the People's Front. What has happened to the little Workers' Theatre in Malaga? or the gentle folk who under fascist fire, helped salvage the American dancer's belongings? We will never know. But whatever the success of General Franco's mercenaries, one fact is certain: the people of Malaga, of all the towns like Malaga in Spain, will never submit to fascist tyranny and rule.

Labor Films for America

We are happy to describe to our readers an event that means the conquest of a new area for left-wing art. We have become aware of several young and healthy film groups actively engaged in the production of professionally conceived and enacted pro-labor films. The importance of this phenomenon is apparent to anyone

who recalls how the abrupt appearance of a number of small left-thinking theatre groups became the signal for an extraordinary growth of the labor drama. Now the movies—at last!—which can reach into a hundred cities at once.

A group in Hollywood, American Labor Films, Inc., has recruited sincere film technicians, directors, and actors for this work. In early mornings and spare week-ends, they have created cooperatively a film, *Millions of Us*, which for the first time deals directly with the dilemma of the unemployed. We are tempted to surprise our readers with the familiar names associated with the production, but the makers request anonymity; less out of modesty than out of a disconcerting knowledge of the methodology of Hollywood blacklisting. The little Hitlers of the California hills would hate to see liberal ideas given an even break.

Labor audiences have already seen *Millions of Us*, and report their enthusiasm for this twenty-minute feature. In a few weeks, prints will be available for union halls all over the U.S.A. Labor itself (Hollywood Reporter, Aug. 4) has inaugurated plans for a production unit, through official channels of the American Federation of Labor, recognizing at last how brilliant the truth is when enacted on the screen.

In New York City, Nykino, a group of talented film workers, are busy on a pro-labor film with the framework of the *March of Time*. They have already completed the portrayal of two stirring and important events of the year: The evictions of middle-class professional people at Sunnyside, Long Island, who are putting up a bitter, stubborn fight for their homes; and the brutal events of the Black Legion. Upon completion of a third incident, this half-hour sound film will be released in standard and 16 mm. size to the huge audience, in theatre, church, club, and union-hall, that has been starved for this type of material.

NEW THEATRE strongly urges every reader to support American Labor Films' initial production, *Millions of Us*, and Nykino's new film, whose scenes appear on our cover.

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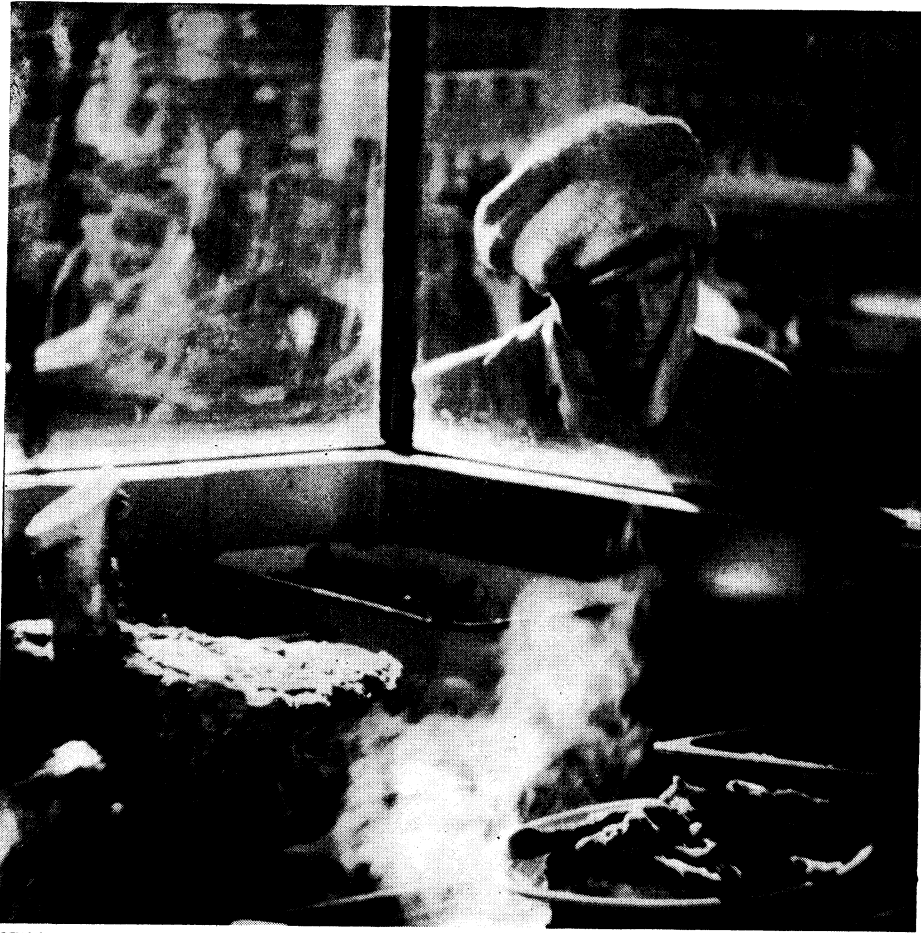
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STILL FROM "MILLIONS OF US," AMERICAN LABOR FILMS, INC.

The Morgue of Moliere

Under the Popular Front regime of France the theatre has received a new impetus. The Blum government decided that the Morgue of Moliere, the Comédie Francaise, needed a new lease on life, and appointed as manager Eduard Bourdet, author of *The Captive*, which was censored in New York. The Opera Comique, whose company went out on strike against its former governor, was placed under the more liberal direction of Jacques Rouche.

This proves a contention we have held for a long time that a united front government, sponsoring a national theatre, would serve to revivify a moribund theatre and democratize culture for the people. In contrast, the report on the Nazi theatre in this issue serves to emphasize the degeneration of art under a fascist regime.

Australia Bans

Australia, land of the Bushmen and kangaroo, can boast of the ever-suppressive hand of the censor as well. This time Sydney is the locale, and Clifford Odets' *Till the Day I Die* the *pièce de resistance*. Presented by the local New Theatre League, it incurred—how strange!—the displeasure of the pro-Nazi German community. Police stepped

on the stage the first night to call a halt. The actors refused to obey, and the cops, nonplussed, had to retreat for further instructions. They came soon enough in the form of a prohibition order, issued by the Chief Secretary. It is ironically in keeping with the entire affair that the Chief Secretary never saw the play he took off the boards because of fascist pressure, and was invited to witness a free performance (permissible under the law) to see if the ban is justified.

Newsreel Muzzle

It was Will Hays of California, U.S.A., who used to censor American films and insure that nothing reached the public eye which might bring a blush to the cheek of a Delaware munitions maker, or a Wall Street bond-floater. But others are seeking to take over his job as it affects this country. Recently, under the veil of a "decency campaign" the Roman Catholic Church announced its intention to shape Hollywood films according to its way of thought. And this month, Americans are forced to look on only those news-pictures of the Olympic games which Hitler, and the Nazi propaganda bureau wish them to witness.

Before the games opened, Hitler compelled all American companies to sign a contract prescribing the how, when, and where of films to be made at the Olym-

pics. As the Motion Picture Herald, trade magazine of the American film, reported the event:

"Adolph Hitler decrees that American newsreels must advertise Germany at the Olympic Games, and on his own terms. All else is *streng verboten*. . . . Der Fuehrer has laid down an absolute dictatorship over U.S. reels forbidding them to photograph the world-owned sports property except under the most stringent regulations, and then only with the consent and under the close supervision of his friend, Miss Leni Reifenthal . . . to whom he has given complete control over all filming at the great Reich stadium, and who designates the subjects to be filmed."

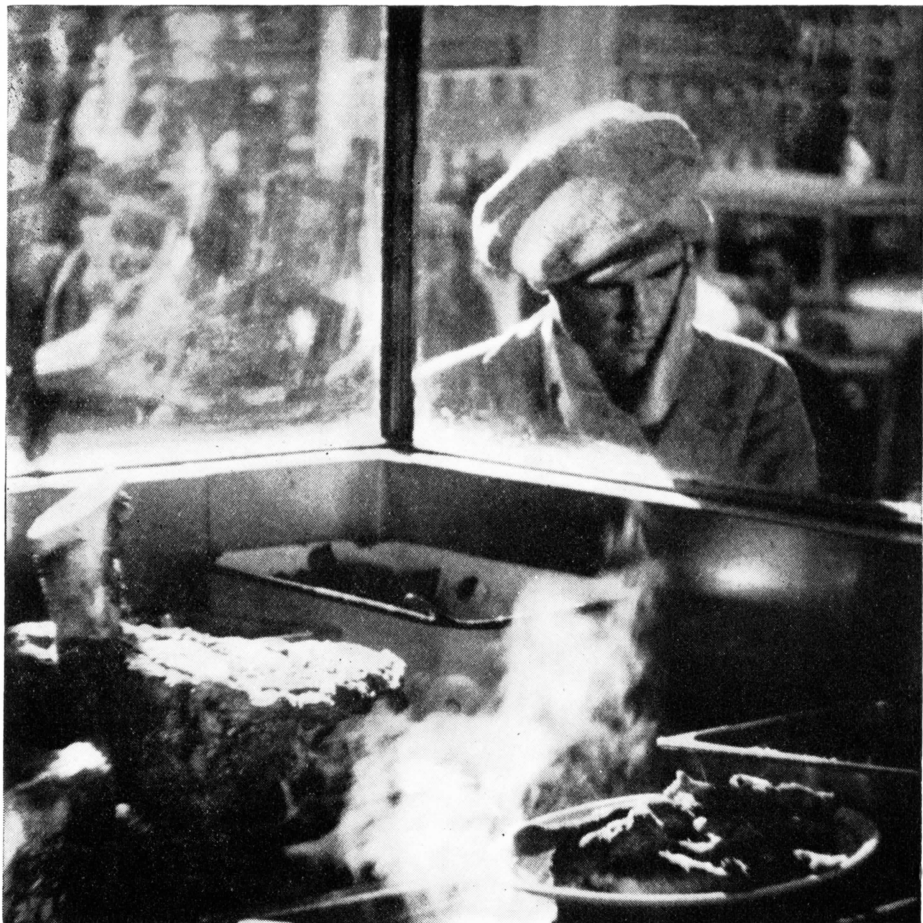
The newsreel companies of this country were bound by contract to turn over all copyrights of their film to the Reifenthal agency, which proposes to issue a gigantic propaganda film of the games later on, and to place an exposed positive and negative of all film they arrange at the disposal of the Nazi government without cost.

Under a series of working rules, added to the contract, American companies were forced to use German sound equipment, and to provide that every cameraman filming the games wore the official Hitler-prescribed, Nazi Olympic uniform. As a final touch, each cameraman was accompanied by a German agent who acted as individual censor on the spot.

The result of all this flagrant violation of the rules of hospitality among nations has been to produce a news-film in which the principal emphasis is placed on Hitler and massed swastikas. The games themselves, including the triumphs of Jesse Owens, take second place to a saluting right arm, and angle closeups of a toothbrush mustache.

As if this were not enough, the Motion Picture Herald points out that Nazi Germany seeks to influence American films at their source in Hollywood, as well. In June, German Consul George Gyssling, stationed in Los Angeles, directed the attention of the members of the cast of *I Was a Captive of Nazi Germany*, an independent film production, to the fact that they were liable to reprisals for participating in pictures "detrimental to German prestige." Such reprisals would bar the German showing of other pictures in which they appear, just as an American picture in Germany can be prohibited because a Jewish writer or a Jewish director participate in its making.

So far, American newsreel companies have kept silent about the shameful contract they were forced to observe to secure any Olympic pictures at all. But there is no reason why American moviegoers must keep silent.



STILL FROM "MILLIONS OF US," AMERICAN LABOR FILMS, INC.

Maxwell Anderson: Thursday's Child

BY PHILIP STEVENSON

"If indications mean anything in this business, the season of 1936-37 will go down through history as the year of Maxwell Anderson repertory. Not content with two plays scheduled for the Winter, he has now finished a third, and last week, after a few days' brooding over the garden, he was beginning to eye his desk again."

—New York Times, August 9th, 1936

With the production last season of *Winterset*, winner of the Drama Critics' Prize, Maxwell Anderson attained a degree of critical recognition and public acclaim accorded no other American dramatist with the possible exception of Eugene O'Neill. Previously he had won the Pulitzer Prize with *Both Your Houses*, and three of his historical poetic dramas were being used as textbooks in schools and colleges.

Until twelve years ago he had been an obscure rebel in the hinterland. Twice during the war he had been fired from jobs for expressing views considered pacifist or pro-German (the terms were then synonymous). But in 1924, in collaboration with Laurence Stallings, he shocked Broadway to attention with *What Price Glory*, America's first anti-war play.

In effect, the play said: Modern war is a life-and-death brawl for a worthless prize, a game without rules played by soldiers called men. But "good soldiers" are not complete human beings. They are good for just one thing—brawling. They cannot abide by any rules, anywhere, ever. In a brawl this is an advantage; but in a civilized environment they are useless and unhappy.

This thesis is expressed in dramatic terms through the rivalry between Captain Flagg and Sergeant Quirt for the affections of the slut Charmaine—who is abandoned by both in the end. Neither soldier has any life outside the war-brawl business. On leave, outside the brawl-area, Flagg has a lousy time thanks to his inability to abide by even the most elementary rules. A great fighter, he doesn't know why he fights, and he doesn't care. "We are all dirt," he says, "and we propose to die in order that corps headquarters may be decorated." His scorn and resentment of higher-ups who rationalize the profession of brawling, who try to control or make rules for it, is epic: he'd like to rub their noses in the latrine.

Flagg is the first of a long series of Anderson rebel-heroes, the forerunner of Morgan, Oklahoma, Gypsy, Macready, Bothwell, Essex, Montoya, Mio, whose contempt for authority is their outstanding trait; and like them Flagg conceals beneath his defiant exterior a heart of gold. Similarly, *What Price Glory* foreshadows the Anderson habit of dodging or ignoring the most important question implicit in the socially significant material which his instinct and sympathies lead him to select. "What am I fighting for?" is an inescapable question among soldiers. *What Price Glory* fails to answer. War is taken for granted. Says Flagg:

"There's something rotten about this profession of arms, some kind of damned religion connected with it that you can't shake. When they tell you to die, you have to do it, even if you're a better man than they are."

The question is tabled. Shelved, rather, on the lofty level of eternal, inscrutable "religion."

The third characteristic one thinks of in connection with Maxwell Anderson—the use of poetry in the drama—had already made its appearance earlier, in his first play, *White Desert*, which he has not published and presumably prefers to let lie forgotten. In *What Price Glory* his prose exhibited an economy and liveliness of image which, though he himself deprecates it as "journalism," he has not excelled in any of his later prose plays,

many of which are marred by passages of "softy" moral romanticism. As a dramatic speech-medium, the prose of *What Price Glory* enviably combines toughness, elasticity, and variety.

Two more Stallings collaborations followed quickly—both much inferior to the first. *First Flight* deals with the youth of Andrew Jackson on the frontier in the days when the Constitution was still widely believed to be a threat against liberty. The issue between federal centralism and local self-government is again symbolized by the rivalry of two men over a girl. Jackson establishes federal constitutional democracy in the State of Franklin by shooting down its chief opponent with a duelling pistol—i.e., by force and violence. But his victory is blurred and partly contradicted in Act III, when idealistic scruples prevent him from carrying off the girl after all. Indeed, most of the last act is devoted to the expression of these romantic scruples, while the play of authoritarianism versus individualism evaporates. Logically, the drama ends with Act II, and the audience's most lasting impression is likely the crack of Jackson's pistol and resounding denunciations of the new government by the pioneer rebels who had fought to establish it. To them Congress plainly represents not the people but a money-grubbing oligarchy:

Second Buckskin: I have called my dogs three miles to a b'ar-pit on a clear autumn night like this. But I kain't make my holler heard in Congress.

Jackson: True, sir, but you can send a delegate to make your wishes heard there. . . .

Second Buckskin: It ain't ours. I have been down to the settlements. What's in 'em? Why, a bee-swarm o' galoots, trying to keep alive by selling each other calico cloth and whisky. All the rules they have air for galoots that sell calico cloth and whisky.

And like Flagg's their contempt for rules is supreme:

"Oh, it's law, law, law, law! . . . Since these here prosecutors tuck hold here—come jabberin' law, law, law—a body cain't put a knife under a rascal's ribs."

Anderson's taste for extreme individualism is again in evidence in *The Buccaneer*, likewise written with Stallings. The hero, Sir Henry Morgan the pirate, has the usual contempt for restraint—in this case the piracy laws and naval regulations—but again the play shifts its

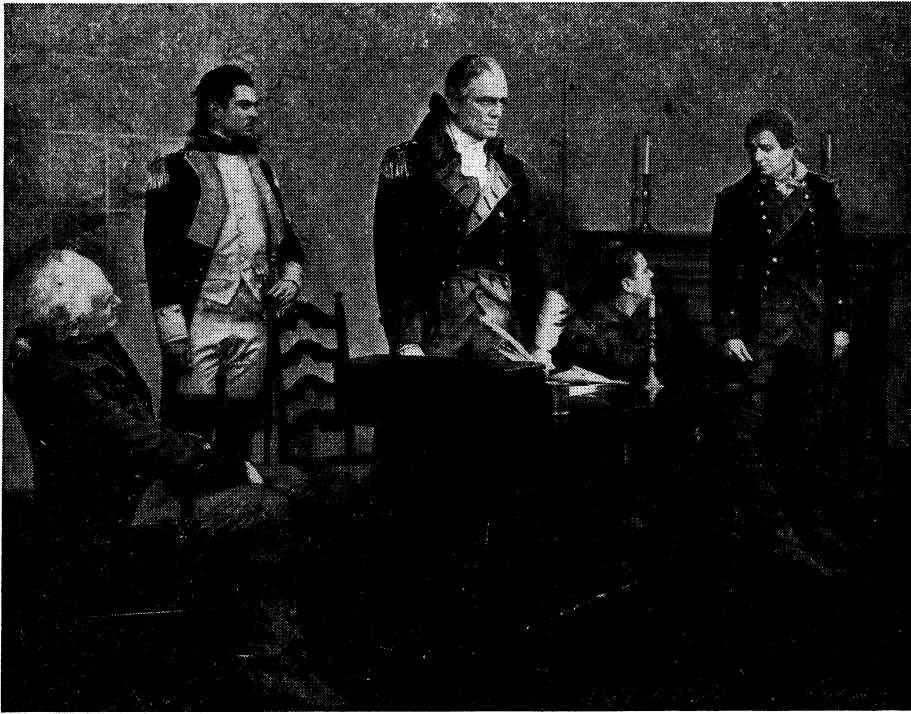


MAXWELL ANDERSON



MAXWELL ANDERSON

Vandamm



SCENE FROM THE THEATRE GUILD'S PRODUCTION OF "VALLEY FORGE"

Vandamm

emphasis, and in sum is hardly more than a cloak-and-sword romance with a touch of Shavianism. It was unsuccessful and relatively unimportant except as an illustration of recurrent Anderson traits.

Anderson's first play without a collaborator since *White Desert* was *Outside Looking In*, the material for which, however, was borrowed, chiefly from Jim Tully. Produced in the Coolidge New Era, when it was treason to hint that Americans might be anything but industrious, prosperous and law-abiding, this play about hoboes met a swift, merciless death. Yet it was not particularly hostile to ruling-class prejudice against down-and-outers. The hoboes are exhibited as a pretty shiftless, unmoral lot, with a congenital aversion to labor and the old Anderson contempt for authority, and their chief, Oklahoma, like Captain Flag, conceals a heart of gold. When the gang is being pursued for the murder of a railroad bull, Oklahoma considers the case of Edna and Little Red:

Oklahoma: I don't know as I ever knew a case like it. Do you know what I think's the matter with you two? You must be in love.

Red: I don't care what you call it.

Oklahoma: Yes, sir; I've often heard about it, but I never saw it before. So instead of taking Edna away from Red, as he proves he could do by a twist of the wrist, he engineers their escape from the bulls; the gang runs another way; and the play comes to a nauseating end with the capture by the Sheriff of the only Negro character—a cringing Hollywood Stepip Fetchit, who whines: "You don't need no irons. Ah's comin' quiet."

Once more Act III is a romantic appendage to an otherwise realistic drama. Act II, the boxcar scene, with its mixture of brutality and humor (it contains a really funny travesty on justice, the mock-trial of Little Red "accused of being a member of the middle class"), is fine realism. It must have been too strong for a carriage-trade thirsting for make-believe, and not even the sentimentality of the last act could save the play from failure.

It was not yet proved that Anderson could write a successful play alone. *Saturday's Children*, the following year, 1926, turned this important trick. It was probably intended to do no more than that because, for once, Anderson used patently trivial material and bent his efforts to making a palatable dish.

The title is wholly misleading. Saturday's white-collar children work for their living, but are never in want, never at a loss for a job. For our understanding of Anderson, the important fact about them is that they are members of the lower middle class and soaked in its romantic have-your-cake-and-eat-it-too psychology. The heroine, Bobby, sets a snare for love, and catches . . . marriage . . . and romantic disillusion:

"I think all day how marvelous it's going to be when you come home—and then you get here—and I don't know—it isn't marvelous at all— It's just a house and we're just married people—and—sometimes I hate it. Everything's getting spoiled—"

So she does an Ibsen Nora (out the *front door*) back to her job and a room of her own—whither friend husband follows in

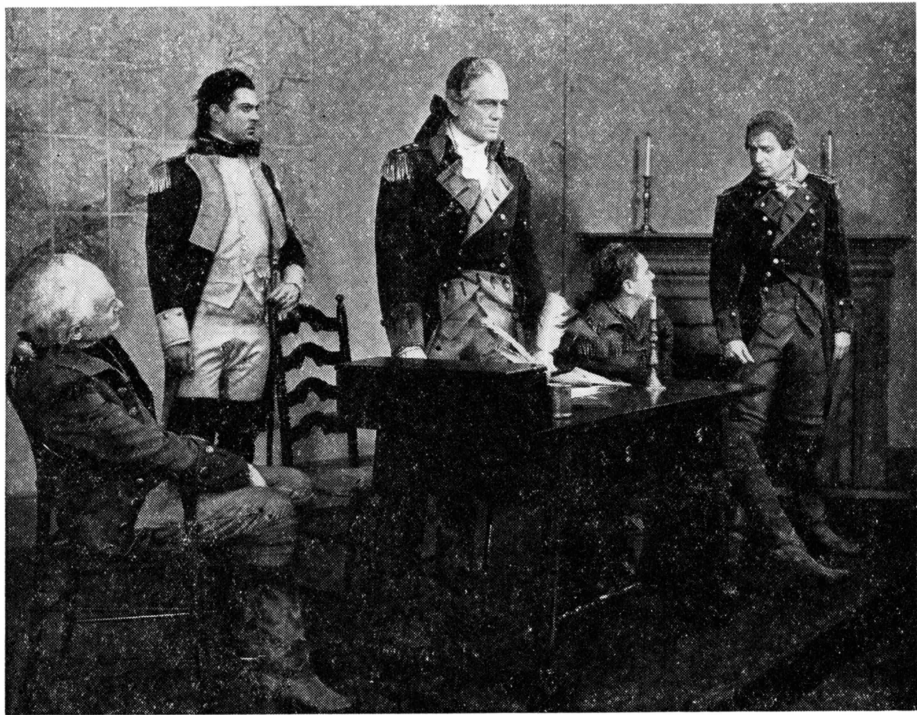
Act III. They both want love, all right; what Bobby doesn't want is "a house"—her symbol for the responsibilities that accompany mating, licit or illicit. Both insist on the excitement of a clandestine, unconventional affair *without* its duties and budgets—in short, to have *and* eat their cake—and by gum and by golly Maxwell Anderson gives it to them in the form of a bolt on Bobby's boarding-house bedroom door and Casanova fire-escape entrances by the lover-husband. It's a well-made play and a perfect Cinderella story, but what it has to do with Saturday's child I am helpless to explain. Would it have been different on Park Avenue?

In *Gypsy*, two years later, Anderson gives us a heroine even further gone than Bobby in making a fetish of freedom. Not content with having *one* cake (cake-eater) and eating it (him) too, she wants an unlimited supply. And like all extreme romantics she has a fate, a *dæmon*, on whom she conveniently thrusts all responsibility for her sexual varietism. "Why am I that way?" she cries to her mother. "Who put it in my blood? You! you!" And a little later: "It's not true about me! I won't have it true!" Which marks the usual penultimate stage in the development of the romantic—denial of plain reality, and imposition in its place of the subjective wish.

For the student of Anderson, the interesting feature of this minor, hot-baby, little gyp Hedda Gabler is that, unlike Hedda, Gypsy has not the courage of her romantic notions—and that Anderson has so little the courage of his that he has written two diametrically opposite endings. In the first, Gypsy goes through with her suicide—the logical ending for Hedda, but totally false for Gypsy who is neither logical nor courageous. In the second, she accepts rescue from suicide and is snatching at another cake-eater at the curtain. This is more plausible; and yet the little gypts of this world, unlike the Heddas, do not even gesture suicide unless (1) they know beforehand they are to be rescued, or (2) they have run their romantic course and shrink from facing its inevitably dingy, lonely, unromantic end.

In between these two relatively unimportant plays, Anderson collaborated with Harold Hickerson on what is in many ways his most satisfactory work: *Gods of the Lightning*, based on the Sacco-Vanzetti case.

Superficially, the material seemed exactly suited to Anderson's pattern. A travesty on justice had victimized two innocent and even saintly individuals who were, moreover, like so many Anderson heroes, staunch libertarians. Actually, however, the story was wholly alien to



SCENE FROM THE THEATRE GUILD'S PRODUCTION OF "VALLEY FORGE"

Vandamm

Anderson's premises. The Sacco-Vanzetti case was not simply a miscarriage of justice perpetrated against individuals, but a vivid example of "justice" as an instrument of the ruling class against workers. Sacco and Vanzetti, themselves class-conscious revolutionary workers, never for one moment forgot this. They knew they were symbols of the oppressed workers the world over, and they proclaimed their legal murder would be a mighty weapon in the world-wide struggle of the oppressed against their oppressors. Anderson, on the other hand, was not a class-conscious but an individualistic anarchist. For him all solutions must be individual solutions; all failures, all tragedies, individual failures, individual tragedies.

So the play is marred by a visible conflict between the viewpoint of the author and that of his heroes. Hickerson, with whom the idea of the play originated, struggled to prevent any blurring of the class character, or adulteration of the political dynamite, implicit in the story; but he was only partly successful. As is often the case with Anderson, the first two acts hew to the line with economy and skill. The two victims, called Macready and Capraro in the play, are framed because of their participation in a class conflict, a waterfront strike. The trial is a travesty on justice. Witnesses are bribed and coerced, and even a confession by the true culprit is disregarded. Macready, in his final statement, eloquently exposes the class character of the judicial process.

But that is the last we hear of it. In Act III, the meat and meaning of any play, the antagonistic forces are relegated to the background. The two heroes and the masses they represent are kept altogether offstage. Interest is shunted away from the public, historical character of the tragedy and is focussed upon two irrelevant points: the abstractly ironical fact that the guilty Suvorin escapes while the innocent are electrocuted; and the personal grief of the girl Rosalie for her dead lover. Hers is the final curtain speech, and how vividly it reveals the conflicting views of the two collaborators! "Don't whisper it!" cries Hickerson-Rosalie, surmounting her agony by her awareness of the tragedy as a weapon in the social struggle. "No! No! Shout it! . . . Cry out! Run and cry! Only"—and now it is Anderson-Rosalie speaking to underscore the personal and individual factor in the tragedy, her grief-stricken despair—"Only—it won't do any good—now."

Compare that last line with the inspired statement of Vanzetti when he knew all hope was gone:

"If it had not been for these things, I might have live out my life talking at

street corners to scorning men. [But] now we are not a failure. This is our career and our triumph. Our words, our lives, out pains—nothing! The taking of our lives, lives of a good shoemaker and a poor fish-peddler—all! That last moment belongs to us—that agony is our triumph."

Anderson says in effect, "No: the last moment belongs to Rosalie and her pretty, pathetic grief. Nor is your agony a triumph but a defeat. Shout if you like—it won't do any good."

It is hard to escape the conclusion that the poor fish-peddler had a stronger sense of tragic, dramatic, and historical values than the foremost American writer of tragic historical drama.

But lest we overemphasize the importance of a last line, or even a last act, it is necessary to repeat that *Gods of the Lightning* does on the whole deal courageously with material of the highest social significance. The class character of the situation, however blurred and soft-pedalled in the end, is unmistakably established in the first two-thirds—so unmistakably that the potential dynamite in the play was widely recognized at the time, and there has been no satisfactory explanation of why the play closed after only a couple of weeks with a packed house on the last night.

1930 marked Anderson's return to the past for his material, and to poetry for his medium. He deserves high praise for his revival of the use of poetry in the theatre, regardless of whether we accept it as true dramatic poetry or, in Archibald MacLeish's phrase, merely "poetic language." Anderson is not one of our top flight of poets. He himself would claim no such distinction. But as MacLeish points out, poetic drama depends

less upon the arresting electric phrase than upon the poetic conception and construction of the whole work, and Anderson's plays in verse meet on the whole MacLeish's test of a poetic conception: that it shall permit the poet "to seize at once and directly upon the emotional crisis" of a situation about which there exists "a community of assumption and understanding between audience and poet."

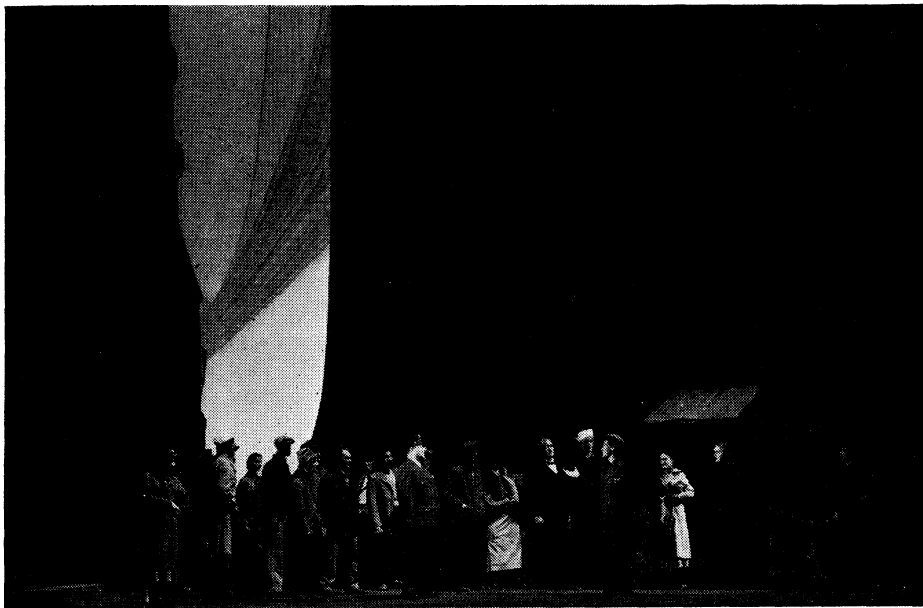
Anderson was cautious at first in choosing his subjects. He accepted the tradition of poetic drama which exacts material out of the distant past peopled preferably by royalty—accepted with a vengeance. What strikes us chiefly about *Elizabeth the Queen* and *Mary of Scotland* is the absurd reverence, for this twentieth century, before what I can only describe as queenship. Both plays abound in lines like "I am a queen" or "You are my queen"—in answer to almost any situation—or "a queen" does so and so, talks, or looks, or feels, or loves, or surrenders so and so, often enough "like a queen," under the apparent assumption that it is in some manner apart from that of lesser females. We might blink at this insistence upon the divinity of queens if Anderson consistently expressed the mediaeval point of view. But not at all. Elizabeth is sometimes a modern liberal:

" . . . I believe in peace, and have no faith

In wars or what wars win," she says at the dawn of imperialist expansion. And when the play *Richard II* is about to be suppressed, she appears as a champion of free speech:

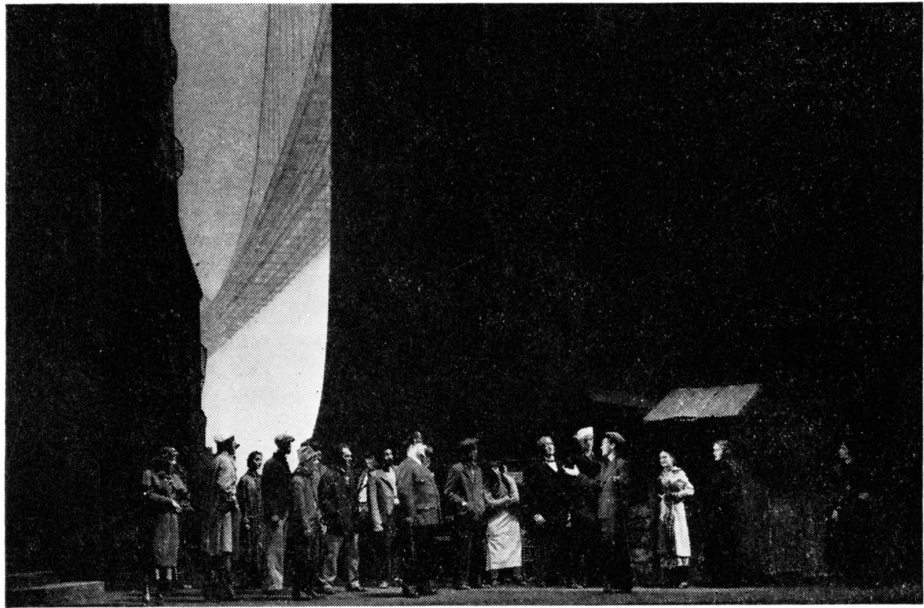
"Are my people so easily led that the sight of a king deposed in play will send

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SCENE FROM LAST YEAR'S BROADWAY PRODUCTION OF "WINTERSET"

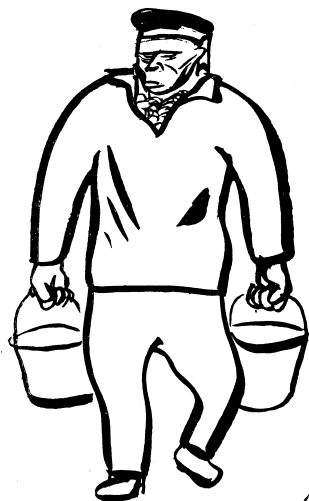
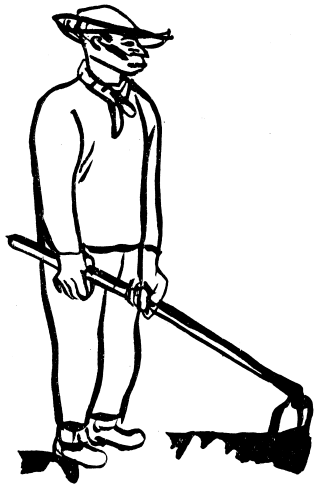
Vandamm



SCENE FROM LAST YEAR'S BROADWAY PRODUCTION OF "WINTERSET"

Vandamm

Spain Says "Salud!"



If you are a Spanish village fisherman (who backbreakingly works night and day to earn about forty cents a day—maybe) and you and your fellows self-protectingly break into your village church and find fascist machine-guns and ammunition, you are a Red terrorist seeking to destroy "Civilization". If, however, you are a Moor (Mohammedan) or Spanish Legionaire (hired thugs of the hated *Tercio*) fighting for fascist money to maintain the most criminal peonage in Western Europe, you are defending "Civilization".

This irony—not the facts, as I saw the guns brought out, and it wasn't pleasant for an "Aryan" to witness Christ's church used as an arsenal for Mohammedan mercenaries against Christians—is perhaps too broad; but it is born of the shock when, reaching Gibraltar in a British destroyer from Malaga, I realized the "decent" outside world was "misunderstanding" a tragic struggle against the meanest economic servitude, as a stock civil war between "Law-and-Order" and "Red terrorists"—i. e.: the Spanish people, an inadequately (pathetically, in fact) armed mass of gallant men and women who, for the first time in a thousand years, have a chance—unless destroyed by the Nazi-fascist itch to intervene — to overthrow feudalism. Hitherto my activities centered in theatre and graphic arts, and I sought to communicate my sentiments in those forms—but this "misunderstanding" is so remote from truth that verbal testimony in press and radio became obligatory. Interest, however, seemed to be concerned primarily with my personal adventures; hence I gladly avail myself of NEW THEATRE'S apparently intuitive invitation for "impressions" — with the defensive warning that deadline haste makes them scattered.

I cannot report that one side is all Pure, and the other wholly Evil—only theologians can do that. Nor am I condoning violence because it is People's Front violence. Yet to say that, in this instance, it is kill or be killed—unavoidable answer to ruthless provocative violence by fascists (always remember that the present bloodshed was begun by them) feverish with terror that the Spanish people will eradicate peonage—you do not have to be a Liberal, Republican, Socialist, Communist, Syndicalist, or Anarchist—merely a human being. Spain today says "*Salud!*" — literally trans-

lated "health" and "general welfare"—and means it.

Arriving in Spain in late May one sensed immediately a spirit of dramatic tension. Spanish life always seems somehow theatrical, and the impression was as if one had come during the interval following a first act curtain. The atmosphere was vibrant with ominous calm, the lull before the storm kind, as if all Spain suspensefully awaited the second act. (The first act having been the People's Front election of February, 1936, and the subsequent strike repercussions.) On the surface Spanish life pulsed with familiar intoxicating vivacity. In hard bright sunlight the *Plazas del Toros* (bull-rings) celebrated the (sometimes) magnificent dance of death. Under velvety sapphire skies Southern Spain, sitting in the same bull-rings at *Operas Flamenca* heard the exalting *Cante Jondo* songs quavering and soaring ecstatically. Sincerely pious religious processions, gorgeously revered saints and sacred images.

But there were significant signs of change!

Sunday mornings the walls of the bull-ring echoed to the voices of the Social Revolution. The workers were using the bull-rings as meeting places.

A Workers' Theatre had rented a Malaga theatre for a week—an equally extraordinary innovation in pleasure-loving Southern Spain. In this Workers' Theatre one saw little scenes dramatizing the strikes and labor union activities, interspersed with Spanish dance and music. (No social change will affect Spanish dance or music. In that sense, the Spanish people are as inflexibly traditional-classic as the Chinese. And why not? It is *their* dance and music.) The audience, so lean and poorly clad, was touching to watch. The theatre, the spoken word, is the only way most of them could be reached—for, as to reading and writing (they rarely have to add their wages), the majority are illiterate. The "civilizers" who have hired the mercenaries have seen to that.

In the villages one saw—and heard not far from my own house)—*Centros* or meeting places where the workers, each evening at eight, and they came right from their work, sometimes walking distances of two and three miles, were lectured as to the advantages of solidarity. Sometimes, especially on Saturday evenings, the voices exhorting

BY ANGNA ENTERS

the fishermen and men from the *campos* (fields) could be heard into early hours—so much so that, being ill and kept awake, my sentiments, unsoftened by the garden's fragrance and its white walls which seemed to float in the glistening Mediterranean, were fascist.

These Workers' Theatres and *Centros* were symptomatic of the change since I had left Spain the preceding September. These were little things—seen with the eyes of industrialized Europe and America with their trade union history—but startlingly symbolical in the Spain I had known for five years each spring or summer since the 1931 political revolution. I had seen the joy attendant upon that revolution deflated as the people slowly realized they were merely rid of a political king. The real kings, the fascists in the army, industry and agriculture, still ruled—and how! They ruled so that Spanish workers would remain serfs, who worked, dressed, and lived like coolies. Extremes of poverty and plenty are laceratingly ghastly in Spain. The smug meanness of Spain's *ricos* has to be seen to be believed. Through the stone walls of dogmatically nourished ignorance light began to seep. That is why you read of unrest, pillage and church-wrecking.

The struggle which followed the 1931 Republican revolution culminated inevitably in the People's Front of February, 1936—a defense against fascism. A tide of victorious strikes began to buffet Spain's economic structure with Dempsey-like blows. Late in June I wrote to my concert managers that over my garden's walls near Malaga I could see and hear the revolution brewing.

These were some of the signs during June:

In my village I had seen almost all the men march past the church in a massed demonstration of silent anger.

I had been through a grim general strike, lasting a week, when nothing—nothing—moved, because the *Jefe* (chief) of the Malaga Fishermen's Union had been shot down in an encounter with the Civil Guardia—who are always loyal to the winning side.

I had seen his funeral cortège up the Calle Larios, while almost half of Malaga nervously watched while men with faces which were masks of terrifying vengeance followed their leader borne in a coffin draped in red. No priests were permitted to participate in this cortège.

Strike after strike—like a relay race.

The rich, one knew, were frenetic and panicky.

The people were calm and extraordinarily confident.

These signs pointed to "Something"—an upheaval, volcanic in intensity—but I expected no explosion until October, a personal guess, as in July tension seemed to ease.

On Saturday morning, July 18th, Malaga was almost its old gay self. Even the trams (after two weeks of strike-silence) ground out their screeching iron music in the sunshine's glare. The cafes of the Calle Larios—Malaga's opulent commercial avenue—were crowded with their usual male habitués. You heard the typical strident appeals to buy lottery tickets, latest Madrid papers, *canarias* (bananas) and shine your shoes. In the luxe *ultramarinos* (glorified grocery shops) baskets were being filled for the first time in a week. True, the steel shutters on the store-windows were down, and police guarded their doors—but all were agreed the strike of the *dependientes* (clerks) soon would be over. It was as if all in Malaga simultaneously were breathing one gargantuan sigh of relief. Malaga now could settle down to the proper celebration of the *verano* (summer). Malaga now could look forward to a real *corrida del toros*, the annual August fiesta. Malaga was at peace.

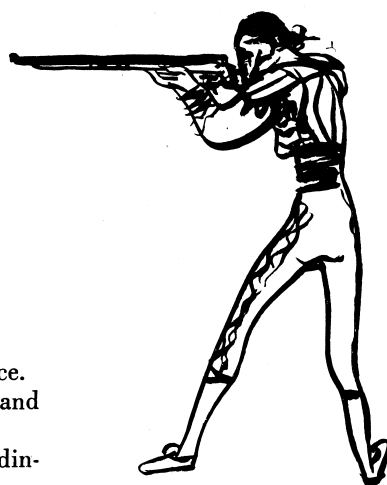
Yet late that afternoon, a third of Malaga, including the whole of Calle Larios, was in flames; dead and wounded strewn in the streets, bullets crackled and shells burst, as civilians, armed by the government, wearing red arm-bands, swept through the blazing town in confiscated motors, carrying vengeance and death to the *ricos* and fascists, who sniped at them from roof-tops and high windows.

Who or what could have caused this frightful bloodshed within the space of a few hours?

There is only one answer—the *ricos* and their monumental stupidity, plus the additional blunder of using Moors. Spanish hatred of the Moors is traditional, and the fascists in using the Moors united liberals and Communists alike in a common cause, irrespective of political-economic beliefs.

I was not present during the initial outbreak. Early that afternoon I had returned to my house in the outskirts of Malaga—about half an hour by motor.

(Continued on page 28)



JOHN GROTH

Smirnov's "Shakespeare"

BY BERNARD D. N. GREBANIER

No one who himself has intensively and honestly studied the material, is likely to agree *in toto* with any book on Shakespeare. The very objectivity of Shakespeare's *method* tempts to over-interpretation on every page of his plays; and uncreative must that student be who does not find himself piqued by this or that dictum of the most substantial of critics. Allowing, therefore, for numerous divergences of opinion with his author, this reviewer nevertheless is willing to observe that nowhere has there been compressed an equal content of pithiness, sound scholarship, fresh insight, and incisive thinking, as in these ninety-five pages.*

Even to the reader who had no interest in Smirnov's thesis, the play-by-play examination of Shakespeare's career should be rich in suggestion. Hardly a play but is inspected with brilliant point and concise judgment. I could wish that a copy of this little book would be forced upon our "leading" actors who perennially exhibit such Shakespearean roles as make neither rhyme nor reason of the text. The approaching crop of Hamlets this season, causes an anticipatory shudder to anyone who is interested in what *Shakespeare* meant Hamlet to be. No Hamlet I have ever seen—and I have seen most of them in our day—seems to have remotely concerned himself with a century of scholarly reflection on that character. Smirnov's book should be an eye-opener. And as for the pedagogues, most of them are content with the infantile interpretations of expurgated high-school texts. Smirnov might give them a notion of the distance they ought to begin to travel.

Unlike too much Marxist interpretation, Smirnov's view of Shakespeare is admirably unforced. His thesis is that "Shakespeare is the humanist ideologist of the bourgeoisie of the time," and that the basic characteristics of his point of view throughout his career are: first, "a new morality, based not on the authority of religion or feudal tradition, but on the free will of man . . . on his sense of responsibility towards himself and the world"; second "a scientific attitude towards the world, life, and reality, which, rejecting all metaphysical interpretations, demands a casual explanation of all natural, social, and psychological phenom-

ena"; and last, "the energy and optimism so characteristic of the Renaissance. . . . Shakespeare did not permit resignation and apathy . . . struggle was to him the whole meaning and content of life." By a progressive examination of the plays, Smirnov proves without difficulty these generalities. What is particularly impressive about his presentation is that he rarely succumbs to the inviting error (so common to much Shakespearean commentary, and which renders it trivial) of taking any one of the characters as Shakespeare's mouthpiece. Shakespeare, he knows, prefers "not to debase, not to caricature, but to elevate, to show objectively those forces which he exposes and judges." This is a lesson that modern social drama has yet to learn: that driving a social idea home is not inconsistent with such objectivity; while leaning too heavily on caricature, and impossible black-and-white separations of the good and the evil, only weakens the *artistic* force of the message. It is by doing full justice to the ideals and people he condemns that Shakespeare elevates the ideals and people he endorses.

In his particular judgments Smirnov is unflinchingly alert. One is happy at last to find a critic who realizes that it is utterly false to say Shakespeare hated or despised the masses, though critics have been fairly unanimous in their accord on this point. The truth is that Shakespeare was more than merely sympathetic towards the people, that he loved them, as Smirnov amply shows, "without sentimentality," with a love that was vital and realistic. That the people could be fickle,

that they were gullible, that they were incapable of independent thought, history had abundantly shown Shakespeare, but he shows no rejoicing at their limitations. On the other hand, it is the plebeian, the servant and peasant, who often speak the common-sense and ethical truth in his plays. The great are judged often in his works by the humble, and the first duty of a king, he insists, is the care of his people. One would look in vain for a warmer understanding of the wrongs of the people than in the opening scene of *Coriolanus*; and only the short-sighted will fail to see how completely, despite the dignity of his character, Coriolanus himself is condemned by the dramatist.

Refreshing too, is Smirnov's understanding of the problem in *The Merchant of Venice*, as being not racial but social. How endlessly has Shylock been attacked and defended on the score of being a Jew, and how wearily has Shakespeare been abused and justified on the count of Anti-Semitism! Yet all this heat is far beyond the mark. Shakespeare again and again gives us to see that in Shylock's *own* mind, his hatred for Antonio has nothing to do with the difference in their races, but only with Antonio's having deprived Shylock of business. The conflict is one between a humanist world of beauty and love, and a sordid preoccupation with greed and avarice.

Perhaps the most novel commentary in the book for the general reader will be the one on *Hamlet*, though the scholar will be delighted at how completely familiar Smirnov is with the various schools of criticism. Our author sensibly rejects as utterly false to the times, the popular notion of Hamlet as a man enslaved by thought. He knows that Hamlet is capable of action, that he constantly acts. On his conclusions, however, I content myself with remarking that I disagree, for I fear that he has overlooked a few things, which lack of space forbids my going into.

Indeed it would be petty of anyone to insist at great length on possible errors in Smirnov. I disagree with him entirely, for instance, on his evaluation of Marlowe as a realist, on his description of Hamlet's relations with Ophelia, on the characters of Falstaff and Macbeth, on the motives of Guildenstern and Rosencrantz. But to make much of these were to obscure the grand lines of this important contribution to Shakespearean criticism. A lesser man would have written an encyclopedia and said not as much. Smirnov has succeeded in jamming every page with cogent observation, and, what is more unusual, in presenting a convincing picture of Shakespeare as the great progressive of his age.

Prize Play Contests

NEW THEATRE and the New Theatre League are conducting a prize contest for plays of general social significance with a first prize of \$200. The 92nd Street Y.M.H.A., NEW THEATRE and the New Theatre League are jointly sponsoring a \$100 play contest for the best social play on Jewish life, with special emphasis on contemporary American Jewish life. The \$200 Prize Play Contest closes on October 5, 1936, and the Jewish Play Contest on November 15, 1936. Full details of both contests may be secured from the New Theatre League, 55 West 45th Street, New York City.

**Shakespeare: A Marxist Interpretation.* By A. A. Smirnov. The Critics' Group.

Dancing in Films

BY LINCOLN KIRSTEIN

The films have frequently employed dancing for one reason or another, and even increasingly in the last two years. But from any objective point of view it cannot be said Hollywood has enhanced either the vocabulary of dancing in general, or created an idiom for its particular use. While theatrical dancing in all forms has created great interest in the legitimate areas, Hollywood has done its best to capitalize on this rise in prestige without involving itself in any danger of creative pioneering. The more one investigates Hollywood possibilities for dancing the more hopeless they seem. The treatment of dancing in films is just another piece of testimony corroborating an almost complete impasse.

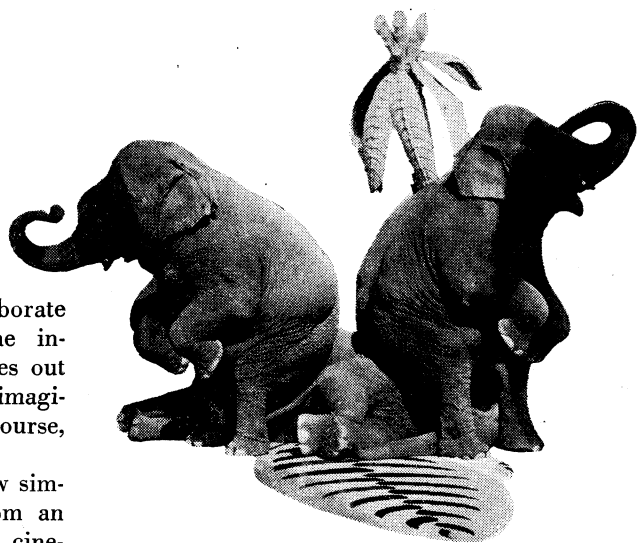
There are, however, some special considerations to be investigated in the problem of adapting dancing to camera. There is a curious change effected in the carry-over of human movement from the stage to the screen. In the theatre we see directly whatever image the proscenium focuses. In a film our eye is controlled by the range of the camera's eye. In this transposition something vital is often lost. It is lost even in acting but in dancing, which is so much more the electric essence of physicality, the loss seems proportionately greater.

In films, as in the theater, the problem of a dance-director is to project soloists against a choral or mass background. There is usually one soloist and the cho-

rus is further complicated by elaborate scenic "presentation" wherein the ingenuity of the studio engineers ekes out the poverty of the dance-director's imagination. The human scale is, of course, wholly lost.

The movies have developed a few simple tricks to cover transitions from an intimate or naturalistic scale to a cinematic or gigantic one. For example, in the Astaire film *Follow the Fleet* there was a "Riviera" sequence in an impromptu revue set on an old schooner. The scene opened as it might have on any Hudson River show-boat, but almost before one could realize it, another enormously amplified set was being used to accommodate the necessary regiment of dancers. Similarly in "opera" sequences, an "opera-house" set of an Italian square will suddenly give place to the square itself. But with music dominating such a scene the visual shift is less of a wrench than in sequences where physical movement is foremost.

Dancing must appeal to movie audiences or it would not be added to production costs. What kind of dancing has the greatest appeal? Largely, the kind that exploits a personality pleasing for reasons quite apart from dancing. It would hardly help Garbo to dance well (though on several occasions she has), but it is very hard for even first-rate dancers to be effective from the Hollywood standpoint if they haven't sex-appeal. Virtuosity is of course compulsory, but many virtuosi exist who can never face a camera. Virtuosity, for film audiences, usually means excessive capability in any one field, as for example, the feet in tap-dancing. It's hard to see how a precision troupe like the Rockettes would have film value except as background since they are so anonymous. And one can even imagine, from the opposite point of view, Fred Astaire being almost as valuable without his taps since he has so much practical charm and so good a vocal delivery. He is surely the best that dancing has to say for itself in our films. Plus his natural elegance and musical instinct, he seems to use more than one part of his body and he makes his camera follow him, seemingly for miles, so that in more inspired moments a very dramatic tension is built up over a large terrain. He is lucky in having such an able partner as Ginger Rogers, and in his dance-director, whoever Hermes Pan may be. But even in such a



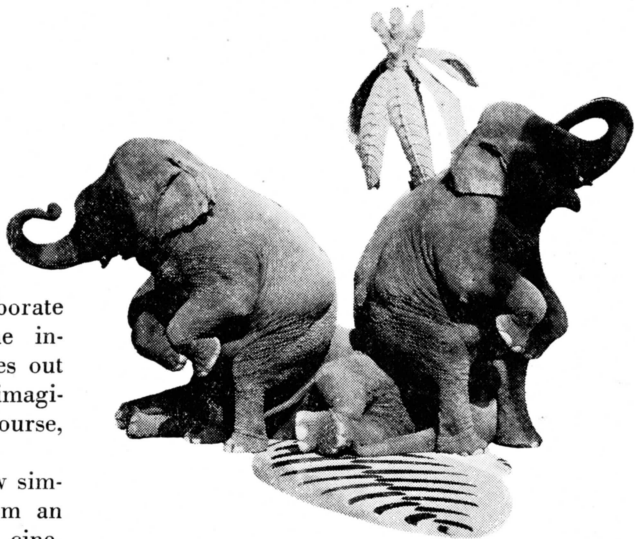
The Ballet of the Elephants
in *The Big Broadcast* of 1935

well-studied genre as the musical, Hollywood is only beginning to make use of dancing as inherent part of dramatic action instead of as interpolated "relief" as in most of the Eddie Cantor works.

There are other good music-hall dancers who have done films. Ray Bolger, a distinguished tap-dancer who judging from *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* in *On Your Toes*, would seem to be able to give to his medium a tragic quality it has never enjoyed, was seen briefly in *The Great Ziegfeld*. Paul Draper, to a large extent redeemed *Colleen*, in spite of Ruby Keeler, and he also contributed a very imaginative "wedding" sequence which survived the cutters. Eleanor Powell has some box-office draw. She is accomplished, monotonous and comforts many nice people in as much as she is so patently a "nice" girl. "Isn't it nice that such a nice girl dances so nicely." Bill Robinson, appearing with Shirley Temple in *The Littlest Rebel* was superbly himself, the old-master. His brilliant style, clear in its unostentatious but transparent theatricality showed the best that a personal manner in taps can give. Tap-dancing in the films, as on the stage is a very limited, undramatic form of dancing. It appeals chiefly to the ear, not to the eye and if a drummer beat out the same rhythms with his hands it would cause little comment. Taps are often badly synchronized. On the stage there is a sharp but delicate sonority to the beats. Frequently on the screen a dancer's feet detonate like a machine-gun. Chaplin may be said to use his whole body better than any other dancer in Hollywood, but this usage would probably fall strictly under the category of pantomime. His movements, highly stylized for the sake of instantaneous legibility are frequently a parody of the five classic ballet positions, which speaks well for his apprenticeship as an English music-hall comedian schooled in the tra-



Eleanor Powell



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*The Ballet of the Elephants
in The Big Broadcast of 1935*



Eleanor Powell



HARRIET HOCTOR IN MGM'S "THE GREAT ZIEGFELD"

dition of the old Alhambra. As for ballet-dancers in the classic genre, few have left any imprint. Harriet Hoctor can be counted on for her pastiche of a ballerina and Gambarelli is less than a mediocrity. Tap has fared comparatively well at the hands of the film in spite of its inexpressive silhouette and its repetitious noise. Audiences like it because, for the most part, it's all they've been given, and since the only dance-directors of influence in Hollywood have been brought over directly from the musical-comedy stage.

Although it has little enough to do with dancing proper, Hollywood has created a type of spectacular diversion employing dancers which has not been seen previously at least on the same scale. This is the Babylonian vision sponsored by Busby Berkeley and culminating in *The Great Ziegfeld*. He may use forty crystal pianos, seven intercircular ramps, a baby niagara, and the U. S. Marines, but the result is, more often than not, too big for camera lens, too much to see, and only awe inspiring for its multiplicity of effects. But such evidence that a picture costs money to produce does something mysterious in selling it. Berkeley used to employ over-head symmetrical shots which reduced eighty dancers to an opening eight-petal bud or an American flag. Hermes Pan is far more clever with his trucking shots because he is not interested in making his girls look like flags or flowers but merely like girls dancing in various places on various levels threaded together by the continuity of music and plot. Bobby Connolly does average work-a-day musical-comedy stuff transferred more or less modestly to the

screen. Albertina Rasch is distinguished for an operetta-style, in contradistinction to the revue-style of the above. Her dance arrangements for *The Merry Widow* were really imaginative with waltzers floating in doors and out of doors with corresponding pretty shifts in the color values of the costumes. Her sequences seem impersonal and well rehearsed but she is not free from the general Hollywood elephantiasis and if she can get two more dozen girls in a frame, she'll do it. Chester Hale staged a good pastiche of a ball-room mazurka for *Anna Karenina* in which Garbo's dance-steps coincided with her dialogue. It was not an original achievement, but in its good taste, a model for a kind of choreographic underscoring which is perhaps the most that can be hoped for dancing in our films. In *David Copperfield* there was a quaintly executed ballet sequence of mid-nineteenth century London with the dancers hauled up to heaven on wires. In *Operator 13* there was a similar decorative old-Southern ball with flashes of square-dance figures that had genuine charm and usefully contributed to the atmosphere of a silly story. Margarete Wallman, the ballet-mistress of the Vienna *Staatsoper* did a ridiculous and inappropriate ballet of Russian peasants for *Anna Karenina*. She is without talent, and fondly imagines that she has solved all cinematic problems by photographing everything from two angles directly above her stage. But she is the type of European reputation which represents "Art" and "Class" to the spenders of million dollar budgets. Agnes de Mille did some splendid work for M. G. M.'s *Romeo and Juliet*. Her scholarly research

in Renaissance music and dancing produced some touching and vivid backgrounds, particularly the lovely masque in the spirit of Botticelli, framing Juliet at the Ball. It is difficult to say how much will survive in the cutting, since the scenes were shot simultaneously from numerous angles with little intelligence. Benjamin Zemach's dances for *She* in the modern idiom made a ridiculous production funnier. The naive and calisthenic quality of contemporary concert-dance is eminently unsuitable to the vast technical possibilities of films.

The ballet has much to give to the films and were the directors wiser they would study classical dancing for its spectacular richness with which a well-handled camera could work wonders. Eisenstein has written well on film technique as applied to dancing, and he had in mind certain choreographic conditionings which must be respected parallel to, but not necessarily overlapping, cinematic conditioning. The ballet is an encyclopedic tradition and it can be pilfered with reward if any Hollywood director has the patience and sense to spend a week on it. Diaghilev had a superstition about films and he would never permit his ballet to come before a camera, although as early as 1910 a French company was eager to shoot *Scheherazade*. Perhaps he was aware of the limited technical facilities that the epoch offered. *Prince Igor*, or some version of it has been filmed, however. It appears, wierdly enough, as the ballet given to entertain the Congress of Vienna in *Congress Dances*. When Nijinsky was in Hollywood in 1916, Chaplin



Fred Astaire



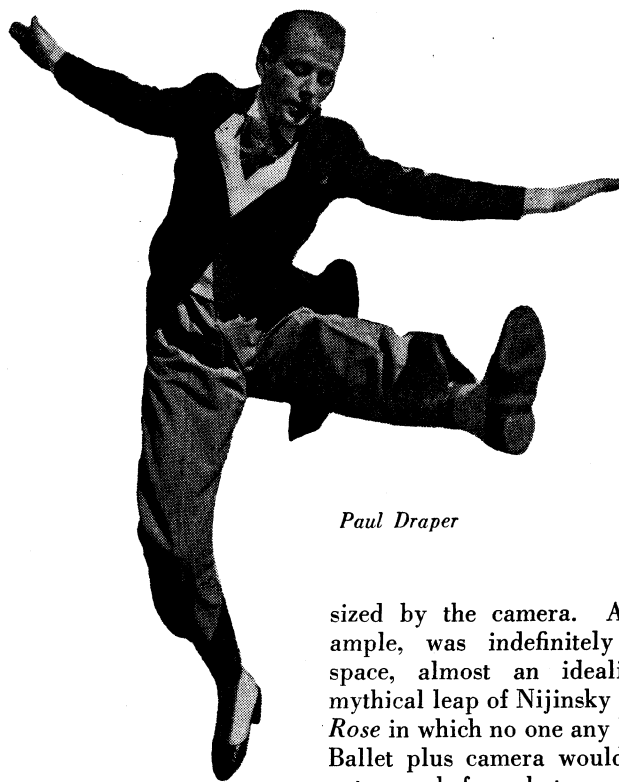
HARRIET HOCTOR IN MGM'S "THE GREAT ZIEGFELD"

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Fred Astaire

took him through his studios and he was very much interested in the medium although he said at the time that it would be unwise to film ballets head-on, the way one sees them in the theatre. He knew a separate technique would have to be worked out. Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford lent Pavlova a studio and there are extant records of some of her more famous divertissements such as *The Swan* and *The California Poppy* but these are documents and not examples of dance made expressly for film. Every classic choreographer of our time has had a little to do with films. Adolf Bolm's *Mechanical Ballet* for Barrymore's *Mad Genius* based vaguely on Diaghilev was a great waste. Massine created dances for an unreleased French film, *Le Roi Pausole*, in which his work alone was impressive. Nijinska's sequences in a *Midsummer Night's Dream* have been universally condemned. But nevertheless, they possessed ideas of film and dance interplay that were not wholly negligible. Reinhardt, as usual, crippled one more collaborator, even had it not been difficult to master an unfamiliar medium as well as create a major work in six weeks. As is frequently the case, a director thought it might be a good idea to have ballets somewhere in the picture, but just where and how he could not be sure. Surely the last thing to be done was to consult the choreographer. When a good choreographer designs, mounts and rehearses dances for films that is usually considered enough. It is inconceivable that they should also have a hand in pointing the camera-eye at the express angle needed for their preconceived pattern. Frederick Ashton did an agreeable ballet for Bergner's *Escape Me Never*, and in general, the English dance sequences in serious films have been far better than the American. Anthony Asquith has an extremely stimulating technical article on *Ballet and the Film* in *Footnotes on the Ballet* (Lovat Dickson, 1936) in which he projects a very free treatment of combined theatrical-dancing and atmospheric landscape. Many of René Clair's earlier films had excellently woven dance-sequences, notably the scenes in the opera house of *Le Million* where the insanity of backstage life in a superannuated theatre floated madly in and out on some fine dancing. Aside from documents of national dances, the Russians have not been lucky in filming dancing. In *Moscow Laughs*, Alexandroff followed super-Hollywood to an unfortunate degree. But perhaps the greatest dance sequence ever filmed was the Xandunga of the Tehuanteac Indians shot by Eisenstein and Tissé and never recovered from the wreck of *Que Viva Méjico!* It is Eisenstein above all others who under-



Paul Draper

stands the moving human body in its stylized lyricism, even when he uses skeletons or puppets as in the *Day of the Dead* from the same heroic and disastrous picture.

Jean Cocteau, from his association with Diaghilev and the Russians achieved an almost perfect synthesis of pantomimic-plastic gesture which was almost dancing in his *Sang d'un poete*. As in the *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* the camera was at all times the mind's eye, not the eye of a second-handed audience. His film with Chaplin, if ever achieved, will be of the greatest interest.

Is the idiom of classic theatrical dancing suited to films? In its most extended uses it most surely is. However, there is little to be gained by photographing the Basil Ballet in *Scheherezade* in technicolor, or *Sylphides* with a group of Chester Hale girls. Aside from a good musician, or at least good music, a choreographer educated not only in ballet but in all the fullest possibilities of the film is needed. By the fullest possibilities one means a treatment of human bodies comparable to the way Disney treats his puppets. *Cock o' the Walk* was an inspired satire on a Busby Berkeley super-super but its color and fantasy were incidentally beautiful in themselves. The camera can diminish and enlarge, accentuate and subdue not only tone-values but actual shapes. The retarded camera can be studied for slow-motion emphasis. In Mrs. Frank Tuttle's short film *Spring Night* two of the dancers from the Monte Carlo Ballet were used. Their plastic pantomime was less rewarding than the use made of certain ballet gestures empha-

sized by the camera. A leap, for example, was indefinitely prolonged in space, almost an idealization of the mythical leap of Nijinsky in *Spectre de la Rose* in which no one any longer believes. Ballet plus camera would be something not seen before, but a valid something.

What has already been done with the dance in films has been, all things considered, very little. The camera as an eye for dancing is as yet more unstudied than misunderstood. The dance sections of travelogues or news reels are generally carelessly shot and stupidly edited with no sense of climax and with music far from authentic dubbed in. Dancing in feature-length films has little or nothing to do with dramatic continuity, and is introduced as incidental divertissement similar to ballet in nineteenth century opera. Even in revues or "Parade" pictures the sequences have little interest except as build-ups for stars. This is not always the fault of the dance directors. A sequence involving many well-trained and long-rehearsed dancers and much ingenuity must be shot in about one hour and a half of actual camera clicking. Hollywood insists on a shiny dancing surface, a floor of composition board covered with layers of baked enamel. This gives the effect of a super varnish or hialation, a glow of richness that reflects the dancers. But this softens with only a little use. The sequences are cut by editors who have no more idea than their stop-watches and no more policy than to accommodate a pre-indicated direction from on top: "We gotta have eight minutes of dancing." The use of the dance bears intense technical research but this is never considered as rewarding as the investigation of some new commercial gadget like sound-allocation, the three-dimensional screen or a super technicolor. It is difficult to see why a dancer of intelligence would hope much from the present set-up in Hollywood. Much could be done, but from the point of cash there is slight impulse to do it.



Paul Draper

sized by the camera. A leap ample, was indefinitely pro space, almost an idealization mythical leap of Nijinsky in *S Rose* in which no one any long Ballet plus camera would be not seen before, but a valid

Impressions of Nazi Drama

BY H. W. L. DANA

"Heil Hitler!" muttered the Minnesingers with their harps and long medieval robes as, on the way from their dressing-rooms to the stage, they filed past the official with whom I was standing. It was a gala performance of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* at the Berlin Opera House this year and to show me how much alive the German theatre was under the Nazis (which I had ventured to question) the authorities had invited me to view the performance from back-stage. They pointed out to me with pride the 84 squares on the huge stage which could be shifted to right or left and raised or lowered and they rubbed their hands with delight at the marvelous mechanism of their stage. I began to feel that they gloated also on the marvelous mechanism of their actors. The Pilgrims with their cowls and gowns and staffs marched by to the strains of Wagner's *Pilgrims' Chorus*, but instead of making the sign of the cross, gave the same greeting, "Heil Hitler!", before going on the stage. It all seemed one further indication of the subordination of the theatre to the Führer. Wagner is the one German genius of the past who is allowed to blaze out in full blast. Yet Wagner's renewed life seemed only a renewed death. Most incongruous of all, the scantily-clad Venus, as she went by us in her grease-paint on her way to the Venusberg, greeted us with a "Heil Hitler!" though she seemed so bored by having had to repeat this ritual so often that she seemed to be mumbling merely the vowels "A-I-A."

Another evening the proud present director of the Berlin Opera House, an enormous man named Klein, insisted on taking me to the State Theatre where they were putting on a first performance of a much advertised new version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. He took me under the enormous circular stage which he had just invented with no less than six different elevators in it of different shapes, now raised to form the parapets of Elsinore or now lowered for a grave. From under this strange contraption we could hear through the cracks over our heads the voices of Gustaf Gründgens, the Nazi-appointed director of the theatre, mouthing the lines of his strangely neurotic and Hitler-like Hamlet. When the actor playing the Ghost of Hamlet's father came under the stage where he was to utter his underground admonition "Swear!", I was quite prepared by this time to have him give instead the

greeting "Heil Hitler!" When from under-stage we heard poor Ophelia going mad above us, I felt that I could not blame her.

For six weeks this year I went practically every night to the theatres in Berlin. Each year since Hitler came into power I have stopped to see something of the Nazi theatres on my way to or from my visit to the Soviet theatres. Each year the contrast has become stronger. I found the Moscow theatres expanding and broadening their scope in response to the ever-widening culture of the people. In Berlin, on the contrary, in spite of all effort to pump up enthusiasm for the theatre, to increase the subsidies threefold, to honor the first performances with the august presence in what had been the Kaiser's box of Hitler, flanked on one side by Goebbels and on the other side by Goering, I felt that the range of the theatre was contracting and that the life had gone out of it.

There are those who still insist that the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Dictatorship of Fascism come to the same thing. Yet, if in no other way, the essential difference can be tested by the widening of culture in the Soviet Union and by the narrowing of culture in Nazi Germany. Of all forms of culture the theatre is the one that best shows the reaction of the public and here is the acid test which shows the renewed vitality of the Soviet stage and the stagnation if not the actual death of the Nazi stage.

"The German stage is dead!" So said the great German actor Bassermann a year ago when he stood at the grave of the banished Moissi and threw into the grave the ring of Iffland—the ring which had been handed down generation by generation from the celebrated actor of Goethe's time. It may be you feel that there was something theatrical in his gesture and that there was some exaggeration in the statement. Yet in a very real sense: "The German stage is dead!"

It was not the brunt of the World War nor yet the humiliation of the Versailles Treaty which killed German drama. On the contrary in the years immediately after the war, it was the German Expressionists—Ernst Toller, Georg Kaiser, Fritz von Unruh, Walter Hasenclever, and the rest—who were introducing into defeated Germany a drama of revolt far more vigorous than anything that was to be found at that time in victorious England, France, or Italy. At the beginning of 1933, German drama in spite of the

efforts at suppression by the Nazis, was still very much alive and kicking. Friedrich Wolf and Bert Brecht were bringing a new courage and a new bitterness on the stage and workers' theatres were springing up everywhere. Once when Storm Troopers tried to break up one of these performances, the actors and audience moved the scenery and all to a nearby Beer Hall and when the police raided them there, the actors mingled with the audience, so that the police had to content themselves with arresting the scenery.

But with the coming into power of the Nazis, all these plays have been completely *verboten* and all these playwrights have been driven out or have left in voluntary exile. The great theatre directors, Reinhardt, Jessner, Barnowsky, Piscator, have one by one been banished; and the only director of genius left, Jürgen Fehling, I found hampered in every way and forced to work on worthless material. Independent dramatic critics, such as Alfred Kerr, are exiles in Paris and those who remain are ordered to have "reverence" for all Nazi plays. The great actors, like Moissi or Bassermann, have gone into compulsory or voluntary exile, and the actor, Hans Otto, who tried to resist the Hitler regime, was murdered by the Nazis.

What, then, remains? The living actors whom I saw seemed strangely dead-alive. As has been said: "Every German actor must be a Storm Trooper on the stage." They seem to go through their acting with the same mechanical motions that they use in the Nazi salute or in the greeting "Heil Hitler!" When I asked some actors why they were willing to put up with these conditions, one of them gave a significant answer: "The Germans *must* do everything willingly." He implied that if the Germans were to give their real opinions of Hitler, it would be a very different matter and to illustrate this he told me an anecdote of Hitler at the barber's: how Hitler asked the barber what could be done to prevent his forelock from falling down on his forehead and how the barber, after getting immunity for what he might say from the Führer, told him that if he would give the people complete freedom to say what they really thought about him, then his hair would stand on end all right.

During the six weeks of my stay this year in Berlin, the control of the theatres was significantly transferred from the

Ministry of Culture to the Ministry of Propaganda. This brings the stage as well as the screen, the radio, and the press directly under Goebbels who likes to play upon them, in his own words, "as upon a vast key-board." A bad play written years ago by Goebbels called *The Wanderer* which had been rejected everywhere is now ordered to be produced. This means not merely the presence everywhere of Nazi propaganda, but the absence of culture. To plead today in the name of culture is to bring the Nazi retort: "When I hear the word 'culture,' I reach for my revolver." "Don't think with the brain," Germans are told, "that is a Jewish attitude—think with the blood!"

Even German culture of the past is under suspicion. Lessing is too full of the brotherhood of man. His Nathan the Wise is a Jew and utters the unutterable sentiment "that all countries have good people." Schiller is too much a lover of liberty and his heroines, Maria Stuart and the Maid of Orleans, too often non-Germans. Goethe the Nazis dare not prohibit and I saw a good many of Goethe's plays that had an almost embarrassing greatness. *Iphigenia* breathed a lofty spirit of reconciliation and tolerance that made one blush for Hitler-land and in *Egmont* when *Clara* stirs up the crowd crying "Free Egmont," one almost expected to hear her cry "Free Thaelmann!"

The very dearth of "safe" German plays, forced the Ministry of Propaganda to give its approval to a host of foreign plays. "Unser Shakespeare" the Germans, to be sure, hardly look upon as a foreigner, and I saw half a dozen of his plays, ranging from a very poor production of a very great play such as *King Lear* (surely far inferior to the performance by the Jewish Theatre in Moscow) to a very poor play, such as *Two Gentlemen of Verona* in a very brilliant and very free adaptation by Hans Rothe. But recently these "Ur-Shakespeare" versions by the author of *The Battle About Shakespeare* have been forbidden. A good Spanish Catholic and monarchist such as Calderon seemed safe. So was Oscar Wilde's *Ideal Husband* and Shaw after he had praised Hitler.

Having seen Jacques Deval's *Tovarish* in the original French version and in the English adaptation by Robert Sherwood, I was very curious to see the Nazi version by Curt Götz. I found that the visiting Soviet Commissar, upon whom the Tsarist Prince and Princess are forced to wait at table in Paris, instead of being made the most brilliant of all the guests, here gets his face slapped to the satisfaction of the orthodox Nazi element in the audience. The whole last act of the Bolshevik's triumph is omitted as embarrassing to the Great H. and the two great G.'s who sat in the Imperial box. On the two occasions when I saw Hitler this year, it seemed to me that in spite of all the playing of bands, there was less spontaneous enthusiasm than before and I got a sense that in the theatres the audiences did not like these foreign plays done over to suit *his* taste.

What was there in the German theatres besides the carefully hand-picked German classics and innocuous foreign plays? How about new German plays? Contemporary social problems were too risky. Either they might be taken to show that all was not well in the totalitarian state or else the plays would be such an obvious whitewashing of conditions that there might be embarrassing groans from the audience at the wrong moment. The two safest subjects seemed to be either loud and empty farces on the one hand or plays based on past history.

The most popular of the loud and supposedly "wholesome" farces was one called *The Rumpus About Iolanthe* in which the audience seems to have got its chief delight in live animals in the poultry yard and in which the central character, Iolanthe, proved to be a very large and very German pig. Each program was provided with a candy pig, tied on by a pink ribbon, for the audience to eat in the entr'acte.

(Continued on page 28)



WOLFE
DRAMA UNDER THE SWASTIKA

Phil Wolfe



DRAMA UNDER THE SWASTIKA

Phil Wolfe

Who Owns the Movies?

BY PHILIP STERLING and DOROTHY DANNEN

Ten years ago the question of who owns the movies was a problem for cloistered researchers. Today it's different. To anyone who has heard movie audiences laugh out loud at the inanities of a quickie, at the pomposities of a polished superproduction, or has heard them hiss the calmly venomous lies of a newsreel, the question is no longer academic.

Certainly, in a period of movie development signalized by the making of *Black Fury*, *Riffraff*, *Red Salute* and the suppression of *It Can't Happen Here*, the question is one that needs a detailed and purposeful answer.

That vague entity, Big Business, which is popularly and correctly credited with the ownership of most American industries is no longer vague where the movies are concerned. It has assumed the formidable shapes of two of America's chief oligarchs, John Davidson Rockefeller, Jr., and James Pierpont Morgan. It is as difficult to prove that they own the movies as it is to prove that they own anything, but the truth remains. As audiences continue to grow more critical of their entertainment diet and the pernicious ideas contained therein, this truth becomes less a matter of gratuitous information and more an instrument of self defense for America's movie-loving millions.

Start at the top of the cinema pyramid surmounted by Morgan and Rockefeller, and you work your way down through a confusion of financial interlockings, corporate dovetails, through banks, stock syndicates, patent pools, licensing arrangements to an astonishingly narrow base of eight major film companies and their endless chain of subsidiaries. It is a base, nevertheless, which is solid enough to afford the greatest degree of comfort, security and profit to the boys perched on top.

Briefly the descent down the pyramid goes this way: Morgan and Rockefeller own the American Telegraph and Telephone Company and the Radio Corporation of America. In the former and most likely in the latter Morgan is dominant.

Western Electric, a subsidiary of A.T. & T., and RCA Photophone, a subsidiary of R.C.A., control the most important American patents in the field of sound movies. The obscurest crossroads theatre can't show a talkie without paying tribute to these two groups.

Big business ownership of the film

through control of sound patents, which dates back only a single decade, was just the entering wedge. The quantities of money needed to develop sound and install it in some 15,000 operating theatres could come only from the twin fountains of American finance. Traditionally, the Rockefeller-Morgan method of liquidating a loan is to take over the industry. Today a cursory survey of the eight leading companies reveals the following direct interests of the electrical companies:

Rockefeller's Radio City holds a strong minority stock influence in Radio-Keith-Orpheum Corporation. Western Electric holds 100,000 shares of Loew's, Inc., having sold 164,000 shares in May, 1934. (Loew's, Inc., owns Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, producers, outright.) Paramount Pictures still has close tie-ups with the Columbia Broadcasting Company which is controlled by banking groups close to Morgan.

In Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation, the Chase National Bank (Rockefeller) holds the largest block of stock and probably has control. Columbia Pictures Corporation is owned largely by California interests through A. P. Giannini of San Francisco's Bank of America. Giannini is closely associated with William Randolph Hearst in the control of most of California's industry and commerce. But even so there is a direct Morgan link since Giannini holds eleven percent of the stock of Morgan's National City Bank. To heighten the incestuousness of the film industry's financial relationships, Giannini's brother, Dr. A. H. Giannini, was recently chosen president of United Artists Corporation.

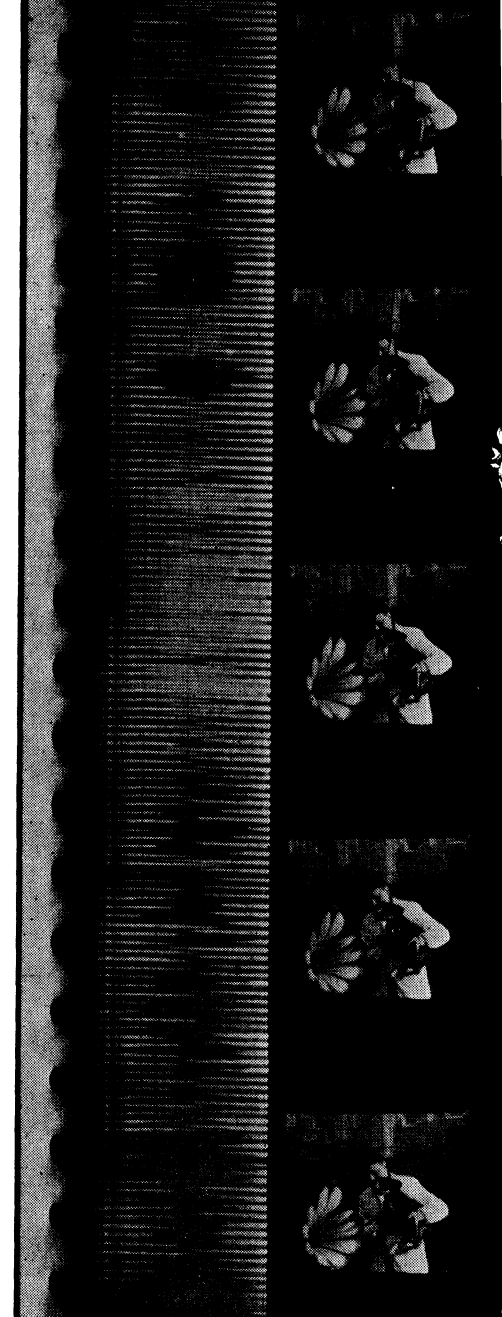
Warner Brothers, which pioneered in sound under the financial sponsorship of Western Electric Company, is still a licensee of Electrical Research Products, Inc. (ERPI) and the constantly expanding list of Warner Brothers subsidiaries brings the Warners into constantly closer affiliation with Morgan and Rockefeller banks.

Universal Pictures Corporation, until recently the freest from the direct control of Wall Street has been sold to the Standard Capital Company of which one J. Cheever Cowdin is president. Mr. Cowdin, it seems, is a New York investment banker who holds directorships in a series of leading aviation companies. He is also internationally famous as a polo

player. To which of America's financial overlords he is vassal was not indicated in newspaper reports of the transaction.

The sale of Universal was regarded as a step toward consolidation of American and British Film interests. More recently a working agreement was established between Twentieth Century-Fox, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and Gaumont-British, forming, in effect, a British film trust. These two developments grow logically from the fact that the essential patents for sound film and apparatus are held by an international pool of American, German and French interests.

Still another big money factor, Grand National Film Corporation, is doing a strong and impressive fade-in on the film scene. It is backed by the extensive and rapacious Du Pont interests who have long sought a major direct outlet for the motion picture film they have developed and with which they now threaten the supremacy of the Eastman Company. The sale of raw film stock





to the industry is still perhaps the most lucrative branch of the whole industry.

These are the main outlines of financial domination in the field of production, but what Morgan or Rockefeller was ever satisfied with half an industry when he could get the whole works? Early in the history of the cinema's development, it's commercial leaders were quick to see that money could be made not only at one end or the other but in the middle as well. Almost from the very beginning the ownership of production and exhibition have been interlocked and distribution control linked with both.

Since the post-war era of expansion in the industry, there has been a violent and unrelenting trend toward monopoly of theatres—there, after all, is where the money comes from. Of the 15,378 movie houses in operation at the beginning of the year, the leading film producing interests of America controlled, for the greater glory of the dollar-sign oligarchy, 2,200. While this may seem an unimpressive fraction, it really represents the undiluted cream of the business. Exact figures are not important in this connection although they are available. Merely compare the weekly gross

record of consistent profits despite the bewildering series of bankruptcies, reorganizations and refinancing operations of the last seven years.

While the ultimate dream of every movie magnate is to control every picture house in the world, Hollywood Boulevard and Wall Street haven't bothered much about it up till now because the moneyed denizens of the two streets have been busy consolidating their control of the key cities where the bulk of America's population is concentrated.

The monopoly of distribution, by now an accomplished and accepted fact of the

Left: Earliest existing specimen of "sound and scene" film. Photographed with camera of Eugene Lauste in 1911. Mr. Lauste, himself, is shown beside "Morning Glory" phonograph horn, holding a small dog. Original film specimen now property of Bell Telephone Laboratory.

Right: One of the advertisements used by Carl Laemmle in his fight against the Motion Picture Patents Company, known as the Trust. Robert H. Cochrane, Laemmle's associate, invented the military figure designated as "Gen. Flimco," who was presented in unbecoming attitudes in an extensive series of anti-trust advertisements.

Below: Specimen of film taken at Edison's Laboratory by W. K. Laurie Dickson (1890-91).

"GEN. FLIMCO'S LAST STAND"



Old Flimmyboy, surrounded by Independent Indians, has about as much chance as a snowball in Hades. Shot full of holes, punctured and perforated from peanut-head to pants, he is making one final rally and bluff by shooting threatening letters to exhibitors and publishing direful interviews in cities where he has "bought" exchanges. We are making arrangements with the artist now for the General's obsequies and burial. While the band is mournfully playing "Has Anybody Here Seen Kennedy" over the grave, you will be making arrangements to hook up with Old Doctor Laemmle who will cure you of all such diseases as "Repeaters," "Dropsy of the Film," "Rainstorms" and "Pip of the Cashbox." Send for Dr. Laemmle's loose-leaf supplementary film list to-day.

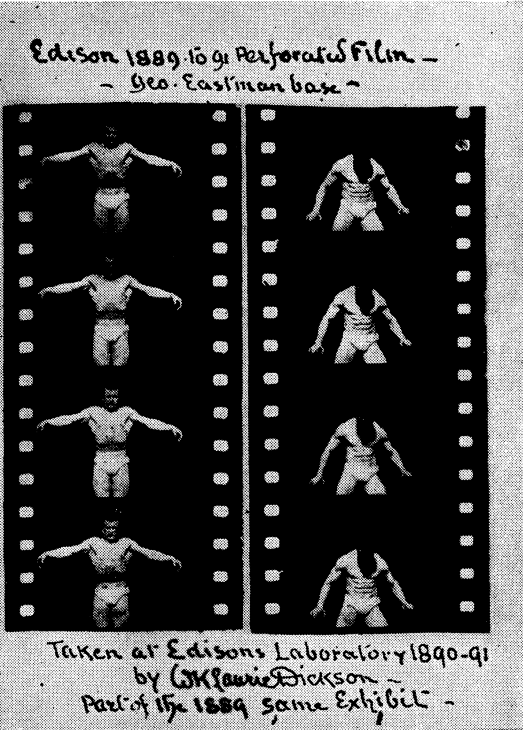
CARL LAEMMLE, President

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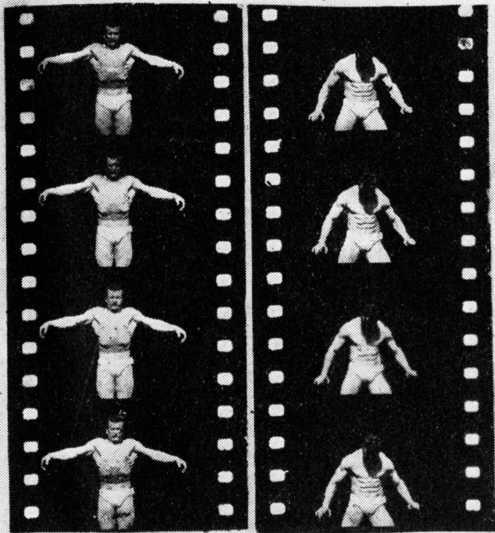




of the Paramount Theater in New York with the weekly take of the Gem Theatre at Kamm's Corners. W. A. Johnston, veteran trade paper editor, has pointed out that only a small percentage of the tens of thousands of picture house operators who have been in business since the end of the nickelodeon days have ever made more than a precarious living. Those who have been defeated by their losses have been supplanted immediately by other small-scale operators. Only the big, affiliated theater chains have had a

industry, also aids in consolidating theatre monopoly. Each leading producing company has its own string of exchanges, or film centers, each with ramifications throughout the surrounding area. The number of key exchanges operated by each of the Big Eight ranges from 35 to 50. The key cities are important not only because they represent big and quick financial turnovers, but because they influence exhibition trends in the surrounding areas. The farmer in Berea, Ohio, reads the Cleveland papers, and

Edison 1889.1091 Perforated Film -
- Geo. Eastman base -



Taken at Edison's Laboratory 1890-91
by W.K. Laurie Dickson -
Part of the 1889 same Exhibit -

if the State Theatre is showing *A Sucker for Redheads* he wants to see it too.

But the process of squeezing out the small-time exhibitor who makes a precarious living, if he makes one at all, is proceeding apace.

Even the theatre chains not affiliated with the producers, are in a better position than the independent owner with less than four houses. Howard T. Lewis, Harvard savant, and a competent though biased authority on the industry, points out even the unaffiliated chains are protected by the producers against the competition of independent owners.

"When the producer-distributor sells to another chain of theatres, buying in substantial quantities, he will frequently protect all the theatres in that chain regardless of their type, against any independent theatre regardless of its type. The reason for this is that the transaction is largely a matter of bargaining; the chain demands protection as a condition of purchase and secures it because to the distributor the total volume of business which the chain offers outweighs in importance any price which the independent exhibitor would pay for any one picture." (Lewis, in *The Motion Picture Industry*.)

According to a compilation based on the *Yearbook of Motion Pictures for 1935*, five of the eight producers in the monopoly share theatre control in the following manner:

Paramount Pictures, Inc., through Paramount-Publix Corporation, owns 975 houses from coast to coast. Warner Brothers owns 450. Twentieth Century-Fox, through various Fox companies, owns 361; Loew's, Inc., (on an incomplete tabulation, and without counting theatres which are operated jointly with United Artists) owns about 200; Radio-Keith-Orpheum (R-K-O) at least 100; Universal owns at least 66 according to a tabulation for 1932 cited by Lewis, and United Artists about 30 theatres, many of which are operated jointly with other producer-exhibitor interests. As Halsey Stuart Company, bankers, take the liberty of saying in their motion picture bond financing prospectuses, the accuracy of these statements cannot be guaranteed. In general, however, they are correct.

The closely linked fields of production-distribution-exhibition do not comprise the entire scope of motion picture monopoly. A random reading of corporation records reveals real estate, music publishing, radio, printing, movie equipment, and film manufacturing interests as other ramifications. Even the legitimate stage has become a tributary of the movie monopoly! Variety, weekly theatrical trade paper, reports that

"Broadway saw more Hollywood money in '35-'36 than ever before. More than \$1,000,000 in picture money filtered through during the season. . . . Hollywood and its citizens backed over 25 per cent of the season's shows. . . ."

Warner Brothers, to round out the monopoly picture, owns five music publishing houses which handle an important part of the entire field of popular music; Brunswick Radio Corporation (phonograph records), Warner Brothers Broadcasting Corporation, Continental Lithograph Corporation (movie posters) and holds contracts for the screen rights to all magazine stories of the Cosmopolitan Corporation (Hearst's Cosmopolitan Magazine, etc.). Paramount Pictures owns half a dozen real estate corporations involved in its theatre operations and owns Charles Frohman, Inc., a legitimate stage production organization.

A further link, formidable in the potential monopoly it affords, is now impending. Recent newspaper reports tell of successful television tests conducted by Radio Corporation of America, owners of some of the essential sound picture patents, and the virtual owners of R-K-O. Needless to say, commercially successful television would constitute a movie revolution which would make the talkie upheaval look like a county election campaign. And the ensuing monopoly concentration would make the present set-up look like the free and disorderly competition of a waterfront fish market.

Ever since Edison's first screening at Koster and Bial's Music Hall in 1896, the motion picture has fought to establish its right as an independent and valid art form. There are few today who don't grant that right. The fact that D. W. Griffith can't get a job, that Billy Bitzer, the great master's camera man, is working on a WPA project, and that a score of other movie pioneers are in the same boat, is beside the point. These instances merely serve as reminders that from the very beginning there has been a contradiction, stimulated by the profit motive, between the movies as an art and the movies as a business. Millions of dissatisfied movie-goers today are living proof that movie art has languished to the same extent that movie monopoly has flourished. As it is today, so it was in the beginning.

When Edison and his indispensable assistants perfected the kinetoscope, which was merely a film peep-show housed in an illuminated box, he failed utterly to realize its possibilities. His sole concern was to create a market for the illuminated boxes. The strips of film which people were to view were a secondary consideration to him. When

Thomas Armat perfected a practical projector which threatened the sales of Edison's kinetoscope the Wizard of Menlo bought Armat's invention and began to manufacture films for projection, but again, his chief concern was a market for projectors, because, here, he thought, lay the greatest profit. He was wrong.

It was ten years before Edwin Porter, under the influence of the Frenchman, Georges of Méliès, and others, put forth the first efforts in America which changed the screen from an agency for the showing of documentary novelties to the most powerful creative medium at our disposal.

But the way for the filming of Porter's *The Great Train Robbery*, the first piece of American screen fiction, was paved by piracy. New York entrepreneurs made film records of the Jeffries-Sharkey prize-fight but "Pop" Lubin of Philadelphia capitalized on the vast popularity of the film by producing a reenactment of the fight and attracting crowds by misleading billing. A similar incident occurred when a movie man announced that he was sending a company abroad to make a film record of a passion play which he actually photographed in his own backyard. It took these piratical "reenactments" to suggest fictive stories as a screen possibility.

By the time the film story became accepted as the common item of movie entertainment, the industry had grown so important that Edison, regretting his earlier neglect of the field, tried to fight his way back into it by a series of suits charging infringements of his kinetoscope patents. By compromise between Edison, Biograph (which already had banking affiliations) and several others of the most important interests in the field, the Motion Picture Patents Company was formed in 1908. This early attempt at monopoly was a severe setback to the art of the movies. Use of cameras and projectors was restricted to a license basis as sound patents today. In an effort to circumvent the patents monopoly, technicians bent backwards to invent cameras which were worse than the existing ones. Even Biograph itself had come into being on the basis of a camera that was more proof against litigation than it was against light leaks.

Up to 1913 the Patents Company held sway, brooking no suggestion of artistic and technical improvement.

The monopoly was making more money than it could re-invest in an ever expanding field and any expenditure on higher artistic quality or revolutionary technical changes threatened its security.

The color processes which now invest Mickey Mouse with added phantasy were
(Continued on page 29)

Texts for Dancers

BY EDNA OCKO

The Bennington School of the Dance, a branch of the college by the same name in Vermont, concluded its sessions with the presentation of two new works by Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman. Appearing under their direction were members of their New York concert groups and approximately forty dancers from the Bennington Workshop. *With My Red Fires*, music by Wallingford Riegger, is the third section of the trilogy by Miss Humphrey, of which *Theatre Piece* and *New Dance*, presented this past season, are parts. Mr. Weidman's new work, *Quest*, is a "choreographic pantomime" with music by Norman Lloyd.

With My Red Fires is a narrowing rather than an extension of its predecessors. Because of the peculiar limitations of its theme, it has sacrificed all of the brilliant contemporaneity of *Theatre Piece* and most of the thrilling symphonic structure of *New Dance*. The Young Man and Young Woman, sensitively portrayed by Charles Weidman and Katherine Litz, are threatened by the malevolent influence of the Matriarch (Doris Humphrey) who seeks, through her influence on the girl, and failing there, through the incited fury of the group, to shatter the romance of the young lovers. In the course of this theme's development, two group dances stand out: the betrothal of the couple in the first section of the work, and the pursuit of these same two in the finale. The former is vaguely reminiscent of the primitive *Glorification of the Chosen One* in *Le Sacre du Printemps* and the latter of an animated fragment of a Greek frieze. Miss Humphrey's dramatic portrait of the Evil One carries emotional conviction but, at the same time, a certain amount of ambiguity. She is summoned to her disruptive duties by the Choric Figures, two imperceptible characters in red, whose relationship either to the lovers, or the Matriarch, is never satisfactorily defined.

While we make no urgent plea for literalness in a dance, we do expect a minimum of consistency and clarity in a portrait once the director has taken the initial step of establishing a specific characterization. This clarity is lacking in the conception as presented at Bennington, and it contributes to a general feeling of puzzlement as to why and wherefore on the part of the onlooker.

There is no doubt that poignant and

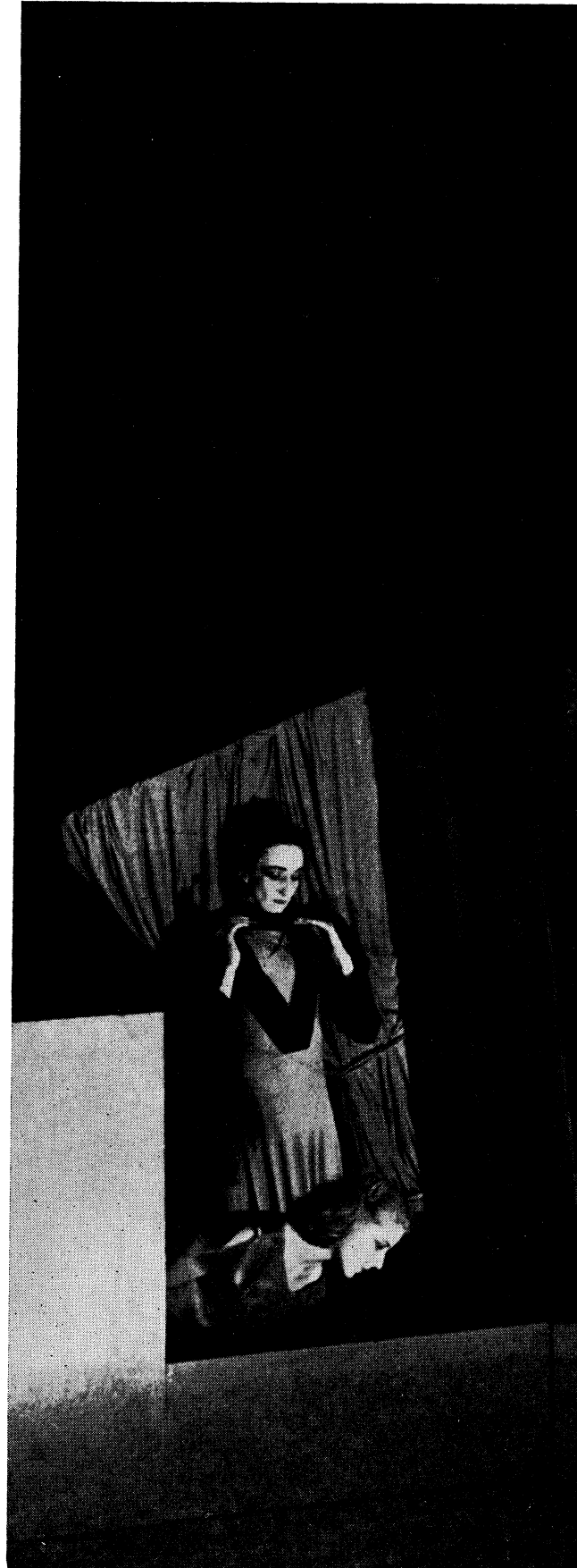
gentle understanding went into the creation of this opus, but it is a moot question whether the theme of frustrated romantic love was worth the superior talents of the artist. Miss Humphrey has amazing choreographic skill, amounting almost to genius; she has a keen and vital understanding of the artist's problems today; she has at her disposal, finally, an excellent group of dancers, men and women. As a mixed company, it is all the more capable of realizing any material conceived by the directors. Bearing in mind the exceptional talents of Miss Humphrey and Mr. Weidman, therefore, the potentialities of such a combination is limitless,—given of course, the intelligent selection of subject matter. Perhaps in this instance, the reason for *With My Red Fires* being a minor work must be frankly attributed to the text. William Blake, whose obscure mystical poem, *Jerusalem II*, supplied the program notes, is scarcely the poet-prophet of the 20th century. His hierarchal cosmology is as defiant of modern interpretation as Swedenborg's, and as tangential.

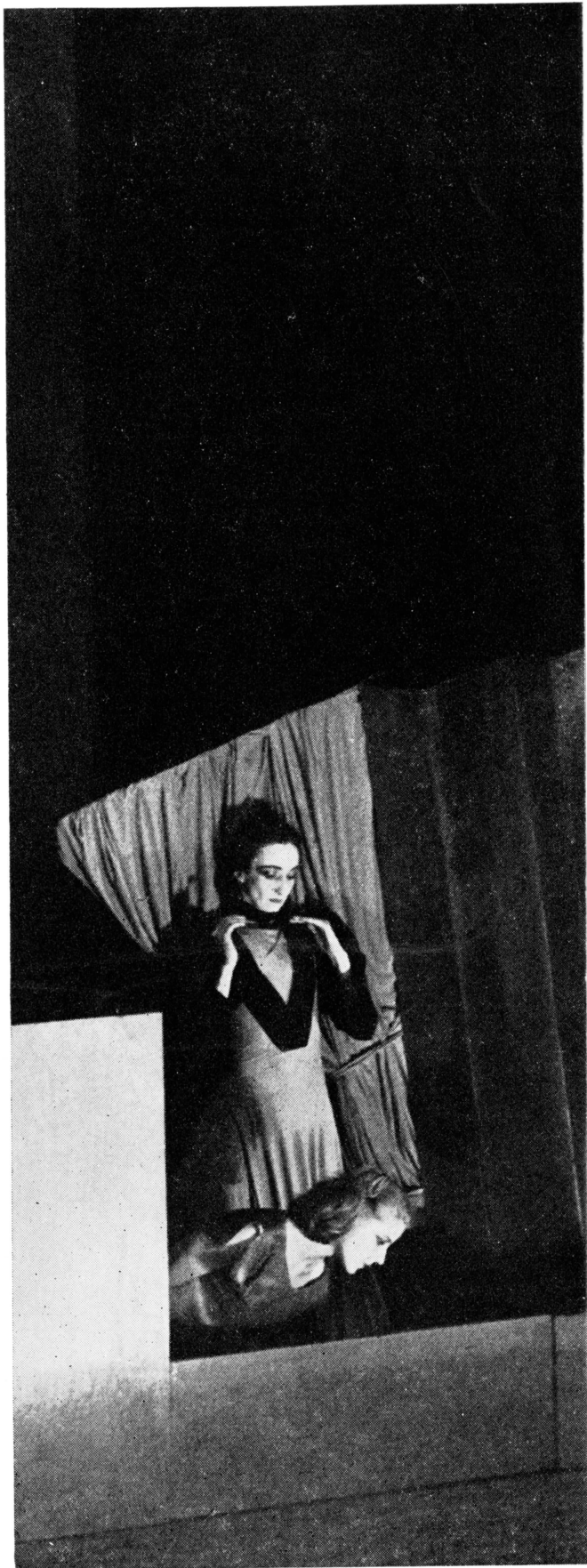
Miss Humphrey is too fine and too modern a talent to dissipate her important energies among mystics and cultists. She must continue along new paths in the modern dance, paths which she herself has blazed in *Theatre Piece* and *New Dance*. There may be temporary setbacks and hesitations, but there cannot be any retracing of steps.

It is to Mr. Weidman's credit that he presented *Quest* to the select audience of Bennington, as well as the student dancers from all over the country. In this work, they were brought face to face with a courageously conceived survey of the artist's dilemma in society today. Here was a fine example of an artist whose social convictions permeated his creations as well as his conversations, and did honor to the rapidly growing stature of his choreographic works.

In *Quest*, the Artist (Charles Weidman), guided by an inner strength to which he sometimes pays little heed, encounters the bludgeon of stupid criticism, and the false front of patronage, characteristic of any country. He next endures the *Kulturreinigung* of one nation (to remain unnamed), where first he is beguiled, by promises of fame and fortune,

"WITH MY RED FIRES"
PHOTOGRAPH BY BOUCHARD





to create there, and then minutely measured and practically quartered when he is found "impure". Next he escapes desperately from participation in war, but his inner vision (personalized by Doris Humphrey) compels him to recognize the futile destruction and betrayal of his fellow-men. He finally leaps into contact with the world, and grasps hands with the weak, who, in an exciting conclusion, support and strengthen not only each other, but their fellows.

The dance is a series of episodes: *Anthropometry* and *Patronage* are amusing skits; *Kulturreinigung*, *Pro Patria* and *Affirmation* stirring and serious group compositions, and the *Allegories* between Miss Humphrey and Mr. Weidman, delicate lyrical passages. It is this abundance of varying material, although excellent in its own right, that we find our only objection. The transition from whimsy to social indignation is not an easy one and cannot, we feel, be successfully compassed in one continuous dance. While we know we should laugh at the spectacle of the artist quaking before patronizing females, we are not so certain how to react to the disillusionment of the artist under fascism; and because our picture of the artist is of a half-comic, easily tempted creature, we find ourselves fearful to chuckle at his vagaries because in that way we might be inadvertently led into like amusement at the unfunny spectacle of fascism and war which confronts him.

The root of the trouble lies in the difficulty of procuring an organized dance libretto or script containing a consistent and logical argument. The modern dance is rapidly approaching a stage when dramatic continuity and climax will be necessary requisites for the complete unfolding of the theme. Miss Humphrey and Mr. Weidman are seemingly pioneering in this field, and it is inevitable that there be trial and error. Mr. Weidman's intention was a good and commendable one. Happily, in this case, most of his conception was transferred to the audience without confusion and misunderstanding. He runs a great risk, however, without a well-thought-out libretto, of lessening the genuine effectiveness of his serious projections, by juxtaposing them with his airily witty pieces. Be that as it may, *Quest* is a retainable contribution to Mr. Weidman's repertoire, and it is hoped that many more people will be given occasion to see this work.

In praising the entire ensemble for its excellent cooperation and presentation, special mention must go to José Limon and William Matons, who not only contributed creative support to their director, but also emerged as superb dancers in their own right.



The Duke

Injunction Granted!, the third production of the WPA Living Newspaper, is not a play in the usual sense of the word. It has no well defined characters, no closely knit plot and the scope of its subject matter is historical and documentary. If we cast our traditional notions of the theatre aside, and approach *Injunction Granted!* with some knowledge of the background of the living newspaper form, and its past accomplishments, we immediately sense an achievement on the part of the WPA Living Newspaper which deserves the attention of every serious theatregoer.

The form of the living newspaper developed to some extent in Europe and in the United States before the Federal Theatre Project was established. Its function was at first limited to the presentation of daily news events in somewhat the same manner as the *March of Time*. Because of the fact that the productions were structurally loose, attempts at novelty were made with the introduction of songs, ballads, pantomimes and dances. The Theatre of Action's production of several years ago, *The World's Fair*, is a typical example of this development. Attempts were also made to combine some elements of the drama with the short and racy scenes in order to give the entire show a formal unity. Friedrich Wolf's *From New York to Shanghai*, which was widely produced in pre-Hitler Germany, is a good illustration of this latter development. *Triple A Plowed Under, 1935* and *Injunction Granted!* are indicative of a further attempt to answer the same world-wide search for a theatrical form for the presentation of current news in a popular manner.

Injunction Granted! does not adhere strictly to the formal conception of the living newspaper. It sets itself the gigantic task of dramatizing the trials and tribulations of the labor movement in some thirty short scenes. It uses a well designed unit set and the aid of a Commen-

"Injunction Granted!"

BY HARRY ELION



Mopey Dick

Florence Sachnoff

tator and a Clown. Due to the large scope of the subject matter, formal structure and execution had to be sacrificed. The total effect upon the spectator is at best cumulative. We are presented the following conclusions: that throughout history the American workers have always been exploited by their employers with the aid of the courts, that the latter issued injunctions freely, interpreted the Constitution in favor of the employer, and utilized the legal frame-up to send working class leaders to jail and death. The second half of the bill introduces the issue of the C.I.O. versus the A.F. of L. leadership and confuses the major outline of the production.

Although the producers of *Injunction Granted!* set themselves the task of tracing the whole history of American labor, they did use a method of selection. For the sake of clarity and greater effectiveness, it would have been wiser to restrict the production to one phase of the history of the labor movement.

The staging of the production is uneven. Some of the scenes, such as Bacon's Rebellion, Haymarket, Monopoly, Partnership, and Jennings vs. Hearst are very effective in their use of the living cartoon. Their ideas are carried over clearly and with a great deal of punch. Joe Losey's direction is brilliantly displayed in these scenes. Most of the other scenes are static and depend too much upon the Commentator for life and meaning.

Injunction Granted!, despite its defects, is an important contribution to the development of the living newspaper form. It is a vital, instructive, and at times very entertaining show.

The Films Make History

BY ROBERT STEBBINS

The extent of a poet's obligation to respect the facts of history, assuming that a certain objectivity is possible, has never been established. Nor is it the purpose or within the power of this paper to establish it. There was a time when any condensation, corruption, or falsification was considered quite appropriate to the historical romance and romantic drama. We can only say that at present there is a movement away from such a tendency. Maxwell Anderson's *Mary of Scotland*, in its approach to history belongs unfortunately to the former period. Even a cursory reading of Scotland's affairs during the years of his play, 1561-1587, discloses a bewilderingly large list of factual variances. So crossed and criss-crossed is this period with diverse and clashing interests, with a simultaneity of dozens of actions and conflicts, that regardless of a poet's skill, it would appear impossible to be compressed within the framework of the conventional three act play. *Mary of Scotland*, it would seem, was inevitably doomed to failure.



Drawing by Aline Fruhauf

Under these circumstances, the film version of *Mary of Scotland*, directed by John Ford and authored by Dudley Nichols, was defeated before the battle began. The film not only inherited all the ills of the original play, and in several instances added faults of its own nature, but even deprived itself of several of the original's virtues. Like the play, the film has no directives, no point of view, is entirely unclear as to its purpose. Certain matters are touched upon but never knitted together to make a consistent fabric of ideas—religious intolerance, the warmth of France, the sourdoughs of Scotland, Catholicism against the Protestant Rebellion, Spain against England, Stuarts against Tudors, idealism against practical statesmanship. The flow of time is halted. The events of twenty-six years are telescoped into one or two years, it would seem. There is a stereotyped second act episode in which Mary implores Beaton, her lady-in-waiting, to marry for love, that is on the low ideational plane of *Graustark* or *The Merry Widow*. The play was wordy to begin with, and the change from verse to prose only increases the talkativeness, which was to be expected when one considers the ability of verse to put things more succinctly. Significantly enough, the one scene that really got going, the death of Rizzio, played beautifully by John Carradine, was comparatively underwritten.

Chiefly, however, the play and even more the film go to pieces on the reefs of faulty characterization. Mr. Anderson has gone to such embarrassing lengths in taking sides against Mary's enemies that as a consequence they possess no credible characteristics and no dimensions. But the movie goes beyond Mr. Anderson. In the play John Knox is human enough to answer Mary's plea for help with "Your Majesty, I should be untrue to myself and my calling if I refused counsel where it is asked." The movie makes him an old goat and nothing more; the chieftains—a pack of dogs; Elizabeth—a spinster with the green disease; Darnely—almost a homo-sexual. There is no conflict of sympathies. We detest Mary's opponents but at the same time cannot regard her with more than pity. She is a will-less creature far removed from Swinburne's characterization: "forgiveness of injuries was as alien from her fierce loyal spirit as forgetfulness of benefits."

Mary fails for many reasons—her idealism and trust—"For there is judg-

ment somewhere in the air, what I am will be known, what's false will wash out in the rains"—her frankness in a hypocritical age, religious intolerance, loyalty to Catholicism, her family pride and obligations—"I abate not one jot of my good blood's lien on the English throne"—but chiefly she founders on her love for Bothwell. Now here was something for a movie to sink its teeth into. It does and bites the remaining life out of the theme. Miss Hepburn of the quivering lip helps complete the ruin of our sympathies. At least in the play Mary had her moments of strength—"I too have a will—a will as strong as your own, and enemies of my own and my long revenge to carry through. I will have my way in my time though it burn my heart out and yours." This aspect of Mary never emerges convincingly in Hepburn's investment of the role. It is manifestly absurd to say, as did *The New Republic's* Mr. Otis Ferguson in the course of as purple a patch of pussyfooting we've seen, that if the movie didn't give us Mary of Scots it gave us Hepburn and they are both great ladies. Great ladies, perhaps, but at logger-heads. Hepburn is undeniably beautiful to look at with her twisted if monotonous mask but for all intents and purposes her Mary is Alice Adams and the heroine of *Morning Glory*—tentative, weak, jittery, full of nerves and enervations.

As cinema, that vague entity, the movie fails. John Ford, who, of all his Hollywood confreres, has the ability to give his work intensity, as witness *The Informer* and *The Prisoner of Shark Island*, is here mannered and stylized—a sure indication that he was not at ease in the play. His lighting effects seem forced and repetitious. The action is slow and segmented. Furthermore he leans on the work of other men. The court-room scene was obviously conceived with a long backward glance at Karl Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc*. The upward pan that concluded the film was borrowed from *A Tale of Two Cities*—the telepathic communion between Mary and Bothwell from *Dark Angel*, *Peter Ibbetson* and innumerable Hollywood essays in the mystical. The whole enterprise is a regrettable one and should serve as a warning against the indiscriminate taking over of unsuitable stage-successes to the screen.

Romeo and Juliet is quite another matter. The play is fool-proof, beyond spoiling. We have seen high-school produc-

tions that moved us. Not that the current MGM film, featuring Norma Shearer, Leslie Howard, John Barrymore, Basil Rathbone, is in the high-school category. We should say immediately and without equivocation that the present version will do a great service toward immediately popularizing the works of the great master. At this stage in the development of Hollywood, and we imply no condescension, the production is the last word in what is to be expected—visual loveliness and intelligent, if not imaginative, comprehension of the text. Miss Shearer's Juliet would do honor to many a more established stage reputation. If her performance fails to penetrate more deeply certain layers of the role we can only attribute it to the shortcomings of the production, such as they are.

Reading the comments of those connected with the film in the special Random House edition of the play—from Norma Shearer's "To know Juliet as Shakespeare has created her is to love her. For Juliet is love" to Professor William Strunk's insistence "but the background, however beautiful, is still only background. The family hatred is for the lovers only an obstacle to be surmounted, etc." — the conviction grows that here, in this matter of love, lies the weakness of the undertaking. Its limited and one-sided approach was well understood. They protest too much. Does anything distinguish the particular quality of love in *Romeo and Juliet* from love in another movie? Not that we could discover. Even the element of frustration is largely negated by the fullness and beauty of their wedding night in the movie version. In short, a unifying and individual conception, which would give uniqueness and dimension to *Romeo and Juliet*, is wanting. Merely love, an abstraction, without implications, if you discount pageantry, of a background of forces that determine the modes of thought including the fashions of love.

This lack of an underlying historical and artistic conception accounts for the fact that the costumes, beautiful as they are, have the appearance of museum pieces—the street scenes pageants for a modern city exposition. Nothing historic comes to life. Again, this lack permits such a variety of dissonant acting styles from Howard's apathetic drawing room manner, though he comes to life for a brief moment in the apothecary scene, to Barrymore's magnificent summation in himself of all that spells ham.

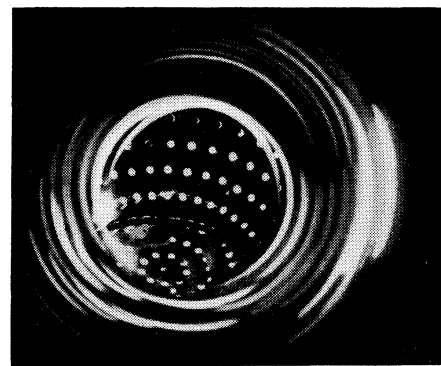
A word remains to be said about the literary practices of the film. Undoubtedly, certain aspects of Shakespeare are time-bound. The life of slang and a wise-crack are short. Within our own lifetime we see the witticisms of youth

slowly growing incomprehensible and dolyng the death. We are willing to admit that a certain amount of pruning of the purely time-bound may have been necessary in *Romeo and Juliet*. We cannot go the entire way, however, and countenance all the cuts of the scenario which sometimes reads like an thematic index to the piano sonatas of Haydn. Without attempting to settle the question, it might be pertinent to ask, exactly what is due a work of art? Aren't we presuming too much when we salve ourselves with the thought that had Shakespeare been alive, good business man that he was, his hand would be the first to use the blue pencil? Or that if Bach were with us to-day he'd hand his works over to Stokowski for orchestration? While we're at it, why not change the perspective, or rather lack of it, of the Italian primitives. As a matter of fact the present movie version retains more of the lines than many a stage production. But this making light with another's work is a dangerous policy to follow. Eventually, as actually occurred in France, you get to the point where Ophelia marries Hamlet and they both live happily ever after.

It is not our intention to detract from *Romeo and Juliet* or give the impression that the film is unworthy. Compared to Reinhardt's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, it shines like a jewel in the crown of night. But at this point in the history of the Hollywood film *Romeo* could hardly be free from stage conventions and conceptions. The same instinct, or call it feeling of inferiority if you wish, that impelled the producer to use tricked up Tschaiakowsky and Gounod, instead of an original score possessing appropriateness rather than the approval of the near-cultured, resulted in a conventional treatment of the entire mise-en-scene. Under the delusion that they were availing themselves of a purely cinematic procedure, the producers of the film point out that their screen version shows much that in the theater would be performed off-stage. But there is such a thing as recreating off-stage business in a theatre fashion. Merely photographing a pageant is not taking advantage of the movies which possess the merit of clarity, uncluttered, simple and spare.

Film Checklist

SUZY (MGM)—Jean Harlow, Cary Grant, Franchot Tone) and *THE ROAD TO GLORY* (20th Century—Fredric March, Warner Baxter, June Lang): Nifty blood-letting jobs. We are more or less innured to the complete indifference with which Hollywood dishes out the minor fables of our time. Proletarian



Still from *Synchromy No. 2*, second in a series of film shorts designed to evoke the mood and spirit of music through a composition of abstract forms, developed on the same rhythmical pattern as the musical composition. Produced by Mary E. Bute and Theo. J. Nemeth of Expanding Cinema.

crooner wins daughter of bank president. From shop-girl to Biarritz. But cynical hoke toward so unmitigated a catastrophe as the last war and future wars brings you up with a savage wrench. After all these years, how do they dare? Yet once again the Harlows, the Baxters, the William Faulkners and Joel Sayres, the Zanucks, play fast and loose with mortality, dancing lightly over the mass graves, the great charnel houses of the last generation. Mr. Zanuck, producer of *The Road to Glory*, would have us believe he intended his film as an anti-war document. "What of the regiment blown to bits by the mine? What of the smoke and battle sirens that put me out a pretty penny?" Mr. Zanuck, this is a restless, unsettled generation. On all sides it is surrounded with boredom, uncertainty, insecurity. What do you offer it? Adventure even unto death, high sacrifice that makes heroic the weak souls of men. Cunning blends of blood and boudoir. Pretty little baby-whores flitting in and out of bedrooms, who hold a man close, close, before sending him off to die. Mr. Zanuck, war is horrible in terms of waste. Take a number from one to twelve million (war dead) and divide it into to-day's stock quotations. Take Slum Row and divide it into the naval race. Take your celluloid and wring the blood out of it!

RHYTHM ON THE RANGE (Paramount—Bing Crosby, Frances Farmer, Bob Burns): The *It Happened One Night* formula all over again eked out by the antics of Martha Raye, a gargoyle from the studio of the sculptor who gave us Bert Lahr. The film can be seen with moderate pleasure.

SATAN MET A LADY (Warner Brothers — Bette Davis, Warren William): A poor rewrite of *The Maltese Falcon* that just stops short of a travesty on itself. As parody it might have been completely amusing. Marie Wilson as Warren William's bemused secretary, is

unerringly funny. It will be too bad, however, if she is to be stuck with this characterization for the remainder of her movie career. Bette Davis's revolt against the Warner Brothers is made perfectly clear by her absurd role in this film.

THREE CHEERS FOR LOVE (Paramount): Eleanore Whitney's tap talent is on a par with the entire production—small time, uninspired.

CHINA CLIPPER (Warner Brothers—Pat O'Brien, Beverly Roberts, Ross Alexander, Henry B. Walthall, Humphrey Bogart): Some good aerial shots and the beautiful Frisco-Honolulu plane. The flesh and blood principals are obvious props for the plane's magnificent performance.

WE WENT TO COLLEGE (MGM—Una Merkle, Walter Abel, Hugh Herbert) and **EARLY TO BED** (Paramount—Charles Ruggles, Mary Boland, George Barbier): Both pictures worth seeing for their infallible comics. Hugh Herbert as an absent-minded professor, Una Merkle, his suppressed and slightly idiotic wife, Charles Ruggles, the submissive clerk afflicted with sleep-walking and a subconscious desire to be a ballet dancer, Mary Boland, eternally preoccupied with her husband's hypothetical infidelities, and Barbier, a choleric though mystical toy manufacturer who renews his strength by walking barefoot on the turf.

GYPSIES (Soviet film—directed by Evgeni Schneider and M. Goldblatt—featuring Alexander Granach, N. Morvinov, Lala Chernaya): With all its faults, the most wholesome movie fare of the month. *Gypsies* is the most recent in a long line of joyous films, *Peppo*, *The Song of Happiness*, etc., about the national minorities and their ascent to dignity and happiness. To say that the Russians are past masters at this sort of thing is to put it trivially. No body of practice or technique could create so ecstatic a moment as Yudko knows when he walks through the wheat fields, singing his inward song while his hands turn of their own accord in the quiet questioning movements of the gypsy dance. Such things are compounded of faith and reciprocity between a people and a government. We are reminded of a recent American newsreel in which the commentator announced in a voice glowing with self-esteem that if the present unprecedented birth rate of the Indians continued, in twenty-five years they shall have increased eighty-three thousand. Not the slightest awareness that the figures implied a condemnation of our Indian policy. To return to *Gypsies*. The film has faults—at times, bad continuity, a disharmony of acting styles although the actors are all in their way superb, Han-

nah's jealousy of Alta is simply too petty to be credible—but these faults are as nothing in the face of its fine lyrical qualities, and the greatness of its theme—the regeneration of a people.

THE DEVIL DOLL (MGM): The following press release should speak for itself:

"Within the fabric of *The Devil Doll*, with Lionel Barrymore in the sinister role of a vengeful old hag, lurks material for a dozen movie plots, several of which, at least, are new to the movies. . . .

Barrymore is seen as a banker whose treacherous partners conspired to send him to jail for life. There he meets Walthall, a half-mad scientist who has

been similarly victimized and who schemes for a happier, more luxurious world by inventing a 'medicine' which reduces human beings to one-sixth the normal size, thereby reducing their physical needs and placing the world's production of necessities on an over-supply basis. For those who like a touch of political economy in their drama, here is sensational thought for contemplation. They escape, and when the first few experimental 'human dolls' are created, Barrymore turns them to purposes of revenge. Within this background, the love story of Barrymore's own daughter (Maureen O'Sullivan) provides amazing, romantic entertainment."

St. John Ervine—"Proletarian Critic"

Mr. St. John Ervine is remembered in the United States as a London theatre critic who came to New York some years ago, and served as a guest drama reviewer on the old *World*. He is less often remembered as one of those who, years earlier, took a part in establishing the remarkable Irish National Theatre movement; a contributory stream to a great main current in literature.

There would be no present occasion to recall Mr. Ervine, except that as critic for the *London Observer*, he has just offered an amazing definition of the word "proletarian," and some startling observations on proletarian art. Mr. Ervine does not completely approve of the proletarian sources of Clifford Odets' dramas. In the course of a review of the English publication of *Three Plays*, he observes:

"Mr. Odets' belief about life is proletarian. He believes that the final authority must be held by the mob, that is to say the multiplied vulgar will, which has no discrimination, no discernment, no power to look below the surface and discover essential motive. The proletarian is exclusively concerned with material things: food, drink, easy relaxation, animal satisfactions."

Mr. Ervine has some other things to say, about Mr. Odets himself: "His chief habit in writing a play is to put on the stage a situation which is disturbing in itself. . . . One need not be an artist to upset people by telling them how half-starved, half-blinded horses are gored and disembowelled at bullfights. Anybody can obtain an effect by describing, even in bald terms, the spectacle of a poor creature dragging its entrails along the floor as it staggers. . . . Brieux' effects were obtained in that sort of way. He traded on the horror of his subject, concealing his artistic poverty in the sheer

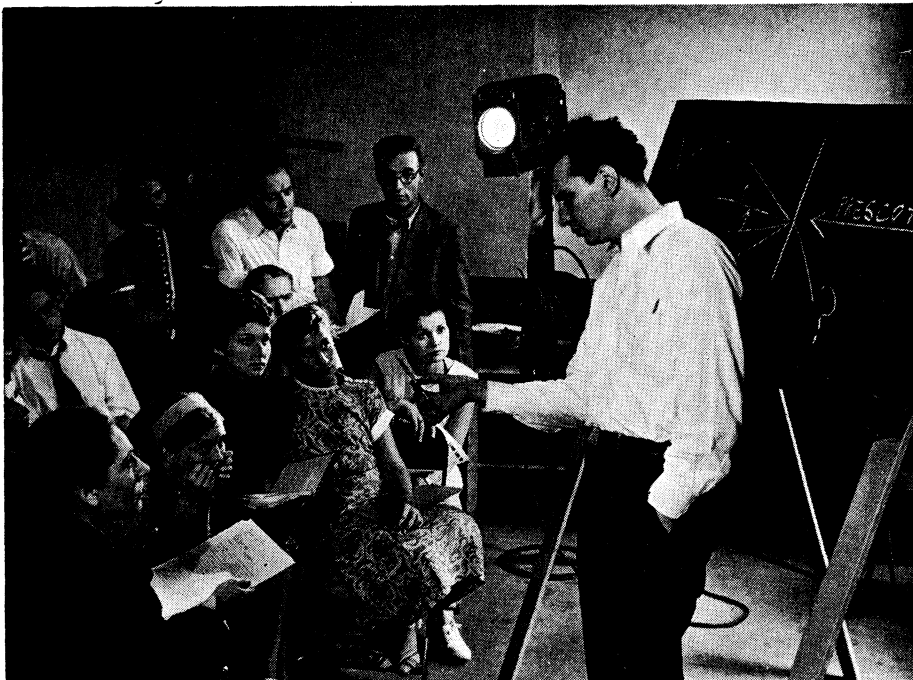
revolting nature of the thing itself. So does Mr. Odets."

These statements force one to marvel at Mr. Ervine. He is, evidently, something of a phenomenon in criticism, as is Julius Streicher in the advancement of the scholarship of anthropology. After all, there are not many men posing as critics who will openly admit that they find the spectacle of millions of American unemployed and starving, as spiritually distressing as the death of a horse in a bull ring. And not many men will say frankly that a proletarian, strange creature, can be actually concerned over something, even if that something is only a plate of ham and eggs to eat, and a suitable bed in which to sleep. Not even H. L. Mencken, of Baltimore.

All this power to look below the surface on Mr. Ervine's part comes, no doubt, from the fact that he is probably a proletarian critic himself. Once, about eight years ago, he took the opportunity to blast a play by Mr. Virgil Geddes, *The Earth Between*, because the seats in the Provincetown Playhouse are narrow and unupholstered, and because it was raining outside. These two facts, no doubt, got in the way of his "easy relaxation," and animal satisfactions, and proved the play to be a wretched one.

There is something to Mr. Ervine after all. His contributory stream to the main current has long dried up, and only pebbles now go rolling down the streambed. But Mr. Ervine, in expressing himself, can be as candid as an open sewer on a hot day. It is a good world in which one knows that Mr. Streicher will continue to show that Jews are almost related to human beings, and Mr. Ervine to demonstrate that proletarians may be considered with animals and starved horses.

RAY LUDLOW



STUDIO SESSION ON "BLACK PIT," CHICAGO REPERTORY GROUP.

Shifting Scenes

It is September and yet many new theatre groups have not announced their fall production plans. By now the season's repertory should have been selected and the theatres humming with activity. What is the reason for the great pall which seems to have descended upon those leading theatres which have dedicated themselves to the presentation of a living social drama? Due to professional complications projected commercial road tours, etc., the rights to *Bury the Dead* can not be finally released in most cities. As a result, many new theatres have ceased practically all activity. Or else they are burdening the mails with heavy imprecations against the National Office.

The situation reveals a serious flaw in the work of the new theatres. Outstanding social plays such as *Stevedore*, *Waiting for Lefty*, and *Bury the Dead* are not written every week. If these plays are unavailable, should the new theatres feel this to be a catastrophe? The answer is emphatically no! For two years members of the National Office have urged the production of social plays from the repertory of the past. But, with the exception of two groups, no new theatre has produced a play from the vast repertory of world drama. And yet there are literally hundreds of plays deserving of production in America today. The new theatres must become conscious of this fact and begin to act upon it.

It is impossible in a brief article to attempt a survey of world drama suitable and desirable for production by the new theatres. One would have to begin with Euripides and discuss the possibilities of a production of his *Trojan Women*, the first anti-war play. One would have to run through all the drama of all the centuries since this first play against war was written. Until surveys of this nature can be published in our press may we remind the repertory committees of the new theatres of just a few social dramatists as their names come to mind? What of Ibsen, Brieux, Shaw, Galsworthy, Gorki, Chekov, Strindberg, Andreyev, Hauptman, Toller, Tolstoy, Bjornson, Wedekind, Moliere, O'Neill, Gaspell, Sidney Howard, Romain Rolland? These names are a challenge to our new theatres' pledge to bring to life in their communities the best in the cultural heritage of humanity.

And to production companies—to actors, directors and designers—the plays of these men

will be a challenge to their creative imagination and their talents. How much more social import can be conveyed in a well-staged classic than in a feebly written contemporary document is well-known in the Soviet theatre! The National Office of the New Theatre League again urges the new theatre groups (and the old) to supplement their repertoires of first-rate new plays with the best of the classics. The new theatres will find that the people in their communities will be grateful for an opportunity to see plays that are properly their cultural heritage but which have too long been denied them.

MARK MARVIN

The Artef Theatre will begin its eleventh year of existence as the first and only Yiddish proletarian art theatre in America during the early days of October with a production of Sholom Aleichem's *200,000*.

Because of the high production level which this valiant organization has established for itself, it is necessary to accumulate a considerable advance sum before even undertaking the first of the three productions a season which are usual with the Artef. A subscription drive for \$10,000 has accordingly been opened. Ranging from \$1 to \$25, the subscription rates offer considerable reductions on actual tickets and provide (in the highest bracket) an unlimited season ticket useful for every performance.

The importance of the continuance of the Artef in Yiddish cultural life can hardly be overestimated, and NEW THEATRE urges all drama-goers to aid the Artef in the creation of its productions by subscribing in advance.

The International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, through its Educational Committee, is offering \$3,000 in two prizes for full-length plays dealing with social conflicts in contemporary American life. The winning play is to be awarded \$2,000; the play in second place will be awarded \$1,000. If, in the opinion of the judges, both plays are of equal merit, prize money will be equally divided. Prize money is exclusive of royalties. The contest closes December 15, 1936. The judges in the competition include Julius Hochman, Max Danish, and Mark Starr of the I.L.G.W.U., and eight others representing various branches of the theatre, whose names will be announced later.

The Repertory Department of the Activities Council for Youth Organizations announces a contest for dramatic monologues dealing with youth problems. All manuscripts will be eligible for inclusion in a volume of monologues to be published in the early fall, and the best monologue will be awarded a prize of \$10. A writer may submit any number of scripts, but each script must be separately entered, with a registration fee of ten cents for handling. The contest closes September 30. Manuscripts must be submitted to the Repertory Department of the Activities Council, Room 1606, 80 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

The Brooklyn Labor Theatre has brought a successful season to a close with a production of *Not Forgotten*. For the first offering of the coming season, it has under consideration *Fortune Heights* by John Dos Passos, *Days of the Turbins* by Bulgakov, and Ernst Toller's *Blind Goddess*.

The Buffalo New Theatre Group has received the official endorsement of the Central Trades and Labor Council of that city and is planning an active season of labor plays.

Bury the Dead will be performed for the first time in Canada when the Montreal New Theatre Group presents Irwin Shaw's play at Victoria Hall in September. The Group, in conjunction with other theatre groups throughout Canada, is sponsoring a contest for one-act Canadian plays.

The National Office of the New Theatre League is sponsoring a series of half-hour broadcasts on Fridays from 10:30 to 11:00 P.M., over Station WLTH, New York City.

Miss Ruth A. Beck, Cornell University B.A., '34, who worked in the direction, production and acting departments of the Cornell University Theatre under Professor Alexander Drummond, has joined the staff of the New Theatre League Repertory Department, and will take charge of the Play Criticism Department.

Two timely scripts will be released by the Repertory Department this month: *Boycott Hearst*, a mass chant in the style of the Living Newspaper, and *Alfy and Willie*, a satire on the Hearst-Landon tie-up.

TO THE EDITORS:

In the article on the Dance Congress, published in the July issue of NEW THEATRE, my paper on *Negro Jazz as Folk Material for our Modern Dance*, read at the Congress, was misinterpreted. I have spent my whole life in extolling the Negro in anything that has to do with either Jazz dancing or Jazz music. I can only guess that it was a mistake on the part of the reviewer and that if my paper had been read instead of heard, it could not have been so misinterpreted.

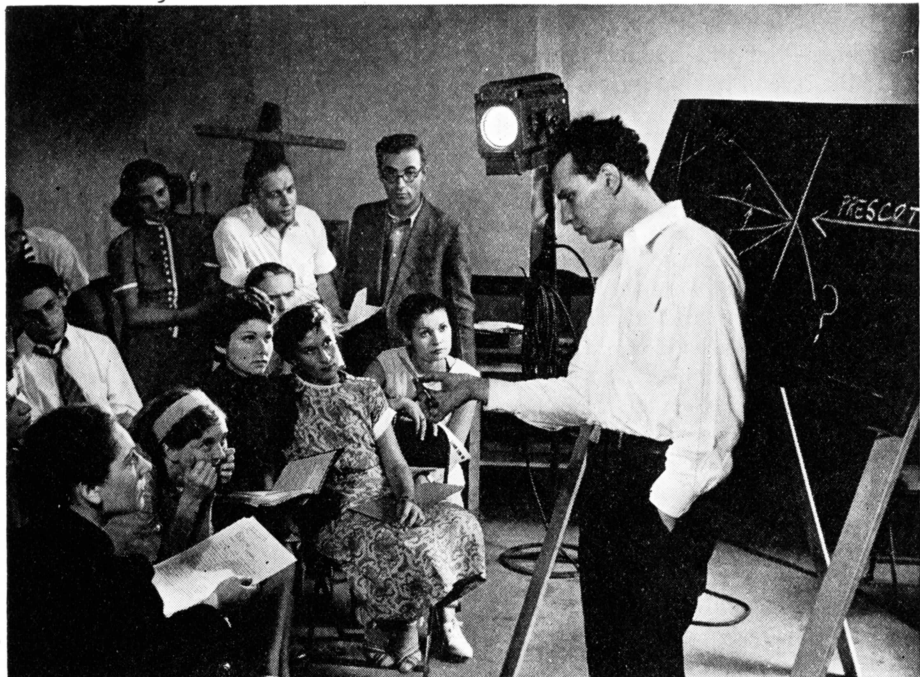
To quote my paper: "Negro Jazz is so infused in all our popular music and dancing that in some degree this entire generation exercises itself in it. . . . Where the 'black face' comedian was an imitation of the Negro idiosyncrasy, white Jazz music and dancing, on the other hand, is our reaction to the Negro impact with our culture."

In this connection, my self-evident statement that "the Negro has used our instruments, our scale, our four part harmony, our shoes to predicate his dancing feet, our clothes to qualify his movements and our 'couple' dancing" was misconstrued to read "Mr. Dodge stated that Jazz was the sole creation of the whites, that the Negroes aped the white man's rhythms."

In two musical articles, *Negro Jazz*, London Dancing Times, 1929, and *Harpichords and Jazz Trumpets*, Hound and Horn, 1934, I have tried to prove that the Negro's contribution to music is the greatest in the last two hundred years.

Would you be so kind as to print this clarification.

ROGER PRYOR DODGE



STUDIO SESSION ON "BLACK PIT," CHICAGO REPERTORY GROUP.

Maxwell Anderson: Thursday's Child

(Continued from page 7)

them running thither to pull the queen out of her chair? . . . Are we too stupid to see that to prohibit a rebellious play is to proclaim our fear of rebellion?"

The Queen is even up to the minute enough to be redder than the rose as she says to Essex:

"Enter and state your grievance,
If you have grievance. For myself I have
A great affection for rebels, being one
myself

Much of the time."

In the two male heroes of these plays, Essex and Bothwell, we find once more the individualists, incapable of control or compromise, of Anderson's early work—Oklahoma and Flagg in doublet and hose, as it were. "You're a man not easily governed, a natural rebel," Bacon tells Essex. An understatement. Essex is the reckless kind that rushes to stick his head in the noose in spite of "his queen's" warning:

The Queen: . . . If you win, that will divide us. And if you lose, that will divide us too.

Essex: I'll win, and it will not divide us.

He'll have his cake and eat it too; he'll will the subjective wish into reality. In the last act, when he has lost and stands condemned, he refuses a pardon from Elizabeth, preferring "to die young and unblemished" than to make the slightest compromise with his "weakness for being first wherever I am." Although he believes that

"That god who searches heaven and earth
and hell

For two who are perfect lovers, could
end his search

With you and me,"

still he rejects that "perfect" love because with it Elizabeth will give him only half, forsooth, and not the perfect and absolute whole, of her kingdom—even though he knows that he would "rule not well."

The two "queen plays" should be regarded as trial balloons with which Anderson tried his audience's reaction to poetry and extended his mastery over dramatic construction. The experiment was successful, and he was emboldened to depart somewhat from tradition in his next poetic play—*Night Over Taos*. He dared to use an American locale, New Mexico in 1847, and to explore a theme potentially significant to-day, the violent overthrow of an outdated social order—specifically the defeat of patriarchal society by capitalist democracy. As in *First Flight* the struggle is symbolized by the rivalry of two men over one woman, and again as in the earlier play democracy

comes in the wake of bullets, calico cloth and whisky. But in *Night Over Taos* the final issue is even more befogged by romantic and idealistic sentiments. The final eclipse of the patriarch, Montoya, is the result not of his military defeat but of his voluntary abdication persuaded by the eloquent liberalism of his son Felipe and the girl Diana—a factually false and in general unhistorical interpretation. The real Montoya did not, the Montoyas of decaying social orders do not, abdicate voluntarily.

Nor does the play pass MacLeish's test of a poetic construction. The subject, though American, is remote in both geography and time; there is little "community of understanding between audience and poet," and the situation demands too much explaining to allow the fullest and freest use of poetry.

Anderson swung back to prose and a modern theme in his next work, *Both Your Houses*. Written in the depths of the crisis when J. P. Morgan paid no income tax, it carefully ignored the crucial problem of its day—the responsibility of the ruling class for the existing conditions and its criminal refusal to shoulder its responsibility. Instead, Anderson did a muckraking job on the corruption of the Congressional servants of the ruling class.

But muckrakers habitually mistake the corollary for the problem. The hirelings of corruption are inevitably corrupt. Anderson glosses over the source of corruption, the ethically insulting economic principles perpetuated by the masters, in order to cry out against the dishonesty and insincerity of their servants. Alan, the young Congressman-hero, fights not for payment of the cost of government by those who derive the benefits, but for economy in administering the policies of the wealthy. His emphasis on honesty brings him, of course, the accusation of being a red. "I'm not a red!" he exclaims indignantly. "I don't like communism or fascism or any other political patent medicine." Here we have the dangerous confusion of the liberal who does not see that having and eating your cake are mutually exclusive—dangerous because so like the incipient fascist's confusion of communism with its opposite, fascism. Alan's only clear conclusion is that Congress "ought to get up and go home." Hitler would agree to that.

Let us be clear on the point. Anderson is certainly not a fascist. But *Both Your Houses* stands as a monument to how far gone in fascistry an "honest" and "sin-

cere" liberal can be—quite without realizing it—who refuses to qualify absolutes: Honest—in whose service? Sincere—in what purpose? Liberty—for whom? for the few to profit at the expense of the many?

When *Valley Forge* appeared, it looked as if Anderson was approaching the goal of combining poetry with revolutionary material. 1778 lay far in the past; but revolution was a lively modern topic. Anderson had the advantage of being able to count on widespread familiarity with the material, so that he could dispense with all but a minimum of explanation. On the other hand, as a romantic hero Washington left a good deal to be desired—compared with Essex, say, or even Andy Jackson. Washington's genius was less for dashing activity than for passive endurance. In expression he was heavy and common-sense rather than brilliant—even when he lost his temper. Leader in a fight for freedom, he was also a master of slaves. Spearhead of the colonial middle class in quest of independence from feudal ties, he was lord of a feudal manor. It was impossible that Washington, when he demanded "the right of free-born men to govern themselves," should mean by it what his ragged, hungry soldiers meant.

Yet Anderson comes off very well. He has the good sense in the play not to exclude the rank-and-file soldiers who fought, froze, starved, deserted, and returned to fight again another year. And he has done them sympathetically and skilfully. Excellent revolutionary theatre is the scene at Howe's headquarters when the rebel soldier Spad interrupts a burlesque on the Revolution by a haymaker to the chin of the Britisher playing the part of Washington—and then, though starving, refuses dinner rather than admit that the Continentals are not well fed at Valley Forge. More sentimental is the conception of Neil, the consumptive—his request for a heroic assignment to give use-value to his inevitable end, and his death in the last act with its feverish eloquence. In fact there is too much romantic and eloquent dying in the last act.

The impressive success of Anderson's ventures in poetic drama, no less from the box-office than from the critical point of view, the growth of his confidence and the maturity of his craftsmanship, made it possible for him in his next play to indulge his own desires as to choice of subject and method. For years he had been edging toward the attempt to treat modern socially significant material as poetry. For years the Sacco-Vanzetti case had preyed on his mind. Dissatisfied with what he calls a "journalistic" treatment of noble themes, he decided to appeal to the social conscience of his con-

temporaries by the most direct possible means. The result was *Winterset*—a recapitulation, in many ways, of all his previous work.

Most of the characters seem poetically simplified and purified versions of people out of earlier plays. Esdras is once more, but more extremely, the idealist ecstatic before the absolute. For Esdras: ". . . The days go by like film, like a long written scroll, a figured veil unrolling out of darkness into fire and utterly consumed. And on this veil, running in sounds and symbols of men's minds

reflected back, life flickers and is shadow going toward flame. Only what men see exists in that shadow. . . ."

Reality is for him subjective; life is but the reflection and echo of the mind. Similarly, Miriamne seems but a purer, tenderer symbol of trustful love than Charity of *First Flight*, Diana of *Night Over Taos*, or Rosalie of *Gods of the Lightning*; and Mio a more desperate individualist, with a heart of purer gold, than Oklahoma, Essex, or the pirate Morgan. But the triumph of the play is a character new in the Anderson roster—the finely imagined Judge Gaunt, whose guilty conscience at having sent a saint to his death is slowly driving him insane. Apparently Sacco-Vanzetti (in the play the two men are merged into one) preys on Anderson's mind only to a less degree than on Judge Gaunt's—or than the "spectre of communism" haunts the capitalist class—and this partial identification between the author and his character and their class has given to the figure of Gaunt a special significance and power.

The theme is announced early in the play by Miriamne:

"Is it better
to tell a lie and live? . . .
But if I had to do it—
I think I'd die."

Later the more mature and articulate Mio states it even better:

"Will you tell me how a man's
to live, and face his life, if he can't
believe
that truth's like a fire,
and will burn through and be seen
though it takes all the years there are?"

The question assumes tremendous social importance when we learn that the truth in question is the how and the why of the death of Sacco-Vanzetti. Mio, the dead man's son, in quest of proof that his father was innocent and railroaded to the chair, seeks out Garth Esdras, eye-witness to the murder of the paymaster and ex-member of the gang that committed the murder. Judge Gaunt comes to Garth seeking the opposite reassurance—

proof of the guilt of Sacco-Vanzetti, and hence vindication of his own bias in the conduct of the trial. Trock, guilty leader of the gang, comes to prevent Garth from speaking.

Act I is frankly radical in temper. It culminates in a scene in which a cop, "in the best police tradition" according to Mio, starts a riot only to accuse the crowd of rioting. The old Anderson hatred and derision of the state, the law and "justice" as instruments of oppression is skilfully established.

In Act II, in one of the most skilful, eloquent and powerful scenes in American drama, the interests and purposes of Mio, Judge Gaunt, Garth and Trock are brought into direct conflict. The verbal duel between Mio and the Judge, in which Judge Gaunt convicts himself to the audience while defending himself to Mio, is precious near great theatre. The first unconvincing moment comes when the supposedly murdered henchman of Trock, Shadow (the name contributes to the sense of unreality—of Esdrasism), reappears like the ghost of Banquo and threatens Trock with a gun, only to go blind with death, drop his gun, collapse, and be put away in the next room. But the incident places Mio in possession of the gun which, a few breathless moments later, establishes the truth by forcing a confession from Trock that the gang did commit the murder for which Sacco-Vanzetti died. In *First Flight* and *Night Over Taos*, truth, then a weapon of bourgeois democracy, had established itself by force. In *Winterset* would truth, a weapon of the working masses, "burn through and be seen" as clearly? Let us see.

Judge Gaunt begs that the truth be suppressed: "You will not repeat this? It will go no further?" "No," says Mio sarcastically, "No further than the moon takes the tides . . . round the earth." Trock threatens: "It won't get far, I guess"—a hollow threat since Mio still holds his gun. Just then the police enter, looking for the demented Judge. Mio tells them of Trock's confession—and of Shadow, murdered by Trock, lying in the next room. Nothing, it seems, can save Trock now or prevent the truth from becoming generally known.

But this is exactly Anderson's object, even though it means sacrificing his play. The police make inquiries. Garth lies of course. But Miriamne lies too, in spite of her principles. At Mio's insistence the police look in the next room and find—nothing. Even Mio looks in. Nothing! Miriamne lies again: "You have dreamed something— isn't it true?" Mio "looks at her comprehendingly"—for by this time he loves this Juliet of the tenements as suddenly and absolutely as any Romeo.

"You want me to say it," he realizes. "Yes, by God, I was dreaming." So the police leave with the Judge, and we are asked to swallow this explanation of the overlooking of Shadow's corpse by three people: "He fell in the hall beyond and we left him there." Up to this moment we have not known of any hall beyond.

Nevertheless, Mio can at least escape; he still has Shadow's gun. Trock tells him: "Don't try using your firearms, amigo baby, the Sarge is just outside." Well, if the police are just outside, Mio can surely get away and take his truth with him; but no: Anderson makes him remain to ask Miriamne, "Why did you lie about Shadow?" The answer is, "I couldn't give them my brother." "You were quite right," says Mio. And now he allows Trock to leave and lie in wait for him outside. Only when escape is impossible does Mio depart.

The third act is superfluous, absurd, contemptible. To prolong suspense, Anderson contrives several more possibilities of escape for Mio. Miriamne joins him outdoors, suggests he could hide in the organ-grinder's shack; but Mio rejects this—it seems he has "claustrophobia" now. "Do you think I'd have time to draw a gun?" Miriamne says no. No one thinks of firing shots in the air to attract the police. Esdras offers to go for help, but is thwarted by Trock's henchmen. The two lovers make love and talk about life. Mio's friend Carr comes in. Mio could use him, but: "I had a message—but I won't send it—not now." Carr leaves. "For me?" asks Miriamne. "I've lost my taste for revenge if it falls on you," Mio explains.

Revenge! The word strikes us between the eyes. *Revenge!* Until now there has been no question of revenge. Mio has wanted the truth in order to "make them see it till it scalds their eyes and make them admit it till their tongues are blistered with saying how black they lied." He has wanted it because a man cannot live unless he believes that truth is an all-powerful weapon for social justice. But now, suddenly, Anderson has abandoned his theme. Mio is merely personally vengeful. The play about truth as a social weapon disappears, and a play of love-versus-hate, a second-hand imitation of *Romeo and Juliet*, is substituted by sleight-of-hand. Follows this incredible passage:

Mio: Miriamne, if you love me
teach me . . . how to live
and forget to hate!

Miriamne: He would have forgiven.

Mio: He?

Miriamne: Your father. (A pause.)

Mio: Yes. (Another pause.)

You'll think it strange, but I've
never

remembered that . . .
 He'd have forgiven—
 then there's no more to say—I've
 groped long enough
 through this everglades of old
 revenges—here
 the road ends.

No more to say . . . Mio has changed his mind about wanting to die. He wants to live now, for Miriamne—with Miriamne. He starts away; but the "bright ironical gods" have put a machine-gun in his road, and he dies operatically. Miriamne insists on dying with her lover; she shouts to the machine-gun that she will tell all. The machine-gun obliges with another shot, and she does an Isolde on top of Mio's corpse. The curtain falls on Esdras on his knees in a dither of ecstasy over this "glory of earth-born men and women" which is to "take defeat implacable and defiant, die unsubmitting." Anderson conveniently forgets that Mio has submitted to the suppression of the truth by which he has lived, while Miriamne has committed suicide!

The third act is superfluous because the tragedy about truth ends with Act II when Mio and his truth, his personal and class interests, are already doomed, while the Judge and his lies, his personal and class interests, are saved. The end is absurd because, with its pyramid of bodies and its indefensible moral, it apes the worst of an outmoded theatricalism. And it is contemptible because the hero's desire to live is born of his betrayal of all he has lived for up to that time—his father's principles. Mio says, "He'd have forgiven." Yet when Maxwell Anderson wrote that treacherous line, he could not have been ignorant of that extraordinary letter by Vanzetti, written shortly before his execution (my italics):

"As long as I can hold a pen, I must write on my assassination. I am a revolutionist and each of my words are intended to be a blow. *I don't forgive any murderers. It would be to betray my beloved ones, my ideas, my comrades, the best of mankind, all the future generation and myself.*"

Nor of this letter from Sacco to his son, written on the night before his execution:

"But remember always, Dante, . . . help the weak ones that cry for help, . . . because that are your better friends; they are the comrades that fight and fall . . .

". . . it is the struggle and fight between the rich and the poor for safety and freedom, Son, which you will understand in the future . . . It would be very useful to you tomorrow when you could use this horrible memory to hold up to the world the shame of the country in this cruel persecution and unjust death. Yes, Dante, they can crucify our bodies today as they are doing, but they cannot destroy our ideas, that will remain for the youth of the future to come."

That, Mr. Anderson, is to "die unsubmitting."

Let's have no misunderstanding about this. We do not quarrel with Anderson's or any dramatist's right to choose his materials—not at all. If he chooses to write a piddling little warmed-over version of *Romeo and Juliet*, that is his affair. And if Anderson had done only that in *Winterset*, we who believe in the theatre as an expression of vital social realities or as a powerful social force would not bother with him. It is precisely because he has wooed and won an audience alive to present-day socio-ethical problems, precisely because he repeatedly chooses themes of major import and has twice invoked for their expression the most potent revolutionary symbols of our time, that he is an artist to be reckoned with. But we have the right to demand of Anderson that he think straight and write clearly about the social themes that instinctively engage his attention—that he have the courage to face the facts and tell the truth.

Truth is castrated in *Winterset*. Even in Act III the play might have been given an affirmative resolution consonant with tragedy. It might have said, "Look! truth to-day is so dangerous to the established order that a man gets killed for knowing the truth." But Mio, by the time he is killed, has abandoned the truth

as mere "revenge" and "hate," and what he dies for is "love." Sacco and Vanzetti identified love with "the struggle and fight between the rich and the poor;" to them love was a human emotion; love for the oppressed meant inevitably hatred for their oppressors. To Anderson love is an absolute—a universal—an abstract, inhuman thing.

No dramatist who has been so consistently drawn to socially significant material and has developed his craft to such a high technical level as Maxwell Anderson, can be dismissed as unimportant. With the eclipse of O'Neill behind his moon of mysticism, Anderson has become the most important playwright of the older generation. But the indispensable question remains: Important for expressing the social truths of to-day? or for suppressing them?

Only he can finally answer. The appearance of the character of Judge Gaunt is a hint that Anderson is not happy in his present position. He is bound to discover, sooner or later, that he cannot become the artist he aspires to be unless he first resolves the paralyzing conflict within himself between his ethics and his class allegiance—a conflict whose irresolution takes the form of an abstract-philosophical flight from reality. He can only become the voice of the social conscience of our time by expressing instead of distorting the realities to which he is drawn.

We must not underestimate the journey he has to make from the refuge of the abstract to the battleground of the real. Thursday's child has far, far to go. He will not get there in a day. There is not even any proof that he is really on his way. But if he is, and if he arrives at the position called for by his conscience, by the experience of his youth, and by his natural sympathies, he will find himself no longer tongue-tied at the crucial moment of his utterance. He will speak as he was born to speak, with the undivided passion of a poet who loves his fellowman.

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Spain Says "Salud!"

(Continued from page 9)

The countryside was positively bucolic. The first sign of trouble in our village was a little after 8 o'clock that night. There was a sudden rush of men, with old-fashioned guns and short meaningless daggers, down the village's steep hill yelling "La Luz"—"La Luz"—"Put out the Lights." Suddenly the village was plunged in medieval blackness. Then there was some shooting. I didn't know what had happened, but when I went to the window facing Malaga I could see it was in flames. All night the rushing up and down the hill went on—but now only whispering could be heard. I sat all through the night, not knowing exactly what was going on.

The next and following days were revelatory. On reaching Malaga, solicitously escorted to the American Consul's house by four armed guards generously provided by the local Popular Front committee, in control of the village, I learned that about 4 o'clock Saturday afternoon (July 18,) at the Calle Larios, a group of military officers and a few soldiers (who didn't know what they were to be used for) read, or tried to read, a proclamation declaring martial law. One of the *Gardes d'Asaltos*—who correspond to New York policemen as to uniform but not as to political sympathies—objected, and a Captain Julin (the name may be spelled incorrectly) of the military group shot him down. Shooting between these military and the police then followed instantaneously. Though the fascist "revolt" was planned to begin simultaneously in North and South that July 18 day—the flareup in Malaga was an accidental anticipation. The People's Front groups did not know of this "revolt" plan. When news reached Malaga several hours later that the *Tercio* (Foreign Legion) had crossed the Straits from Spanish Morocco and had landed in Algeciras, hoping to march up the road—about five hours by motor—to Malaga, bridges were bombed, and defense precautions were taken, such as putting out the lights of my village, which was in the line of march.

Malaga itself was an amazing spectacle. It was as though June's threatening atmosphere had cleared. The faces of the people somehow were different—fresh, with an "up" expression. Here were the same poorly clad men of the Workers' Theatre with guns slung over their shoulders patrolling the streets. Houses all were decked with protecting red flags. This did not mean that all in the houses were "red"—on the contrary, it indicated only that they were for the Republic. All motors on the streets were

in the hands of People's Front committees, or the police. They too had red gauze covering one of the head-lights. After the first three days of fighting, the trams began to run, crowded with citizens, armed and unarmed, some taking the ride to see a destroyed Malaga, others going to work. On the trams, groups of young men and women joyously sang the *Marseillaise* (taught in Spain's Republican schools since 1931) and the *Internationale*. Everyone was feeling good! The attitude toward foreigners—like myself—was friendly. While I was in Malaga I did not hear of one act of violence against a foreigner or his property. There was destruction, confiscations—as of food for the poor, or motors, in many instances returned each evening—but no looting. When I told the Malaga Committee my work for the theatre and in painting was in my villa half an hour from the town, I was escorted personally by the President of Malaga's Socialist Party, with four armed guards, one being the President of the *Bomberos*—no—no, it's just Spanish for plumbers—along a road still unclear of fascist snipers. I made the mistake of trying to pay them—and they needed all the money they could get for the defense of Malaga—yet they would take nothing. And they had more important things to do!

This is a last-ditch war to the death—for life—by the Spanish people. They will win.

Impressions of Nazi Drama

(Continued from page 15)

The new plays safely based on past history were all special pleading for the National Socialist Party and its policy. One of January of this year, von Zwehl's *Uprising in Flanders*, and another of March of this year, Klucke's *The Devil's Concert* both deal with the same time and period, the revolt of the Spanish Netherlands, as Goethe's *Egmont*, but carefully avoid the generous implications of Goethe's work and are merely carefully prepared foretastes of the present narrow nationalism of the Nazis.

Shortly before the Nazis came into power, Ferdinand Bruckner, by origin a Rumanian Jew, had written a very successful play on *Queen Elizabeth* which Nazi rowdies had tried to break up. Now they had set up their dictatorship, they not only completely forbade this play, but tried to replace it by another play about Queen Elizabeth, Hans Schwarz' *Rebel in England*. The "rebel," the Earl of Essex, is a sort of prototype of Hitler, whom the blonde-haired youths salute with a Nazi salute and a "Heil Essex!" and who utters the typical Hitlerian threat: "Heads must roll!" Ambassadors from Russia, resembling Ger-

man caricatures of Bolsheviks, come with a modest proposal that the Virgin Queen should become the wife of Ivan the Terrible, who had already gone Henry VIII one better by having seven wives. Elizabeth parries by proposing that Ivan should marry the lady whom Essex secretly loves.

Hanns Johst, now the Nazi head of repertoire, made his fame by his play *Schlageter* about the Nazi martyr during the French invasion of the Ruhr, who dies crying "Deutschland Erwache!" I saw another play of Johst's produced this winter, *Thomas Paine* in which it is Tom Paine who is the prototype of Hitler and at Valley Forge, beats on the drum as he sings his patriotic song. The fact that Washington came in smoking a corn cob pipe, that the American Revolutionary soldiers march to the goose-step and that Valley Forge was said to be in "Western Pennsylvania" and that from there across the "White Mounts" lay—not the state of Maine,—but the Great West, was all a little disconcerting to Americans. The fact that Thomas Paine was put in the same prison cell with King Louis XVI and that he came out sixteen years later to find the Directory still in power must have been equally disconcerting to the French. Hanns Johst modestly explained to me that Shakespeare and Shaw had taken equal liberties with history. Why should not he?

In May of this year, Alfred Mühr's *White Eagle* gives us a good fascist picture of the revolt of the Poles under Pilsudski against the Russians. In June of this year, another ultra patriotic play, *Fighters and Dreamers*, represented in the Germany of 1849, Nazi ideals triumphant over the liberals of that period who are represented as Jews.

Since June, the latest and most spectacular of Nazi dramas has been, of course, the Olympic games. Here, of course, the 100% Nordics were supposed to be the heroes of the performance and those of darker skin the villains. But

something seems to have gone wrong with the performance and we find some of the Negroes running away with the show. The actors apparently did not stick to their lines. As is often the case with Nazi drama, the final effect is quite different from what the Ministry of Propaganda had intended.

Who Owns the Movies?

(Continued from page 18)

commercially practicable in 1912. Charles Urban came here from London in an effort to sell his color photography inventions to the patents trust. They maintained silence in the face of his eager explanations until he finally returned to London in discouragement.

The Patents Company did what it could to retard the development of full-length feature films as they are known today. In 1912 came the decision of the U. S. Supreme Court declaring the combination illegal, and its patents invalid. But it was not until 1915 that its dissolution was ordered and a heavy fine imposed upon the group, who had then got out from under, leaving only a shell for the government to levy upon.

Sound pictures date back to the experiments of Eugene Lauste, in 1907. What was lacking was proper amplification and better recording methods. Neither the patents trust, nor the powerful independent groups that superseded it, ever paid serious attention to the matter. Even in the period from 1923 to 1926 the advent of sound was regarded with horror by the big movie interests.

It seemed a needless and willful upsetting of the apple cart. Talkies were virtually forced on the industry by the bank-controlled electrical companies. Producers hated talkies because they meant a new and tremendous investment and because the language difficulty threatened to cut off their foreign markets.

Three-dimensional photography is still talked of, in the movie trade press, as an interesting experiment and a pleasant but impractical dream. If any producer is making serious efforts to develop it, it is a deep secret.

Few movie magnates will admit it, but they dread the thought of three-dimensional photography because it would mean, in all likelihood, the adoption of the stereoptical principle which would require scrapping of every bit of photographic and projection machinery which is now in use and would probably double the amount of film needed to make a picture.

Criticism of the film's low artistic standards used to be met during the post-war hey-day of the film's industrial development by the argument that "you've got to give the public what it wants." Today in the era of growing monopoly control, the rigid motto of the bankers who control movies from studio to screen is "the public takes what it gets."

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Backstage

As we go to press, a group of writers, actors, directors and other professionals have formed the Theatre Committee for the Defense of the Spanish Republic. The Committee has already placed in production a play on Spain by Kenneth White which will be given two performances at the Hotel Delano on Sunday, September 20. The play is to be directed by Joe Losey and performed by a cast of professional actors. Proceeds of the performances will go to the aid of the Spanish forces fighting against the fascist rebels. The Committee's address is 229 West 42nd Street, N. Y. C.

Readers will be interested to learn that the New Theatre League is sponsoring an exhibition of stage designs by Moi Solataroff for the Artef Theatre. The exhibition will be held at the A.C.A. Galleries, 52 West 8th Street, New York City, from October 15 to November 1. It will include all of Mr. Solataroff's work for the theatre, from his designs for *At the Gate* (1928) to those for the Artef's forthcoming production of Sholom Aleichem's *200,000*. Mr. Solataroff is also a well-known painter and has had exhibitions at the Montrose, Murray and Anderson Galleries in New York City, and in Rio de Janeiro and Paris. NEW THEATRE will reproduce several of Mr. Solataroff's stage designs in October.

Elias Castelnuovo, well-known South American left-wing playwright and critic,

is in imminent danger of being deported to his native Uruguay by the authorities in Buenos Aires. Organizer of the Left Theatre and author of sixteen books and three plays, Castelnuovo would suffer certain imprisonment and possible death at the hands of the fascist government of Uruguay. All readers of NEW THEATRE are urged to send protests against the deportation of Castelnuovo to the Argentine Consul General at 17 Battery Place, New York City, and to the Argentine Ambassador in Washington, D. C., demanding the right of asylum for Castelnuovo in Argentina, where he has held citizenship papers since 1923, and resided for nearly twenty years.

Philip Stevenson is the author of two novels, *The Edge of the Nest* and *The Gospel According to St. Luke's*, and several plays, including *Back Where You Came From*, which was recently produced by the Theatre Collective of New York.

Lincoln Kirstein's latest book, *Dance*, was reviewed in our April issue.

Bernard D. N. Grebanier, who reviews Smirnov's *Shakespeare* in this issue, is a professor at Brooklyn where his particular courses are Shakespeare courses. At present he is working on a book on Hamlet.

H. W. L. Dana, whom readers will recall for his essay on Maxim Gorki as dramatist in last month's NEW THEATRE, reappears with his impressions of drama under the Nazis.

Irwin Swerdlow is drama critic of Justice, publication of the I.L.G.W.U.

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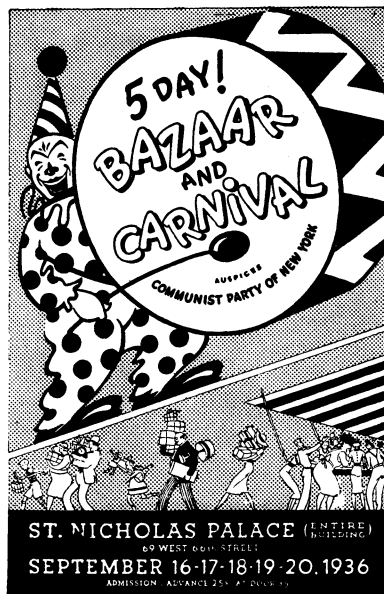
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