

FORE AND AFT THE MID-DECEMBER FOOTLIGHTS

Noise-Making Cult Growing in Theater

Actors' Former Conversational Precedence Now Usurped By the Audience

By EARLE DORSEY. If one may presume to offer a word of suggestion to those already omniscient Puritan forces which seek, so whole-heartedly, to guard the yokelery of the nation from contaminating mental and moral stage influences, it might be well to frame a new or Twentieth amendment to the Constitution which would establish, for all time, a conversational traffic rule in the theater.

There was a time, of course, when conversation in the theater followed a definite and well-established course. During those brief periods when the curtain was lowered between acts, the right of an audience to dissect a star's private life, its neighbor's gown or a playwright's theme was unchallenged by sight save the libel laws. On the other hand, during those intervals when the curtain was lifted, the actors themselves were believed to have the dialogic right-of-way and audible comments on all and sundry topics were confined to the stage side of the footlights—unless the show was too awful.

This indifference to the play, incidentally, may be emphasized by a sprightly and thoroughly audible conversation with the bald-headed man in the evening dress behind or beside one, though some remember the unrestrained, musical titter at serious moments of the action. The latter method usually causes the leading man to glare, which assists the audience in locating one's exact position. Both of these methods in employing to the best advantage from a box, in which position one is easily visible to all eyes and from which position one may most advantageously sneer at the groundlings in the orchestra silly enough to pay \$2.20 a seat to see a play.

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If you are interested in keeping abreast of the times, there are a number of other methods of distracting attention from the stage to oneself that are a bit old-fashioned, perhaps, but within reach of the average purse. One way is to lease an orchestra seat, preferably behind Lou Dougher, and repeat the cute little catch lines of the blond-haired comedian or the ingenious summary girl just home from school. This is fairly effective, particularly if you change the subject upon a moment's notice. Another way is to repeat each line after you. The range of effective disturbance, of course, is regulated solely by the carrying power of your voice. Frank Morse reports an instance where a fat man with an anti-orchestra aroma managed to ruin a play for a radius of ten chairs on either side.

I am indebted, however, to Heywood Brown for reporting a method that is frequently powerful in its effect on the audience though it has the disadvantage of actorial approval. One may be equipped with a powerful, percussing, musical titter at serious moments of the show and a great deal of annoyed attention from the audience by pounding out two or three excores more than a majority of the audience desires. A careful study of this method may even result in a faint hiss from some person who has slid far down in the aisle before delivering it.

This same method may be varied, likewise, by setting up a tremendous applause the moment the star is catapulted into an important scene which gives him no time to acknowledge your greeting, several clapping or patting, or more gloriously, she will be forced to bow. In this manner, an appreciable gap will be torn in the fabric of the plot and—much more important—there may be persons who growl and mutter in the audience who are not aware of the fact that their own star is being applauded. The effect was emphasized by Taylor Holmes' momentary error in glaring into the box.

REPORTS from other cities indicate that the movement is growing in popularity and authority on the subject of "artistic" performances, where the character of the drama is such as to puzzle and befog the limited attention of the auditor, who thus falls an easier victim to the ministrations of those in the audience who have tendencies to share the publicity according to membership in the Actors' Guild with none of the inconveniences and discomfort of hotel and Pullman life.

In this connection, it might be said that the movement gains expression back-stage among the members of the Actors' Guild by loud-voiced halloo to Mike to "turn them borders off a minute" and "hold that drop where you got it now" which are readily audible to the audience, despite its own "tween-act clamor. It has the effect, in large measure, of demystifying the audience and butchering the illusion of the theater and leads to the impression that one has invaded a dress rehearsal of the Aladdin Ready-Cut House factory cast.

The best psychological thought of the theater was but recently committed to the theory that the outcroppings of mentality inherent in those individuals to whom theater-attendance was a rare treat. It was believed to be nothing more than the ingenuous, bland complacency of an individual who, for the moment, is alone in the theater. Others were not slow to contend that it was due to a growing dissatisfaction with the quality of modern drama quite unacceptable to themselves. These ideas, however, are practically discarded.

A more comprehensive study of the situation, though, which is accepted by the best practitioners of the theater. It is regarded as a manifestation of the new economic era in America, which, having enriched a large number of individuals, whose former acquaintance with the theater was confined to the bill-board, now brings into the theater as customers a class which is unable to restrain a desire to tell the world they've "arrived."

It is particularly marked in those who have attained to the box-seats, either through business success or through the manager's wife. It is not in the natural order of things that one long debarr'd, through economic stress, from an enjoyment of a theater and its wares, should suddenly attain to a box seat and evening clothes and be expected to keep his seat.

IN A BOX AT THE THEATRE!



Now We Have the Reason Why English Plays Excel

Lionel Atwill Says They Rewrite Before Rehearsals, Not Afterward.

Lionel Atwill, whom David Belasco will present in "Deburau" at the French of Sacha Guitry, adapted by Granville Barker, at Belasco Theater this week, immediately preceding the engagement at the Belasco Theater, New York, has divided his career principally between the American and London theaters. One of the most frequent queries put to him is in what respects rehearsals of a play differ on these stages.

"In America," declares Mr. Atwill, "plays are practically rewritten at rehearsals, while in London they are hardly changed once the parts are given to the players. Nearly all of the rewriting in London is done before the first rehearsal."

"A striking illustration of this fact might be cited in the case of 'Milestones,' which enjoyed a run of over twenty months in London. This play, written by Arnold Bennett and Edward Knoblock, was rehearsed by a very strict director, for four and a half weeks. The only thing changed from the day the play was into rehearsal up to the time of production was the ending of the second act, which was done by the authors overnight."

"Another London production that I might cite was 'The Poor Little Rich Girl.' After that play went into rehearsal, the only thing altered was a scene between the mother and the father which necessitated the rewriting of but three pages of manuscript. I have never appeared in a London production that was altered more."

"I approve very much of an out-of-town premiere of a play, which is the usual rule in this country. In London, a play is rarely presented out-of-town before its premiere there, although George C. Kossmuth has lately rather generally adopted this custom. London productions, of course, are rehearsed with great care and there are always a series of dress rehearsals such as Mr. Belasco makes a point of here."

"That, I believe, is the only real difference between the American and London theater, everything is about the same, except that in London there are London and provincial actors. A London actor rarely leaves that city but has his house there and becomes a member of the community."

Now and then there is an artist who dies in New York and leaves behind him the glittering lights of Broadway to seek life in more normal, restful channels. Marcus Kellerman, who will sing the role of Amosaro in "Aida" this week, at Polli's, is one who has done this. Mr. Kellerman has had brilliant success in the concert and operatic world, but one day a millionaire from Richmond heard him sing. He was so delighted with Mr. Kellerman's voice and personality that he said: "We need you in Richmond."

Henry's 'Tin Lizzie' Invades the Drama

O'Neill's Brilliant Score An Aid to Barrie's Charm



Henry's 'Tin Lizzie' Invades the Drama

Owing to unfavorable weather, the Linderman Bros. Circuit, fourteen Ford trucks, last performance this summer and the boys furnished the entire program, with one exception being very versatile. Dr. Cook, the old timer, was on the advance with a Ford. Also, doing his own posting, and a real agent he is. Mr. Cook is now home at Iowa, Wis., and the Lindermans are building over their show at Sheboygan, Wis., their home.

"Red" Gordiner closed his tent dramatic show early owing to performers wanting winter positions while they were to be got and his wife and children are at "Red" Hill. A helper are playing the small ones with pictures, using a Delco plant on a Ford truck.

Thomas Blanchard, the magician, cannot be pried loose from Hopkinton, Iowa, since he got back from France. He says he got all the travel he wanted in two years service and got shot in the neck besides, and any offer won't budge him from his job print shop—Opera House Reporter.

'Pitter Patter' Coming

"Pitter Patter," the musical comedy success, now at the Longacre Theater, New York, will come direct from there to Polli's early in January with the same big company headed by Ernest Truex that has made the Metropolitan engagement a notable one. This will be Mr. Truex's first appearance since he visited Washington in "Very Good, Eddie" several years ago. "Pitter Patter" is by William B. Friedlander, who wrote the music and lyrics, and Will M. Hough, who wrote the book.

IN THE PICTURES.

Upper Left—Fritz Leiber, the noted Shakespearean actor, who will begin a series of Shakespearean offerings at the Shubert-Garrick Theater tomorrow night, including "Macbeth," "Hamlet," "Merchant of Venice," "Romeo and Juliet," "Julius Caesar," and "Richard III."

Center—Lionel Atwill, the brilliant young actor, who supported Frances Starr in "Tiger, Tiger," and who will make his debut as a Belasco star at the Belasco tomorrow night in Granville Barker's adaptation of Sacha Guitry's French comedy, "Deburau."

Upper right—Marcus Kellerman, one of the prominent singers of the Washington Opera Company, who will have one of the chief roles in the production at Polli's during the week of the opera "Aida."

Below—Ruth Chatterton, the former Henry Miller star, who returns to Washington, this time under Frohman auspices in the American version of Sir James Matthew Barrie's latest play, "Mary Rose," which will be seen for a week's engagement at the National, beginning tomorrow night.

Some Real Drama On Week's Program

New Plays by Barrie and Belasco Are High Lights of New List

PROBABLY no week of the present season will prove of greater importance, theatrically speaking, than the one which opens in Washington today. It marks the presentation for simultaneous weekly engagements of a new Belasco production of extraordinary dramatic prestige, "Deburau," starring Lionel Atwill, at the Belasco Theater, and one of the preliminary American performances of Sir James M. Barrie's latest play, "Mary Rose," at the National.

In other ways than these, the week is remarkable from the standpoint of artistic drama, for Fritz Leiber, the Shakespearean star, begins a series of repertoire performances in that medium at the Garrick, while Polli's will house the Washington and French opera companies in a series of operatic offerings. The programs in detail follow:

"Mary Rose"—National. "Mary Rose," the latest play from the pen of Sir James Matthew Barrie, which is esteemed one of the profound successes of the London season, will be presented at the National Theater tomorrow night. Ruth Chatterton will be seen in the role of chief importance under Frohman management and without exaggeration one may say that "Mary Rose" is one of the most eagerly awaited plays of the season. "Mary Rose" is said to be a play in which the same spirit as "Peter Pan" and "A Kiss for Cinderella," though not without a tragic note. Miss Chatterton's support includes Tom Nesbitt, O. E. Clarence, Ada King, Winifred Fraser, A. R. Homewood and Guy Buckley.

Belasco—"Deburau" Of extraordinary dramatic importance is the presentation at the Belasco tomorrow night for a week's engagement of David Belasco's latest production, "Deburau," adapted from the French of Sacha Guitry by Granville Barker and a play which serves as the initial starring vehicle for Lionel Atwill, who scored such a pronounced success in support of Frances Starr in "Tiger, Tiger." The cast that Mr. Belasco brings to Atwill's support is particularly notable and includes Hubert Druce, Joseph Herbert, Sidney Taylor, Rowland Buckstone, John L. Shine, John Roche, Edmund Gurney, St. Clair Rayfield, Bernard Reinold, Morgan Farley and others. The play was produced under Belasco's personal direction.

Opera—Polli's A week of opera, alternately divided between the singers of the Washington Opera Company and the French Opera Company, will be the attraction at Polli's this week, beginning tomorrow. Mary Cavan, Ruth Townsend, Otakar Marak, Marcus Kellerman, Charles Trowbridge, Tutman and George Harold Miller will be featured in the Washington Opera Company's presentation of "Aida" on Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings. The French Opera Company, with an exceptional company, will present on Tuesday evening, "The Merry Widow," Thursday evening, "Le Grand Mogol"; Saturday evening, "Marguerite Siva" will be heard Thursday matinee—in an "at home recital."

Shakespeare—Garrick At the Shubert-Garrick Theater beginning tomorrow, Fritz Leiber will appear for one week in the plays of William Shakespeare. The repertoire follows: Monday and Thursday evenings, "Macbeth"; Tuesday evening and Saturday matinee, "Hamlet"; Wednesday evening, "The Merchant of Venice"; Thursday matinee, "Romeo and Juliet"; Friday evening, "Julius Caesar"; Saturday evening, "Josephine." The company includes Irby Marshall, Louis Leon Hall, John C. Hickey, John Burke, Wallis Roberts, Joseph Singer, Robert Strauss, Sidney Elliott, James Hendrickson, Arthur Row, Virginia Bronson, Pauline Crell, Katherine Sayre and Millie Bland.

Burton Holmes—National For the fourth photo-lecture of his current season Burton Holmes will present at the National Theater tonight and tomorrow afternoon his interesting lecture, "Spanish Cities," in which Mr. Holmes takes his audience to Madrid, Barcelona, Toledo, Seville and other cities, and reveals, in fascinating manner, the Saracenic fairyland that the Moors erected in Spain and which they left to delight future generations.

Vaudeville—B. F. Keith's At B. F. Keith's this week, beginning tomorrow, the attractions will be led by "The Baby Grands," Jane and Katherine Lee, the cute little kiddies of movie fame. They will be assisted by William Finney in a comedy sketch, "The New Director." Ernest Evans, the dance star, and his associate artists, will present "Wedding Bells," a smart divertissement. Jessie Weston will give a "Ternpichoreo Cocktails with a Kick." Frankie Wood and Bunce Wylie will present "All Right, Eddy." Bob Hall, "The extemporaneous," and other well-known entertainers will lift the bill above the average diversion and droilery.

Vaudeville—Cosmos Joe Wood's Oriental musical revue, "Ming Toy," will headline the vaudeville and picture bill at the Cosmos this week. It is a beautifully staged and gorgeously costumed offering. The Aborns' up-to-date comedy, "The Profiters," will be another big feature. Included on the program announced for the week include Roy Wise and Company in a laughable surprise; Gadsby and Walton in song in a laughable surprise; "The world's cutest pony and Thomas Melghan starred in the week's film offering, "Civilian Fanny." A Mack Sennett comedy, "His Youthful Fanny," will complete the program.

Vaudeville—The Strand Beginning tomorrow another interesting and well balanced program is announced for presentation at the Strand Theater. Trovato, eccentric and humorous violinist, and Sherman Van and Hyman in "Theodiosus Nonsense," will divide honors for headlines position. Others appearing will include Reckless and Folly Follette in "Vaudeville as You'll Like It" and Ida Regal and Mack Jack in a delightful comedy episode entitled "The Book Shop." "Children of Despair" a screen play from the famous stage play, is the film offering. Edith Haller will sing in the leading role, supported by William Courtwright, Arthur Carew, Elmer Johnson and a notable cast. Selected short subjects and special orchestral numbers will round out the program.

The Bostonian Burlesquers—Gayety "The Bostonian Burlesquers," one of the big, pretentious offerings of the burlesque season, is announced as the attraction at the Gayety Theater for the week beginning this afternoon at 8 o'clock. "From Hero to Shanghai" is the title of the entertainment offered, which is described as a "musical chop suey." Frank Finney will be seen as the featured comedian of the company and the cast includes Jack Witta, Jack Richards, Nettie Nelson, Blanche Parquette, Tina Glenn, May Ross and Andy Francis.

The All Jazz Revue—Folly "The All Jazz Revue," a show that is said to embrace every requirement for enjoyable and diversified entertainment, begins a week's engagement at the Folly Theater this afternoon at 8 o'clock. A realistic spectacle, "In the Briny," featuring a corps of diving nymphs, is the featured offering. Lou Powers is the chief fun-maker and his supporting cast includes the Morette Sisters, musician; Nadine Gray, Pearl Hamilton, Happy Freyer, George Slocum, Jack Stanford and others.

Today's Amusements.

- National—Burton Holmes lecture, 8:15 p. m.
Keith's—Vaudeville, 2 p. m.
Strand—Vaudeville, 2 p. m.
Cosmos—Vaudeville and pictures, 2 p. m.
Gayety—"Bostonian Burlesquers," 2 p. m.
Folly—"The All Jazz Revue," 2 p. m.
Metropolitan—Mr. and Mrs. DeHaven, in "Twin Beds," 2 p. m.
Halt—"Half a Chance," with Nahlon Hamilton.
Palace—Billie Burke in "The Frisky Mrs. Johnson."
Garden—"Conrad in Quest of His Youth."
Columbia—"Ideals of Clay," with Mac Murray and David Powell.
Knickerbocker—Mr. and Mrs. Carter DeHaven in "Twin Beds."
Crandall's—Charles Ray in "An Old-Fashioned Boy."