

New Theatre

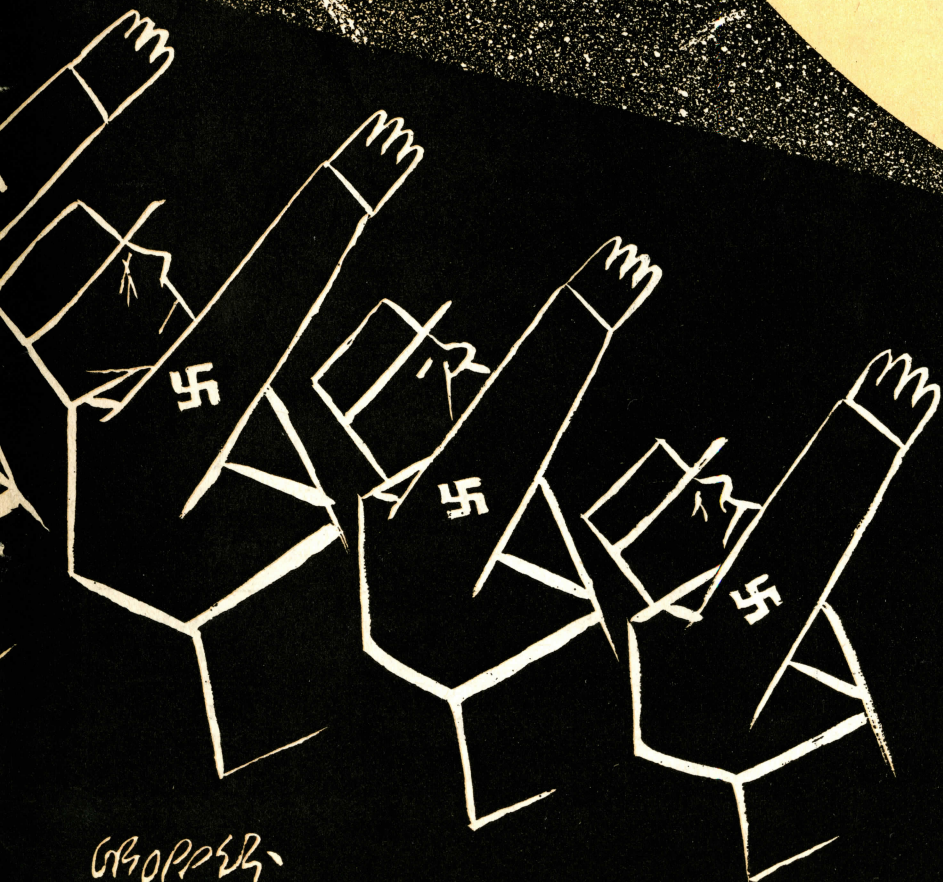
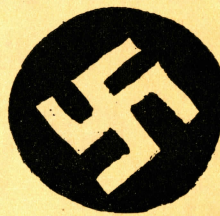
“Parade Ground Art”—

The German Film
Under Hitler

by Carl Dreher

“The Living Newspaper”

by Morris Watson

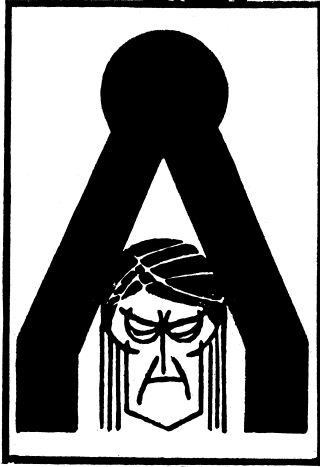


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NEW THEATRE

JUNE, 1936

After the successes scored with *Murder in the Cathedral*, *Triple-A Plowed Under*, *Chalk Dust*, *Macbeth* and *Censored*, the Federal Theatre has proven its right to exist not only on a provisional relief basis but as a national people's theatre subsidized by the government. Through its travelling troupes and more "permanent" companies, it has aroused a new, nationwide interest in the theatre. The SRO signs at the WPA shows are the result of a policy of good artistic entertainment, and a price range which permits people of moderate means to attend the theatre. Yet, at the height of its success, with new production like *1935*, *Battle Hymn*, *Class of '29* and *Dance of Death* on the boards, the Federal Theatre Project and other WPA Projects are meeting with severe opposition on the part of reactionary interests.

Why? Curiously enough, the theatre itself presents the situation in a nutshell. In George White's *Scandals of 1936*, Project workers were ridiculed and misrepresented as boondogglers and idlers. The *Scandals'* musical comedy portrayal was not only a libel against the relief worker, it also reflected the mocking attitude of reactionaries and Congressmen to the basic issues facing the American people, economic security and unemployment insurance.

Although President Roosevelt's recent pronouncements on relief indicate that white collar Projects, which include the Arts Projects, will not be abandoned, relief workers have a right to look with real concern on the administration's relief program. Last year the cost of caring for twelve million unemployed amounted to \$4,800,000,000. For the same number, the administration now proposes to appropriate \$1,425,000,000. Thus, while apparently fighting the Liberty League's program for relief curtailment, the federal government is making enormous concessions to the reactionaries. Undoubtedly the elections, with the relief issue the main ammunition of the Republicans, have influenced the Democrats in making this drastic curtailment of relief funds.

Organized labor forced the inclusion of the Prevailing Wage Amendment in

the Relief Appropriation Bill. Even with this amendment, however, the bill will throw at least 700,000 workers back on the dole. Led by Congressman Marcantonio, the struggle is on for a two-billion dollar addition to the appropriation to take care of those workers whom the administration plans to drop from the rolls. But the real demands of the unemployed in the Workers' Alliance and the WPA workers are contained in the Marcantonio Relief Projects Standards Bill, also before Congress. This bill provides that the federal government "appropriate and continue to appropriate funds for the purpose of creating employment for the unemployed and where such employment cannot be provided, direct cash relief sufficient to provide every human being the minimum necessary to maintain life in health and decency."

The fate of the arts projects is bound up with the whole relief issue. NEW THEATRE calls upon its readers to send in letters to their representatives endorsing this bill. Every person and every organization supporting this bill now before Congress will be helping America's twelve million unemployed in their struggle for adequate relief standards.

Note: As we go to press, the District of Columbia court's ruling that the Resettlement Administration is unconstitutional has threatened the whole federal relief structure.

The Equity Elections

The campaign which has been waged against the independent nominees for the Actors' Equity elections on May 25th has been carried to extraordinary lengths. A letter sent to members early in May, signed by a small group of leading actors which included Katharine Cornell, Helen Hayes and Philip Merivale, declared that the attempt to elect independent council members was "a very clever political move on the part of a minority radical group." This accusation was made despite the fact that the petition for the independent ticket had been signed by Fredric March, Whitford Kane, Edwin Arnold, James Cagney, Walter Abel,

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THE AUDIENCE OF A WPA MARIONETTE SHOW AT THE MILLS HOTEL Martin Harris

Melvyn Douglas, Helen Gahagan, Glenn Anders, Groucho Marx, Jimmy Durante, Roland Young and Ilka Chase. George Abbott not only signed the petition, but answered the above letter by one of his own, in which he charged that "an Equity agent, coming to rehearsals in an official capacity, has taken aside young inexperienced members and secured their signatures for the regular ticket. This," added Mr. Abbott, "is a little terrifying. It is close to coercion. I happen to know personally most of the candidates running on the independent ticket, and if it is fair to call them dangerous radicals, then I am afraid it is fair to call those in power 'Bourbons'."

Ostensibly in answer to Mr. Abbott's declaration, another letter, signed this time by the "Voluntary Campaign Committee for the Regular Equity Ticket," declared that "we have a group of dissent and discord among us. They have been very active in the last two years creating all sorts of internal frictions over unimportant matters, mostly matters which should never have been brought up in times like these." The letter then went on to imply that the independent ticket was solely engineered by "this group."

Readers of *NEW THEATRE* may recall that the group of "dissent and discord" has been responsible, among other things, for such *unimportant matters* as pay for rehearsals, protection against unfair salary cuts, and the abolition of the Junior minimum salary. The names listed above in addition to some three hundred other signatures to the nominating

petition, should dispose of the charge that the independent ticket is backed only by a "minority radical group." Lastly, the attempt to identify opposition with disruption is profoundly undemocratic; the right of opposition has always been a fundamental principle of democracy.

Undoubtedly either a partial or complete victory for the independent ticket in the May 25th elections will assure a more progressive and democratic Equity in the future. Among other things it would insure a greater degree of cooperation with the Dramatists' and Screen Writers' Guilds of the Authors' League, and the other theatrical unions.

The National Dance Congress

NEW THEATRE went to press before the formal opening of the first National Dance Congress on April 18th. Delegates traveling from as far west as California and Oregon arrived in New York to attend the six performances and the four conferences scheduled for the week. Approximately 220 dancers appeared in the productions and 25 speakers, representative of diverse points of view, addressed the delegates and the general public. Here, with one or two exceptions, was the first true united front in the dance world: a united front composed of musicians, amateurs, professionals, representative of all the modern schools of dance, folk groups, ballet dancers, Broadway hoofers, and Lindy-hoppers.

On the economic front, although the dancer constitutes about fifty per cent of the stage profession, she is the least organized. Jobs are increasingly difficult

to get, and the Projects are taking care of an extremely small percentage of the unemployed. Teachers make no livelihood teaching, concert dancers have never been able to support themselves on recitals, young professionals have almost accepted as natural the fact that many of them earn their daily bread as salesgirls and clerks. Can the professional dancer, for whom at present there is no union, be organized? Ralph Whitehead, executive secretary of the American Federation of Actors, speaking at the Congress, may serve as the guiding hand in the drive to unionize the unorganized dancer, not under A. F. of L. jurisdiction.

On the cultural front, the problems seem more complex. Several associations exist with overlapping programs, in many cases with duplicated membership. Here is a waste of energy and a draining away of strength that can be remedied by the resolutions for joint action, which this Congress should propose. There is a definite need, too, for a *professional dancers organization*. Esthetic and technical differences must be subordinated in order to facilitate close cooperation and friendship among all dancers—ballet as well as modern, theatre as well as concert. Progressive dancers must stand together as a cultural and social force, a strong united bulwark against all forms of reaction and censorship.

This the Congress must do. As a lasting result of this first attempt, there must be a basis for a permanent and close knit professional organization of the entire dance world, in order to insure itself artistic and economic clarification.

Prizes for Plays

The recent spring freshet of prize awards raises some familiar problems. Is a play to be judged for its entertainment value, for its technical merit, for the ideas which it presents, or for a combination of all three? Is it likely that each year one play will achieve excellence in all three categories, and if such a paragon fails to appear, should not the award for the best play temper its praise with a little criticism? Finally, is it possible or even desirable to attempt to single out *the* best play of the season, with the blanket endorsement which such a selection involves?

Coming down to cases, there is this year's Pulitzer Prize-winner, *Idiot's Delight*. No one will deny that Mr. Sherwood's play furnishes an entertaining evening in the theatre. But it is obvious that its author also intended it to be a plea against war. His work must therefore be judged on a level other than that of pure entertainment. Seen in this light, is Mr. Sherwood's *mélange* of chorus



THE AUDIENCE OF A WPA MARIONETTE SHOW AT THE MILLS HOTEL

Martin Harris

girls and cosmopolitans, together with the reunion and re-attraction of a couple who once dallied together in Kansas City, the combination best calculated to impress his audience with the superiority of peace? It seems more probable, instead, that the Pulitzer Prize has been awarded to a play in which integrity of thought has been sacrificed, almost to the point of cheapness, for the sake of that anomalous quality known as "good theatre." Has not Mr. Sherwood himself gone on record as saying that "to be a successful playwright you have to cheat a little?"

Turning to the Drama Critics' Circle award, no one will deny that Maxwell Anderson's *Winterset* is a work of uncommon stature which contains a great measure of fine writing and high thinking. Yet in it, the man who once wrote *Gods of the Lightning*, an uncompromising arraignment of the murder of Sacco and Vanzetti, expounds a creed of bitterness, romanticism and empty philosophic assuagement. He extends his compassionate understanding to the judge who killed the two men, and makes the son of one of them turn against his heritage with the words, "teach me a treason to what I am and have been, till I learn to live like a man!"

What is needed is a clear and rational system of critical evaluation which would require a dramatic critic to pay as much attention to what a play says as to how it says it. Due credit would then be given *Winterset* for its literary and dramatic qualities, along with an analysis of its defeatist philosophy and reactionary implications.

For its part, NEW THEATRE nominates Clifford Odet's *Paradise Lost*, Albert Bein's *Let Freedom Ring*, Sidney Kingsley's *Dead End*, Paul Green's *Hymn to the Rising Sun* and Irwin Shaw's *Bury the Dead* to a 1935-36 role of honor for plays which, despite undeniable shortcomings, unite good theatre and fine craftsmanship with integrity and a stirring message.

The Dramatists' Strike

The dramatists' strike seems to be nearing settlement. The contract committees of the playwrights' and producers' organizations have reached an agreement, which has been ratified by the Dramatists' Guild Council and by the members of the League of New York Theatres. It will be submitted to the membership of the Dramatists' Guild for ratification at a general meeting on May 25th, too late for treatment in the current issue of NEW THEATRE. A detailed report of the settlement will be forthcoming in an early issue.

German Theatre Front

While Herr Goebbels regiments the Nazi theatres to such a point of dullness that even loyal Nazis must be lured in by special cut-rate prices, there are fresh signs that the *German* theatre is not dead. NEW THEATRE reprints on this page a photostatic copy of the cover of an underground pamphlet which is being issued and circulated at the risk of life itself in Germany today. *Artist, Awake!* and a companion publication, *Notebook for Artists*, are exciting evidence that not all the thousands of actors who have been forcibly liquidated by the Hitler regime have given up the struggle in despair, or embraced the tenets of the new Teutonic-Aryan art.

From the first actors like Hans Otto (murdered by the Nazis) have carried on an uncompromising struggle against the Nazi regime. Their forces are now being strengthened by the addition of many who accepted the general principles of National Socialism but stood out none the less against the reactionary artistic policies of such Nazi leaders as Rosenberg, Goebbels, Schultze-Naumburg and others. Many younger players attempted in all sincerity to reconcile their own artistic credo with the Nazi-Aryan totalitarian state. The government ruthlessly suppressed any such deviations, with the result that it has driven its critics into complete opposition.

Despite government terrorism, the work of protest and organization goes on in ever-widening circles of influence. An illegal magazine called *Footlights (Rampe)*, of which the above-mentioned pamphlets are the first two issues, is appearing regularly. About a thousand copies are printed by a rotograph process on thin paper; the actual circulation is undoubtedly much larger, since the copies are passed from hand to hand. The editors call themselves "the opposition members of the Reich Kunstammer", the government-organized "union" which superseded the old German Actors' Association, dissolved for its outspoken denunciations of Hitler.

Yet another manifestation of organized opposition comes from outside Germany, in the guise of a new monthly publication, *The Theatre Artist (der Bühnen-Künstler)*, edited by a group of Swiss actors in Zurich. Its pages bear evidence that the German-speaking actors in regions adjacent to the Third Reich—Switzerland, Czechoslovakia and Austria—have drawn certain conclusions from the fate which has overwhelmed their col-

leagues and which now hangs, not too remotely, over their own heads. The first issue, dated February, 1936, calls on all theatre workers to unite in a militant front against the dual menace of Nazi penetration of ideals, and political domination. The theatre cannot turn its back on life; the actor, as a member of society and a citizen, is inexorably affected both as an individual and as an artist, by political and social events. If he wishes to survive he must fight. Above all he must face clearly the grim facts of his present situation. On the other hand, he must avoid defeatism and despair: "No cause is lost until the will to struggle is lost, until the combatants abandon themselves hopelessly to the fear of what is to come".

In addition to its task of leadership and organization, *The Theatre Artist* will publish informative articles on working conditions in the theatre, with a view to fighting censorship, wage cuts and the deterioration of standards of production. An excellent start has been made in this direction in the first two issues, which carry articles on a new system of auditions in Zurich to help actors find jobs, on the history of the German Actors' Association, and detailed information regarding working conditions, wage scales, repertory and general financial stability of German theatres in Zurich, Basle, Lucerne, Vienna, Linz and elsewhere.

An editorial refutes the old fallacy of no money for art when people are hungry. Make the theatre as vital to people as bread itself, demands *The Theatre Artist*, rightly putting the burden of justification on the theatre itself: "A theatre that has nothing to say to the mass of people has no right to their support. The theatre does not belong to the upper minority of society, which in any case no longer has any idea of what to do with it; it belongs to the broad masses of people. . . ."

ELEANOR FLEXNER.



COVER OF "ARTIST, AWAKE!"

The Living Newspaper

BY MORRIS WATSON

The current edition of the Living Newspaper at the Biltmore Theatre, 1935, recounts various happenings of the year for which it is named and represents a deliberate experiment in the matter of presenting news visually.

The Living Newspaper's first offering, *Triple-A Plowed Under*, took a single theme and developed it along news lines and actually was more pamphlet than newspaper. In 1935 unrelated items are presented on the same program, and the tempo of the year, rather than the history, is stressed.

The edition opens its story at 11:58 p. m. of the last day of 1934 with a crowd of merrymakers at Times Square. The commentator asks if they remember Hindenburg, John L. McGraw and Marie Curie who died in 1934. And do they remember the assassination of King Alexander and the burning of the Morro Castle? Midnight comes with a blast of noise.

"Make news!" the commentator pleads. Twelve representatives of the Great American public get into a box to judge the events and the Voice of the Living Newspaper quickly announces January 2, the opening of the trial of Bruno Richard Hauptmann for the kidnaping and murder of Baby Charles A. Lindbergh, Jr. A Flemington, N. J., ballyhoo man proudly conducts a crowd of curious through the courtroom and tells them where Gloria Vanderbilt, Big Nick Cavarro and other celebrities parked themselves for the trial. The trial goes on with the crowd rushing for seats, with re-

porters quarreling over the purchase of exclusive stories from the principals. Betty Gow is called. "I couldn't hear the baby breathe," Miss Gow testifies. As she speaks the courtroom blacks out, a spot comes up on a stylized witness stand in the center. The stand becomes a crib. She feels over the covers. Her expression becomes one of horror. She hesitates an instant. Then she screams: "Colonel Lindbergh! Colonel Lindbergh!" and rushes off. "Jafsie" Condon comes on to testify. But he does not testify. He acts out what he has to say and the mysterious "John" of Van Cortlandt Park and the cemetery helps him. The spotlight turns to an eerie green. Leaves rustle. "John" sits with the elderly Bronx pedagogue and asks: "Would I burn if the baby is dead?"

Thus the technique of reporting a trial visually without merely reproducing it on the stage in a word-for-word manner.

Next comes a scene that violates all the rules of dramatic writing. But the Living Newspaper is a combination of newspaper and topical revue. It is reporting the passage of the Wagner-Connery labor disputes bill in the terms of an actual case. A young lady appears to testify before an examiner for the board. Her words become reality. "They shut off the power and made us all go to a big room," she starts. She is talking about the Somerset Manufacturing Company of Sommerville, N. J. The curtain opens on a bunch of scared young girls and reveal the lengths to which small New Jersey towns will go to keep America safe for

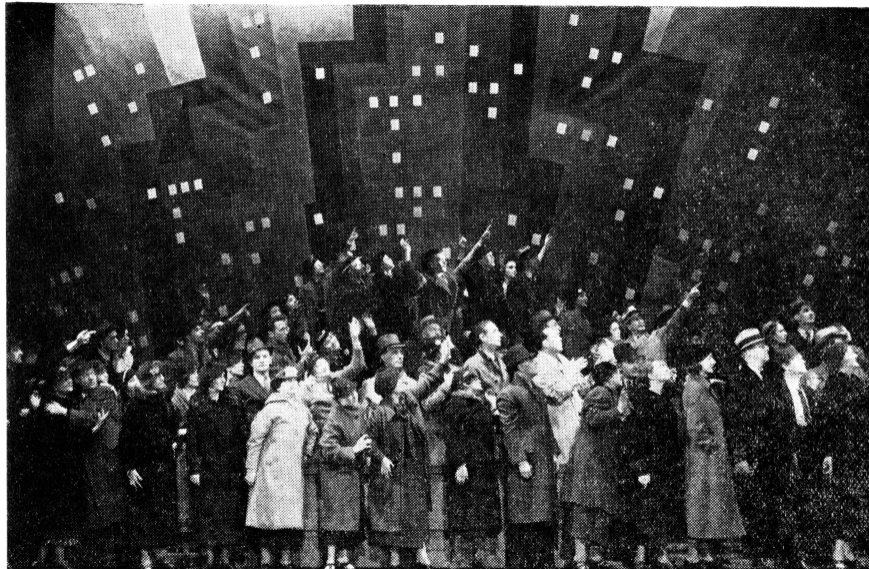
the exploited open shop. The episode ends with another piece of testimony acted out. One of the young ladies finds her pay is short. She goes to the office girl. She's right. Her pay is short. But wait—that's the book for the NRA code inspector. According to the book she gets *paid* by, the miserable wage she got is all she had coming. No climax. The critics call it anti-climax. The boys of the fourth estate who edit the Living Newspaper are just telling a story for what it is worth. The scene may lack the customary punch expected at the end of a dramatic sketch. Anyone viewing it, though, should be able to see why labor needs some legal protection.

That the scene should have a "wallop" at the end may be a valid criticism. I'm not saying that it isn't. The usual news story is written with the punch at the top. We newspapermen are newly wedded to the theatre. We have a lot to learn about each other. A dozen more editions should put us in step. The stride may surprise us.

A sop to humor follows the labor problem in 1935. Bugsy Goldstein is sore as hell. Officials have re-rated the public enemies—and he's only No. 6. Just a flash. The Great American Public plays a Giants-Dodgers ball game from its bunting-bedecked jury box. The scene means nothing to me because I never saw the Dodgers play. I can't take sides here. The fans laugh like hell, and that makes it a good item for the Living Newspaper's sports page.

Barbara Hutton gets married. This





time to a count. The Living Newspaper falls back on the manner in which Miss Ruth McKenny handled the story for the New York Post: the manager of a Woolworth five-and-ten would be glad to let the Post photograph one of its workers who also was to be a bride that day—only, Miss Hutton might not like it!

The next scene makes its own comment on the human race. William Deboe is hanged at Smithland, Ky. Folks turn out early to get good seats. Deboe was convicted of rape. He points to his accuser and says: "If I had five hundred dollars I wouldn't be here, she'd a taken it." What a thing to say! "Not if you offered me a thousand," she comes back. A preacher intones the Lord's Prayer. "Peanuts, Popcorn, Crackerjack," yells the candy butcher. So far as we could determine, the scene is staged exactly as it happened. Two minutes before the curtain went up on opening night the actor who plays the preacher became convinced the Living Newspaper was poking fun at the Lord's Prayer. He said he wouldn't go on! We had to explain the idea.

Under the general heading of "Trivia" comes the case of the prisoner who was forgotten, who served eighteen years of a five year sentence, and the man who advertised that he found a lady's purse in the backseat of his automobile. He was willing to pay for the ad himself if the owner would explain the matter to his wife who couldn't imagine how the purse got there. A laugh.

The Voice of the Living Newspaper sweeps through the mention of several other headlines of 1935 and then Dutch Schultz comes on the scene—to beat the law, to die at the hands of the mob. The Great American Public discusses matters, not too relevantly. Then, Huey Long manipulates his legislators like puppets

and swaggers on to his assassination. The legislative scene is stylized. It becomes a living cartoon and through it the Living Newspaper learns that it can pack potency into its editorial page.

The Great American Public again—to disagree on whether the assassination of Huey Long was a national crisis, and wind up by being indifferent to the whole matter.

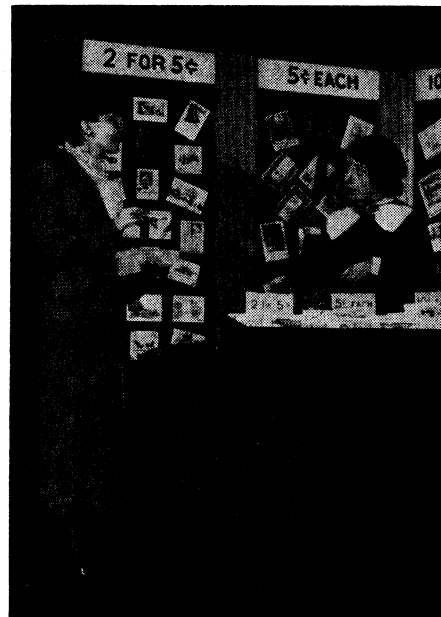
In 1935 Jeremiah T. Mahoney and Avery Brundage argued about American participation in the Olympic games at Berlin. "Sport must confine itself to the affairs of sport and no other," says Brundage. The Living Newspaper reports the incident, and illustrates sport as it is practised in the land of the Nazis. The best tennis player is removed from his team because he is a Jew. A Polish-Jewish soccer player is killed. A Catholic swimmer is stoned. The Living Newspaper doesn't say anything is right or wrong. The audience does pretty well in making its own decision on the matter. I know of no way to censor hisses.

John L. Lewis makes a plea for industrial unionism. President William Green of the American Federation of Labor is adequately quoted. The Living Newspaper tries to illustrate the argument. No kick there.

The China Clipper flies from Asia to America in 62 hours for the sake of commerce. A thriller, and another experiment. The Living Newspaper is feeling its way.

Angelo Herndon in jail with a "mercy" sentence of 18 to 20 years on the chain gang.

"That's sho' death," says another prisoner who spent six months on a Georgia chain gang. Here a test of visual reporting. The prisoner stands in the cell and describes the horrors of Georgia torture.



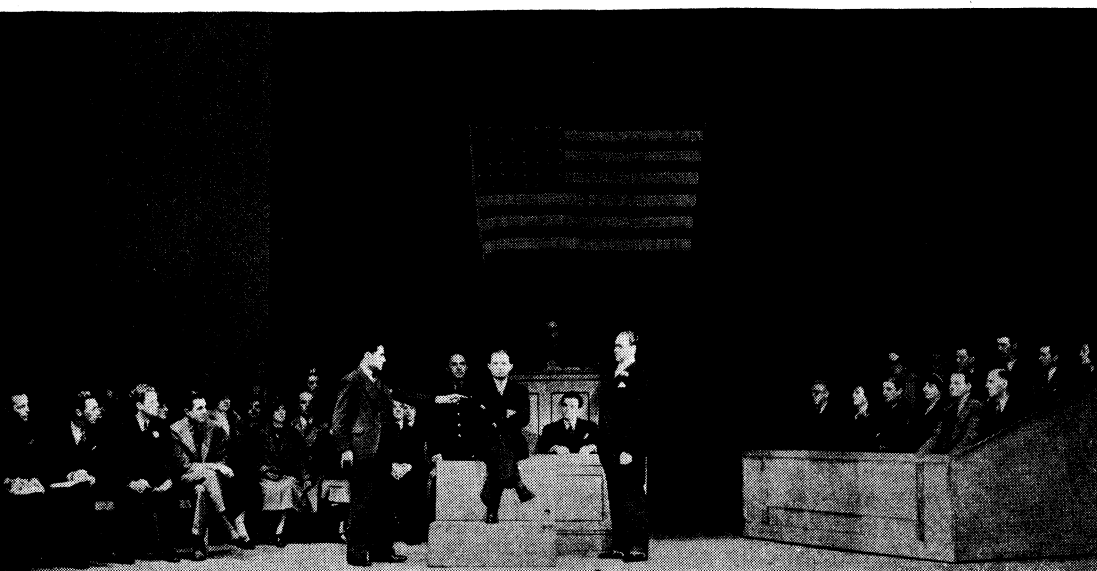
The lights on him dim. The curtains open slowly and the audience gets a vivid glimpse of what he is saying. Silhouettes against a red light wield picks on a road. Over them hover the ominous, 20-foot high shadows of guards, rifles and whips held in position of "ready."

"Ef yo' cain't stand it no mo' and drop in yo' tracks that ol' whip come crackin' down agin and somp'n make yo' get up and raise a pick and drop a pick agin," the prisoner says. The silhouetted whip cracks.

The crowd is in Times Square again. Horns are tooting. Bells are ringing.

Happy New Year! Welcome 1936.

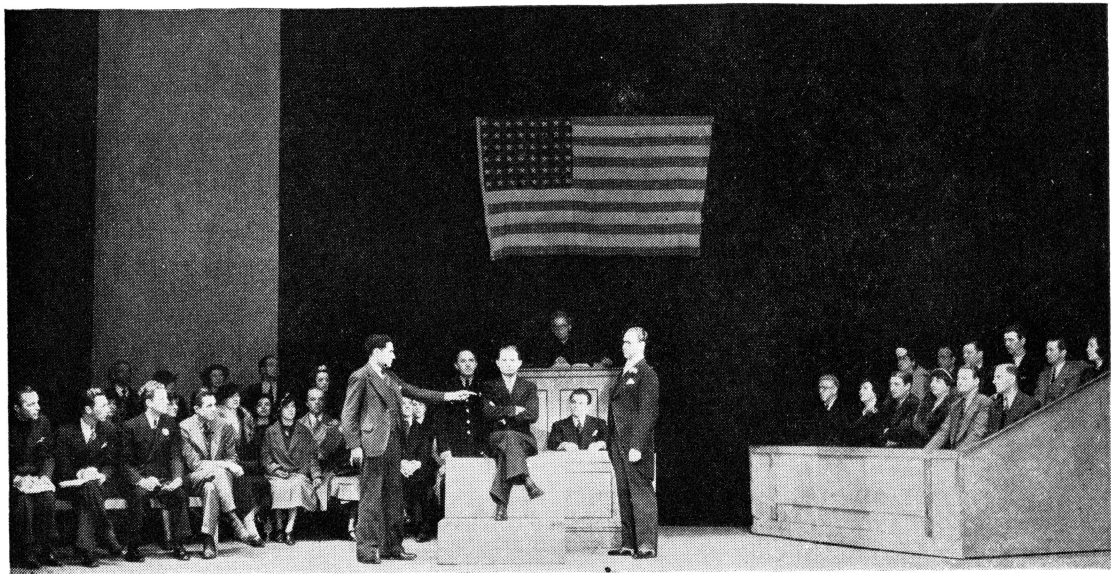
It is difficult to compare this kaleidoscopic report of the year's events which lent themselves to staging with the Living Newspaper's first edition, *Triple-A Plowed Under* which tied the plight of the the farmer to the plight of the city man



Four scenes from The Living Newspaper's "1935"; left to right, the Times Square crowd welcomes 1935, Georgia Chain Gang, the Hauptmann trial. Above: Scene from Barbara Hutton Weds.

Photos by Arthur Steiner





Photos by Arthur Steiner

and disturbed the mental processes of those who saw it. In other words, it made people think. 1935 hasn't as much of that virtue, and it is open to a great deal more criticism. Each of its scenes is likely to be judged from a purely theatrical standpoint. They cannot, as did the scenes of *Triple-A Plowed Under*, flow into each other, contributing to another.

Many times lately I have been asked: "Whose idea is the Living Newspaper?" The answer is: "I don't know."

The business of presenting news on the stage has been tried before—in vaudeville, by workers' clubs, in the Workers' Laboratory Theatre of New York and elsewhere. I also have hearsay evidence that Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur once toyed with the idea and that similar enterprises flourished for a time in Berlin and Moscow.

Whatever the idea behind the Living Newspaper in the beginning, circumstance and influences of one kind and another have modified it. A literally rough estimate of it at the moment would be: "Combine the newspaper and the theatre and to hell with the traditions of both."

My own connection with the enterprise was an accident. Last October the Newspaper Guild of New York was looking for some way to absorb a few of its unemployed in the newly formed Federal Theatre Project. The Guild's unemployment committee went to Elmer Rice, then the Regional Director for New York.

Rice suggested that a Project be formed to present news on the stage. The committee began looking for some one to head the project. The first I heard of it was when I was asked if I knew of any one who would fit the job. I didn't. The heavy hand of coincidence entered the plot at this point and I found myself "at liberty." To cut the corners on this explanation, there was thrust upon my shoulders the task of organizing the project.

I was greatly excited by the idea. For many years I had been covering living drama and visualizing it in terms of the stage. The amazing thing about the Living Newspaper is that it was so late in coming. The explanation may be that newspaper men have been timid about barging into the theatre and theatre men have been bound by too many traditions. There has been plenty of friendly conflict between those of us in the Living Newspaper who are of the fourth estate and those who are of the theatre.

Elmer Rice lent a vigor to the Living Newspaper which still is apparent. In the beginning we thought we would dramatize current news, it never occurring to us at the moment that the current news



Martin Harris

BACKSTAGE AT THE LIVING NEWSPAPER: ANGELO HERNDON AND HUEY LONG

at hand was likely to be very weak stuff. The Living Newspaper staff of dramatists began culling the papers and writing for all they were worth on such items as "Tart Shoots Lover," and "Robber Seizes Jewels of Movie Queen." Rice's criticisms resulted in a complete reorganization of my own news sense. Rice said things were going on in the world and he thought we ought to talk about them. I agreed. He thought of things that affected peoples' lives and happiness and he didn't care if we stepped on a few toes and made somebody mad.

Armed with this moral backing, we decided to dramatize that part of the news which was controversial, hence current when we reached the stage with it. In part this decision was based upon our disillusionment over the length of time it took the government to purchase equipment for the theatre, since it became apparent that any news item which had the value only of timeliness would be valueless by the time we could get it to the audience.

We lost no time in changing our direction. We launched into *Ethiopia*. Here unadorned fact became so powerful that federal officials were alarmed. Sympathies were bound to be with Ethiopia. This was not our fault. There was not the slightest bit of editorial shading in the script or direction. If the facts had been such as to glorify Mussolini and to make a villain of poorly represented Ethiopia, the subsequent course of the Living Newspaper might have been different.

The high command of the WPA made

the presentation of *Ethiopia* impossible. The ruling was that under no circumstance were we to present any head of a state or foreign cabinet minister on the stage. Rice, in resigning over this censorship, declared that to present *Ethiopia* under this ruling would be like presenting *Hamlet* without Hamlet. We were about to open when the Washington decision stopped us. We were left with a large, demoralized acting company.

"Science" was suggested as a good, safe subject for the next show. It was quickly rejected. We had ready a script on the "Southern Situation." It dealt with lynching, share-croppers and the several social struggles now going on in the south. Rightly or wrongly we compromised. We offered to do the Agricultural situation. With little in the way of facts to go on, several of the executive staff of the Living Newspaper literally wrote like hell on a Sunday to have a script ready on the following day so that the acting company could be immediately put to work. We wrote and rewrote *Triple-A Plowed Under* up to the day of its opening. The last scene, for instance, already revised five or six times, was completely rewritten the day before opening.

There were many predictions and few of them favorable for *Triple-A Plowed Under*. One director connected with the Living Newspaper declared it was "breakfast food" and quit his job rather than be connected with it. Some theatre people said it violated all the rules. An official

(Continued on page 33)



Martin Harris

BACKSTAGE AT THE LIVING NEWSPAPER: ANGELO HERNDON AND HUEY LONG

End of Season

BY JOHN W. GASSNER

Over at the Brooklyn Little Theatre, where a new social drama unit has been producing the Siftons' poignant dramatization of the German Terror, *Blood on the Moon*, the theatre still makes a claim to seriousness. But except for *Bury the Dead* on Forty-eighth Street, Broadway's openings have all been concessions to the encroaching summer. The end of the season has spawned two or three trivial comedies, a vaudeville—*Gus Edwards' Sho-Window*, a musical comedy smash hit—*On Your Toes*, and the inevitable Gilbert and Sullivan revivals.

Departing from the customary stew of pretentious skits and dances, the Dwight Deere Wiman production, *On Your Toes*, gyrates around the novel topic of balletomania. It essays rather successfully some mild satire at the expense of the classic Russian and the modernistic ballet, particularly in two travesties, the *Princesse Zenobia* and *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* ballets; it is even more entertaining in its spoofing of the aristocratic pretensions of devotees of the art: *Too Good for the Average Man*, sung by the Diaghilev of the play, is the best of this year's comedy songs. On the other hand, this musical is not free from some pretentious artiness of its own, while the mildness of its theme, along with a number of concessions to sentimentalism, make the whole sedative at best. It is only fitting that the season's musical offerings should end with a bromo-seltzer. Among the performances, Luella Gear's acting makes a fine art of sophistication, and Ray Bolger's is something to be grateful for.

The Gilbert and Sullivan revivals by the company that performs them annually are traditionally competent. The operettas themselves have held up uncommonly well through the years, despite the Gilbert and Sullivan faddists who comprise one of the seven plagues of the literary world. The times have even added incisiveness to the satirization of class distinctions and pompous authority. The Ko-Kos and the Poo-Bahs are still rampant, indeed more so than ever in our totalitarian states; the rule of the so-called élite, far from abating has become more wanton and stupid, just as its philosophy of superiority has grown more absurd. At the same time, the tragic immediacy of the stupidities which the operas never regard as real issues are now uncommonly disturbing. It is not easy to laugh at absurdities when they evoke images of concentration camps and

and mass psychosis. But this exigency will hardly trouble devotees, for whom the essential virtue of a Gilbert and Sullivan comedy is its capacity for adding syrup to satire.

This being the proper occasion for an accounting of the season, it can be said at once that it was one of the most substantial in years. One notes with astonishment the assertion of Mr. Richard Lockridge of the New York Sun that it was marked by "the unexpected collapse of the theatre of the Left." If Mr. Lockridge means that certain plays sponsored by younger organizations like the Group Theatre and the Theatre Union did not meet with financial success, he is right. But it is preposterous to suppose that a poor box-office can capsize determined groups like these. If the "little theatre" movement which gave us O'Neill was not deterred by pecuniary considerations, the progressive organizations of our own time will not be either. There can be no doubt of this when one considers the courage and self-sacrifice that have galvanized them from the day of their inception. Since, moreover, theirs has been consistently a theatre not for profit but for use and expression, the financial yardstick is inappropriate. At most one can regret that more public support was not forthcoming, and trust that more energetic steps will be taken to crystallize and enlarge it.

If, however, Mr. Lockridge implies that the work of these organizations was so poor as to warrant the opprobrium of the word "collapse," one need only point to Irwin Shaw's *Bury the Dead*, a play that was written for a NEW THEATRE play contest and was first produced by the *Let Freedom Ring Company* under the auspices of the New Theatre League. One refers further to the publication and production of Paul Green's *Hymn to the Rising Sun*—one of the strongest short plays written by an American playwright; to the bold and fruitful, if not completely articulated, experiments of *Mother* and *Case of Clyde Griffiths*; to *Let Freedom Ring*, *Bitter Stream* and *Paradise Lost*. The division of opinion regarding Albert Bein's dramatization does not obscure its native quality and the genuineness of its characters, assets not to be found in the books of dozens of other productions and to be treasured in any sensitive inventory of the season. Wolfson's drama of Italian fascism must at least be granted timeliness and provocativeness—again rare virtues in the the-

atre!—whatever may be thought of its structure. *Paradise Lost*, largely because its unique expressionism, involved a stylization and an abundance of content that laid the work open to misunderstanding. This reviewer still regards Odets' play as a major accomplishment of this or any other season within memory, an opinion which one shares with such able critics as Heywood Brown and Clifton Fadiman and with scores of practicing playwrights.

However, the question embraces more plays and producing units than those already referred to. It is quite impossible to abide any longer by a neat little category of "left" drama. The social orientation implicit in this classification constituted the life-blood of scores of successful plays like *Idiot's Delight*, *Dead End*, *If This Be Treason*, *Love on the Dole*, *End of Summer* and *Russet Mantle*, generally accepted as the cream of the season's serious theatre, and *Winterset*, despite the falsification and evasions which destroy its integrity and vision. Even *Ethan Frome*, with its vivid realization of a constricting environment, belongs to their number. If the season was a noteworthy one, this was due preponderantly to its more or less definite grappling with contemporary problems of war, dictatorship, economic collapse, and the struggle for life, liberty and humanity in a transitional world.

To this body of weighty drama, the lighter department added the color and humor of *Pride and Prejudice*, *Victoria Regina* and *Lady Precious Stream* and the zest of *Boy Meets Girl*, *First Lady* and *Squaring the Circle*. Worthwhile and, in the main, exceptionally effective were the revivals of *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *St. Joan* and *Porgy and Bess*, while the Federal Theatre, giving an increasingly good account of itself, contributed *Triple-A Plowed Under* and *1935*, two notable experiments in the Living Newspaper technique, as well as *Macbeth* and *Murder in the Cathedral*.

A roseate view of our recent theatre requires qualification. Briefly we note on the debit side the uncertainty and confusion of many of the better plays, the technical shortcomings of some of our aspiring playwrights and producing organizations, the worthlessness of dozens of plays that will be spared mention, and the wasteful vacuity of the musical comedy and revue season. But all things being relative, friends of the American theatre have had much to be grateful for; and if the necessary clarifications are forthcoming, the same expenditure of talent may result in dramas of much greater truth and power in the near future, perhaps next season.

Parade-Ground Art—

The German Film Under Hitler

BY CARL DREHER

“Film and microphone have done their part to bring the Man to the People and the People to the Man.”

This birthday salute to the Fuehrer does scant justice to the German film, which has performed untold prodigies in hallowing the mystic union of the Leader and the led. Nor is its work at an end, for the bond between folk and Fuehrer requires assiduous rewelding. To this end all the forces of German movie art and science were dedicated on and after January 30th, 1933.

Keeping them so dedicated requires a corporative set-up to which even the native German genius for complex organization would scarcely be equal, were it not for the invention and application of the unifying Fuehrer principle. Never before has the world seen, regulating a single industry, such an array of massive titles: *Reichsminister*, *Staatskommissaren*, *Reichskulturwarter*, *Oberregierungsraete*, *Hauptstellenleiter*, *Kontingentenleiter*, *Amtsleiter*, and *Geschaeftsfuehrer*, down to simple *Doktoren*, storm troopers, and policemen. Never before has history witnessed such a proliferation of governmental chambers, boards, associations, administrations, bureaus, and fronts; such a multiplication of decrees, followed by later decrees to interpret or rescind the foregoing decrees; such collection of dues and fees; such promulgation of regulations and prohibitions; such an issuance of official certificates, permits, cards, and badges; such a holding of congresses, meetings, and confabulations; such a universal furor and searching of the national soul. Withal films are made, but now they are “German” films, not things like *Maedchen in Uniform*, *M*, *The Blue Angel*, *Kameradschaft Westfront 1918*, or *Congress Dances*, which formerly aroused the interest of a decadent world.

The authoritarian line descends from the Fuehrer to the Minister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, Dr. Goebbels, often referred to by his adoring subordinates as “The Protector of the German Film,” thence to the Reich Film Chamber, hereafter referred to as the RFK, which is divided into an employees’ group, the *Reichsfachschaft Film*, and associations of producers, distributors, exhibitors, etc., each with its leader and sub-leaders. At the same time the National Socialist Party, through its film division, has liaison officers operating be-

tween its district headquarters and the regional authorities of the RFK. This enhances the virtue of the Fuehrer principle, and perhaps facilitates the collection of a little quasi-legal graft on the side. Good Germans should be glad to pay for the blessings of totalitarian law and order.

The RFK regulates, by decree, everything and everybody pertaining to films. To trade or work in the film business, one must belong to the RFK and the appropriate sub-organization, and hold a permit. One may not work even with a permit, but certainly not without one. A sample decree in this category:

“EXPULSION FROM REICHSFACHSCHAFT FILM.

“By order of the President of the Reichsfilmkammer, the actor Herbert Grunack, also known as Bert Gussy, is excluded from the *Reichsfilmkammer* and thereby from the *Reichsfachschaft Film*. His permit No. 320 is hereby cancelled.”

The innocent have nothing to fear. Thus Jenny Jugo, a brunette featured player and leading woman, keeps her permit:

“AGAINST JENNY JUGO—RUMORS.

“Rumors having recently been circulated that Jenny Jugo is non-Aryan, we certify that she has furnished proofs of

Producers, Attention!

Whether you realize it or not, films like *Riffraff*, *Red Salute*, *Fighting Youth*, and the constant anti-labor and pro-war bias of the newsreels, are reactionary influences conditioning the public mind toward fascism. Not only have you failed to produce a single anti-fascist film, but by your cancellation of the production of *It Can't Happen Here*, you have revealed your fear of antagonizing existing fascist governments. Today reaction and anti-Semitism are growing in the United States at an alarming rate. This article by Carl Dreher gives an accurate and disquieting account of what happened to the German motion picture industry when Hitler came to power. In the debacle that ensued, not only the trade unions (which you are fighting so savagely in this country) but all producers who did not subscribe to Nazi tenets, or were “non-Aryans,” went down to ruin.

—THE EDITORS.

her Aryan descent to the office in charge.”

The RFK specifies admission prices in theatres, clearances and rights to plays, rentals and accounting methods, and whether pictures may be shown at all. At one time it specified the make-up of main titles, and told the producers who should get screen credit, but this proved too much of a headache even for the Fuehrer principle, and the decree was withdrawn.

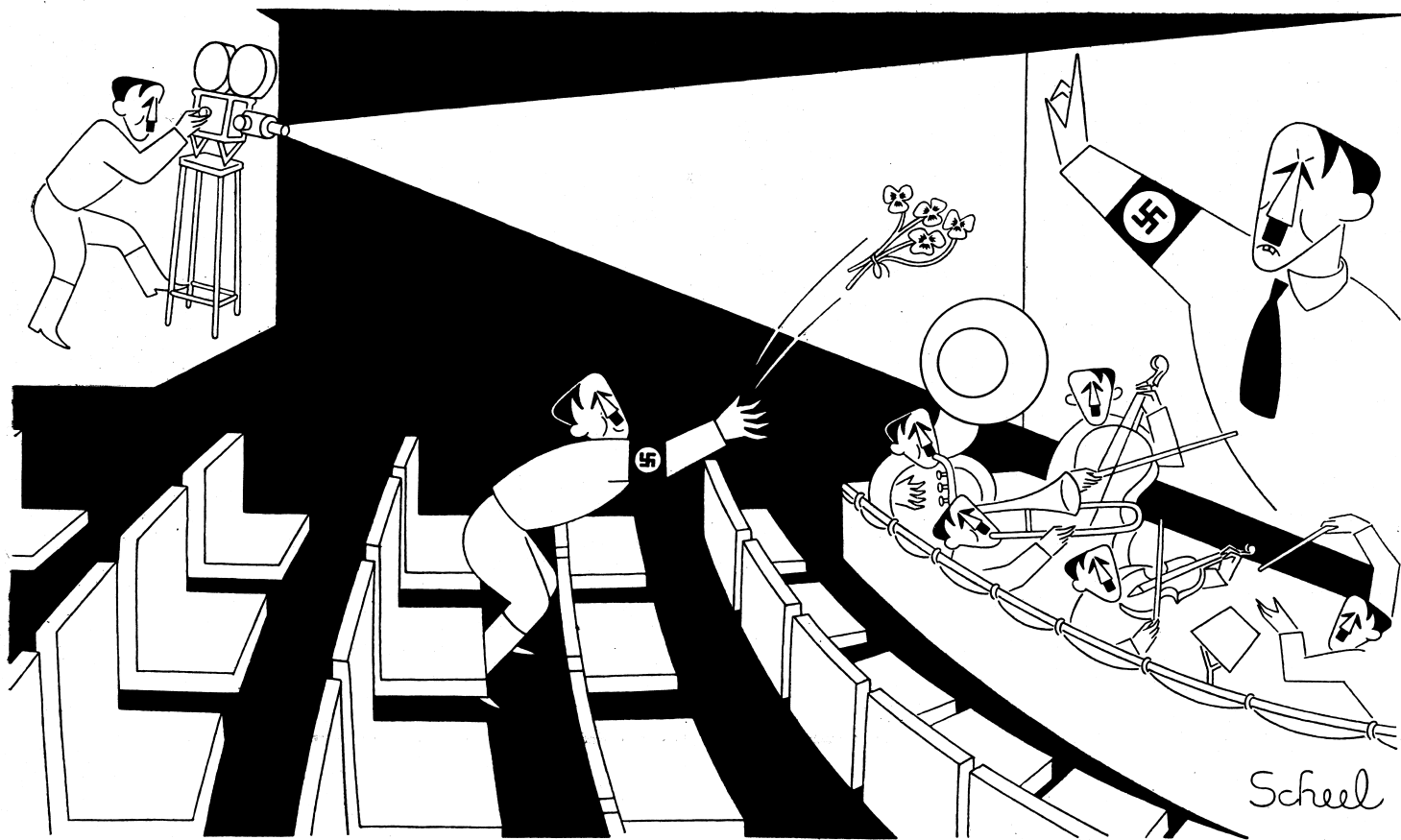
Such slight set-backs mean nothing to seasoned Nazi administrators. Their Fuehrer complex knows no bounds in time or space, and they extend it conceptually to all countries. Thus a German film journal refers to “Kardinal Hayes, the Fuehrer of the well-known clean-film movement in the U. S. A. . . .”

II

The chief expositor of Nazi cultural philosophy is, of course, Dr. Goebbels himself. When he speaks his thoughts on German film art, the entire industry prostrates itself. In reporting his speeches, the trade press has standardized certain phrases: the Doctor’s words are always awaited tensely (“mit Spannung”); during his address the audience is filled with enthusiasm (“begeistert”); and at the close bursts into roaring applause (“brausenden Schlussbeifall”) followed by a triple *Sieg Heil* to the Fuehrer. This unanimity is another achievement of the Fuehrer principle.

In the course of a weighty speech before the International Film Congress held in Berlin in April, 1935, Dr. Goebbels, like Luther at Wittenberg, propounded a series of theses, but a mere seven instead of ninety-five. With rare profundity, he showed that “the laws of the film are not the laws of the stage,” and that “public taste is educable for good as well as evil.” He denounced pictures which offer “mere mass entertainment,” but cried, “Away also with pale estheticism!” On an earlier occasion, he warned, “Do not come to us with the story that Art must serve Truth.”

The worshipful Doctor has cited four non-Nazi films as meriting Nazi approbation, at least in some respects. These are *The Cruiser Potemkin*, directed by the Bolshevik Eisenstein; Fritz Lang’s *Niebelungen*; *Rebel*, co-directed by Trenker and Kurt Bernhard; and *The Last Company*, also a Bernhard production. Bernhard is a Jew. Lang, a certified Aryan, was, with Pabst, also an Aryan, and



ADOLPH HITLER FILMS, INC., PRESENTS ADOLPH HITLER IN "ADOLPH HITLER"

Lubitsch, the most notable contributor to the international renown of pre-Hitler German pictures. With astounding ingratitude, he left Dr. Goebbels for Louis B. Mayer. Pabst and Lubitsch are also in Hollywood.

As for Eisenstein, the unmannerly Russian said, in the course of an open letter to Goebbels:

"Get back to your drums, Master Drummer-in-Chief!

"Stop disporting yourself with ritual pipings on the magic flute of National-Socialist realism in the cinema.

"Stop imitating your idol, Frederick the Great and on his own flute, too.

"Just stay at your more congenial instrument—the axe."

Besides Goebbels, many other Nazi doctors have contributed to the theory of the cinema, but, as one of them puts it, "In the *Kulturpolitik* of the Third Reich there is no such thing as 'diversity of opinion,' for what National Socialism prescribes, is as old as the Party itself." In consequence all their articles and speeches are alike, and the student of Nazi film culture need go no further than Dr. Goebbels.

III

Since the Fuehrer principle unifies by purification, the ferreting out and casting forth of non-Aryan elements have been a cardinal task of the Nazi film administra-

tors. One gifted analogist calls this "lifting off the dross." The more common expression is *entjudung*—"de-Jewing." When de-Jewing has been accomplished, an organization is said to be *judenrein*—"cleansed of Jews," or, conversely, *rein arisch*—"pure Aryan." Thus, on October 1st, 1935, the joyful news was published that the Protective Union of Film Distributors was finally *rein arisch*. The *entjudung* was complete to the last drop of blood.

The magnitude of the task of de-Jewing the German film will be understood if we contemplate its state when the National Socialists took power. Before this time, as *Oberregierungsrat* Raether points out, there was no German film. *Volksfremde*—"strangers to the people," aliens, dominated it. The German industry was then as Hollywood is now. Decency and honor, as well as jobs, were at stake. The situation cried to high heaven for correction, and it was corrected. The German film was purged of Reinhardt, Czinner, Schach, Kortner, Ludwig Berger, Pommer, Bergner, *et al.* Their jobs went to German-blooded men, and now the industry breathes the pure atmosphere of 100 per cent Aryanism. The only remaining trouble is with the pictures.

To combat recurrences of vitiation, in July of last year Dr. Goebbels appointed Hans Hinkel special commissioner of purification. Some of the perverse Jews

had persisted in trying to continue earning a living in the film business. And—it would be unbelievable if Special Commissioner Hinkel himself did not testify to it—these Israelites had succeeded in seducing a certain number of German-blooded individuals. It would appear that while pure Aryan blood insures honesty, race pride, and nobility in *almost* every individual through whose veins it courses, there are some exceptions.

The method used by the Jews was *Tarnung*—"masking." The Jew became a silent partner, concealed behind an Aryan facade. While Special Commissioner Hinkel proclaimed himself as inflexibly determined to root out the renewed activity of non-Aryans in cultural life, he disclaimed any intention of "employing informers or listening at keyholes." Such measures were unnecessary. Before the hunt was well under way the editor and publisher of the *Licht Bild Buehne* found it necessary to announce that "communications and notices in reference to the Aryan or non-Aryan character of persons, firms, or corporations can be received by us only when officially confirmed." This is an indication of the vigilance with which the Nazi business man watches his competitors for possible re-defilement of the industry.

The net result of the chase, as far as reported, was, however, somewhat disap-

pointing. One Berlin film house was closed by the police, on the ground of masked Jewish ownership, and the *Tarner* "nabbed," together with others implicated. In a more extraordinary case, one Willi Zeyn was expelled from the *Reichsjahrschaft Film* for acting as a *Tarner* for a Jewish film director. The mechanics of director-Tarnung are not clear; perhaps television and radio telephony are employed, for the Jew certainly could not show himself on the movie set.

IV

The achievement of the high aims of German *Kulturpolitik* cannot be left to random enterprise or individual judgment. It requires censorship—constructive censorship. The censors of backward nations merely delete navels, naughty words, and insults to the national honor. The German censors go on from there.

Dr. Goebbels' discovery that public taste is no unalterable fact reverberates in the halls of the German film administration. Hans Weidemann, the youthful vice-president of the RFK, carries the doctrine a step further: "There is no such thing as public taste; we can shape that as we will. We have determined political taste; we can do the same with artistic taste!"

The concept of State-determined public taste is coupled with that of State-determined mental hygiene. Under the Weimar republic, it seems, the film and its patrons were alike very sick. Thus on July 11th, 1935, *Oberregierungsrat* Arnold Raether, reviewing the achievements of the Chamber over the past two years, reported that it had almost fully restored the film business to health, by permeating it with National Socialist consciousness. Evidently it suffered a relapse, for on November 17th the president of the RFK, SS *Oberfuehrer* Prof. Dr. Oswald Lehnich, appeared before a meeting of the Cultural Senate to prescribe numerous measures for the recovery of the industry. And on December 13th Hans Weidemann, at a private showing of the French *Les Miserables* before the *Reichsjahrschaft Film*, said:

"While we must reject the material of this film and the manner in which it is presented, let it not be denied that we know and recognize its artistic achievement. It is essential for the German artist to see such foreign art; the public on the other hand must have quiet, until it is once more entirely healthy and strong."

At this meeting Nazi speakers attacked *Les Miserables* on the ground that it "portrays the criminal as innocent, as morally justified, while the State and its institutions . . . are portrayed as guilty of the



AD FOR "GERMAN FATE ON RUSSIAN SOIL"

misfortunes of the criminal. This whole theme is carried out in a very reprehensible manner, which taints every spectator. On these grounds the film had to be rejected for German exhibition."

From this it would appear that in Germany, as in other countries, film professionals, especially censors, acquire immunity to moral poisons which would fell the general population.

As in the United States, censorship begins at the beginning, before the picture is shot, "to prevent treatment of material contrary to the spirit of the time." In the early part of 1934 Dr. Goebbels created in the propaganda ministry the post of film dramaturgist, and appointed to it the editor of the *Angriff*, Willi Krause, who thus became the first Joe Breen of Germany. American producers, however, take liberties with the Hays office which would scarcely be safe under the Fuehrer principle. The official dramaturgist has full power over scripts and stories, including authority to inject himself into the actual production process, and to direct the director. Recently, after defending himself against a slanderous rumor that he had received 65,000 marks from a producer, Herr Krause resigned. He was succeeded by Hansjuergen Nierentz.

If a finished picture is banned on the recommendation of the examining board, an appeal may be made to a superior examining office. In practice it is considered healthier to refrain from such a procedure. Where the showing of a picture is judged undesirable on political grounds, Dr. Goebbels has independent authority to forbid exhibition.

Among foreign films which received the fatal "V" (*Verboten*) in 1935 were

Nana, *Flying Down to Rio*, *The Thin Man*, and *The Iron Duke*. Currently *Modern Times* has been barred on the ground that it is "contrary to the spirit of the New Germany of Chancellor Adolf Hitler"; thus Chaplin's mustache will not compete with the Fuehrer's on German screens.

The German film mentors issue two kinds of exhibition permits, covering pictures which juveniles may attend, and those for adults only. Among American pictures which the Hitler youth had to forego in 1935 were *Naughty Marietta*, *Queen Christina*, *Eskimo*, *Anna Karenina*, *It Happened One Night*, *Mutiny on the Bounty*, *Peter Ibbetson*, *Broadway Melody*, the Sol Wurtzel-Dante *Inferno*, DeMille's *Crusades*, a Harold Lloyd feature, several westerns, and—Shirley Temple in *Our Little Girl*. The preponderant cause for juvenile exclusion was "moral," *i. e.*, sexual, or in bad taste. Children are encouraged, or compelled, as a school activity, to see military films, war being considered in good taste.

The censorship has its positive as well as its negative aspect. Producers compete for official ratings of merit, which confer remission of theatre taxes and other benefits. The most honorable distinctions are *vob.* (*volksbildend*—educational), *kü* (*kuenstlerisch wertvoll*—artistically valuable), *staw.* (*staatspolitisch wertvoll*—politically valuable), and *stakü* (*staatspolitisch und kuenstlerisch besonders wertvoll*—of extraordinary political and artistic merit). Since the film critics take their cues from the censorship ratings, the producers of a *staw.* or *stakü* feature are free from worry about reviews, but unfortunately no infallible way has yet been found to make the cash customers follow the reviewers. Thus a highly rated film, *Das Maedchen Johanna*, did a nose-dive at the box-office.

V

We now pass to a consideration of the products of the system of Fuehrer organization, philosophy, purification, and censorship outlined in the preceding sections. Entertainment films, purveying, as in other countries, the tender emotions of love and romance in safe form for the masses, are not permitted to divert the public from the serious objectives of the cinema, which are (1) protection against "enemies of the State"; and (2) promotion of the patriotic virtues: loyalty to State and Party, obedience to authority, and especially *heroism*. The forte of the new Reich film producers is, in fact, the heroic film, and nothing, of course, is more heroic than War.

In order that the masses may not die
(Continued on page 34)

Theatre for Children—Moscow

BY LUCILE CHARLES

It was ten minutes to curtain time. As we came into the lobby of the Moscow Theatre for Children several hundred children were there, shouting and laughing, gathered into a big circle. They were playing African games and a knot of them were listening to a young man who was telling African stories. Then the game broke up and they all sang songs, and at curtain time they were told that they were going on a big ship to a faraway country. They marched around the room to the piano music and up into the theatre hall.

Here they were quickly and quietly seated according to height. They had come in groups with their teachers, for the most part, and now sat expectantly quiet, their round little heads faced eagerly to the curtain, their round eyes wide open, ready for the wonders they were about to see. Already there were things to look at: The gray curtain clearly belonged in a children's theatre and no other; it was appliquéd with vivid cloth bas reliefs of characters which had become famous in the theatre; a tall spotted giraffe, a monkey sitting high in a palm tree, a group of Negroes, a clown, a little parade of children. Stretched around the balcony of the theatre was a white cloth with animals

painted on it: snakes, lions, bats, and a ship on waves.

An orchestra of perhaps twenty adult players which was to play music especially composed for the play came into the orchestra pit. Natalia Satz, the founder and director of the theatre, stepped before the curtain and greeted us. There was a moment's hush, that magic moment before the play actually begins. Then an actress of great sweetness in the character of a Negro woman came before the curtain and talked to the children who answered her in chorus. She told them briefly about the play they were to see, *The Negro Boy and the Monkey*, one of the most famous in the repertory of the theatre, and she introduced and explained the characters. When she finished she stepped to one side of the stage and sat near the proscenium, remaining there thruout the performance, to make occasional comments and explanations to the children. All the characters are played by adults of course, since this is a theatre where mature artists devote their lives to playing for juvenile spectators.

The curtain was up. And here, in a set like a yellow bowl, a group of Negroes were playing games, jumping rope and wrestling. The set was extremely simple: a yellow cyclorama, and a yellow plat-

form running all around the stage, from which descended three steps and a steepish slide to the floor. I suppose the color denoted African sunshine. Up and down these steps and slide and all over the floor the Negroes gamboled. They spoke to one another in squeaks and shrill cries. They gave solo dances in turn while the rest watched, striking colorful attitudes. They joined in a wooden rattle dance. Underneath the naive clowning, each one was obviously an expert dancer—the dance was a really modern ballet. The music too was modern—in a gay, fantastic spirit.

Presently the stage was empty of players, a curtain descended, and a cinema multiplier was at work. In a black and white film, something like our Mickey Mouse, animals were shown in their home in the forest; there were elephants and lions; birds flying; and the little Negro boy out hunting. Unsuccessfully he stalked his prey down one forest aisle after the other. Soon we saw that he himself was being followed by a snake, who glided behind him closer and closer and closer. Then he caught him. The little hunter was helpless. But a monkey who had been watching all this from a nearby tree saved the little boy and forced the snake to give him up. Fol-



A SCENE FROM "THE NEGRO BOY AND THE MONKEY", MOSCOW THEATRE FOR CHILDREN



A SCENE FROM "THE NEGRO BOY AND THE MONKEY", MOSCOW THEATRE FOR CHILDREN



BETWEEN ACTS IN THE THEATRE OF THE YOUNG SPECTATOR

lowed a *spasibo* (thank you) dance, while the snake glided away in disgust.

The second scene showed the same set, plus a little hut with a thatched roof. The mother Negress was fixing up the house. Her family returned with pumpkins and other good things they had found. There was a dance of joy. Then the mother assigned a duty to each, bringing firewood and water and arranging the supper. When all were ready to eat, it was discovered that there was one child missing! Consternation. Fear. Despair! But in the midst of the weeping, home comes the little Negro boy with his new friend, the monkey. There is a wild dance of joy.

The monkey is marvelously played, by the way. The rolling head, scratching, jumping, twining of arms around a pole, all the characteristic jerks and grace are combined in an extraordinary piece of acting.

Downstairs between acts the children ran around the lobby munching edibles purchased at the buffet, or looked at exhibits of the work of the theatre, or gathered again into a big circle where they were led in games by the young director.

Some watched a series of solo dances from among their own number, done to

an accordion. Children as young as four, five, six years volunteered eagerly, were beckoned into the center of the circle, and danced until they were tired or the leader chose a new child to step forth. Others played games again, not very different from the games children play all over the world.

None of this seemed "staged" by the way. That is it had been carefully planned, the order of events had apparently been well thought out to present an interesting exhibition to the foreign visitors who were attending the performance as part of the Theatre Festival; but the children seemed not to be doing anything unusual to them. They seemed to be having a marvelously good time, doing the dances and games which they associated with going to the theatre.

I have heard the comment since I returned to this country that this organized play between acts has been overdone, in the Russian children's theatres; that the younger children may care for it, but the older ones are bored. But on the two occasions when I visited the theatre, I saw only intense and apparently unforced enjoyment.

Upstairs again. The second act struck a new note, of satire. The big game

hunters stalked on, with big helmets, much heavy clothing, ponderous manners, binoculars, in vivid contrast to the supple freedom and gaiety of the native blacks.

To cut the story to the bone, the little monkey is caught and taken to a far-away land. The Negro boy sets forth in his turn to save his friend, helped by all the animals of the forest—and by the children in the audience who shout advice to him. Finally the long chase involves the use of warships, shown in the cinema, when the monkey is borne away on a ship flying a faintly disguised American flag. A Soviet ship follows, carrying the Negro boy. Finally the monkey is seen working in a factory. I forget just how he got there, but there he is, very sad in this alien environment. But the little boy searches for him, and at last there is an exciting reunion. The monkey is discovered up in the balcony of the theatre, squeaking and frantic with joy. The little Negro boy is on the stage below. And to really tremendous excitement—jumping and shouting—on the part of the children, the two are reunited, and the play ends.

A sparkling, colorful show. One can easily understand why it is a great favorite with the Russian children, and why it has been played more than three hundred times in the last eight years.

Behind all this vivid playing, moves a well developed philosophy and technique. Some of it is explained in the "Word of Welcome," which was given to the guests of the Theatre Festival. I quote from it:

"It became the object of the special children's theatre to create a real art, a new art, an art for children.

"We rejected once and for all the point of view that children don't know what's what and it is therefore unnecessary to give them first class examples of art. On the contrary, the very trustfulness of children, the child's firm conviction that what he is seeing is real art and the very best, greatly increased our sense of responsibility.

"Artistic taste should be cultivated from earliest childhood.

"One has only to look at children who have been deprived of any artistic education. How greedily they seek for what is 'pretty,' how ready they are to believe that the beautiful woman standing beside the horse, framed in a golden horseshoe that they see gaudily painted in the lid of a chocolate box is really beautiful. How eagerly poor children collect soap wrappers with pictures of luxurious ladies with flowing hair decorated with roses.

"Such children often remain slaves of their first impression. It is more diffi-

(Continued on page 33)



BETWEEN ACTS IN THE THEATRE OF THE YOUNG SPECTATOR

"We Are From Kronstadt"

BY ROBERT STEBBINS

The Soviet film masterpieces have had a hard road to travel to recognition, particularly in America, where the Hollywood product has so great a hold. Today, the classic Russian works are held in high esteem but this was far from the case at the time of their American premieres. A recent instance of how poorly new Russian films fare was Dovjenco's memorable *Frontier*, to date the noblest expression of his towering filmic genius. Undoubtedly in the years to come the same critics who damned *Frontier* with faint praise, mild abuse or total neglect will speak of it with the respect it deserves. The reception of *We Are From Kronstadt*, however, offers a gratifying exception to the general rule. From the very first the press has been unanimous in hailing this remarkable film as a cinematic event of the first significance. Not a single dissident voice in the chorus of praise has been heard.

The reason for this unanimity is not difficult to find. *We Are From Kronstadt* moves between extremely simple limits and within them generates terrific impact. Its form is so concentrated that no iota of force has been lost. Unlike its illustrious predecessors: *Potemkin*, *Ten Days That Shook the World*, *Storm Over Asia*, which encompassed an entire universe and a multiplicity of themes, *Kronstadt's* task is comparatively simple. The critics felt that the former attempted too much. These films remind one of Michelangelo's *Creation of the World* and of the magnificent, crowded canvases of Breughel. Before them, the uninitiated, including the critics, stood dazzled and uncomprehending.

Kronstadt offers no such difficulties. It is devoted to portraying the heroism of the Russian naval forces and the role of the Bolsheviks during that precarious period when the revolution was threatened on all four fronts by the allied interventionists and the White Guards. Yudenitch was already hammering at the gates of Petrograd. The film opens in a mood of brooding mystery, with a quietness that emphasizes the great issues at stake. The commissar Martinov has been sent from Petrograd to enlist the assistance of the sailors of Kronstadt. We see him as he turns his head for a last momentary glimpse of the city. He seems to question whether he will ever see it again. Perhaps he quietly endures a foreknowledge of his death.

In the fleet he finds quarrelling and

dissension. The men complain that their rations are insufficient. Particularly querulous is the sailor, Balashov, who finds the greatest difficulty in submitting to discipline. But the arrival of a flotilla of enemy ships makes their discussion seem slightly academic. The sailors leap to their guns and the enemy is beaten off. Martinov asks for volunteers against Yudenitch. Only those who have proven themselves especially trustworthy will be accepted. Instead the sailors first ask Martinov for his qualifications. He good-humoredly informs them that he has been a Bolshevik since 1901 and spent many years in prison for political offenses. They are contented. One after another they step forward to be voted upon. There are no demurs until Balashov volunteers. "He's unfit . . . he's never willing to give in" are heard from all sides. The men hesitate to support him, until Martinov, who has detected the valor and integrity of Balashov, raises his hand. From this point onward the film moves with great directness. At their posts in the trenches the Kronstadters are outnumbered and are taken prisoners, but only after a desperate struggle. Instead of shooting them, the Whites hurl them off the edge of a cliff into the sea after having tied huge stones to their necks and bound their hands. This scene is unforgettable, among the many films we have seen, for its affecting synthesis of terror and poignancy. Tonally, it possesses a succinctness that heightens the visual impression. The prisoners speak quietly and briefly. Martinov—"Where I fall thousands will rise." The blond sailor who can never be separated from his guitar kicks it out of the hand of the White soldier and then leaps into the sea. Some fall cheering defiantly. Another with his last words praises the Baltic Fleet. Only Balashov escapes. He makes his way back to Kronstadt. In the fire of his comrades' sacrifice, Balashov's character, anarchistic and deviating, burns to the rigidity and hardness of steel. He directs the return of additional recruits and, together with the army, smashes the Yudenitch forces. As the film comes to a close the camera descends upon Balashov whose voice, both grave and triumphant, speaks the words—"Who else wants Petrograd?"

The Russian cinema has always reflected the political and social circumstances of its history. Immediately after the revolution was an accomplished fact there was a great necessity for the inter-

pretation of what had taken place. Not only was this necessary within Russia but almost as important beyond her borders. As a consequence, the representative films of the first period, ending with the masterpieces of Eisenstein and Pudovkin, possessed a universality, an intellectual brilliance and mastery of exegesis that have never been equalled. It was an old decayed world they were exposing and a new world they were holding up to the eyes of their audience. Hence the necessity for rapid contrasts, for explosive cross-cutting, for montage. *Kronstadt* emerges from a completely different concurrence of forces. The needs of the time are vastly altered. The lessons of Eisenstein, and Pudovkin, supreme didacts, are already learned. Today, Russia is a nation healed and entire. But a nation at the brink of war. At this very moment Germany has refused Great Britain's entreaty for a peace pact with Russia. Her ruler, Hitler, openly declares his intention of extending fascist tyranny over the Ukraine. Border incidents in the East grow in frequency and gravity. Hence the direct singleness of purpose of *We Are From Kronstadt*. It is primarily a defense film—a defense of the first socialist state.

This singleness of purpose, although the source of *Kronstadt's* strength is also the cause of its failings. *Kronstadt* at times verges on over-simplification. It sacrifices richness of implication for directness. At no time, for example, do we see the Petrograd the men are fighting for. True, as Friedrich Wolf points out, "these soldiers and sailors look so much like armed workers," but seldom do we feel the masses behind them. This is not true of *Chapayev* in which the peasantry come to join up with the rebel leader. In *Frontier*, the last words of the tiger hunter, Glushak, "Who will dare?" are the more meaningful for our having breathed the keen air of the mountain tops and looked down on the endless woods of the taiga.

The characterizations of *Kronstadt* are forceful but lack roundness and fullness. They are vital personifications of qualities rather than living beings. The character of the woman Ekaterina Timan is left undeveloped so that one comes to the conclusion that she has been arbitrarily inserted to make possible the meaningless rivalry between Balashov and the army man.

(Continued on page 36)



"TO SAVE FORTY CENTS"

GUS PECK

"Ain't Hollywood Romantic?"

BY CLARA WEATHERWAX

If you haven't enough worries, if your salary as a soda jerker or chain-store clerk is too high, if you enjoy hanging on to a telephone all day every day—become an extra.

"They treat us like props," a little extra girl on a \$3.20 check said. I thought of some sets on the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer lot at Culver City: elaborate fronts soon to be junked. I asked about wages, hours, conditions, clothes.

"I don't get much, work's so uncertain," she said. "Sometimes you get a call and it's for just a few minutes. Other times you work so long you could drop dead. The law says the limit for women is sixteen hours, but I've worked longer, sometimes twenty-three and a half hours straight. I used to think," she half smiled, "that I could make the dress parade. But doing mob work once in a blue moon like I am . . ." I didn't say anything, just looked at her. She added, probably not knowing the way her face lifted with hope, "Of course, I might get a big chance. Something that'd make me stand out from the mob. I know I could do it, if I just get the chance."

Sidney Skolsky, well-known Hollywood columnist, gives a few additional details:

"The extra girl lives in a single room, no kitchen, for \$25 a month; or two rooms and a kitchenette for about \$45 a month. . . . An extra generally lives with another extra. . . . They take turns sitting in the room all day, waiting for the phone to ring, and if one girl receives

word about 'a call,' the other will go along and try too."

I visited an atmosphere worker in her room. "Take me, I'm lucky," she said. "I'm more or less international. I'm dark. I can work on Spanish pictures. Italian and French, too, but not English pictures." She was sitting on her bed, pajama-clad legs tucked under her for warmth. Pale, very slim, pretty, nervous. She wasn't well—appendix trouble. She needed money badly, for doctors. "I've been out of work for a while, but I usually average three days a week."

"How do you get to the studios? They're so far apart."

"I have to keep a car. It takes a lot for clothes, too. Of course, it's hard when you get a slack spell. But I'm really luckier than most."

And she is. Not ten per cent of those looking for extra work can get it.

People are classified according to the front they can keep up. The mob workers get \$3.20 or \$5 a day. Atmosphere or dress people pull down \$7.50, \$10, \$12.50, or \$15 checks—when they work. Under the NRA wage scale, still in effect, \$25 a day is the minimum wage for a "bit" extra. But the producers know the angles. When the code was drawn up, the status of the "actor" was not defined! So certain chiselers—Columbia and Paramount have been the worst in this regard—took quick advantage. By calling a man an actor they can pay him as low as \$1 for speaking lines for which a bit

player would receive a minimum of \$25.

Members of Motion Picture Producers' Association of America hire extras through Central Casting, a private corporation controlled by the Association. Central gets a percentage on all people placed. It has a list of over six thousand (of which seventy-five per cent are on relief). This does not include any of the thousands not listed at Central who receive occasional mob work, usually for \$3.20 a day. Fraternal organizations and relief rolls supply most of the crowds and racial groups. Certain producers can and do save themselves huge sums by hiring crowds, at the lowest wages paid for extra work, through still other channels. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer hires hundreds of such extras through the Chamber of Commerce at Culver City, which it controls. Warner Brothers work a similar racket at Burbank.

The chisel cuts other ways, too.

For the Florence Nightingale picture, *Angel of Mercy*, Warner Brothers hired fifteen hospital nurses on \$10 checks, although Central Casting had over fifty unemployed extras qualified for the parts. After the day's work on this same picture, many of the crippled war veterans used in the Crimean war scenes, hobbled as best they could all the way over Cahuenga Pass to save forty cents carfare.

You have seen U. S. Army, Navy, and Marine forces in certain pictures. Producers used them instead of regular extras—it's cheaper. Marines appeared



"TO SAVE FORTY CENTS"

GUS PECK

in Columbia's *U. S. Smith*, filmed at the Marine Base in San Diego. In *Sons o' Guns*, Warner Brothers employed about two hundred members of the 160th Regiment of the California National Guard, dressed as German soldiers. Many of them had to get leaves of absence from their jobs in order to work on *Sons o' Guns*.

Government services and equipment are provided *free* to the studios. This means that employed and unemployed taxpayers feed the military forces, pay their wages, and furnish them and their gear to the producers for nothing, thus throwing more extras out of work. Extras are, of course, protesting this species of scabbing, through the Junior Screen Actors' Guild.

The Screen Actors' Guild (Senior and Junior), with a membership of over five thousand, is affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. The Junior branch, for extras, was formed two years ago last November; dues are \$5 a year, with an entrance fee of \$10. A major function of the Guild is to settle thousands of complaints for its members.

One of the worst cases occurred last October. Forty women were called to the MGM set at 5:30 P. M. for work on *Riff-raff*. In the rain scene, they were soaked and hurled down by the full force of water from three fire hoses, backed by wind machines. Driven water, cold and sharp as icicles, blinded them and flung them about. Many were skinned from ankles to thighs. One woman was knocked unconscious. Another was paralyzed for hours. No drying equipment was provided; no towels, until a few appeared at 3:30 A. M. For working from 5:30 P. M. to 5:30 A. M. under these conditions, each woman got \$11.25. The union obtained an adjustment for them and additional payment for their treatment and injuries. The film itself, blurred by so much water, had to be retaken, but the few women who returned next night said that because of the organized protest, conditions were vastly improved.

In *The Crusades*, the infernal machine crushed a man's leg. De Mille shouted furiously because the man's comrades stopped the machine to help him. Men are cheap; retakes are expensive. In the battle scenes, extras were cut and injured. In *Lives of a Bengal Lancer*, many men had bones broken. One is still in the hospital although it happened over a year ago. And if you think it's easy to collect compensation for studio accidents, just ask any who've been hurt!

Directors are known to pray for accidents. It is quite usual for emergency cameras to be posted at all angles about

certain mob scenes, grinding away, covering the action just in case something "accidentally" happens to give the picture a gruesome bit of "realism."

More and more extras turn to the Screen Actors' Guild, sensing the power of organized labor. By protesting the use of seventy of Victor McLaglen's light-horsemen in 20th Century-Fox's *Under Two Flags*, extras had them jerked out. They got an apology from McLaglen, too.

A Mexican, working on a \$7.50 check, in *Dancing Pirates* at United Artists Studio, was asked to speak a line in Spanish. This put him in the bit extra group. He also worked one fourth check overtime. The Junior Guild got him the \$21.87 adjustment he was entitled to. The assistant director's excuse for not having paid him was "because he was a Mexican." The assistant stated he "did not pay Mexicans for speaking lines."

A tragedy even greater than underpayment for racial reasons lies in the types of roles given to Negroes, Mexicans, and certain other races. Disagreeable, weak, or buffoon parts are assigned them. Only occasionally a Negro gets a real part. Afterwards, he must drop back into extra work. Where a white player would be rocketed to stardom, the Negro will be called uppity if he asks for more than an extra's wages.

Since the NRA was scrapped, numerous disputes have been referred to the California Industrial Welfare Division, but since its Chief, Mabel E. Kinney, got her job through Louis B. Mayer, it naturally interprets cases of abuse in a way which puts the victim on the spot rather than the producer.

Nevertheless, the Guild has won many improvements. Sometimes decisions affect twenty or a hundred extras, or all in general. Extras must now be paid for cancelled work calls unless a release is given in time to accept another call. Those interviewed at studios are now paid carfare. Extras are paid for fittings. They get into their costumes on studio time, too.

Too many extras, however, do not yet realize the great power they could exercise through belonging to the Guild and taking a lively part in its work. Even members are not fully aware of what power they have in hand. Unity exists on the surface between both the Junior and Senior Guilds, but not in reality, for the Junior membership lacks the most basic of all rights—the right to a strike vote. When actors and extras alike see the supreme value of real unity, not only among themselves but between the Guilds and other crafts in the industry, the producers will be faced with a closed shop under which unions can dictate working conditions, hours, wages.

New Theatre Tour

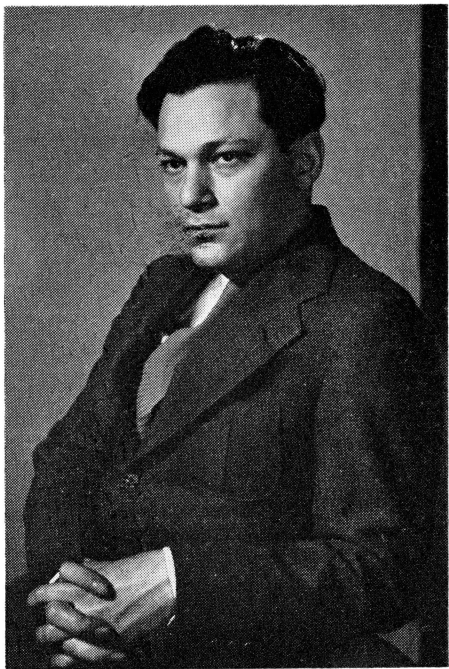
In a previous issue of *NEW THEATRE*, Harold Edgar wrote: "Though the Soviet Union still has its enemies, all but the ignorant will grant that its theatre is the first in the world. Every observer whatever his politics testifies to its high vitality."

American theatre and film artists and enthusiasts wishing to confirm this appraisal will be interested in the tour to the Soviet Theatre Festival arranged by *NEW THEATRE*, to be guided by its editor, Herbert Kline. The party will be restricted in numbers, since its purpose is to provide intimate access for American artists and technicians of the stage and screen to the life and work of their colleagues in the Soviet Union. The delegation will be welcomed by prominent foreign critics and leading figures of the theatre and screen arts, including Tretiakov, Eisenstein, Friedrich Wolf, Jay Leyda, Leon Moussinac, Chen-I-wan and Piscator, and will meet Stanislavsky, Okhlopkov and Pudovkin.

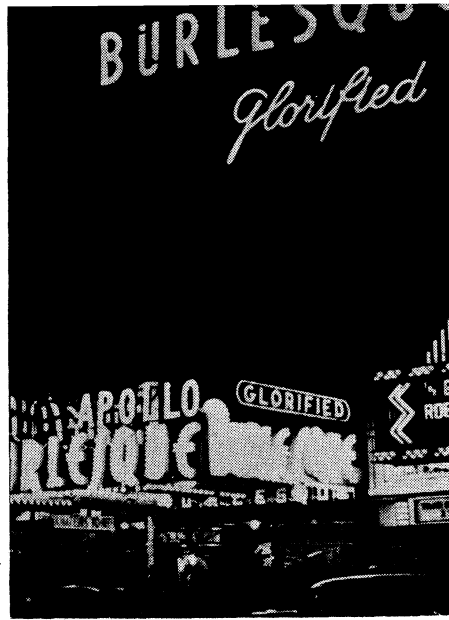
Besides attending performances of the Vakhtangov, Meyerhold, Bolshoi, State Georgian and Moscow Art Theatres, opportunities will be provided for members of the party to study at close range the method and technique for which each theatre is famous. Preceding the Festival, the group will make a 2,000 mile tour, visiting a number of points in the Soviet Union, England, France, Poland, Finland, Sweden and Denmark. The tour leaves New York August 5th on the *S.S. Aquitania*, and returns September 21st on the new giant steamship *Queen Mary*.



HERBERT KLINE



HERBERT KLINE



Burlesque

BY PHILIP STERLING

The burlesque stage, offering vicarious sex experience at reasonable box office prices, is almost totally divorced from reality despite its bawdy humor and bare buttocks, and therefore has little justification as an art form. Nevertheless there is an important reason for its reevaluation.

"Burlycue" has remained essentially unchanged since the beginning of the century, but the people who work in it, the comics, the strip women and the chorus kids have moved forward. They have learned that there are facts of life other than sex. The sum total of their learning is contained in their recent discovery that a strong union is better than the unsecured pledge of an employer. They have found a new collective consciousness and are developing a new mode of professional life. That's what makes it necessary to draw a line between the bad of the burlesque stage and the good of the burlesque actor.

Burlesque, like other popular entertainment forms, has been degraded from a once virile and lusty instrument of folk expression to a hollow, tinsel-draped shell, retaining only those features which are best suited to commercial exploitation.

The development of American burlesque into an undisguised sex display stems from the long-skirted, petticoat-wrapped morals of the late Victorian era when sex was a dirty word. The gay, light-hearted stage extravaganzas of the day were adjudged naughty because dancers and actresses flitted about the stage with unlady-like verve leading to the evil of exposed legs, garters and/or underpants. *The Black Crook*, most notable of the late Nineteenth Century's giddy stage vehicles, was good, clean fun, but Victorian society called it naughty. Ambitious showmen exploited its reputation and produced more daring pieces. Slowly the elements of simple entertainment in burlesque gave way to the present-day

exploitation of sex. Its excuse for living is still good, clean fun. It's never clean and it's seldom good fun.

The structure of a burlesque show is simple. Every show opens with a chorus number. Then follows a comedy bit involving two or three comics. The mouldy senility of the comic bits is seldom relieved by any freshness of treatment.

The comic scenes are divided into two main types. One deals with the gullibility of the self-styled "wise guy" who inevitably meets disaster in his attempt to flim-flam someone else. The other is an elaborate piece of dialogue built around one or a series of sexy double meanings. Only occasionally does one find vestigial remnants of true burlesque.

There may be a scene in which the comic, appropriately garbed, is being instructed in the art of bull-fighting. The dialogue goes something like this:

Straight Man: "When the bull comes out you wave your cape."

Comic: "Then what do I do?"

Straight Man: "You gotta be careful because the bull's liable to hurt your pickador." (At this point the comic's reply and his gestures indicate that he believes a pickador to be some part of his anatomy.)

Straight Man: "When you kill the bull, you walk over to the side of the arena, you bow, and you look up at the queen's box."

Comic (looking coy and roguish): "Do I have to wait till I kill the bull?"

Straight Man: "Sure. It ought to be easy for you. You've been shooting the bull for years."

From this point the scene may go on and end with a punch-line which has no connection with bull-fighting nor with anything else that went before.

Or there may be a scene in a haunted house in which the comic pretends to be dreadfully frightened and the straight man fearlessly announces his determination to lay the ghost. Whereupon there will be much ado because the comic, in his simulated fright confuses "ghost" with "goat."

After the comedy blackout, which burlesque is credited with having originated, comes the strip number, which today has become the chief attraction. The stripper sings a popular tune which is usually neither new nor tuneful. There was a time when most strip women couldn't do anything but strip. Today, however, one

finds an increasing number who have some slight accomplishments in the way of song or dance. She sings her first chorus fully clothed, although she is toying with the pins that secure her specially designed costume. On the second chorus the lights change and as she sings she begins to divest herself of either the bottom or top part of her gown. Half undressed she struts, dances or skips, according to her degree of accomplishment, across the stage, timing the removal of the rest of her costume with her exit and the last bars of the music. On her third appearance she may have part of her gown thrown loosely about her but before she makes her final exit she is again totally disrobed save for a small beaded "G-string."

During the depression, when burlesque operators, like other showmen, would have displayed their grandmothers in pink tights to bolster falling box-office receipts, nudity became desperately nude. As a result the flesh displays have reached almost their extreme limit.

The strip act is followed by a chorus number, the dancing routines and costumes of which are generally simplified from those of a high-priced revue. The specialty number follows. This may be a tap dancer, a singer, a quartette. In the specialty number the chorus may again be brought into play with banal but revealing costumes. Multiply this sequence by four or five and you have a burlesque show.

One of the most revealing phenomena is the splicing concessionaire who holds forth between performances. His technique is eloquent of the low esteem in which burlesque operators hold the intelligence of their patrons. After his routine announcements of chocolates, cigars, cigarettes, orangeade, always couched in superlatives, he launches into the following rapid-fire peroration:

"Now ladies and gentlemen: I want to call to your attention today a special imported French novelty which we are prepared to pass out to each and every patron of this show. I know you're all broad-minded and you enjoy a good laugh, and I've got something here that you wouldn't part with for fifty cents or a dollar once you get it. Now I am not asking fifty cents or a dollar. I'm not even going to sell it because it's against the law. But nobody can stop me from giving it away as a little souvenir. I have

BURLESQUE
Glorified



here an imported French booklet showing a group of French models and as you turn the pages you will get a good idea from the pictures of what certain people do under certain conditions. It leaves nothing to your imagination. I am not selling these but with every ten-cent bar of this famous brand of chocolate the boys will give you one of these booklets as they pass up the aisle."

Who goes to these shows? Manual and white-collar workers and various strata of the lower middle class—the same people who go to the movies. Without question the major part of these audiences see through the banality, and hollow merriment of the shows.

If the patrons of burlesque continue to support it despite its obvious sham it is not because of any inherent viciousness. Joseph Wood Krutch's explanation, though mildly phrased, is apt:

"The dogged patience with which hundreds of men . . . sit through insipidity after insipidity is proof that this queer society of ours shuts out a considerable portion of its members from adequate contact with experiences which human nature cannot be kept from craving."

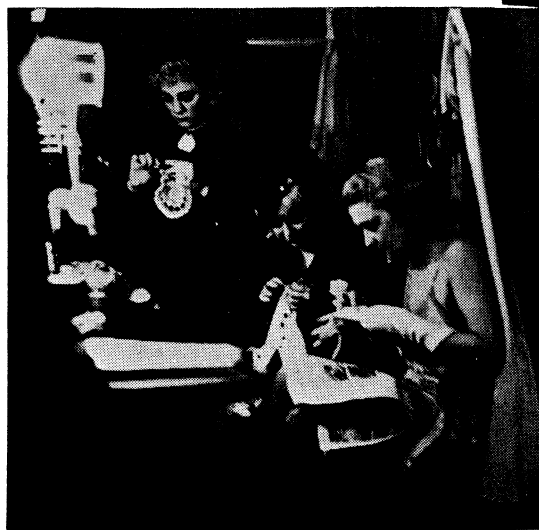
If burlesque is so bad, what about the people who work in it? Who but individuals of loose morals and low intellectual caliber would permit themselves to be agencies of such shabbily disguised lewdness and salaciousness? That's like asking who but a person intent on suicide would be a steeple-jack or a sand-hog. The fact is that most people have little choice of employment. Occupations are largely determined by momentary necessity and by the accidents arising therefrom.

Burlesque chorus girls and show girls get \$25.50 a week in stock companies and three dollars more on the road. Principals, strip women and comics, get as low as \$40 but their pay is scaled upward according to their personal reputation as drawing cards. They average close to \$60 a week. In New

York City the working week averages about 70 hours. That means four shows a day, a midnight performance on Saturday nights and about three rehearsals a week which last from 1 A. M. to almost any time.

Until several months ago, when the Burlesque Artists Association led its first successful strike, the working week was from 82 to 90 hours. Girls got from \$15 to \$21 a week and principals were kept close to the \$40 minimum. In addition, the chorus captain, whose loyalty to the employer was purchased by a few dollars extra per week and by greater security of tenure, had powers of life and death over

(Continued on page 36)



PERFORMANCE AND BACKSTAGE PHOTOS BY MARTIN HARRIS

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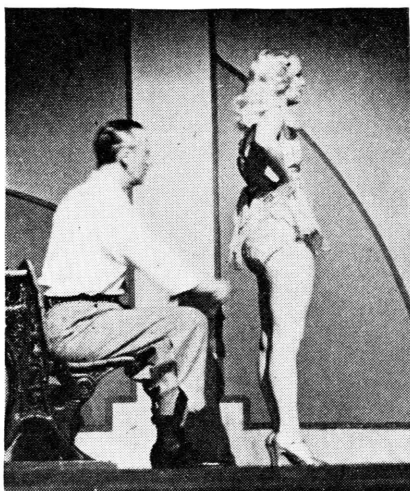
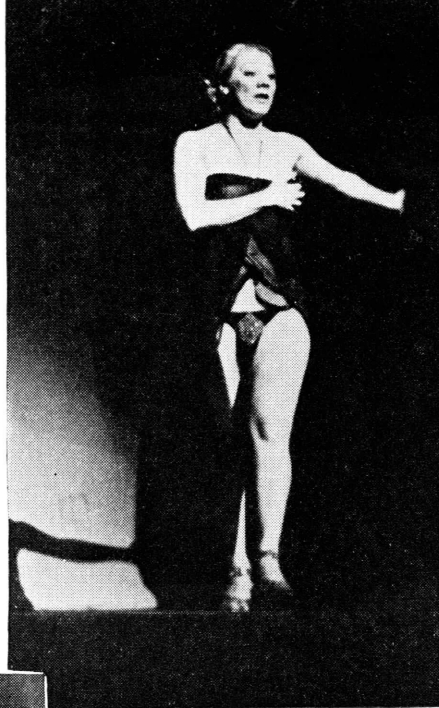
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(Continued on page 36)



PERFORMANCE AND BACKSTAGE PHOTOS BY MARTIN HARRIS

A Museum of Ballet



Those who were privileged to watch the Diaghilev Ballet (1901-1929) each successive season, will recall it as a constantly fresh and creative experience. Conscious indications of new directions in music, painting and choreography made each successive season a series of manifestos. Many of the ballets may have been soon forgotten, but there was always an atmosphere of creative tension about Diaghilev, a feeling that whatever new combination of talents was about to be given a debut was worth the preliminary talk and posthumous anatomizing which crammed aesthetic conversation for twenty years. There was no place for dust to gather.

The de Basil ballet company (1932-1936) is a museum, which houses dance productions of historical importance for our instruction and pleasure. It contains a repertory which is largely resurrection or reconstruction of works composed for Diaghilev, with a few notable additions. Except for a couple of painters, not one new significant collaborator has emerged either among its decorators, musicians or choreographers, although there are half a dozen new dancers. De Basil has commissioned no work from Stravinsky, Hindemith, Prokofiev, Shostakovich or Markevitch, which he might have done, and which his predecessor

would not have failed to do. Instead he maintains much of the repertory Diaghilev created, and annually he adds a few new works. The ballets he shows are of varying significance. From all of them something valuable may be learned; from each of them an American dancer may draw useful comparisons, and from half a dozen of the dancers any lover of dancing cannot fail to derive pleasure.

Let us examine the exhibits of the de Basil Museum chronologically. We must begin with a reevaluation of *Lac des Cygnes* (1892). This serves as an illustration of "classical" or nineteenth-century choreography with a smack of traditional pantomime. It is the second of a four-act work, still popular in Moscow. This act was designed not by Petipa (as the program states), but by Lev Ivanov, one of his talented assistants. It depends for its present interest on the apparition of Alexandra Danilova as the Swan Princess. This remarkable artist is the one star of the Diaghilev company who, instead of disappearing from the stage, has actually developed into the most accomplished classicist outside of the Soviet Union. In her is incarnate that nobility of carriage and sensibility of gesture which is the dynastic attribute of the supreme Russian ballerina. She is exact, brilliant, and combines both tenderness and virtuosity. But the choreography of *Swan Lake* is weakly revived. A splendid Adagio employing all the men

(in the original) is discarded in the de Basil version, where the green-clad Archers make an apologetic entrance and vanish. The celebrated variation of four cygnets is given to a quartet of girls who make it look like a schoolroom exercise, which it has since become.

Then there is *Aurora's Wedding* (Petipa-Nijinska, 1895-1921). This has become a kind of "Washington Crossing the Delaware" in the museum. It is a series of dances thrown together as diversissements from the last act of Diaghilev's ill-fated revival of *La Belle au Bois Dormant*. Nijinska added her *Three Ivans* and reworked some other numbers. It has two famous variations, an adagio which exhibits Baronova's clean technique and *The Blue Bird* which nightly brings down the house. The male rôle is usually danced by David Lichine, an artist who bears to ballet a relation similar to that of Saroyan to writing. He has sex-appeal and a showy energy. The security of his ultimate poses fools one into thinking that his initial and intermediate movements are excellent, which they never are. To see *The Blue Bird*, a charming solo, really well executed, calls for Roland Guerard, the brilliant technician from Philadelphia who is rarely given a chance. What remains of the original choreography of Petipa is weak testimony to his renown either as inventor or as architect of dance. Tchaikovsky's music is perhaps the best



Ivanova and Lichine

BY LINCOLN KIRSTEIN

ballet music one can hear. An examination of his letters reveals the pains to which he went to solve the technical problem he undertook as a composer of dance music. *Aurora's Wedding* is a faded pot-pourri, but obviously a fragrant and enjoyable one to most audiences.

The exhibit representing Michel Fokine comprises *Les Sylphides* (1909), *Oiseau de Feu* (1910), *Prince Igor* (1909), *Scheherezade* (1910), *Spectre de la Rose* (1911), *Thamar* (1912), and *Petrouchka* (1911). When these ballets are given, the program explicitly reads "after M. Fokine." The "after" is frequently a long way after, being only as long as some of the memories in de Basil's company. Why Fokine, still alive, is not asked to remount his own work, which only he completely remembers, is a mystery. The one which holds most for us, mainly in the matter of style, is *Sylphides*, particularly as danced by Danilova, Petroff and Riabouchinska. Here Fokine superimposed on a pastiche of the 19th century ballet all he had invented independent of, but parallel to Duncan. The arm movements, the symmetrical but still interesting floor patterns, the single male variation, are lovely. But the corps de ballet, after a tour of thirty thousand miles, performed it without elegance. *Petrouchka* has no longer the advantage of a large bustling crowd for its opening scene. The sharply characterized national types of Fokine's original miming, in combination with Stravinsky's superb orchestration, and the artists of the original ballet, have been lost. The music cries out for thorough restaging. *Scheherezade* is sillier than salacious Franco-oriental novels of thirty years ago; *L'Oiseau de Feu*, except for a longish first act adagio superbly executed by Massine and Danilova, seems more shabby folk-lore. The music alone vaguely recalls what may once have been novelty. The revival of the Nijinsky legend is responsible for the persistence of *Spectre de la Rose*: Fokine's *pas de deux* is a permanently admirable composition, but Lichine's interpretation of the Rose exemplifies only too nakedly what superficial ballet technique accomplishes. All that was once movement, smooth and simple as honey, is now broken, gauche, saccharine and pretentious. By continuing to produce *Spectre* and his other works so weakly, only an increasing doubt is cast (and cast unfairly) on the contribution of Fokine as choreographer.



Massine

The section dedicated to Leonide Massine must be studied first of all in relation to Massine himself as dancer. In terms of a dancer's life he is not young. In terms of a dancer's training, he has not had the benefits of a thorough classical background from one of the great Russian schools. But he is theatrically in the hey-day of his youth, and most other dancers of whatever school, wherever trained, can learn much from him. Whether as a comic or an heroic character he imparts to any rôle a quality of absoluteness in its theatrical projection. That is, one would rather not see anyone else dance his parts after him, though technically he might be frequently surpassed. Perhaps this absolute polish comes from having danced so long, and so many times in every ballet. At once animal and seemingly adolescent, he is firm and noble as well. His agile bearing in walk or dance, his abandoned precision in character-work, or in his grand sensitive adagios are the property of a stage artist as satisfactory in every department as exists today.

Massine's first school was in the Spanish Dance. Discounting his early and uninteresting *Midnight Sun* (1915), we find in *The Three-Cornered Hat* (1919), with Picasso's fine scenic investiture, some interesting dancing. The plot is involved. There are long spaces of empty movement on the stage, but it contains Massine's own Farruca, a fine pastiche of the percussive Iberian idiom. He is always fortunate in setting his own solos—the Barkeep in *Union Pacific* (1934), the Hussar in *Le Beau Danube* (1924). It is curious that he never resets his choreography of last year or even fifteen years ago, in spite of his increased chore-

ographic information. *The Good-Humored Ladies* (1917) is almost the only one of his works which seems permanent, not to be improved on today. In it, the mimicry is musical, the mood created an equivalent to Scarlatti's music, the drama fresh and not diluted as in Massine's later *Scuolo di Ballo* (1933).

Of his ballets created for the de Basil company, *Les Prèsages* and *Choreartium* (both 1933) are the most rewarding, and have even been partially praised by exponents of modern dance on account of superficial stylistic similarities between Wigman and the palette of gesture Massine occasionally employs. Choreographic symphonies are anomalies. They either must follow or "interpret" the music so closely that they become enslaved calisthenics hopelessly trailing after counterpoint, or they must ignore the music to such an extent that it is nearly forgotten, serving only as much of a pretext for dancing as any other given symphony. Tchaikovsky is better music for dancing in *Les Prèsages* than Brahms in *Choreartium*, and even in spite of a vaguely symbolic libretto *Les Prèsages* seems the more coherent achievement. In the Brahms work, Massine has established absolutely no alliance be-

(Continued on page 37)



The Los Angeles WPA Theatre Project

BY SANORA BABB



MARIONETTE WORKSHOP, LOS ANGELES FEDERAL THEATRE PROJECT

The Los Angeles WPA Federal Theatre Project is housed in an old wholesale electrical supply building with an uncertain elevator, grey cement walls and new-lumber knobless doors. There are 1,440 people: carpenters, office workers, costume makers, maids, publicity men and theatre managers, actors and actresses, musicians, directors and writers, all kinds of workers necessary in the life of the theatre. Besides the general drama groups, there are Yiddish, French and Negro groups, and a Mexican unit in formation—over five hundred actors in all.

You feel conflict between death and life in this disinterred place, with its ghosts of abandoned industry and its new kind of activity, as you feel it in these “reclaimed” people who are busy on the various floors.

You climb the stone stairs, four and five and six flights, because it is easier than waiting for the decrepit elevator. A thin woman with a sheet of paper filled with figures hurries past half out of breath. A boy goes down with an armful of placards for a new play. (Almost no allowance has as yet been made for advertising; the actors, knowing its necessity, finance it cooperatively from their own pay.)

Some place nearby a violin is playing. Back of the stairs in the dusk a woman's figure dim against the grey wall under the high dirty window. A young actor tells you she is Buda Dorsay, that she practices there many hours every day. The actor is Walter Zuetelle, baritone.

now Master of Ceremonies in the vaudeville unit. He has been in fifteen New York musical shows, has played bits and extras in pictures, and forty-two weeks in the Olvera Street Theatre here in *The Streets of New York*. After that show closed, he found no more work, until he got on the SERA Project a year ago. He is married, and his wife has been wanting a baby for several years, but living has been too uncertain, and she has been ill; there was no money for doctor's care or a decent place to live. Under the Federal Theatre Project, with actors' wages from \$85 to \$94 a month, there is for the first time in years a little security. They have moved to a little house at the beach with the hope that his wife may regain her health. Perhaps they can even afford to have a baby, if the job keeps on, if he, with the others, can look forward to the establishment of a permanent Federal Theatre, run on a cooperative basis, if . . . He does not mind telling you that he believes the relief theatres will develop a new type of entertainment, and that he is going to vote for Roosevelt. “We've at least a chance to live, and work at what we want, and with careful managing a chance to get a few necessary clothes.”

There's a pretty ingenue, Donya Dean, waiting in a publicity office. She had had three seasons of stock, when she came to Hollywood to try pictures. She was getting along all right, doing extra work, when she suddenly found herself discriminated against, with thousands of others, because she was not registered at

Central Casting Agency. Central Casting “cooperates” with the producers; they had a plan to alleviate the desperate conditions among extras: those listed with CC would receive more calls, the surplus workers would be “liquidated.” Donya is one of them; nevertheless, she believes that the purpose of the theatre is to *entertain*, and that social ideas, social drama are depressing.

You wander into a large room where the Shakespeare unit is rehearsing lustily, under the direction of Gareth Hughes, one time well known stage and screen star, an authority on Shakespeare, still a young man. In Hearst's daily attacks on the WPA, he has taken a particularly malevolent pleasure in referring repeatedly to Hughes' past fame and his present plight on the dole. Just as a matter of fact, Hughes, like many WPA executives, is working on the project on a non-relief ticket, and has never been on relief. (There is at present a ten per cent provision for such extra talent as is needed.) Until he came on the project there was no Shakespearean group. Now rehearsals are going on for a Shakespearean Festival, with music by the WPA symphony orchestra, for the week of April 20th, which will include *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Merchant of Venice*, and *Hamlet*. Mr. Hughes prefers to interpret the Shakespeare plays with all the robust life and verve of their original intention, with reverence, but without the lugubrious solemnity of unreality that is commonly felt for them. He knows every



MARIONETTE WORKSHOP, LOS ANGELES FEDERAL THEATRE PROJECT

line of Shakespeare, and while he is talking, he is also listening to the actors rehearsing, catching up the dialogue here and there. You feel his kindness that is not sentimental, his love for the theatre, his enthusiasm that has awakened and stimulated his actors. Above the noise of movement and shouting, with so much Shakespeare filling the room, you ask Mr. Hughes if he believes the theatre should also portray and interpret the living themes of today, the tremendous social upheaval of the present.

"By all means! The social theatre has its place, it could and should interpret life to the masses. We need new theatre, new themes to replace the degenerate offerings of the sex-ridden drawing room dramas of the commercial stage."

Mr. Hughes is busy again. You sit down with some women, and you get into conversation with Truly Shattuck, once-famous musical comedy prima donna, who made the first experimental talking picture for Thomas Edison in 1913. A lively old Falstaff comes out of a scene, and sits down to talk. Everyone nearby listens to him. He is Frank Brownlee, who has been on the stage forty-two years, who once retired on his income. Since 1931 he has tried to get work so that he and his elderly wife could eat and have a place to live. After drifting from "worse to worse" he finally got on relief this year. "People are always hungry," he says, "to see a play that reflects current life. They always have been and always will be. They like to identify themselves and their situations with those of the actors. If the federal theatres can keep free of cheap politics, that's one of the good chances for revival. The commercial theatre is bucking too many other interests."

You go to see Max Pollock, who put on *Formation Left* for the Los Angeles Contemporary Theatre, and who is now directing the Modern Drama group. They are preparing Conrad Seiler's *Censored* and Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. "These are artistically moving plays," Mr. Pollock tells you, "but this is not enough. The plays we are permitted to do are nothing to what we have here to produce. We are told to produce vital, moving, timely plays, but if we do—what happens?" He has no awe reverence for the conventional handling of classics. "If we cannot always use new plays, then I want to produce Shakespeare and Ibsen from a contemporary point of view." Mr. Pollock feels that men like Howard Miller, who asks repeatedly in meetings for alive, social dramas, will do much to help the Federal Theatre Projects to become

something more than dead work arranged only to keep relief clients busy: "It is hard to say what the future of the Federal Theatre will be: the process is so slow, so tremendous. Our only hope is in the youth. I know young people and directors here who would love to do social plays, because there is nothing else vital in the theatre today but the interpretation of the life around us."

You talk with B. W. Garrett, a former executive at a major motion picture studio, who is the traveling manager for the PWA shows. He tells you that the two Federal Theatres in Los Angeles are the Mayan and Musart; besides these, the shows are booked all over California. There are twelve-day tours covering schools and CCC camps. Arrangements with some of the CCC camps located back in the mountains are carried on entirely by short wave radio, their only means of communication. Only men are permitted on the one-night CCC programs. No curses allowed on the stage, no mention of the deity, no blues. They travel in army trucks, accompanied by an army chaplain.

Black Empire with a Negro and white company of sixty-five and their own WPA orchestra in the pit, now playing at the Mayan in downtown Los Angeles, is a well-enough produced but romanticized Negro play of the black man ruling the white. You'd like to see these talented Negroes in plays with a voice for the truth of their own lives.

You see the rehearsals and the plays, and walk among these people, and in some of them you see the experience of the hard years in their faces, you hear it in their stunned and waking voices, and you wonder how long they will be satis-

fied with themes out of a dead life. Some of the people are dead: their lives have been broken in a failing world, and the end is this: a little security for awhile, something to eat, a room some place, a cheap pair of shoes, or a coat on sale. If the reactionaries succeed in killing the Federal Theatres, how will it be next? The fear before and the fear after: here is a little respite. But the others are alive, and sooner or later they will wake up to the drama they are living. You feel a great patience and expectancy. Many of them have not thought much about why they are on relief. The "depression" is the answer to everything. They do not question the crisis, they do not yet identify themselves with the millions of other disinherited people. They do not yet identify their position with that of a great body of people harrassed by the same problems throughout a chaotic world. They are so steeped in the distorted ideas of our traditional culture, created by a class guarding its own interests at the expense of the majority, that their thoughts are guided by these ideas instead of by facts. This manner of thinking excludes the truth of our times, and leads to that state of sleep-walking wherein all criticism of the status quo is viewed as false. Hence, the truth becomes subversive, and the less courageous are fearful of recognizing it openly. But the facts are so blatant in the lives of these workers, they cannot long ignore them. Playwrights on the project are writing plays out of the lives of themselves and those around them. Plays are being submitted depicting the misery and wealth, the awakening and decay, the contradictions of a dying form of society. Vitality and strength, humor and excitement, emotion and thought are in these plays. If they are not censored and shelved before the actors have a chance to read them, these actors will find in them an expression and vigor that is their own.

The reactionaries fear the new theatres' portrayal of their surfeited and decadent minority, and the alive and vigorous themes of the oppressed, stirring with a sense of their right to a decent life. With forced censorship, this minority has set up a violently protective circle around the inside of present-day society, and any healthy new life in the theatre has to fight itself free of this plague. The will to fight here lies mostly in the actors emerging from their malnourished (mental and physical) lethargy to a clear understanding of why they are going through this experience.

One thing they will all tell you: that they hope for and will work hard to develop a permanent Federal Theatre, free of censorship and political corruption.



A SCENE FROM CONRAD SEILER'S "CENSORED," LOS ANGELES FEDERAL THEATRE PROJECT



A SCENE FROM CONRAD SEILER'S "CENSORED," LOS ANGELES FEDERAL THEATRE PROJECT



Phil Wolfe

PLAY REVIEWS

"We Live and Laugh"

A review with music, directed by Judah Bleich and Zvee Scooler; music by Maurice Rauch; choreography by Lillian Shapero; settings by Andrei Hudiakoff; costumes designed by Emile Stoner. Entire production under supervision of Stephen Karnot.

The Yiddish Intimate Theatre, a unit of the Federal Municipal Theatre, has carved out a fair evening of entertainment in *We Live and Laugh*, the musical revue which opened at the Public Theatre on May 8th. There are eleven numbers in all, ranging from old legendary folk themes to present-day subjects of struggle and protest. Of the latter group *Seamstresses*, depicting in choreographic form the toil and drudgery of the shop, gains distinction over the others by its simplicity and scenic effect. Kreymborg's *America, America*, while it begins impressively, proves rather disappointing. It lacks the vigor and robustness which attended its performance by various dramatic groups in the past. *Miners*, the only other subject of social content, found the stage cluttered with figures executing a multitude of patterns which was further confused by poor lighting. The scene, which ends with the death of a miner and his being borne out on the shoulders of his comrades, might well have been the most impressive piece of the evening with more careful staging. *Village Wedding* offered a novel scenic background for the colorfully arrayed and merrymaking townsfolk. Scenes described by a narrator are revealed in quick succession on the album-like set

with interesting results. *The Wonder Horse* tells an odd legend of Litvak who with his toothless horse sets out to seek his "fortune." He falls asleep in the city of Chelem, whose inhabitants according to Jewish legend are proverbial fools. The townsfolk wake up and discover Litvak and his horse asleep. Upon closer examination they discover two gold coins lying at the horse's rear and are convinced that Litvak's horse has brought them fortune. The action which follows the "discovery" is repetitious of the *Village Wedding*. A bit more stylization would enrich the playfulness of the scene. *Provincial Theatre* is good farce. It had the audience roaring with delight. That old standby, *Six Brothers*, met with equal approval. The six brothers are all musicians (klezmer to you) who earn their living by playing in the streets. One by one they confess that they're dying and suit the action to the words and music. There's a happy ending, however, when coins are thrown at their feet by sympathetic town folk and a mad scramble ensues in which the "dead" brothers come to life and they're all O. K. *Steam Heat* left this reviewer cold and certainly does not belong on the program. *Underworld* provides one of the shortest black-outs on record; *Prisoner 1936* suffers by its familiarity to Yiddish speaking audiences and *Cantor's Audition* ends with a baseball player winding up in high C. The music, most of which is of folk origin, is well scored. *Seamstresses* and *Miners* would be more effective, however, with muted strings.

P. W.

"Blood on the Moon"

The Brooklyn Progressive Players, who aim to build a permanent social theatre in Brooklyn, have made an excellent beginning with *Blood on the Moon*, Claire and Paul Sifton's play about Nazi Germany, which they presented for three weeks, beginning April 26th, at the Brooklyn Little Theatre.

Dealing with the ghastly persecution which overtakes a middle-class German family with a touch of Jewish blood in its veins, *Blood on the Moon* shows the mystical-fanatic basis of Hitler's strength among German youth, the brutality to which it lends itself, and the complete intellectual confusion and isolation of its middle-class victims. Although it fails, even by implication, except in a few vague references, to clarify the fundamental forces behind the Nordic-nationalist creed, it is a powerful exposition of the realities of fascism, and in some scenes rises to a high level of dramatic writing.

As produced by the Brooklyn Progressive Players under the able direction of Kumar Goshal, *Blood on the Moon* proved gripping theatre. The group, which consists largely of men and women who work during the day, as well as several young professional actors, achieved a finished and workmanlike production. Nor did the level of the acting fall far behind; it sagged only where the script itself was at fault: in a discursive first act which endlessly explained and commented on a situation which had not yet been dramatized or brought home to the audience, and again in the last act, when the action faltered, and recitative prevailed. But in the second act, where a series of compact, theatrical, tautly-written scenes showed the step-by-step annihilation of the Mohlenhoff family, the actors rose to the occasion and turned in a number of first-rate performances, notably Sabine Newmark as the sister who is finally driven to suicide by the necessity of an abortion, Alexander Scourby as the young musician, Joseph Cutler, who took the dual roles of a tragic Jewish business man and an old doctor whose life-work crumbles before his eyes, and Robert Payson, who managed to portray the young Nazi storm-trooper, Willy Steiermacher, with sincerity and conviction.

Next season the Brooklyn Progressive Players plan to present three plays, the first of which will be the Siftons' new satiric farce, *The Crime of the Century*. During the summer they will perform a condensed version of *Blood on the Moon* in union halls, and at summer camps and theatres outside New York.

E. F.

Union Smashing—Hollywood Style

BY HERBERT KLINE

The Wagner Labor Disputes Act should be invoked immediately against the Association of Motion Picture Producers of Hollywood for the intimidation and coercion of employee members of the Screen Writers' Guild. Charging the Guild leaders with being "power-seeking radicals" whose program for amalgamation with the Authors' League of America amounted to a destructive war on the motion picture industry, the producers themselves declared war on the Writers' Guild, deliberately resorting to underhanded tactics of the foulest character to force screen writers into betraying their own organization and their own interests.

What did the screen writers want? Were they seeking power or protection? Was it true that Ernest Pascal, Ralph Block, O. H. P. Garrett, John Howard Lawson, Francis Faragoh, Sidney Buchman, E. E. Paramore, Jr., Dudley Nichols, Edwin Justus Mayer and other Screen Guild leaders were "power-seeking radicals" out to "dominate" the film industry? Were they in league with "Eastern" writers in a scheme to "Sovietize" the writing crafts and enable the writers to take over control of their employers' business?

According to L. W. Beilenson, counsel for the Guild, the purpose of the proposed Authors' League amalgamation was "to provide a framework within which all the writers in this country could unite in a common purpose; to preserve what had been won; to give an instrument for future progress; to make the organization able to function in an emergency, yet preserve democratic safeguards."

Power or protection? The question can be answered best by stating the immediate economic reasons for strengthening the Writers' Guild. With growing competition from British and other film production centers, the increasing importance of radio and the imminence of television, it was only reasonable to expect that the producers would soon attempt to re-scale the salaries of writers and of the entire personnel in the industry.

"With organization," an editorial in the Screen Guild Magazine for April stated, "we can, in just measure, control this re-scaling of salaries. It is no more than just that we should. The picture business belongs to those who make it—writers, actors, directors and others who work in it, as well as the producers . . . The writers' interests must be guarded."

In an article "One Organization for All American Writers" in the same issue,

Ernest Pascal, the Guild's president, broached the question of amalgamation with the Authors' League which was to be offered for ratification at the annual membership meeting on May 2nd. An order was also issued instructing all members not to sign any contracts or make any commitments with producers extending beyond May 2nd, 1938. This order was valid only for the seventeen day period from April 15th (when the magazine was received by Guild members) to May 2nd, when the order would be brought before the membership for ratification. It was necessary to set a cut-off date for contracts "because only then can we control the supply of men and material. Until we do, we cannot win even with a strike. When we do, we can win without a strike."

The producers were incensed. If the amalgamation and cut-off agreements were passed at the May 2nd meeting, the writers could force them to recognize the Guild, a step they had refused to take for three years. "Guild Shop" would inevitably follow. This would mean not only control of salary re-scaling, but other concessions. For example, the writers might decide to change the prevailing option arrangements which permit the studio to bind the writers' services for a long time while allowing the studio to set aside the contract at the close of frequent option periods. Even more, it meant the first step toward giving the screen writer as much control of his product as the playwright holds under the Dramatists' Guild contract of the Authors' League. And worse still, what if the actors and directors should follow the writers' example? That would eventually mean "Guild Shop" not only for the writers but for the entire talent field.

Accordingly, the men who own the movies declared for "war to the finish." They succeeded in getting James K. McGuinness, John Lee Mahin and Howard Emmett Rogers of MGM and Patterson McNutt of Paramount to head a group of "conservatives" within the Guild. These "conservatives" were active for weeks before May 2nd. They attacked the Guild leaders on charges of radicalism and persuaded a number of sincere screen writers, including Robert Riskin and Samson Raphaelson, that the amalgamation program, as stated by the board, would sacrifice the Guild's "autonomy" and subordinate the interests of the Hollywood screen writers to the "Eastern" sector of the Authors' League.

On April 25th, the producers mailed a statement to all the employed members of the Guild. The statement, which was released for publication on April 27th, carried the signatures of all feature-producing members of the Producers' Association: Columbia, Metro, Paramount, Pickford-Lasky, Pioneer, Radio, Selznick International, 20th Century-Fox, Universal, Walter Wanger, Hearst-Warners. They warned the writers that "the industry will not accept a closed shop for writers on any basis whatsoever."

The "conservative" faction published ads and letters in the trade papers in order to influence other writers to oppose the Guild program. One of the most blatant efforts was the ten-page legal opinion published under the signature of Bess Meredyth. This opinion, handed down by the law firm of O'Melveny, Tuller and Myers, declared that all unions were "organizations in restraint of trade," making their members subject to prosecution, and presented an utterly misleading analysis of the Authors' League Constitution.

The most vicious bit of "red baiting" came from Herman 'Pu-Yi' Manckiewicz, one of Hollywood's highest paid writers. Manckiewicz placed a \$150 ad in The Reporter of April 27th, headed "Proposed Charter for Local Number 1, Sons and Daughters of I Will Arise Screen Writers' Union." His effusion was signed "Writers of Hollywood, Unite! You have nothing to lose but your brains: Herman J. Manckiewicz, Grub Street, Beverly Hills, California. In the Year of the Terror, One."

In The Hollywood Reporter of April 28th, Gene Fowler issued a plea to the higher-salaried writers for "rugged individualism." He argued that unionism only protects the incompetent members of the Guild, that good writers don't need protection. He conveniently neglected to mention that even the most powerful "rugged individualists" among the high salaried screen stars, directors and writers were helpless before the steam roller 50 per cent wage cut of 1932 that induced Fowler, among others, to join the Screen Writers' Guild.

On April 29th, Billy Wilkerson, owner of the self-styled "pro-labor" Hollywood Reporter, went out gunning for Ernest Pascal. In a signed editorial he stated that Pascal had demanded a personal contract guaranteeing that he alone would receive screen credit for a script regardless of what other writers in the studio collaborated with him. The libel, deliber-

ate as it was, was spread all over Hollywood to whip up prejudice against the Guild president. Not until the man who asked for this contract was proved to be Ernest Vадja, a name conveniently similar to that of Ernest Pascal, did Wilkerson retract this lie.

Some of these attacks were met by Donald Ogden Stewart, who replied to Fowler, by Pascal who answered Zanuck's attack on the Guild, and by Dudley Nichols who declared a "one man war" on The Reporter for its vicious misrepresentation of the writers' program. In support of the writers, the Actors' Guild stated: "The attack of the producers on the Screen Writers' Guild is the opening gun of an attack on all talent organizations."

In the meantime the "conservatives" were gathering forces. The producers gave them complete use of studio facilities including free meeting rooms, car and messenger service, etc. But not content with merely encouraging the conservatives' sabotage, the producers finally took things into their own hands and called separate studio meetings at which they directed their writers how to vote May 2nd.

On the night of April 30th, the Guild board made a disastrous compromise with the "conservative" faction. In an effort to avoid a split, the Guild leaders, while retaining the idea of the two year limitation of contracts clause and the fight for Guild Shop, agreed to delay action on the basic principle of amalgamation. Their compromise called for a vote on May 2nd for amalgamation "*in principle*," pending certain changes the conservatives demanded in the Authors' League Constitution, instead of the original amalgamation proposal which alone could give the Guild bargaining power and strength to back up their demands.

The night of May 2nd saw the Guild apparently united. Five "conservatives," McGuinness, McNutt, Bert Kalmar, Samson Raphaelson and Robert Riskin, were admitted to the Guild Board as agreed upon April 30th. With only Gene Fowler and Zoe Akins speaking against the program presented by the board, the writers voted for "the principle of amalgamation," 188 to 32, and 193 to 25 for the May 2, 1938 cut-off date, which would lead to Guild Shop. Despite the substantial majority these measures had received, the producers' strategy, as carried through by McGuinness and McNutt, had succeeded. The leaders of the Guild must be severely criticized for their lack of clarity in not realizing that amalgamation, which would assure them the full backing of all writers in the Authors' League, was the real issue.

On May 3rd, the Association of Motion Picture Producers met in secret. They de-

cidied to call meetings of all writers employed at their respective studios. At these meetings, the producers employed open coercion and intimidation. They declared, "Those of you who are members of the Screen Writers' Guild, get this! Resign—or else! If you are under contract to this studio, and you don't resign, we'll tear up your contract. If you're not under contract, we'll fire you! In either event, if you don't resign from the Guild, you'll never get a job in another studio."

Immediately thirteen writers, all from MGM and 20th Century-Fox, resigned from the Guild. Reports of wholesale secessions from the Guild were current in the trade papers, and a rumor persisted that the "conservatives" would form a new Guild.

The following day, James Kevin McGuinness and Patterson McNutt resigned from the Guild Board. They were followed soon after by John Lee Mahin and Howard Emmett Rogers, the original "conservative" foursome, thereby flagrantly breaking the pledge they had given to the Guild. Bert Kalmar also resigned. But Robert Riskin and Samson Raphaelson had the courage and sincerity not to resign. In an ad Riskin stated:

"Yesterday three of my honorable and distinguished colleagues took what is commonly known as a 'run out powder' . . . The reason they gave for their actions are so feeble as to be laughable. They claim their constituency left them and they therefore have no one to represent. . . . What about their *own* convictions? What about their pledge to the fifteen men on the board? What about their pledge Saturday night? What about their pledge to me? I shall remain on the Board in an attempt to follow through with the conservative program to which the original committee of five pledged itself. . . . Keeping pledges is apparently a Rover Boyish sentiment, looks like I'll never grow up."

But the "conservatives" scheme was too near realization to be stopped at this late date. Under the heading "Peace Makers Out of Guild," Variety of May 6th Reported, "Manckiewicz Back of New Writer Body." Later developments proved the report was true, that resigning "conservatives" were joining up with Herman Manckiewicz in forming a new writers group. If there was any doubt left that these men were acting as stooges for the producers, Variety exposed them completely if unintentionally that day. . . . "He (Manckiewicz) is said to have talked proposition over with producer representatives and received assurances that such an organization would be recognized by the studios for bargaining purposes."

Will even a self-styled "rugged individualist" like Gene Fowler deny that there's something fishy (or is it 'finky'?) about an organization which is led by men who make successful deals for recognition of a non-existent group while their own Guild remains unrecognized by The Producers' Association after three years of effort?

The efforts of Guild officers to send a committee to the producers to negotiate for a Guild contract have thus far met with failure. The producers have refused to reply to any Guild communications. Meanwhile, the producers' new puppet writers' organization has received national publicity through the efforts of Roy Howard, publisher of the "liberal" Scripps-Howard papers. Howard wired Rupert Hughes for an article describing the screen writers dispute, likening it to the efforts of the Newspaper Guild to gain control of the publishing field. Hughes obliged with a vicious attack on the Guilds. But while talking for democracy and stating his hatred of Fascism and Communism, Hughes was taking part in the setting up of the kind of labor union advocated by both Hitler and Mussolini—unions under employer control.

Is the Guild defeated? Not at all. Though it would be futile to deny that it has suffered real losses, the Guild is far from beaten. This was demonstrated at the meeting on May 8th when 125 loyal members, all working in the studios, voted for immediate amalgamation into the Authors' League under the original terms. (Naturally they rescinded the May 2nd, 1938, cut-off clause which had become inoperative due to the large number of resignations). The Guild's position is fundamentally a strong one. Although 72 active Guild members and 41 associate members resigned, there are still 350 active members and 480 associate members in the Guild. It is obviously the only organization that can and will protect the writer against the wage-cuts and reprisals that are bound to come from producers who threatened recently to bring in writers from other fields at "one-fifth" the prevailing wage standards, and who have been defeated three times by the Guild in attempts to put across major wage cuts. With the Authors' League supporting it, and with the fundamental honesty of its position insuring it many new recruits, the courageous and sincere members of the Screen Writers' Guild who have stood by it throughout this crisis can look forward confidently to the establishment of "Guild Shop" in Hollywood and to the united organization of writers in all fields. As Ernest Pascal says, a battle has been lost but the war will still be won.

Film Forms: New Problems

BY SERGEI EISENSTEIN

(This is the third and concluding section of Sergei Eisenstein's essay; the first and second sections appeared in the April and May issues of NEW THEATRE.)

In the course of my exposition I have had occasion to make use of the phrase "early forms of thought-process" and to illustrate my reflections by representational images current with peoples still at the dawn of culture. It has already become a traditional practice with us to be on our guard in all instances involving these fields of investigation. And not without reason: These fields are thoroughly contaminated by every kind of representative of "race science," or even less concealed apologists of the colonial politics of imperialism. It would not be bad, therefore, here sharply to emphasize that the considerations here expressed follow a sharply different line.

Usually the construction of so-called early thought-processes is treated as a form of thinking fixed in itself once and for all, characteristic of the so-called "Primitive" peoples, racially inseparable from them and not susceptible to any modification whatsoever. In this guise it serves as scientific apologia for the methods of enslavement to which such peoples are subjected by white colonizers, inasmuch as, by inference, such peoples are "after all hopeless" for culture and cultural influence.

In many ways even the celebrated Lévy-Bruhl is not exempt from this conception, although consciously he does not pursue such an aim. Along this line we quite justly attack him, since we know that forms of thinking are a reflection in consciousness of the social formations through which, at the given historical moment, this or that community collectively is passing. But in many ways, also, the opponents of Lévy-Bruhl fall into the opposite extreme, trying carefully to avoid the specificity of this independent individuality of early thought-forms. Among these, for instance, is Olivier Leroy, who, on the basis of analyzing out a high degree of logic in the productive and technical inventiveness of the so-called "primitive" peoples, completely denies any difference between their system of thought-process and the postulates of our generally accepted logic. This is just as incorrect, and conceals beneath it an equal measure of denial of the depend-

ence of a given system of thought from the specifics of the production relations and social postulates from which it derives.

The main error, in addition to this, is rooted in both camps in that they appreciate insufficiently the quality of gradation subsisting between the apparently incompatible systems of thought process, and completely disregard the qualitative nature of the transition from one to the other. Insufficient regard for this very circumstance frequently scares even us the moment discussion centres round the question of early thought-processes. This is the more strange in that in Engels' *Socialism—Utopian and Scientific* there are actually three whole pages comprising an exhaustive examination of all the three stages of construction of thinking through which mankind passes in development. From the early diffuse-complex, part of the remarks about which we quoted above, through the formal-logical stage that negates it. And, at last, to the dialectical, absorbing "in photographic degree" the two preceding. Such an absorption of phenomena does not of course exist for the positivistic approach of Lévy-Bruhl.

But of principal interest in all this business is the fact that not only does the process of development itself not proceed in a straight line (just like any development process), but that it marches by continual shifts back and forward, independently of whether it be progressively (the movement of backward peoples towards the higher achievements of culture under a socialist regime), or retrogressively (the regress of spiritual superstructures under the heel of national-socialism). This continual sliding from level to level, forwards and backwards, now to the higher forms of an intellectual order, now to the earlier forms of sensual thinking, occurs also at each point once reached and temporarily stable as a phase in development. Not only the content of thinking, but even its construction itself, are deeply qualitatively different for the human being of any given, socially determined type of thinking, according to this that state he may be in. The margin between the types is mobile and it suffices a not even extraordinarily sharp affective impulse to cause an extremely, it may be, logically deliberate person suddenly to react in obedience to the never dormant within him armory of sensual thinking and the norms of be-

havior deriving thence. When a girl to whom you have been unfaithful, tears your photo into fragments "in anger," thus destroying the "wicked betrayer," for a moment she re-enacts the magical operation of destroying a man by the destruction of his image (based on the early identification of image and object).

(Even to the present day Mexicans in some of the remoter regions of the country in times of drought drag out from their temples the statue of the particular Catholic saint that has taken the place of the former god responsible for rains, and, on the edge of the fields, whip him for his non-activity, imagining that thereby they cause pain to him whom the statue portrays). By her momentary regression the girl returns herself, in the effect of the impulse, to that stage of development in which such an action appeared fully normal and productive of real consequences. Relatively not so very long ago, on the verge of an epoch that already knew minds such as Leonardo and Galileo, so brilliant a politician as Catherine di Medici, aided by her court magician, wished ill to her foes by transfixing with pins their miniature wax images.

In addition to this we know also not just momentary, but (temporarily!) irrevocable manifestations of precisely this same psychological retrogression, when a whole social system is in regress. Then the phenomenon is termed reaction, and the most brilliant light on the question is thrown by the flames of the national-fascist *auto-da-fé* of books and portraits of unwanted authors in the squares of Berlin!

One way or another, the study of this or that thinking construction locked within itself is profoundly incorrect. The quality of sliding from type of thought-process to type, from category to category, and more—the simultaneous co-presence in varying proportions of the different types and stages and the taking into account of this circumstance are equally as important, explanatory and clarifying in this as in any other sphere:

"The exact representation of the universe, of its development and the development of mankind, as equally of the reflection of this development in the mind of man, can be attained only along the path of dialectics, only by continually taking into account the general interaction between appearance and disappearance, between progressive changes and changes retrogressive . . ." (Engels, *ibid*).

The latter in our case has direct relation to those changes in the forms of sensual thinking which appear sporadically in states of effect of impulse or similar conditions, and the images constantly present in the elements of form and composition based on the laws of sensual thinking, as we have tried to demonstrate and illustrate above.

After examining into the immense material of similar phenomena, I naturally found myself confronted with a question which may excite the reader, too. This is, that art is nothing else but an artificial retrogression in the field of psychology towards the forms of earlier thought-processes, *i. e.*, a phenomenon identical with any given form of drug, alcohol, shamanism, religion, etc.! The answer to this is simple and extremely interesting.

The dialectic of works of art is built upon a most curious "dual-unity." The impressiveness of a work of art is built upon the fact that there takes place in it a dual process: an impetuous progressive rise along the lines of the highest intrinsic steps of consciousness and a simultaneous penetration by means of the structure of the form into the layers of profoundest sensual thinking. The polar separation of these two lines of flow creates that remarkable tension of unity of form and content characteristic of true art-works. Apart from this there are no true art-works. By predominance of one or other element the art-work becomes unfulfilled. A drive towards the thematic-logical side renders the product dry, logical, didactic. But overstress on the side of the sensual forms of thinking with insufficient account taken of thematic-logical tendency—this is equally fatal for the work: the work becomes condemned to sensual chaos, elementariness, raving. Only in the "dual-unique" interpenetration of these tendencies resides the true tension-laden unity of form and content. Herein resides the root principle difference between the highest artistic creative activity of man and, in contradistinction therefrom, all other fields wherein also occur sensual thinking or its earlier forms (infantilism, schizophrenia, religious ecstasy, hypnosis, etc.).

And if we are now on the verge of considerable successes in the field of comprehension of the universe, in the first line (to which the latest film productions bear witness), then, from the viewpoint of the technique of our craftsmanship, it stands necessary for us in every way to delve more deeply now also into the questions of the second component. These, however fleeting, notes that I have been able to set forth here serve this task. Work here is not only not finished, it

has barely begun. But work here is in the extremest degree indispensable for us. The study of the corpus of material on these questions is highly important to us.

By study and absorption of this material we shall learn a very great deal about the system of laws of formal constructions and the inner laws of composition. And along the line of knowledge in the field of the system of laws of formal constructions, cinematography and indeed the arts generally are still very poor. Even at the moment we are merely probing in these fields a few bases of the systems of laws, the derivative roots of which lie in the nature itself of sensual thinking.

By analyzing along this line a whole series of questions and phenomena, we shall store up in the field of form a great corpus of exact knowledge, without which we shall never attain that general ideal of simplicity which we all have in mind. To attain this ideal and to realize this line, it is very important to guard ourselves against another line which might also begin to crop up: the line of simplificationism. This tendency is to some extent already present in the cinema, which a few already wish to expound in this way, that things should be shot simply and, in the last resort, it does not matter how. This is terrible, for we all know that the crux is not in shooting ornately and prettily (photography becomes ornate and pretty-pretty when the author knows neither what he wants to take nor how he must take what he wants).

The essence is in shooting expressively. We must travel toward the ultimate-expressive and ultimate-effective form and use the limit of simple and economic form that expresses what we need. These questions, however, can successfully be approached only by means of very serious analytical work and by means of very serious knowledge of the inward nature of artistic form. Hence we must proceed not by the path of mechanical simplification of the task, but by the path of planned analytical discovery of the secret of the nature itself of affective form.

I have sought here to show the direction in which I am now working on these questions, and I think this is the right road of investigation. If we now look back at the intellectual cinema, we shall see that the intellectual cinema did one service, in spite of its self-*reductio ad absurdum* when it laid claim to exhaustive style and exhaustive content.

This theory fell into the error of letting us have not a unity of form and content, but a coincidental identity of them, because in unity it is complicated to follow exactly how an effective materialization of ideas is built. But when these things

became "telescoped" into "one," *then was discovered the march of inner thinking as the basic law of construction of form and composition.* Now we can use the laws thus discovered already not along the line of "intellectual constructions," but along the line of completely fulfilled constructions, both from subject and image viewpoints, since we already know some "secrets" and fundamental laws of construction of form in general.

From what I have elucidated along the lines of the past and along the lines on which I am now working, one more qualitative difference appears:

It is this, that when in our various "schools" we proclaimed the paramount importance of montage, or of the intellectual cinema, or of documentalism or some such other battle programme, it bore primarily the character of a tendency. What I am now trying briefly to expound about what I am now working on has an entirely different character. It bears a character not specifically tendentious (as futurism, expressionism or any other "programme")—but delves into the question of the nature of things and here questions are already not concerned with the line of some given stylization, but with the line of search for a general method and mode for the problem of form, equally essential and fit for any genre of construction within our embracing style of *socialist realism*. The questions of tendency interest begin to grow over into a deepened interest in the whole culture itself of the field in which we work, *i. e.*, the tendentious line here takes a turn towards the research-academic line. I have experienced this not merely creatively, but also biographically: at the moment at which I began to interest myself in these basic problems of the culture of form and the culture of cinema, I found myself in life not on production, but engaged in creation of the academy of cinematography, the road to which has been laid down by my three years' work in the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography, and which is only now developing. Moreover, it is of interest that the phenomenon noted above is not at all isolated, this quality is not at all exclusively characteristic of our cinematography. We can perceive a whole series of theoretical and tendentious routes ceasing to exist as original "currents," and beginning by way of transmutation and gradual change to be included into questions of methodology and science.

It is possible to point to such an example in the teaching of Marr, and the fact that his teaching, which was formerly a "japhetic" tendency in the science of languages, has now been re-

vised from the viewpoint of Marxism and entered practice no longer as a tendency but as a generalized method in the study of languages and thinking. It is not by chance that on almost all fronts around us there are now being born academies; it is not by chance that disputes in the line of architecture are no longer a matter of rival tendencies (Corbusier or Zheltovski); discussion proceeds no longer about this question, but controversy is about the synthesis of "the three arts," the deepening of research, the nature itself of the phenomenon of architecture.

I think that in our cinematography something very similar is now occurring. For, at the present stage, we craftsmen have no differences of principle and disputes about a whole series of programme postulates such as we had in the past. There are of course, individual shades of opinion within the comprehensive conception of the single style: Socialist Realism.

And this is in no way of sign of moribundity, as might appear to some—"unless they fight, they're stiff"—quite the contrary. Precisely here, and precisely in this I find the greatest and most interesting sign of the times.

I think that now, with the approach of the sixteenth year of our cinematography, we are entering a special period. These signs, to be traced today also in the parallel arts as well as being found in the cinema, are harbingers of the news that Soviet cinematography, after many periods of divergence of opinion and argument, is entering into its classical period, because the characteristics of its interests, the particular approach to its series of problems, this hunger for synthesis, this postulation of and demand for complete harmony of all the elements from the subject matter to composition within the frame, this demand for fullness of quality and all the features on which our cinematography has set its heart—these are the signs of highest flowering of an art.

I consider that we are now on the threshold of the most remarkable period of classicism in our cinematography, the best period in the highest sense of the word. Not to participate creatively in such a period is no longer possible. And if for the last three years I have been completely engrossed in scientific-investigatory and pedagogical work (a side of which is very briefly related above), then now I undertake simultaneously once again to embark upon production—of the film *Bezhin Meadow*, about which in more detail another time.

Translated by IVOR MONTAGU.

Ten Million Others

BY BEN IRWIN

Writing in the March, 1935, NEW THEATRE on the results of the first New Theatre League play contest, Herbert Kline commented: "We're tired of plays with wooden heroes and soap-box speeches. . . . Most of the playwrights still think they have to go outside their own experience to find the material of social conflict."

The wooden heroes and the soap-box speeches and the conversion endings are still with us in the City Projects' Council-New Theatre League contest for plays on the relief situation which closed last month. But at least the playwrights, half of whom came from New York, the rest from twelve other states and Canada, did show an intimate knowledge of their subject matter in the fifty scripts that were submitted. Small wonder with millions of people dependent upon relief for their subsistence in America in 1936.

In awarding first prize to *Ten Million Others* by David Danzig, WPA employee, the judges were largely motivated by the keenly authentic and genuinely dramatic quality of the playwright's material. The script is the first playwrighting effort of the author, who is an active organizer in the City Projects' Council, New York organization of professional and white collar workers on Public Works Projects.

In its production on a New Theatre Night at the Civic Repertory Theatre on May 3rd, *Ten Million Others* revealed some exciting qualities. Treating with the dual problem of sincere social workers caught in the wheels of the relief system and the problem of the unemployed cut off relief rolls the script has at once stirring honesty and dramatic purpose. Its structural weaknesses, apparent in reading the script, were skillfully surmounted by the intelligent direction of Clem Wilenchick, and the remarkable performance of John Brown, who gave to the character of Murdock, the project supervisor (the type of role that with less expert acting too often becomes the stereotyped and conventional villain of the workers' theatre), a three-dimensional quality seldom achieved in any characterization in a one act play. Commendable too, but to a lesser extent, were the members of the supporting cast, especially Frederick O'Neal as a Negro worker whose child is dying from lack of medical attention and Ben Ross, of the Theatre of Action, who played the

role of an Italian laborer with humor and sincerity. Helen Warren as the honest social worker gave a somewhat Joan of Arcish heroic quality to her character that was not too conducive to sympathy from a receptive audience. An ending, that looked as if it might have been an improvisation, and which is now being altered by the author, detracted from what otherwise would have been a first rate production and play.

The second prize winning play, *From Little Acorns*, was performed on the previously mentioned New Theatre Night along with *Ten Million Others*, by the cast of *Bitter Stream*, current Theatre Union production. As directed by Albert Van Dekker, much of the inherent and warm humor in the play was skillfully pointed. Dealing with a family scene, and the plight of a conservative unemployed father who is in constant conflict with his militant son, the production called forth great response from the audience, largely composed of relief workers, which recognized the authenticity of the situation. Luba Wesley as Mrs. Berkowitz, a sympathetic neighbor, and Frank Conlan as the conservative parent gave splendid performances, assisted by a worthy cast. A too even development of the plot structure, wordiness in the presentation of the material, and several characterizations of foreign-born employee workers which hedged almost on burlesques of these types, hindered an otherwise smooth flowing production. With slight revision both these

A NEW ONE ACT PLAY CONTEST

NEW THEATRE and the New Theatre League will shortly sponsor a new one act play contest. With a view to encouraging the widest possible range in form and subject matter, prizes will be awarded for the best short play of social significance with a maximum playing time of one hour fifteen minutes, a broad category which should bring forth plays dealing with the struggle of progressive forces against reaction in this country, on the important new developments in the trade union movement, and against war. Full details of the contest will be available by June 10th from the New Theatre League, P. O. Box 300, Grand Central Annex, New York City, and in the July issue of NEW THEATRE.

scripts should prove of service to the new theatre movement, particularly with the growing unrest among the unemployed as thousands are threatened with being thrown off relief.

Special honorable mention was awarded by the judges to *Wait*, by Philip Stevenson, one of the most prolific new theatre playwrights. The script presented a special problem to the judges, inasmuch as it was the most convincing and most professionally handled play in the contest. However, since it has its locale in New Mexico, and utilizes a number of native Mexican characters in leading roles, *Wait* undoubtedly would be a difficult play to cast for our new theatres. It was this consideration which compelled the judges to award honorable mention to this script and prizes to the others.

Among the other scripts, *Jack Robinson*, by Seyril Schoehen, dealing with the story of a small boy who committed suicide when his hungry family killed his pet rabbit for food, was distinguished by its imaginative approach and sensitive writing, and *Disorderly Conduct*, by Sidney Schoenwetter, using the flashback technique succeeded in presenting a broad canvas of relief problems. *The Least of These*, by Herbert Sklaroff, *Patches Can't Hide*, by Lee Jordan, and *Below 20 Above*, by David Abarbanel, were other scripts which were considered in choosing the prize plays.

The plays submitted were on a much higher level in general than the scripts submitted in previous contests. Much, however, is left to be desired in the manner in which the social playwrights treat their human material. More objectionable even than the stereotyped working-class hero who is all virtue and no vice, is the landlord, relief administrator, banker, or general, as the case may be, who does everything but wield a horse-whip and twirl a mustache. As ridiculous as the representatives of our better people are when they act in their official capacity in cases involving social conflict, they are too often nothing but burlesque creatures under the pen of an earnest new theatre playwright. It is apparent that all too many of our playwrights have yet to learn the primary lesson of the social theatre, that if our theatre is to serve its purpose as a force at once educational and entertaining, it must first of all be convincing.

It is unfortunate, too, that more of the professional playwrights who are coming to the new theatre movement did not find sufficient inspiration in the rich material of the relief situation to write for this contest. It is to be hoped that the next contest to be launched shortly will find more and more entries from the ranks of the professionals.

English Letter

BY LESLIE DAIKEN

A new orientation of the dance is being achieved in England today by various maturing labor groups. It springs from a desire to re-establish the lost contact of the art with the objective conflicts, both class and cultural, of everyday life. Although by no means a popular idiom, Dance-Drama represents the form that is being used almost exclusively in this country for the expression of a social ideology. The originator of Dance-Drama in England is a one-time pupil of Martha Graham's, Margaret Barr. She has no faith in the motivating ideas of the existing commercial theatre, however admirable its showmanship and its machinery might be. She believes firmly in the great possibilities of a theatre-form built on Dance-Drama and drawing its ideas directly from life.

First among the groups in England is the Dance-Drama Group, Miss Barr's own unit, in which the members have been working as professionals for more than five years. They have shown their ability to work together constructively, sharing experiences and gaining from each other's collective ideas in discussion. The work in movement is under the direction of Margaret Barr and Teda De Moor; musical composition is directed by Edmund Kubbra, costumes and decors by Peter Goffin. The Dance-Drama Group gave many successful productions in the theatre at Dartington Hall, a magnificent estate in Devonshire, where they first began to evolve their embryonic sociological ideas. Foremost among these early compositions was *Colliery*, performed by farm-workers, laborers and foresters from the neighboring village.

Eventually it was felt that the work should be extended to a wider public if it was to have real social significance. The Group became established in London, and in September, 1934, they gave their first performance in collaboration with the workers' theatre movement. The East London audience was wildly enthusiastic.

The first West End program was given in February, 1935, at the Theatre Arts Club, under the management of Maurice Brown, Ltd. The pieces presented included *The Three Sisters*, a subtle treatment of the reactions of three young women of different character—a prostitute, a spinster, and a young girl—to the circumstances of war; *Hebridean*, based on the songs and the work of Gaelic Islanders; *Eviction*, a powerful photographic study of rack-rent; and *Medieval Suite*, four short cameos, *The Hunters*,

The Falcon Ladies, *The Crusaders*, and *The Amorous Bailiff*.

The debut was well received by the London critics. The Times, most authoritative of the daily papers, contrasted the performance with classical ballet: "Whereas in the classical ballet, story merely provides a loose framework for stringing together passages of more or less relevant virtuosity, here the story is the informing purpose; ornament is cut away; and each single gesture is free to contribute its point with peculiar force." Commenting on the group itself, the critic continues: "Each performer on the stage brought a fresh and distinctive individuality to participation in a scheme which, whatever its origins, is essentially original and essentially English."

The Workers Dance-Drama Group differs from the Dance-Drama Group in that it is not comprised of professional dancers, and that, in its performances, it concentrates entirely upon specific social content in the new dance form. After eighteen months of arduous training the Group gave seven performances in London and the suburbs. Staged chiefly in the borough Town Halls, such as Hammersmith, Battersea, Poplar and Shore-ditch, these shows have been always enthusiastically received. The pieces given by the Group have now been incorporated into a standing repertory which includes sketches like *Mills*, *Nothing to Do*, and *Factory*.

Mills, written by one of the members, deals with a strike of workers at the looms. The climax here is intensely agitational. *Nothing to Do* is a bold antithesis between the temperament of the unemployed working-class and that of the idle parasites of society. The treatment presents, in striking contrast, the depravity of the bourgeoisie "making whoopee," with the revolutionary determination of the unemployed and their refusal to accept their lot. *Factory* is more detailed and advanced. It shows the interior of a sweatshop, the devalizing effects of the speed-up, and the brutal exploitation of an overseer, whose negligence is the cause of a girl worker's fatal injuries. The climax here is a strike.

In these representative sketches the rhythm-pattern is not provided by any instrument on or off stage; it is an integral part of the actors. Their hands and feet alone are used to declaim rhythms, mechanized or simplified as the case may be. This essentially self-contained and very effective technique evolved naturally

out of the lack of properties, handicaps in production, absence of orchestra, etc., and has opened up an entirely new field of research and revolutionary experiment.

Thirdly, there is the Workers Ballet Group, also working in London, a unit which has been in existence for nine months. The members are recruited mostly from Trade Unions, Co-operatives, Guilds, and factories in the vicinity. Under an experienced instructor, the group is building a technique for political ballet in which they hope to specialize. Functioning as a collective, the group has successfully staged an anti-war ballet.

The theme is a demonstration of the unity between the British working-class with the workers in the colonies, and a

conflict between these joint forces and the capitalists. Through the conflict of war, and the misery of its aftermath, comes the determination to seize power by driving the capitalists out of control. This movement is a rhapsodic treatment of power. Next comes the primitive illustration of how the proletariat can, and does, engage in the business of Production, Distribution, and Consumption. The ballet concludes with a mass dance celebrating the idea of Holiday. The musical scores for all the group's performances are written by Alan Bush.

Increasingly significant work by each of these dance collectives will undoubtedly result from their affiliation with the newly formed New Theatre League of Great Britain.

Five-Finger Exercises—III

BY BOB LEWIS

In the April NEW THEATRE I spoke of the reasons for and the value of training the senses of the actor to make him a perfect "instrument of transmission" and I gave some exercises for the development of the *sense of touch*. We now go on to the other senses:

The sense of smell: Take a bottle of toilet water or perfume and smell it. Now remove the object and experience once more in *sense memory* (see last month's article) the sensation previously felt when the perfume was there. Real emotional experiences have been results in some people with delicate olfactory nerves from smelling certain perfumes, and the reaction of this in *sense memory* on the stage in a given scene may sometimes give the actor the necessary feeling to act that scene. Work on the *sense memory* of smell with other objects.

The sense of taste: I put this right after *smell* because the latter is included in the former. Start with the simple things that you eat and drink: bread, water, coffee—being careful that, after you have sipped the real coffee and put it away, you take into account the *sense of touch* when you lift the imaginary cup of coffee to your lips, that you *feel* the cup against your lips, that you *smell* the coffee, that you *feel* the degree of heat, and finally, that you *taste* the coffee—cream, sugar, etc. Do this exercise with all kinds of food and drink. Don't forget that when you have to drink whiskey on the stage and the property man gives you tea—*old, cold and without sugar*—you must use this *sense memory* of the taste of whiskey.

The sense of sight: In the first article of this series on "concentration" I gave an exercise which is a good one for the train-

ing of the *sense memory* of sight; namely, studying a painting for a few minutes, then putting it away and *seeing* it again on the bare wall or ceiling. Always go back to the real painting and check up on how much you have missed in the *sense memory* exercises. You can do this kind of exercise with all sorts of objects, such as watching an airplane go by in the sky and after it has gone *see* it go by again in *sense memory*. You will have to use just such activity on the stage when you must look off into the ropes and sandbags in the fly of the theatre and say, "There goes the Boston airmail, like an arrow in the night!" The *sense of truth* on the stage is created when you can really "see" the object in your *sense memory* instead of having to look at nothing and make some movement or gesture to *indicate* that you are looking at something.

The sense of hearing: The simplest way to develop this *sense* at first is through music. Play part of a record on the phonograph. Then *hear* it again in *sense memory*. Be sure you hear not only the melody but the instrument, the gradations of tone, the accompaniment, the orchestration, if any, etc. Also, practice with sounds. When you hear a noise in the next apartment hear it again in *sense memory*. You will be amazed at the effect on your mood by listening in *sense memory* to a gay tune or a sad tune, provided you really *hear* it in your head.

Be sure you are thoroughly relaxed when you practice these exercises, and the next time you have to say to your stage sweetheart, "Remember the time we first met, on the boardwalk at Coney Island?" try to recall in *sense memory* the sights, sounds, even smells of that gay place and see how much it gives you.

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THE NEW THEATRE GROUP OF MONTREAL IN "THE TABLOID REDS"

Shifting Scenes

The development of the new theatre movement in England, which has recently been signalled by the organization of a New Theatre League patterned on our American organization, has taken a further step forward with the plan to establish a permanent Socialist theatre in London, with its own company and playhouse. Definite steps were discussed at a conference of four hundred trade union and other labor delegates, held in London on May 10th. A. M. Wall, one of the leaders of the British Actors' Equity, presided at the meeting, which declared that it would seek a guaranteed audience from affiliated workers' organizations. Nearly sixteen thousand supporters are already guaranteed.

The New Theatre League has made another important contribution to the literature of the social theatre, in the shape of a booklet on *Audience Organization*. Experienced workers in every aspect of new theatre work have contributed detailed and informative articles. Particularly helpful to groups all over the country should be an article by Margaret Larkin of the New York Theatre Union. A bibliography, facts about fire prevention regulations, taxes, incorporation, publicity, trade unions, book-keeping, and radio work, and sample budgets and forms, are also included. In addition the New Theatre League has just published an informative brochure, with an excellent statement on the new theatre movement by John Howard Lawson, which may be procured by mailing a three cent stamp to the National Office at 55 West 45th Street, New York.

One of the outstanding events of the entire season has been the winning of the second prize in the Canadian National Drama Tournament by the Progressive Arts Club of Vancouver, with its production of *Waiting for Lefty*. Granville Barker, distinguished British playwright, was the adjudicator. The group raised \$3,000 for its round-trip expenses from Vancouver to Ottawa (where the tournament was held), one of its fund-raising schemes being a city-wide Tag Day, which is an innovation in the new theatre movement.

The Gilpin Players of Cleveland have been presenting *When the Jack Hollers*, by Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps. This new Hughes play, although superficially a comedy, deals with the slow-starvation of the Negro and white share-croppers living in debtors' slavery in the Mississippi delta region. Previously the same group produced another Hughes comedy, *Little*

Ham; "a folk-picture of Harlem life, rich in character and humor," wrote the critic of the Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Punch Beats the Devil, by Philip Stevenson, translated from the Spanish of Arzubides, well known Mexican puppet writer, will be released this month by the Repertory Department. It is the first puppet play to be published in two years by the New Theatre League.

The Bayonne New Theatre group has again been successful in a local dramatic contest, this time winning second prize—\$25—before an audience of 2,000, with a scene from *Waiting for Lefty*.

The Los Angeles Contemporary Theatre's production of *Bury the Dead*, directed by John Cromwell and Egon Brecher, will open on June 2nd. Twenty-five minutes of newsreel shots of mobilization and other preparations for war in various countries will furnish the introduction to Irwin Shaw's play.

The Studio Workshop Players of Greenwich, Conn., are sponsoring a full-length play contest. Scripts should be sent to Mrs. John R. Dunlap, Calhoun Drive, Greenwich, before June 1st. The prize-winning plays will be presented by the Studio Players, and royalties will be paid.

The New York Current League of Neighborhood Clubs has issued a call for actors, directors and playwrights, with a view to new productions. Those interested should apply at the League offices, 112 East 19th Street, New York.

TO THE NEW THEATRE LEAGUE:

Hereby beg to acknowledge receipt of your check in the amount of \$59.88, this representing the Theatre Authority's percentage in connection with the May 3rd performance at the Civic Repertory.

Now that your season has drawn to a close, my Board and I want to extend to you and the League our sincere appreciation and thanks for your splendid cooperation with the Theatre Authority. Your so doing has made it possible to help those of our profession who, being sick and indigent, need our help, and we of the Theatre Authority are trying to do our bit to alleviate their hardships.

With best wishes for the continued success of the New Theatre League, I am,

Sincerely yours,
ALAN CORELLI.

Theatre Authority, Inc.,
Executive Secretary.

John Bovingdon

When an experimental program appears on any stage, a reviewer is tempted to place the performance into one or the other existing theatrical categories. The work of John Bovingdon, presented at Town Hall, April 29th, eludes all hasty characterizations. He surely is not a dancer, and equally not a dramatic mime. We must deal, therefore, solely with the actual value of this original genre.

Each number on the program is precluded with a documentary speech delivered before the curtain. The actual performance is composed of illustrative semi-rhythmic gestures accompanying the spoken phrase. Both the preliminary speech and the succeeding number complement each other.

Mr. Bovingdon is undeniably a theatrical personality with a beautiful voice, whose erudition and personal charm captivates sections of his audience. But these elements cannot adequately carry the burden of the significant, political material he selects. Where the theme is topically dramatic, as in *Underground Printer*, an atmosphere of attention and interest is aroused. But it is taxing a general audience beyond its capacity to expect it to be concerned with laboratory researches into the past and present of all nations, particularly when some of the themes are expounded in Russian, or in Japanese or in primitive jargon. Such specialized material is more suited to the confines of intimate studio recitals than the professional stage.

To date this form of production has proven itself serviceable only in the realm of Mr. Bovingdon's personal activity. Final statements on the value of this contribution to the theatre arts must be definitely withheld until such time when it can prove itself on a broader and more popular scale.

To this reviewer, the most encouraging section of the program was the film taken of *Underground Printer*, by Lewis Jacobs, under the direction of the talented Thomas Bouchard. While we could conceive of more imagination in the translation of this study on to the screen, there were some exciting sequences and beautiful shots to be thankful for.

ELIZABETH SKRIP.

Answer to "An Open Letter"

In Miss Boaz' open letter in the May issue of *NEW THEATRE*, she makes the statement that my "questions and doubts" arising from only several months' work at the New York Wigman School, would have been answered in the full three years' course. How, then, does Miss Boaz explain the fact that a number of the best Wigman students, including Jane Dudley and Miriam Blecher, after four years of professional work at the school, found it necessary to seek the answers to these same questions and doubts in other methods—of Graham, Horst, and the New Dance Group? Why is it that talented and receptive students such as these had to go elsewhere to gain technical stability and a knowledge of formal composition? To expect a professional course of study to include these two most vital phases of work is a far cry from expecting a school "to manufacture an artist"—in Miss Boaz' words. The fact that the New York Wigman School offers the broadest dance education of existing schools today, does not invalidate the fact that there are serious deficiencies in the method.

Finally, the article "From a Dancer's Notebook" was neither written nor published as objective criticism. It was an expression of an individual's reaction to a period of work. As such it was intended and as such it must be received. In having stimulated wide and healthy discussion and controversy among dance students and dancers and laymen, I have more than justified making these "notes" public.

BLANCHE EVAN.

May 16, 1936.



THE NEW THEATRE GROUP OF MONTREAL IN "THE TABLOID REDS"

The Living Newspaper

(Continued from page 8)

from Washington saw a dress rehearsal and said it was "dull." It was my own opinion, and it still is my opinion, that there exists a large potential audience of the theatre composed of people who are thinking, and who want to think more of the vital social changes which are going on in the world, and that *Triple-A Plowed Under*, with all its inadequacies as a theatrical production, came nearer to satisfying this need than any fictional play I have seen.

From time to time in the preparation of scripts many interesting and controversial elements arise, elements which would occur neither in the writing of a newspaper story nor in the preparation of a straight sketch or one-acter for the commercial theatre. Since the medium of the Living Newspaper is a combination of both, the predominance of one force over the other is frequently a moot matter which finds dramatist ranged against reporter on the question of which is more important and what leeway can be taken to make a yarn sustained on the stage. For instance, in the sketch about Huey Long in 1935 which is divided into three lightning scenes, it was felt that nothing could top the second, the puppet sequence, in which Huey conducts the legislature on strings. Yet the newspaper boys felt and insisted that the assassination was *the* news. The dramatists insisted that on the stage it was anti-climax. Both were right.

Research on the Living Newspaper requires a tabloid's appraisal plus Sunday supplement's coverage of facts. More than that, it presupposes an ability to discern implications, and to catch those small items which may have dramatic value.

Inevitably, the Living Newspaper's technique is compared to that of the *March of Time* movie and radio programs. The difference between the two is essentially the point of view. *March of Time* is put out by a rich magazine and a rich advertiser. The Living Newspaper is written, edited, staged and acted by people who struggle for their living. It is bound to catch the flavor of that struggle. What it puts on the stage is the combined effort of a group trying its best to compose its differences and march in one direction. So far, there are no stars. I hope there will be none. Seldom is the audience conscious of any individual.

If the Living Newspaper is to grow into a vital force of great worth to the community it must not only continue to be the effort of a group but it must be free of every vestige of official consorship.

Its editors and its actors must be free to work out their own problems. A step toward this desirable state of affairs would be the divorce of the Federal Theatre Project from the WPA. So long as it is a part of the WPA it will be subject to petty and unfair attacks from those reactionary forces which see red in every letter of relief.

Is it too much to ask that the government grant a straight subsidy for something for which the community is hungry?

Theatre for Children—Moscow

(Continued from page 14)

cult to reeducate than to educate in the first instance. Nevertheless, one should not be led to think that the forming of a children's theatre is not set with very great difficulties, often with far greater difficulties than are encountered in running a theatre for grownups.

"For example, we have to take the ages of members of our audience very carefully into account. Children of 6 and 10 and 14 have entirely different perceptive faculties, and we must accordingly vary not only the subject matter but also the way of presenting our plays.

"Our work is based very largely on a study of our audience. We must know what they like in order to be able to

carry them along with us; and therefore apart from the artistic, musical, and other sides of theatre work, there is the educational. The educators have worked out and applied a number of scientific methods of studying the juvenile theatregoer. Direct contact with the child audience is kept up by means of conferences and meetings in which the children themselves take part. The children are very willing to criticize our performances in a serious spirit, to say what they have enjoyed and the kind of plays and performances they would like to see in the future.

"... We cannot touch upon all the questions connected with the work of our theatre. It is enough to say that... only the tremendous interest of the Soviet power, and the great material assistance given by the Soviet government, has made possible the formation in the Soviet Union of more than a hundred special theatres for children.

"And in our theatre, the Moscow Theatre for Children, during the fifteen years we have been in existence we have trained our own workers in every branch of children's art. Further, our plays aim at bringing our child audiences as little as possible into a land of dreams, and it is real life with its conflicts and the building up of socialism which finds artistic expression in our work."

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Parade-Ground Art

(Continued from page 12)

on the wrong side, it is necessary to apprise them of their enemies: the Marxists and Jews. *For Human Rights*—Arya-Film, performs this mission. The writer, Hans Zoberlein, is said to be one of those “who emerge only once in centuries from the fermentation of *Weltanschauung*.” It is the time of the “Munich Freicorps,” seventeen years ago. The revolutionaries are villainous-looking sailors and thugs, drunk and armed, led by a commissar who is a ringer for Trotsky. “On the one side there is the will to destroy, on the other the attachment to the land and the will to keep it.” After the battle, in which right triumphs, “the clear way is seen, which leads to justice and faith.” The censor decorated the picture with the order of *kü*.

German Fate on Russian Soil—Delta-Film, “tears the mask from the face of Bolshevism in Russia.” The commissar with his knout is even more sinister-looking than his predecessor in *For Human Rights*. The girl who falls in love with him expiates her misstep by dying in a swamp, the God-fearing peasant leader is slain, and the survivors burn their village and flee. The censor’s rating is *stakü*.

Next to the Marxist, the Jew (when they are not identical) is the enemy of the State. *Petterson & Bendel*, the Swedish film which precipitated the July, 1935, riots in Berlin, deals with the Jew. This was the first foreign film in the original version to receive the censor rating *stau*.

The film depicts the rise of Bendel, a penniless East-European Jew, who through a series of swindles becomes a power in business. Among those whose trust he betrays is the young, frank, honest Nordic Swede, Petterson. The contrast was not to the taste of some of the Jewish customers. They hissed. The SA legions were called out, and all the Jews, male and female, who happened to be in the neighborhood, paid dearly for their arrogance.

Over a month later it was found that several theatres were running prints of *Petterson & Bendel* from which scenes unpleasant to non-Aryans had been cut. The secret police put things to rights again.

Petterson & Bendel, although it inspired the heroic action of the storm troopers, is technically a comedy. *Heroism and Death Struggle of Our Emden* is a specifically heroic film released on the twentieth anniversary of the sinking of the cruiser *Emden* by the Australian cruiser *Sydney*. It is “at the same time a

memorial to the heroes of 1914 and an admonition to our generation, to do the same in love of the Fatherland and fulfillment of duty to the last breath. The dead arise, and show the living of today how in blood and suffering they knew how to die for the Fatherland . . . The aim of this film is to show, in one glowing hour, what Germany is—and what it means to be German.”

An heroic film glorifying an earlier epoch is *The Old and the Young King*—NDLS, starring Emil Jannings. The young king is Frederick I (the Great), the old one, his father Frederick Wilhelm I. In appreciation of this production, General Goering, as Prussian Minister-President, received in audience the star, the director, and two officials of NDLS. The General modestly “stressed the similarity of the statesmanlike tasks which the great soldier-king (Frederick the Great) and he himself had undertaken, wherein lie the foundations for the artistic greatness of the Fatherland.”

The National Socialist party itself produces, or initiates the production of, the finest brands of heroic films. Some, like *The Road to Freedom* (freedom to arm and conscript), are merely regional in scope. The latter, labeled “educational” as well as “politically valuable,” commemorates the lives and labors of the Nazi workers in Thuringia, when National Socialism was struggling to power. “The old comrades-in-arms of the Fuehrer hurry from town to town, enlightening the citizens on all questions of politics, industry, and German *Kultur*, counteracting the racially alien elements who would defeat them.” The comrades triumph, and the film ends with excerpts from the Fuehrer’s speeches.

But besides the Reich Party Day film,



DR. GOEBBELS

a review of the annual goings-on at Nuremberg, all other heroic Nazi movies appear dwarfed. The Fuehrer himself baptized the 1935 edition *Triumph of the Will*—his will. Leni Riefenstahl, now at work on another mammoth production showing the Olympic games “in the framework of the New Germany,” was the creator of *Triumph of the Will*, which was photographed by nineteen cameramen and their assistants to an original length of 400,000 feet.

The gala première of this “Epochal Film Document” made a Hollywood first performance look like the opening of a delicatessen store. The *Licht Bild Buehne* broke into Gothic type to describe it:

“Majestically the sparkling eagle spreads its great wings over the marquee of the UFA *Palast am Zoo*, a red sea of waving swastika flags emblazon the wide facade of the theatre, golden bands glitter from the flagpoles, everything is bathed in color and brilliant light and invites joyfully and festively to the first performance of the Reich Party Day Film.”

Great crowds stand for hours to see the arrival of ministers, diplomats, high army officers, the authorities of State and city, leaders of the SA and SS and the officials of the Movement. At 8:30 the car of the Fuehrer drives up. The square rings with deafening Heil-shouts. Between lanes of SS-men the Fuehrer, escorted by Rudolf Hess, SA Major-General Brueckner, and Dr. Goebbels, proceeds to the middle loge of the festively decorated theatre.

The entire house rises and salutes silently with upraised arms. The lights are dimmed, the curtains part, revealing the orchestra of the SS Bodyguard Adolf Hitler, which plays the *Crusaders March*, and the *Badenweiler March*, beloved by the Fuehrer. Then the film begins with a shot of the aerial flotilla bringing the Fuehrer to Nuremberg, shows his welcome in the streets, the subsequent speeches and assemblies, and above all, marching and reviews. At one time, 52,000 men of the Labor Service march by. Hitler salutes in the picture with straight arm, proving that even the best actor benefits by good direction. In person, he sits in the loge between Hess and Brueckner, looking spastically earnest, and as usual in need of a haircut. Nevertheless “Whoso still doubts, will be convinced by this film that Fuehrer and public has in Germany become one, ruled by one will, which has triumphed over everything that in the past blocked its way, and which will triumph over all obstacles.” So spoke Rudolf Hess at the close of the meeting (in the picture):

'Hitler is Germany, and Germany is Hitler.'

VI

Even in the symphonic uproar of Nazi film production an occasional sour note is audible. Since the press, operating on the Fuehrer principle, prints only what it is good for people to know, rumors fly through the studios, the distribution offices, and the film cafés of the *Friedrichstrasse*, thence spreading abroad to "besmirch the reputation of every honest film worker." In spite of threats and decrees, rumors continue to circulate, and it has even been necessary for the propaganda ministry to deny a report that Emil Jannings is a Jew, and as such has been barred from further participation in film activities.

Unfortunately, also, the German film, as a business, is none too prosperous. While Tobis paid a 4 per cent dividend for the year 1934-35, the largest German film company, UFA, passed its dividend, and between October and December its shares fell from 66 to 48, with much dissatisfaction and protest among the stockholders. Only 94 features were produced in 1935, as compared with 122 in 1934 and 151 in 1931, consequently, in spite of exchange difficulties, more foreign films had to be imported.

The economic difficulties at home are in large part repercussions of travail abroad. The German motion picture, next only to the American, was an international business. According to Dr. Scheuermann, former president of the RFA, the boycott reduced Germany's film exports 33 per cent. "From all sides Germany is attacked." When the British make a picture about the sinking of the *Lusitania*, the Germans complain of it as a persecutory film (*Hetzfilm*). "Machinations against the German Film in Jugo-Slavia." The Jugo-Slavians are turning to American pictures, on the ground that "Germany today cannot boast of important pictures which might be in a position to win worldwide success. The excessive control of German officialdom prevents this. . . ." In Roumania, where 104 German films were imported in 1932, 48 were all they would take in 1935. Hungary showed about the same ratio, 100 a year before 1933 and 55 in 1935. *Storm Days of 1919*, after provoking a tumult in Budapest, flopped at the box-offices. In Belgium: "Dirty Brussels Hands at Work"—the communists hiss German films permeated with "a high ethical message." The most intolerable situation is in Holland, where the Dutch Prof. Dr. Cohen, "representing a committee of predominantly Jewish interests" criticizes the German film over the radio in a manner which "trans-

gresses the bounds of international decency." He compares the persecution of the Jews in the Frankfort ghetto at the beginning of the nineteenth century, depicted in the American picture *The House of Rothschild*, with conditions prevailing in Germany today. Even the colossal *Triumph of the Will*, the Fuehrer himself imbuing the photographic emulsion, while a success in Venice, provokes disturbances. *Variety* calls *The Old and the Young King* German propaganda posing as historical narrative. Only the Japanese seem to be kind to the German film, and they do not count for much in cash.

Striving valiantly to stem the tide, the Germans called an International Film Congress in April, 1935, out of which developed the International Film Chamber, with Dr. Scheuermann as president. Everything possible was done. The Fuehrer received the delegation leaders and expressed himself on the art of the film. Dr. Goebbels laid down his immortal theses. The Kroll Opera House was splendidly decorated with the flags of all nations, blazing between banks of white and blue chrysanthemums. The nations, however, did not all follow their flags into the I. F. K. Among those currently abstaining are the United States,

Russia, England, and Holland, while others, such as France and Sweden, have participated only after making objections and reservations exceedingly painful to the sensitive Nazi spirit. Thus the privately-expressed hope that the I. F. K. might help the German film to regain its earlier "mighty place" in the international market seems illusory.

"Everywhere the press writes of the decline of German culture under National Socialism. The world must be shown that it is wrong." That, indeed, is the problem. Germany is right, the world is wrong, but it is a large world.

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"We Are From Kronstadt"

(Continued from page 15)

From a formal aspect the film is rudimentary, consisting of a protracted predicament and a last minute rescue. The ability of the camera to present simultaneous actions by quick cutting is seldom utilized. Instead, extended episodes that occur synchronously are separately worked out. But in the light of what is attained in pulse and in thrust, perhaps this primitiveness of form is a virtue.

Certainly to many, our partial refusal to consider *Kronstadt* within the limitations of its purpose will appear carping. The test of a successful work is whether it has accomplished what it set out to do. The fervent applause that everywhere greets *Kronstadt*, and the deserved encomiums heaped upon the film's director, Dzigan, permit little argument on that score. *Kronstadt* will win the Russian film many new adherents.

FILMS OF THE MONTH

The films this month of May have been so uniformly mediocre that we are tempted to merely record their titles and let it go at that. Only three films, however momentarily, managed to emerge from the general welter of insignificance—*I Married a Doctor*, *Peg of Old Drury* and *Pension Mimosas*.

I MARRIED A DOCTOR: Despite the fact that this movie version of Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* keeps pulling its punches and cancelling its points, there is enough left over in the good performances of Pat O'Brien, Josephine Hutchinson and the sterling direction of Archie Mayo to make a tolerable hour and a half in the dark. In one brief scene the action really comes to life (the death of the serving woman) and indicates what Mr. Mayo could do with half a chance.

PEG OF OLD DRURY: (English) Made by the same outfit which gave us *Nell Gwynne*. Directed with skill and feeling for the period. Cedric Hardwicke's David Garrick is a vast relief after his crack-brained Theotocopulous in *Things to Come*.

PENSION MIMOSAS: (French) Directed by Jacques Feyder. A modest discourse on the love of a rather middle-aged woman for a young man, her adopted son. A subject the French seem fond of. The relationship between the Countess and her nephew in Stendhal's *Charterhouse of Parma* is very much like it. *Pension Mimosas* naturally falls infinitely short of the latter's profundity, but still is very worth seeing.

UNDER TWO FLAGS: The third movie version of the Ouida novel. A

waste of excellent cast, proficient photography, and your good hour and a half.

ONE RAINY AFTERNOON: It's rather pathetic watching Pickfair trying so hard to be continental, parisian and all that. Miss Pickford's first independent production falls woefully short of its European models.

THE PASSING OF THE THIRD FLOOR BACK: We went because Bert-hold Viertel directed. Viertel tries hard to salvage this ancient wreck, but with no success.

TILL WE MEET AGAIN: A spy melodrama with no nuances to distinguish it from hundreds of others. Features Herbert Marshall, Gertrude Michael and Lionel Atwill.

BIG BROWN EYES: The mystery of *The Thin Man* is greater than its author, Dashiell Hammett, ever suspected. The movie producers are still looking for him. *Big Brown Eyes* is another false clue.

The impulse to lump together *The Country Beyond*, *The Witness Chair*, *Let's Sing Again*, *The Golden Arrow* and *The Amateur Gentleman* is really too great to withstand. We realize that we are failing in our duty to our readers who should be informed that Bobby Breen in *Let's Sing Again* has a thin penetrating pipe of a voice and no particular talent for acting, that Bette Davis doesn't add to her reputation in *The Golden Arrow*, that the title *The Amateur Gentleman* is an adequate description of Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., as a producer, and so into the night, but even this department gets tired of pushing over straw men.

Burlesque

(Continued from page 19)

the jobs of the girls in the line. She could impose fines, she could recommend dismissals and she could work her chorus as long and as cruelly as she liked.

For a long time there was no such thing as a notice of closing or dismissal. Today closing notices are required by the union and either notice or pay is given. Transportation is provided by the opera-

tor for persons dismissed from the cast while shows are on the road.

During the depths of the depression burlesque operators, paying as little as \$15 a week to chorus girls, followed a practice unparalleled in the annals of crooked showmanship. Principals and chorus members alike, on opening their pay envelopes would find only part of their salary. Substituted for the balance would be a warmly worded note thanking the members of the cast for their cooperation with the management "in these trying times."

The boast of burlesque impressarios that their medium is a smelter from which the true gold of theatre talent emerges free of its base ores is no longer valid. In the days before burlesque slipped from two-a-day to its present continuous policy it did produce a long list of stars: Al Jolson, Bert Lahr, Will Rogers, Weber and Fields, Eddie Cantor, Clark and McCulloch, Fred Stone, Fannie Brice, James Barton, Willie and Eugene Howard and Sophie Tucker. Unless there is a burlesque renaissance, those days are gone forever.

Whether or no burlesque as it stands today deserves an opportunity for a renaissance is quite another question. Operators talk long and fondly of producing "script shows," with lighting, costuming and music which will rival the expensive reviews. No doubt such an effort has commercial possibilities, but experience has proved in every branch of the American stage that commercial possibilities are not often consistent with the best interests of the theatre. The ideal route to salvation for burlesque would be the liquidation of the form in which it exists and the development of a stage devoted to light musical travesties of the current dance, drama, musical and entertainment world with frequent incursions in the field of political and social comment.

As matters stand such a suggestion is utopian. We may as well reconcile ourselves to the fact that as long as "this

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queer society of ours shuts out a considerable portion of its members" from experiences which human nature will not be denied, vulgarly flaunted nudity and smut at reasonable prices will be offered from the stage in one form or another.

Meanwhile lovers of the theatre should be actively interested in the welfare of the burlesque performers. Actors in other fields must make a conscious effort through their professional organizations to end the isolation and ostracism forced on members of the burlesque stage by traditions of false individualism.

The entire theatre world will gain by assisting the burlesque artists in their efforts to preserve their integrity as wage-earners on stages where an actor is less an actor than a promoter's puppet.

A Museum of Ballet

(Continued from page 21)

tween the four movements. His absorbing patterns are frequently too closely composed. The stage is packed with as many varieties of movement as a three-ringed circus. In an effort to be inventive, Massine has created an over-ornamental but not a solid structure. The eye can only take in so much. The Adagio portions are frequently arresting, but such curious aberrations as the jocose third movement in which a cosmic *bier-stubbe* is the plaza for fun-fun are inexplicable. But *La Boutique Fantasque* (1919) with renewed costumes after Derain's accomplished sketches, is an unalloyed pleasure. None of the divertissements seem too long, all are witty, and best of all Massine dances a good deal himself. Nothing in *Jardin Publique* (1935) except his own adagio with Toumanova is worth a remounting. He is surfeited now from producing and performing. In two years however, we may find him creating some of the most important theatrical dances of our epoch. His plans to produce the Berlioz Fantastic Symphony may be more grateful than scores previously chosen.

Bronislava Nijinska is represented by one ballet created for de Basil, *Les Cent Baisers* (1935), and by Stravinsky's *Les Noçes* (1923) and *Gypsy Dances* (1931), created before.

Les Noçes achieved a considerable local success. As choreography, it exhausted a certain type of arbitrary, almost military angularity which its composer's brother had inaugurated in his *Sacre du Printemps* (1913). Then, such violent and wilful ugliness was used as violent and cleansing reaction to the romantic epoch of Fokine. An angularity, an arbitrary linear accentuation, the modern dance has continued to worry like a bone ever since. As for the pleas-

ure we derive in the visual aspects of *Les Noçes* aside from its newness to us, there is not a great deal. The patterns are patiently conceived and soberly executed. There are a few beautiful static and monumental pictures first conceived on paper by Gontcharova. In 1923 the Revolution was not such an heroic fact as it is now, and even in their revolt against the folk-lore of *Fire Bird* and *Petrouchka* Nijinska and Stravinsky conceived only another kind of folk-lore. They reduced it to a clean, almost anemic vision but in the stage pictures at least, the spirit of the moujik seems thin-blooded, antiseptic, "classical" in a West-European sense.

What do we take away from this remarkable museum of dancing as rewarding and delicious memories? Chiefly, I think, the work of individual dancers in isolated moments, never either the work of the troupe as a whole or any single ballet composition in its entirety. But it is a rich museum which can house some of the dancers de Basil employs. Besides Danilova and Massine, who are inexhaustible repositories of information of how best to be effective on the lyric stage, there are others but a little less valuable. Yurek Shablevsky is a Pole, and in spite of a leg injury, enchanted us again with his rare amalgam of fresh physicality and wild but controlled brilliance. It is his violence rather than Fokine's that makes the dances in "*Igor*" still visible. Baronova has become a ballerina, almost a *ballerina assoluta*, in two years. Ripe and healthy as a fresh apple, she is a model of stage distinction and good dancing-manners. As The Poet in *Public Gardens*, George Zoritch gave a hint of the real first-dancer; it was partly physical brilliance he gave off and partly that unmistakable aura which is the electric manifestation of an animal who only breathes freely on a stage.

These dancers were trained in schools kept by four exiled imperial ballerinas in Paris. Their only present schooling

is in continual performance. Their style is never corrected. They fall into pitfalls of mannerism and affectation which inevitably destroy gifts even greater than those Toumanova once had. Museums are only half-hearted satisfactions at best. None of us can ever buy all the objects or arrange them to our taste. But they are valuable places in which to study the loot of the past. They tell us something about our present and surely there is still nothing to compare with the de Basil company that most of us can see.

The de Basil troupe offers theatrical performances in the lyric genre which makes us long for more and better presentations of the same sort. For the idiom of ballet has an element of physical excitement, at worst acrobatic, at best a complete visual synthesis, which seem to beggar and dim all other dancing. What may be the fine points of style to the balletomane become to an ordinary spectator merely part of a residual whole which delights the eye and warms one's whole being. If the uses of this wonderful form of theatrical dancing often seem at present at a standstill, it is our responsibility to demand and create not only new ideas for it to express, but new dancers to express them. Ballet, because of its theatrical power, has gained a great American audience. It must greatly advance its own genre if it hopes to keep this support.

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Correspondence

To NEW THEATRE:

I came across a copy of NEW THEATRE in a workers' bookshop in Glasgow the other day, and have read every word in it with the greatest interest. May I offer you sincere congratulations and good wishes on the great work you are doing to make the theatre a living force for truth and beauty in the lives of the masses of people?

Hitherto I have thought that Soviet Russia was the only land where the theatre was being reborn in the services of the people by facing up to the problems that press upon them. But with your magazine and League I see that the torch is a light in America as well.

Over here our commercial theatre is concerned almost solely with amusement, sickly sex dramas or musical inanities. It is dumb in the presence of the reactionary terrors that threaten us all—war, fascism, destitution, financial despotism, industrial conscription, slavery, censorship, and tyranny of all kinds that come between the individual and his free development as a human being. If we only had something corresponding to your new theatre movement to fight these evils. But even our strikes are conducted in a gentlemanly manner! Our workers seemed to be kept perpetually doped with the "dole," with sport and by the press, and to have lost the instinct for the flaming spirit of revolt against oppression and injustice.

I want to get fresh heart by reading your magazine regularly and to keep in touch with your fine work for creative drama of social significance. Although so far away I would like you to feel that there are those here who are with you heart and soul in your struggle to make the theatre the weapon and the treasure it can be in combatting the dark forces of dictatorship.

With heartiest good wishes to NEW THEATRE,
BERTRAM McCRIE.

Eirene, Garelochhead, Helensburgh, Scotland.

The following letter was sent to Mr. Harry Simons, special press representative of *Bury the Dead*, by the National Commander of the Veterans of Future Wars:

DEAR MR. SIMONS:

I am very pleased to hear that all the forty men in the cast of *Bury the Dead* desire to become members of our organization. I trust this includes the six corpses. That, by the way, is a new angle for us and it opens up entirely new possibilities. We might find that our membership could be increased almost indefinitely if we were to sign up cemeteries wholesale, especially the military cemeteries in France.

I have read the play with tremendous interest. It is extraordinarily well done. It makes one wonder if perhaps there might not be more than six men who will refuse to lie down and be buried beneath the coming war. I hope I shall have an opportunity of seeing the play itself in the near future.

Our method of forming a post is to select a commander and to send out buttons and cards to him. If you wish, I can send the buttons to you. Or if you think that some special arrangements might be made we are open to suggestions. Best wishes.

LEWIS J. GORIN, JR.

Contributors

Clara Weatherwax is the author of *Marching, Marching*, which won the recent New Masses-John Day prize novel contest.

Sanora Babb has contributed short stories to *The Anvil*, *The Magazine*, *The Windsor Quarterly*, and others.

Carl Dreher is the head of the Sound Department at RKO.

Morris Watson is managing producer of the *Living Newspaper* of the New York Federal Theatre Project, and vice-president of the Newspaper Guild of America.

Lucile Charles is on the staff of the American Peoples School.

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September 4th—Bolshoi (Opera) Theatre—"Eugene Onegin," by Tschaikowsky.

September 5th—Performance by the State Georgian Theatre from Tiflis.

September 6th—The Central Children's Theatre; the State Central Theatre for Young Spectators.

September 6th—Moscow Theatre of the Revolution—"Umka, The White Bear," by I. Selvinsky.

September 7th—The Moscow (Gorki) Art Theatre—"Resurrection," by Leo Tolstoi.

LENINGRAD

September 8th—The Leningrad Academic Maly (Opera) Theatre—"Quiet Flows the Don."

September 9th—Leningrad Theatre for Young Spectators—"Timoshkin Mine," by L. Makariev.

September 9th—Performance by the Franko State Theatre of the Ukraine (from Kiev)—"Destruction of the Squadron."

September 10th—The State Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet—"The Fountain of Bakhchisarai," by B. V. Asafiev.

One notes that, for the first time, the theatres of Leningrad are included in the Festival program. In both cities, arrangements have been made for foreign guests to watch backstage work, to interview the leaders of the theatre and cinema and to engage in discussion with workers of the Soviet stage. All-inclusive rates for the ten days of the Festival have been set at \$65 third class, \$95 tourist and \$165 first. These include hotels, meals, theatre tickets, sight-seeing in Moscow and Leningrad and transportation by special train between the two cities. A number of special interest groups under the leadership of Professor H. W. L. Dana and Herbert Kline, editor of NEW THEATRE, are being organized which include a background study of travel throughout the Soviet Union in connection with the Festival. Write Intourist for its Theatre Festival booklet No. NT-6 and for information about special Theatre Festival Groups.

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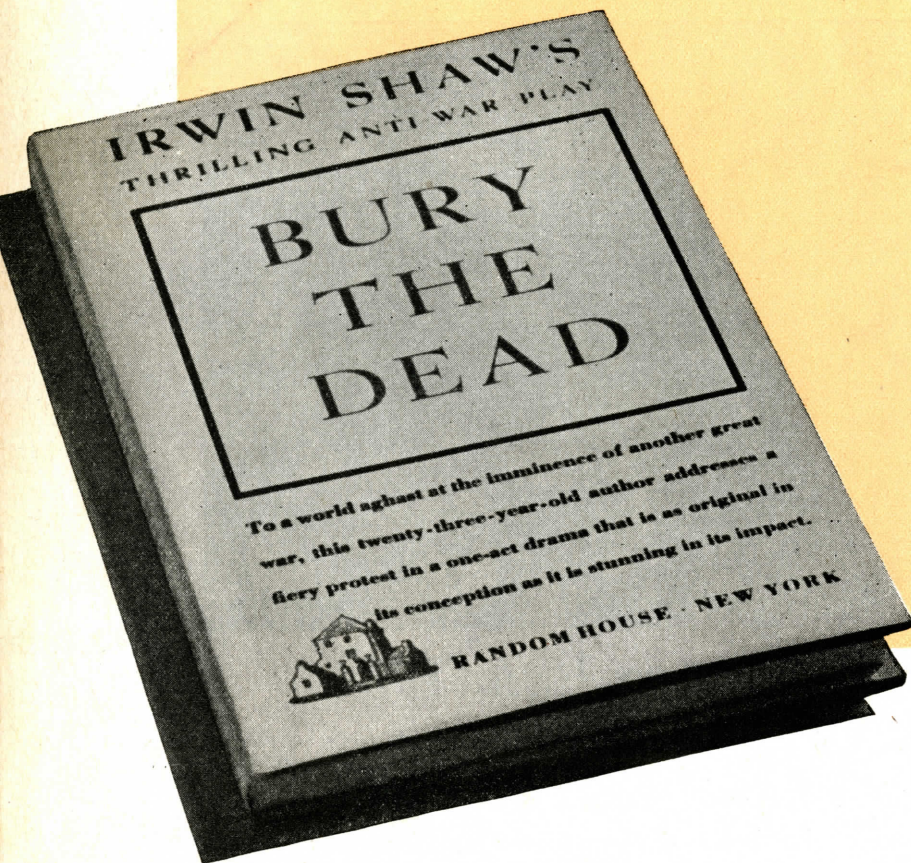


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