

Plays on Many Stages

Increase of Little Theaters Changes the Playgoer's Map

Houses Off the Beaten Track Stimulate Interest in the Stage, Encourage Search for Novelties and Give the Unknowns a Chance.

By LAWRENCE REAMER.

THE increase in the number of New York's little theaters has changed noticeably the map of the playgoer. His course is no longer confined to Broadway. He may wander to every quarter of the town with the certainty of finding drama in one form or another.

A decade ago such theaters were unknown here. One went to the Broadway playhouses or stayed at home. It was not possible to make a journey in those days to the eastern end of Grand street in order to view the dramas of Shaw, or Dunsany, Galsworthy, Barker O'Neill, or some equally modern dramatist. This has been for the past two seasons the object of the Neighborhood Playhouse, which seems to have departed far from its original purpose as the dramatic adjunct of the Henry Street Settlement. Yet the theater is the most fascinating of the arts. Once it takes hold of the imagination its thrill is likely to endure. No wonder the Neighborhood Playhouse so much enjoys its dramatic activities.

Just how eager New York theatergoers are to search for whatever may be new and promising in the theater the audience that traveled down to the East Side on a recent stormy night quite impressively revealed. It is not in the least to be blamed on the institution that the event was not at all what this loyal public had expected. The large audience was no more a compliment to Mr. O'Neill than an evidence of the playgoer's willingness to depart from the beaten track.

Scarcely less remote is the little theater of the Provincetown Players, who have won their greatest distinction through introducing the plays of Eugene O'Neill. "Emperor Jones," which is, after all, his most interesting work so far as the public goes, first saw the light there, and it is to the rare perception of the actors of the Provincetown group that the engagement of Charles Gilpin to play the title role is to be credited. In all some nine plays by this dramatist have been brought forward by the powers of this active little theater. None of the other groups has been so daring in its originality as the minds that exhibit their progress in the little playhouse on Macdougall street. On the other hand none has collected such a theater. The bound volume of the plays performed by the organization during the past few years of its existence has proved of value not only to the amateur actors but of interest to readers.

These little theaters "on the side," as they call them in Paris, naturally originated in the City of Light. In no other capital is the existence of the drama so vital. These little playhouses, since they are less expensive than the usual commercial theater, are the homes of experiment and artistic adventure. A play may live here on a sum that would mean speedy extinction under the burdens of the commercial playhouse. Even our own little theaters probably would have contributed nothing to the contemporary drama if they cost as much as a stage in one of the Forties or on Broadway.

And two houses which have done so much as introduce Eugene O'Neill and make up its repertoire from Shaw, Dunsany, Barker and Galsworthy cannot but possess an important influence in any community that takes its drama seriously. Nowhere does there seem to be such seriousness about the art of the stage as in these two playhouses, alien as at least one of them may be in the character of much of its attendance.

The Greenwich Village Theater, probably because it seems larger and more comfortable, falls less naturally into the list of the theaters on the side, although it is certainly far enough from the broad way of the drama. Yet it never seems to lose altogether the atmosphere of a hot-house. One always expects that the play if it pleases the public will be moved on to a larger auditorium. The general aim of the Greenwich Village Theater, however, is always in the direction of a higher artistic standard than the commercial theater always maintains. Topographically, rather than in any other way, does the Sheridan Square playhouse seem to be long in the list of the theaters on the side.

Moving the Successes.

The process of moving the successes on is not confined by any means to the Greenwich Village Theater. Even Granville Barker's "Madras House," which would seem fitted only to the exotic atmosphere of a more or less private theater, had a brief term of exhibition at the National after its Grand street popularity was exhausted.

The Provincetown Players have exhibited a certain eagerness to get up town. It was, of course, inevitable that "Emperor Jones" should be seen in another and a less exclusive environment while "Diffrent" deserved its revelation to uptown audiences. The band of Macdougall street actors even took the Princess Theater for a brief term, and there tried George Cram Cook's "The Spring" on the desert Broadway air, while "The Verge" enjoyed the hospitality of the Theater Guild at the Garrick Theater long enough to allow Miss Wypherly to be seen in the leading role. Few of these theaters on the side are ever satisfied to let their successes remain in the atmosphere to which it has pleased their artistic fathers to call them.

The Theater Guild is of course conducted on a scale so much more ambitious than its other possible resemblance to the other theaters mentioned is the lack of financial gain back of the enterprise. It is not primarily conducted for profit. But its operations have met with far reaching success. No task seems to stump its promoters, as the current representations of Bernard Shaw's "Back to Methuselah" seem to demonstrate. It is indeed abroad seeking the difficulties that it may overcome. The Theater Guild is of course the more or less direct descendant of the Washington Square Players. Interesting as their accomplishments were they set for themselves an impossible task. It is impossible to interest the New York public in a program of one act plays.

Success of "The Grand Guignol." Such has been the success of the "Grand Guignol," which is a name that has come to have its significance over the theater world. It was not possible for such an experiment to flourish here, as Holbrook Blinn and his associates demonstrated. There was, of course, the difficulty that the programs were altogether one act dramas. Then their character failed to arouse any sympathetic response in theatergoers. Prosperity for such an institution is not altogether limited to Latin countries, however. Such a theater seems to flourish in London.

Incetown groups proves the interest in theatergoers in what they have to offer. At the first representation of "The First Man" at the Neighborhood last week there were some of the regular attendants at such plays as the uptown theaters offer who had no other interest in the downtown plays than the desire to be there also at the first representations. When the so called "first nighters" are to be found over near Grand street and East River as well as on the upper stretches of Macdougall street the trail is extending in many new directions.

The ministrations of these theaters are all for the good of the art. They keep the activity always on tap. New writers, so indispensable to the theater, find a hearing in them. Geniuses may not always be discovered, but the field of the theater's subjects is materially broadened. Many interesting experiments in stagecraft have found their success in the playhouses.

The constantly increasing interest in the theater among all classes has kept step with the progress of the cinema. Maybe there is a recognizable relation between them. It is to this interest moreover that the growth of the small theaters is to be attributed. It can also be said without prejudice that the achievements of the theaters on the side have in every way justified the interest in them. They have been an undeniable advantage to the American theater. They have earned the right moreover to take themselves seriously.

Dunsany Play in Bill at Lenox Little Theater

The Lenox Hill Players, composed entirely of professional actors, will produce a bill of one act plays at the Lenox Little Theater, 52 East Seventy-eighth street, beginning March 21.

The first bill will include "The Slipper" by Lord Dunsany; "The Glistening Gate," by Lord Dunsany; "The Fog," by Frederick Truesdell, and "At the Hawk's Well," by William Butler Yeats; the last a new form of stage entertainment.

Robert Edeson, Miss Laura Walker, William B. Mack, Creighton Hale, David Lindley, Miss Alice Davenport, Lloyd Neal and other well known players are in the casts.

Asahmed Eldridge Scott is director of the organization and the stage direction is in the hands of Cecil Owen, who has been associated in a similar capacity with a number of Broadway successes.

Actresses to Aid Jewish Relief Fund

Included among the volunteer entertainers and patronesses who will take part in the benefit which Miss Sophie Tucker is arranging for the Jewish Relief Fund next Tuesday evening after the theater in the Paradise crystal room, formerly Reisenwaber's, are Miss Elsie Janis, Irving Berlin, Harry Carroll, Miss Irene Bordone, E. Ray Goetz, Fay, Clarence Nordstrom and Miss Edythe Baker, "Frisco," Miss Clara Jool, Miss Ada Lewis, Doradina, Eugene O'Brien, B. C. Hilliam, William Boyd, Harry Ross, Vincent Lopez and his Pennsylvania Hotel orchestra, and "Tangerine" quartet, stars from "Shuffle Along" and numerous others besides Miss Tucker herself.

Charles Hackett Sings At the Scala in Milan

New York friends of Charles Hackett, American tenor, have received word that he has scored a success at the Scala in Milan as *Almaviva* in "The Barber of Seville." This was the first time an American had ever been asked to open the season in Italy's most famous opera house.

Following his Milan engagement Mr. Hackett will go to Monte Carlo, where he sang *Gavroche* in "Tosca." After his Monte Carlo engagement Mr. Hackett will go to Paris to sing at the Opera Comique. This will be the first time that an American tenor has sung at this institution.



Miss FRANCES WHITE and TAYLOR HOLMES in "THE HOTEL MOUSE" Shubert



Miss ERNITIA LASCELLES in "BACK TO METHUSELAN" Garrick



Miss GLADYS JORDAN in "THE BLUE KITTEN" Selwyn



Miss CLARE EAMES in "THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS" Princess



Miss PEGGY WOOD in "MARJOLAINE" Broadhurst



Miss HELEN WARE in "MONT MARTRE" Belmont



Miss ESTELLE WINWOOD in "MADAME PIERRE" Ritzy Theatre



Miss LENORE ULRIC as KIKI at Belasco Theater

'Duley' Among the Plays in Brooklyn

"Duley," the comedy by George S. Kaufman and Marc Connelly, having completed its long run at the Praxos Theater, will be moved across the East River to-day to begin a week's engagement at the Montauk Theater to-morrow night. Miss Lynn Fontana, who scored in the title role, continues to head the company.

"Getting Gertie's Quarter," the A. H. Woods farce, will be presented at the Majestic Theater. The piece is by William Collier and Avery Hopwood. In the cast are Miss Wanda Lyon, Walter Jones and Mrs. Dorothy Mackay.

Sir Harry Lauder, with several surrounding acts, will appear at the Brooklyn Academy of Music next Wednesday and Thursday, matinee and evening. He will sing several new songs of his own composition, including "I Know a Lassie Out in O-H-I-O."

Gus Edwards with his new revue will top the bill at the Orpheum. Others will be Lewis and Dody, Toto and Dixie Norton and Coral Melotte.

Theater Benefit To Aid Bellevue

A benefit performance will be given at the Times Square Theater, Sunday evening, March 19, under the auspices of the first surgical division of Bellevue Hospital to raise \$1,000 to purchase X-ray equipment. According to Miss Rosa Brown, secretary of the first surgical division of Bellevue, the new equipment will be used in the outdoor patient department. The committee consists of four volunteer workers, Mrs. Robert Carl, Jr., chairman; Mrs. J. A. McCreary, Miss Mabel Ross and Miss George. At the performance "The Little Minister" will be presented and there will also be a comedy, and numbers by a quartet from the New York Police Glee Club.

IN UPTOWN PLAYHOUSES.

George M. Cohan's comedians presented by Sam H. Harris in the musical comedy "Mary," will be the attraction at the Shubert-Riviera Theater, beginning to-morrow night.

"East Is West" is the comedy by Samuel Shipman and John B. Heyner in which William Harris, Jr. will present Fay Bainter at the Bronx Opera House for a week.

Calendar of First Performances

TO-DAY.

LONGACRE THEATER (Madison)—"Galathée," French comic opera by Maase, will have its first presentation here. The title role will be played by Mile. Eva Leon, who translated the libretto into English. Other singers will be Michael Navarre, Carlo Corelli and Mario Pagano. There will be a chorus and ballet.

MONDAY.

SHUBERT THEATER—Lee & J. J. Shubert will present Miss Frances White and Taylor Holmes in "The Hotel Mouse," a three act musical comedy, book by Guy Bolton, lyrics by Clifford Grey and music by the late Ivan Caryll and Armand Versey. It is founded on a French comedy by Germain and Armont, dealing with a young woman compelled by her supported uncle to prey upon the guests of Continental hotels. Others in the cast are Miss Fay Marbo, Barnett Parker, Stewart Baird and Al Sexton.

PRINCESS THEATER—"The First Fifty Years," a drama of married life by Henry Myers, will be produced by Lorenz M. Hart and Irving S. Stripes, with only two characters, played by Miss Clare Eames and Tom Powers.

GARRICK THEATER—The Theater Guild presents the third and last section of "Back to Methuselah," entitled "As Far as Thought Can Reach." This section, directed by Philip Moeller, will have the cast of the previous parts, besides a group of dancers trained by Elise Defour.

TUESDAY.

BOOTH THEATER—"The Truth About Blayds," comedy by A. A. Milne, presented by Winthrop Ames. In the cast are O. P. Heggie, Miss Alexandra Carlisle, Ferdinand Gottschalk, Miss Vane Featherston, Leslie Howard, Frieda Inescort and Gilbert Emory.

Did You Hear?

About the Theatrical Man Who Refused to Meet Squirrels and About the Lipstick Theater.

By LUCIEN CLEVER.

ONE of the singers who came to the United States last season and had such an unfortunate time that she altogether refused to come back here even to sing at the Metropolitan Opera House this winter has found the usual success now that she is once more on her native heath. This is Mme. Selma Kurz.

During the whole of her stay here the soprano was ill with bronchitis and eventually she had also to struggle against a state of nervousness of the kind described as nervous prostration so long as doctors thought that such a thing existed. When she appeared at the Vienna Opera House as *Gilda* at the beginning of her season it was declared that she had never been in better voice. Her subsequent appearances have served to make her even more popular than ever with the Viennese public. Mme. Kurz is now more than ever before convinced that the fates have decided she will always have her greatest success on the banks of the Danube.

Reversing the Process.

One of the recent passengers to Europe was Mme. Queens Mario, who is going abroad to make her first operatic appearance on the other side of the ocean. Mme. Mario, who is a New York girl, reversed the usual process of the operatic career. She made her first appearance here, sang for two years with the Gallo company and was then engaged by Antonio Scotti for his opera company. So great was her success with him that she is to be one of the leading members of the same organization on its spring tour.

In the meantime, Mme. Mario has gone to sing in Paris, Milan, Monte Carlo and the leading opera houses of France and Italy. Next winter she will be abroad during the whole year.

Mario Laurent's Death.

There were peculiarly and circumstances surrounding the death of young Mario Laurent of the Metropolitan, who

Ralph Morgan Left Law for the Stage

Ralph Morgan, leading man with Laurette Taylor in "The National Anthem" at Henry Miller's Theater, started by trying to become a member of the legal fraternity. He is a New Yorker, as all his family have been, the latter having had business interests in the city for more than four generations. His grandfather was a member of the bar fifty years ago and it was inevitable that young Ralph should have a legal training. He graduated from Columbia, class 1904, and took a supplementary course in law, getting a degree in 1906. He afterwards served as a lawyer's clerk.

He did much in the way of amateur theatricals when at Columbia, and took part in Ibsen's "Love's Comedy," which was produced at the Hudson Theater in 1907. His performance in that play came under the notice of the late Mrs. E. L. Fernandes, who advised him to go in for a stock training. This he did with Larry Giffen, who then conducted a stock company at Richmond, Va. Morgan started in at a salary of \$24 a week, playing general utility.

Richard Bennett was the leading man of the company and the first play was "The Prisoner of Zenda," in which Mr. Morgan played the role of the artist in the second act. His chance came, however, in the next production, which was "The Three of Us," in which he had the juvenile role. After that came the part of the Imp in "When We Were Twenty-One." This was followed up with fourteen weeks of juvenile roles, which, besides giving him the necessary experience, made him a favorite in Richmond. Following this initial experience in the theatrical world, his subsequent career was from one production to another.

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