

# NEW THEATRE

DRAMA FILM DANCE

MAY, 1935 — 15c

and showed it in his...  
 absurd to think that Junior thre...  
 said his wife. "You know as well as I do that he  
 ac on to read yet."

**100,000 Wanted for the CCC**  
 "Better Than Starving in the City."  
 ... Journal, Inc. Registered U. S. Patent Office.  
 ... and colleges are turning their thousands  
 ... will find trouble in givi...

**U. J. MOBILIZES  
 PEACE ARMY IN  
 JOB WAR**

...  
 "How's the show  
 answering cry.  
 "Great!"  
 And they mean...

... of one body acis-  
 at 17 minutes. He found  
 after fortified against a real  
 gain because of the fast  
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**FOREST CAMPS  
 PRAISED BY  
 ROOSEVELT**

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Ben Ross of the Theatre of Action  
 in THE YOUNG GO FIRST forth-  
 coming play of life in a CCC camp

Photo by Alfredo Valente



# THE THEATRE OF ACTION

(Formerly the WORKERS LABORATORY THEATRE)

*Announces its first full-length production*

## “THE YOUNG GO FIRST”

A DRAMA OF THE CCC CAMPS

*By Peter Martin, George Scudder, and Charles Friedman*

“600,000 boys in the CCC - When war comes The Young Go First”

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TOWN!

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*at the* **PARK THEATRE**

*formerly the Cosmopolitan*

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For information regarding benefits and theatre parties: Rhoda Rammelkamp, Theatre of Action, 42 East 12th Street, N. Y. C., STuy. 9-1821

**THE GROUP THEATRE presents**

## A W A K E A N D S I N G

by **CLIFFORD ODETS**

*“Awake and Sing, ye that dwell in the dust” -- Isaiah - 26:19*

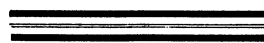
**BELASCO THEATRE**

**155 WEST 44th ST.**

BRyant 9-5100

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Mats. Thurs. & Sat. \$2.20 to 55c



## “WAITING FOR LEFTY”

and “TILL THE DAY I DIE”

by **CLIFFORD ODETS**

**LONGACRE THEATRE**

**48th STREET WEST OF BROADWAY**

Evg. \$1.65 - \$1.10 - 83c - 66c - 40

Mats.: Wed. and Sat. \$1.10 - 83c - 66c - 40c

MAY, 1935

# NEW THEATRE

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Vol. II, No. 5

Published monthly by the New Theatre League and New Dance League at 114 West 14th Street, New York City. (Phone CHelsea 2-9523). 15c. U. S. A. (Subscription, \$1.50 a year). 20c. Foreign (\$2.00 a year). Illustrations and text cannot be reproduced unless credit is given to New Theatre Magazine. Entered as second class matter Oct. 29, 1934 at the Post Office, New York City under act of March 3, 1879.

AFTER four years of alternate silence and scoffing, the New York daily critics are all playing follow-the-leader behind Brooks Atkinson's straightforward admission that, while the Broadway theatre has no comment to make in the midst of a vast social upheaval, the revolutionary theatre is becoming increasingly dynamic and is no longer merely a skirmish on the fringe of the theatre. Nowadays, almost every dramatic page from *Zit's*, *Variety* and *Billboard* to the *New York Times* is filled with unqualified praise of the Theatre Union, the Artef, and particularly, of the Group Theatre and Clifford Odets. It is easy to understand why this deluge of praise (coming at this late date when the left theatres have fought and won their battle for existence) irritated that master of revolutionary humor, Robert Forsythe. That these same critics ignored or ridiculed our work, when a friendly word or two from any one of them might have meant a lot to a struggling young group, rankles in the memory of every pioneer worker in the left theatres. Nevertheless, Forsythe's "to hell with 'em" attitude is hardly representative of the reaction of most new theatre people to the sudden, unexpected friendliness on the part of the boys who make or break the shows along Broadway. For one thing, there is no reason for Forsythe's fears that we will substitute the critical criteria of Broadway reviewers for our own. For another, though we can get along, as *Peace On Earth* proved, without the critic's support, it would be dishonest to deny that we welcome their approval: for it brings thousands of outsiders to see our plays and interests hundreds of talented theatre workers in our program. A fair and intelligent article like Bosley Crowther's "Theatre of the Left" in the *New York Times* of Sunday, April 14, should be welcomed not sneered at. And is there any sense in getting sore because Robert Garland likes the Artef and *Awake and Sing*?

THE straightforward proletarian punch of plays so different as *Waiting For Lefty*, *Stevedore*, *Till The Day I Die* and *Newsboy*, the subtle artistry of *Sailors of Cattaro*, *Recruits*, *Black Pit* and *Awake and Sing*, and the responsiveness of our stimulating workingclass actors and audiences make it difficult for any honest critic not to recognize that the future of the drama rests with the theatres of social protest. The theatre is a weapon that we are learning to use more and more effectively. We are not satisfied, even with the remarkable accomplishments of the past season. Even our finest actors, directors, playwrights are constantly working,

studying to raise the artistic and political level of their work. Actors play hard at night, and study hard at the Theatre Collective and New Theatre League training schools during the day. The future of the new theatre rests with earnest and talented young people who are determined to bring the theatre back to its origin, in the life and hearts of the community.

IF there are any skeptics remaining who regard the rise of the left drama as a flash in the pan, a look into the immediate future will disappoint these prophets of doom. Though few openings are planned along Broadway, a number of new social dramas will open soon. The Theatre of Action, formerly the Workers Laboratory Theatre, will present two new plays during May at the Park Theatre on Columbus Circle. *The Young Go First*, a three act C.C.C. camp play, was written by two of their own playwrights, Peter Martin and George Scudder, and is based upon Scudder's actual experiences in a C.C.C. camp. *My Dear Co-Workers*, a one-act play based on the recent department store strikes, was written especially for the Theatre of Action by the revolutionary novelist Edward Dahlberg. The Artef Theatre, with *Recruits*, *Yegor Bulitchev* and *Dostigayev* already on the boards, will add Sholom Aleichem's *Aristocrats* to its repertoire early in May. The New Theatre players of Philadelphia will open in Christopher Woods' *Too Late To Die*, May 9 at the Locust Theatre, despite the censor's ban. On May 6, Boston, which banned *Waiting For Lefty*, will see the opening of the Theatre Guild's political review *Parade* by George Sklar and Paul Peters, and with Jimmy Savo as the leading star, And Broadway will see the Theatre Guild's first venture leftwards since *They Shall Not Die* on May 20, when *Parade* opens at the Guild's home on 52nd St. Besides these openings, eight workers' theatres plan openings of *Waiting For Lefty* for early in May, and more are rehearsing Clifford Odets' hard-hitting taxi strike play for production late in May. If this news isn't enough to knock conservative and reactionary opponents of the left drama dizzy, the annual Dramatic Festival in Detroit will offer for the first time the premiere of a strong social play: *The Ugly Runts* by Robert Reynolds (author of the Harper prize novel *Brothers In The West*), based on the hunger strike of the Pecs miners last fall. And Jasper Deeter, of the Hedgerow Theatre, is staging Piscator's play *An American Tragedy*, as written and staged by the famous German revolutionary director. Looking forward to next season, we find that John Howard Lawson has

completed his long-expected *Marching Song*, a play on unemployment, for the Group, and has turned to *Saga Center*, a farm play. Clifford Odets' newest play *Paradise Lost*, uses the same Bronx family background as *Awake and Sing* but treats it in a different manner. Theatre Union will present *Strike Song*, a drama of the Gastonia strike, by J. O. and Loretto Bailey early next fall, and the Theatre Guild will present a play based on the Chinese Red Army by John Wexley. Albert Bein, author of *Little Ol' Boy*, will himself produce his play *Let Freedom Ring!*, a dramatization of Grace Lumpkin's Gorki Prize Novel, *To Make My Bread*. Also, new plays by the Siftons and Virgil Geddes are expected for fall. The Theatre Mass, which announced forthcoming productions of *In New Kentucky* by Samuel Ornitz and *John Henry: "Bad Nigger"* by Herbert Kline, have been unable to carry out their plans and have released these two plays. Also on the market is *If This Be Treason*, Philip Barber's drama of the Chicago teachers' strike, and *12 Men in a Mine*, Wallace Waite's dramatization of the famous French novel of the same name. With most of these plays forthcoming for fall the future of the left drama seems assured.

**B**EFORE 1936, a City Ordinance will be proposed making it imperative for the following to be licensed in order to pursue legal business: "Billiard and pool tables, . . . dirt carts, . . . hand organs, . . . shooting galleries, . . . professional and trade schools," including dramatic and dancing schools. Not only will every dance school be required to obtain a license, but "each such school shall be required to obtain a separate license for each premises so used and to pay . . . a separate fee therefore." Prior to the issuance of a license, each applicant will have to file a bond with the city commissioner of from \$1000 to \$10,000. Fees for licenses follow:

"Where the number of students each month receiving instruction is

25 students or less,	the annual license fee shall be \$ 25
26 to 50 students,	" " " " " \$ 50
51 to 150 students,	" " " " " \$100
150 to 300 students,	" " " " " \$150
300 or more students,	" " " " " \$200

Violations of license or neglect or refusal to comply shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$500, not more than six months imprisonment, or both.

Mr. Milton of the *American Dancer* kindly gathered together representatives of the dance field to meet Mrs. Whitney, Deputy Commissioner of Licenses of the City of New York, to discuss this ordinance. Mrs. Whitney first informed us how fortunate we were that this bill had come up for passage during Mayor La Guardia's administration, since he was so sympathetic to art in general. So sympathetic that he wishes to add to the burden of income tax, sales tax, etc., the exorbitant license fees and bonds mentioned here. Then we were informed that "regulation" was a nasty word. The city did not wish to interfere with private business, nor to "regulate" the artistic activities—it merely wanted to pro-

tect the public. When Mrs. Whitney was asked from what the public had to be protected, she said that the professional and trade schools were slipped into the license bill at the last moment, and that the problem of "protection" would have to be "investigated." When it was suggested that dancing teachers were not making even a bare living today, Mrs. Whitney said perhaps it would comfort us to know that all other business people being subjected to this "License Ordinance" were also quite poverty-stricken.

From the point of view of the dancers, an interesting phenomenon was revealed. There were a number of teachers of ballroom and stage dancing there, who actually applauded the idea of licenses—who honestly believed that regimentation of this kind would offer *them* protection in the dance field: protection from the perpetuation of low-fee schools, protection from unethical advertising on the part of competitors, etc. In fact, these supporters of the bill were so taken with the idea that they wished not only the school premises to be licensed, but each individual teach-

er as well. It was a sorry sight to watch and to listen to men and women, who in their ignorance, and out of their low financial status, chose to encourage the passage of a bill designed primarily with the purposes of regimentation and of ways and means to increase the graft machine of the city government.

Four points must be made clear:

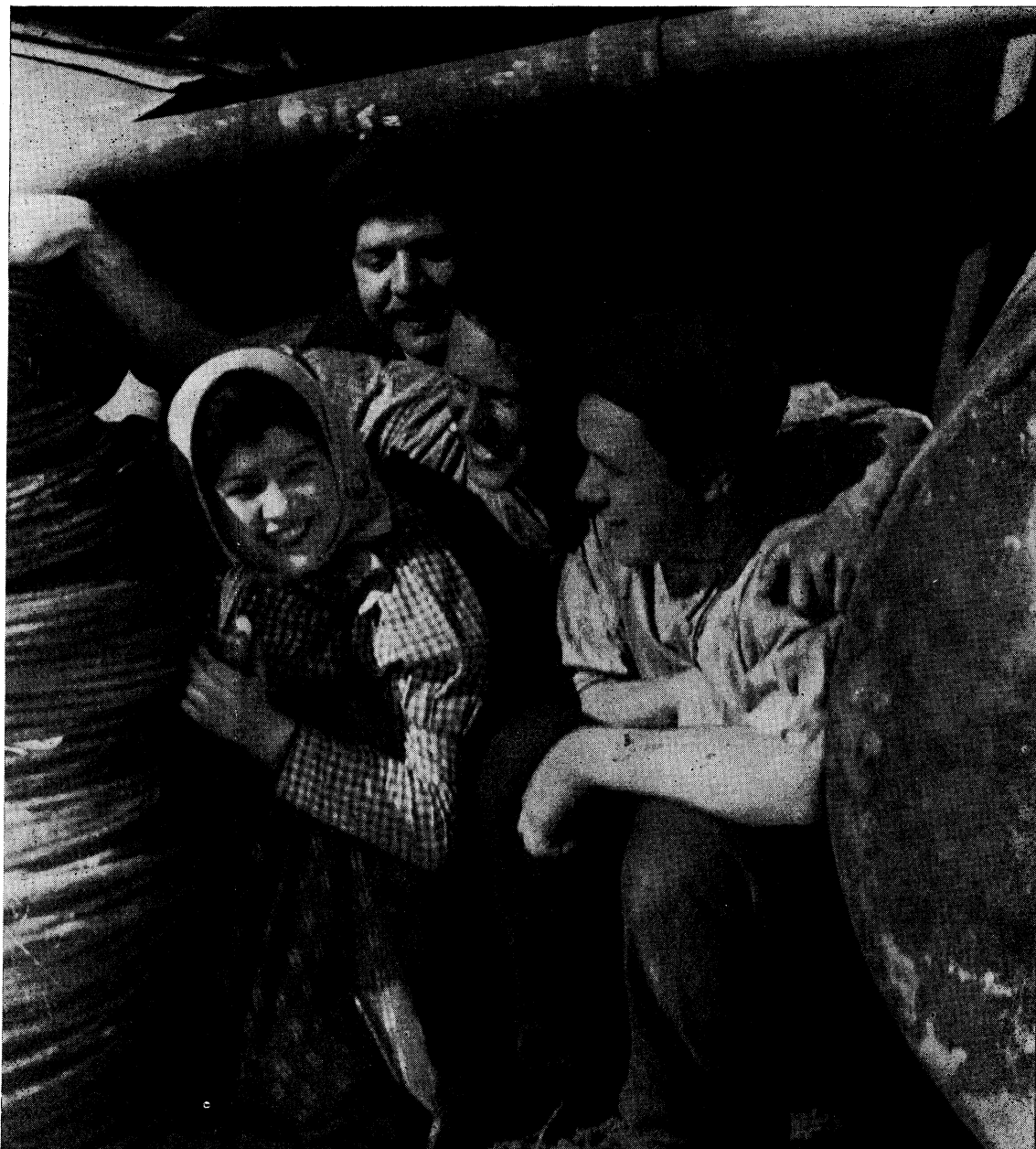
1. The city government is out to regiment every cultural activity.

2. There exists a percentage of teachers in these activities who naively misinterpret this move as an altruistic one.

3. These professionals must be enlightened through every means at our disposal that assistance cannot come through legislation of this nature.

4. Letters of explanation of the unique conditions of the dance field, of the financial straits of all workers, including cultural workers, and of protest against licenses, be sent at once to the Deputy Commissioner of Licenses of the City of New York, Mrs. Whitney.

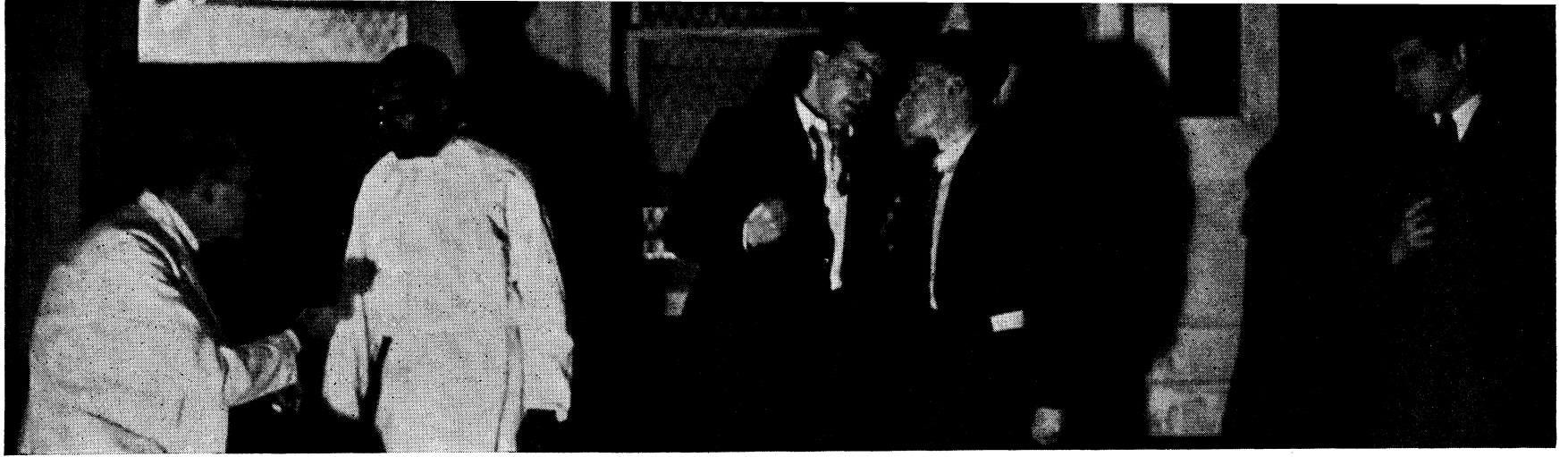
**The Youth of Maxim**, dir. by G. Kosintzev and L. Trauberg. Now at the Cameo Theatre. *Sovphoto*



The Youth of Maxim, dir. by G. Kosintzev and L. Trauberg. Now at the Cameo Theatre.

*Sovphoto*





Waiting For Lefty, New Haven Unity Players. Yale Drama Tournament

# The Censors See Red

By RICHARD PACK

Once again, the news is "Boston Bans." Several years ago it was *Strange Interlude*; early this year, *Within the Gates* and *The Children's Hour*. Now, it is *Waiting for Lefty*!

Within the short space of one April week censorship fastened on workers theatres in three cities: Boston police suppressed *Lefty* and arrested four of its cast; Philadelphia authorities closed the New Theatre Players' production of *Too Late To Die*; and the New Haven Board of Education revoked permission to perform, *Waiting For Lefty* because the play is allegedly "not fit to be produced in a public school building."

With increasing rapidity, theatre workers and theatre goers are being taught that wherever a play appears which contains a clear statement of the facts of American life, re-actionary authorities are likely to attempt to prevent its showing. The authorities have not yet co-ordinated a definite censorship procedure but they have power and will use it to protect the *status quo* with disregard for fundamental rights or cultural values. Immediate mass protests, mass protests that speak without fear and reach the audience who want these plays, can stop this censorship from above.

When the New Theatre Players of Boston, an amateur group affiliated with New Theatre League performed *Waiting For Lefty* for the first time in Boston on March 28-29, Censor McNary was in the audience. The following week police went to the landlord of the building at Long Wharf which houses the New Theatre Players and warned him that he was housing "communistic groups." As a result the New Theatre Players were evicted. The next day Boston papers reported that the performance of *Lefty* scheduled for the Dudley Street Opera House that Saturday would be banned. As originally reported, the charge was "Un-American." But this was too crude even for Boston and the old "morality" excuse was resorted to once again.

Despite police threats, the show went on again. Fifteen young actor-workers performed *Lefty* to a packed house which included besides McNary

a contingent of police, who, as the *Boston Post* related the next morning: "leaned forward, straining their ears to catch every line of the play, alternately blushing and scribbling notes in the dark." The sharp-sighted reporter who saw the cops blushing in the dark (sic) neglected to mention that these same law-and-orderlies did their best to disrupt the play. One even went so far as to try to prevent the actor planted in the audience from rushing on to the stage in the "stool pigeon expose" scene.

No sooner had the curtain rung down on those "Un-American" words of "Strike! Strike! Strike!" then two of the police took into custody Jean Lenthier who played "Fatt"; Philip Goldberg, "Dr. Barnes"; Robert F. Allen, "Sid"; and Richard Keller, "Dr. Benjamin." Next morning, they were arraigned in Roxbury Court on a charge of using profanity in a public assembly. If the police wanted to maintain the fiction that they were closing *Lefty* on moral grounds, they should have coached the newspapers more carefully, for the Boston sheets betrayed their real purpose: the suppression of a working class play which exposes labor fakers and demands rank-and-file action in trade unions. "The police details, sprinkled liberally through the audience," said the *Post*, "also included Detectives Goodman and Goldston of the 'Red' Squad." Why this interest of the notorious Red Squad if the objection to the play was only "moral"? The headlines explained "Police To Put Guard On Court—Fear Red Trouble At Arraignment Of Actors."

Attorneys of the International Labor Defense and the Civil Liberties Union rushed to the defense of the four players, and secured postponement of the trial. Immediately postcards, petitions and telegrams poured in upon the Boston police. An alert answer to the challenge of censorship!

On April 15, despite the police ban, *Waiting For Lefty* was again performed in Boston (profanity deleted). Mass protest had achieved its end; the police did not interfere with the performance, although members of the Red Squad

were again on hand, listening for a stray "Hell" or "Damn," anxious for an excuse to make further arrests. A determined and enthusiastic audience cheered the New Theatre Players. When the chairman told how one of the company was in jail for distributing leaflets protesting against the censorship, a collection large enough to cover her bail was volunteered.

Word of the Boston suppression of *Lefty* reached the jittery gentlemen of the New Haven Board of Education who immediately revoked the permission previously granted for a performance by the Unity Players of this play in a public school building. Ironically enough, that same week the Unity Players won the annual Yale Drama Tournament for the George Pierce Baker Cup with their performance of *Waiting For Lefty*. When the Chief of Police learned that the School Board had banned the play he issued a ukase forbidding performance anywhere in New Haven. The Unity Players with the co-operation of the American Civil Liberties Union and the I.L.D. and members of the Yale Law School student body and Professor Walter Pritchard Eaton of the Yale School of Drama attempted to get an injunction against the Police Chief restraining him from interference with productions of this play. They failed to get this injunction. However, they intend to perform *Waiting For Lefty* as a test case.

IN Philadelphia, they have no recourse to the Police, for the duties of the Fire Department are two-fold. They not only extinguish fires; they also put out plays. (The same tactics that the Tammany-Walker administration used in 1932 to suppress *Merry-Go-Round*, the Sklar-Maltz play attacking administrative graft and corruption). The New Theatre of Philadelphia is an organization built along the lines of the Theatre Union, and including among its sponsors Sidney Howard, Elmer Rice, Mordecai Gorelick, Sherwood Anderson, Paul Peters, Dr. George S. Counts, and Lincoln Steffens. Six months were spent in preparation for the theatre's first production, *Too Late To Die*, a realistic picture of



Waiting For Lefty, New Haven Unity Players. Yale Drama Tournament

unemployment by a new playwright, Christopher Wood. An old church building had been converted at great expense into a theatre and equipped with revolving stages, etc. A deputy fire marshal inspected the theatre, and pronounced it acceptable, if certain changes were made. The requested changes were made.

Nevertheless, on the eve of its opening, the New Theatre was refused a fire permit. The excuse: that all "little theatre groups" were being closed down as fire traps. Other little theatre groups in Philadelphia are still presenting plays. Strange that the fire department waited until opening night to find fault with the theatre! When the group tried to secure another house, they found the theatre managers unwilling to rent to them. Investigation disclosed that this was a result of a conference between theatre owners and Mr. Henry Star-Richardson, secretary to the Mayor, and Philadelphia's unofficial censor.

Frieda Nuremberg, secretary of the Philadelphia New Theatre, asked Richardson why he objected to the play. On moral grounds? No, but "the scenes were built up on false premises . . . the workers would be much upset if they were to see a picture of their lives" (!) Besides, the economic situation as portrayed in the play was altogether too simple. Things are much more complex than that; so much so, that even such a great thinker as Tolstoi "couldn't solve the problem."

And who says things aren't all right as they are? "The workers aren't so terribly oppressed. It's just that they're ignorant. The economic situation could be solved by everybody working harder and doing with less." (c.f. A. Hitler: "There is nobility in hunger.")

Richardson insisted that he was not a censor. Of course, "if the Mayor hears about this play and doesn't like it, and I know he won't like it, he will revoke the license of the theatre in which the play is given." At the present writing a theatre has been secured. Its manager has expressed willingness to risk having his license revoked "if the Mayor doesn't like it." The test will come early this month when *Too Late To Die* has its censor-deferred opening.

Censorship is often not without humor. The unhappy lot of the husky Boston policemen whose manly cheeks crimson when censorial duty calls, and the pontifical pronouncements of the Tolstoyan Mr. Richardson of Philadelphia are amusing.

The blue-nose umbrella swinging Comstockian censor of the cartoons is a stock joke. Laugh if you will. But behind the mask of "purity-seeking" lies the ever-present danger of suppression of social plays, and of all drama that deals realistically and honestly with life.

Last summer, members of the Los Angeles Workers Theatre were arrested for "carrying concealed weapons," and the wooden guns they carried as props for a play were confiscated by the Red Squad. That was funny. But there was no laughter when the news came about Peter Maccherini, organizer of the San Francisco Blue

New Haven Police Won't Let You SEE Prize Winning Play,  
**"WAITING FOR LEFTY"**  
 READ It In This Issue Of The HERALD And Judge It Yourself  
 New Haven SUNDAY HERALD New Haven  
 NO FEAR - NO FAVOR THE PEOPLE'S PAPER  
 DAY, APRIL 21, 1935

Blouses. During the General Strike, police thugs broke up a waterfront performance of this workers theatre, slugged and almost killed Maccherini.

EVERYWHERE the menace of censorship confronts theatres. In Rock Island, Ill., the New Theatre Players carry on rehearsals with American Legionnaires sitting in the hall, night after night. No one knows what action these self-appointed censors intend. After a New Theatre Night in Kansas City, at which Jack Conroy and Virgil Geddes spoke, plays of social protest were performed, friendly strangers invited 60 of the actors and audience to a party; secured names and addresses of all present. The next morning they visited the employers of the 60 and told them to stop their employees from "mixing in Communistic affairs." That same evening police visited each of the party guests; told them they would lose their jobs unless they would stay away from all radical gatherings!

Last month the New Theatre players of Washington, D. C., a non-political group composed of actors who were tired of the commercial theatre, were forcibly ejected from their rehearsal hall. They are the only theatre group in the city which honestly depict social problems of the day. Some weeks earlier the Gilpin Players of Cleveland, an outstanding Negro little theatre group who stand on no particular social platform, had a taste of censorship. Their announced production of *Stevedore* was protested before its opening by reformist Negro ministers on the charge that it contained indecent language. Municipal authorities needed no urging to pick up this cue. Both the profanity charge and a trumped-up fuss about the adequacy of the theatre building were used in an attempt to prevent the opening of the play. This despite the fact that the theatre had been used constantly for many years and that the Players had presented other plays in which profanity was used. Opposition of the theatre and liberal and radical friends whom it mobilized finally forced the re-opening of the play.

In New York City last December, active censorship was foreshadowed when Commissioner of Licenses, Paul Moss, notified the League of New York Theatres that he would like tickets to previews of all shows being presented by league members so that "all necessary changes" could be made before opening. Will New York acquire a self-appointed censor? Moss saw *Sailors of Cattaro* at a preview performance and ordered



the deletion of certain slang and profanity. Line deletions were also reported to have been requested in the Theatre Guild's *Valley Forge* and Brock Pemberton's *Personal Appearance*.

The excuse for censorship is never lacking; whether it is "obscenity" or trumped-up infractions of fire ordinances. And when necessary, as in San Francisco, even the fiction of legality is dropped, and resort is made to open Fascist terror.

Significantly, the censorship drive in the theatre has increased, since the Catholic Church, through the Legion of Decency, started the campaign to "clean up" the screen. It was this drive which gave impetus to the stage censorship and which was climaxed by a bill recently introduced into Congress: H.R. 2999 providing for Federal censorship of motion pictures. Censorship first seeks to intrench itself, and formalize its position, and then to extend its operations to wider fields.



Once the movies have been made safe for Sweetness, Light, and Shirley Temple, the condition is bound to be reflected in the theatre. How does the campaign for "purity" in the movies affect the stage. Barrett H. Clark, writing on "The Process Of Marketing A Play" in the March issue of *Theatre Arts Monthly* declares:

"Very few manuscripts are bought (by a commercial theatrical producer) before they have been read either officially or otherwise by some one in the office of the story editor of one or more of the motion picture companies, or at least before the manager is reasonably sure that his manuscript will ultimately interest one of the picture companies. Nearly all . . . of the managers . . . submit scripts to persons affiliated with a picture company before they will think seriously of signing a contract. If you don't believe this, try sending out a manuscript—a really good manuscript—and put a note on the cover saying 'Picture rights of this manuscript are not for sale.' Most of the managers will refuse even to read the play."

In short, as the film themes are restricted, the taboos of Hollywood become the taboos of Broadway.

The good fathers of the Legion, not satisfied with the purification of the screen, are mustering forces for a direct attack on the stage. Cardinal Dougherty, Legion of Decency leader, who last year issued a ban on motion pictures in the Philadelphia archdiocese which still remains in effect, recently declared that "indecent vaudeville" must go.

More damning, is Boston's banning of Sean O'Casey's widely-praised *Within the Gates* this January, on the grounds that the play "is immoral and holds religion up to ridicule." The Boston correspondent of the New York Times reported that

"It may or may not be significant that the protest against *Within The Gates* originated with the Jesuits. So far as is known, this is the first time in Boston that public objection has come from such a source. It may also be of importance that the priest who appeared against the play has been active in the Legion of Decency campaign, cleaning up the movies."

Cardinal Dougherty has also announced that the ban on movies in his archdiocese would remain in effect even though "Hollywood's much-married and much-divorced actors and actresses

and the Russian producers of lascivious filth and the theatre owners who purvey crime lose some of their fabulous incomes." Where and when the Cardinal found "lascivious filth" in a Soviet film, he neglected to specify.

In the light of the Cardinal's frothings, note that H.R. 2999 would be used to bar all movies of social protest and most Soviet films. The bill introduced into the House by Representative Culkins and now before the Committee of Interstate and Foreign Commerce, provides for a Federal motion picture Commission, appointed by the President, whose duties shall be "to protect the motion picture industry from unfair trade practices and monopoly to provide for the just settlement of trade complaints, to supervise the production of silent and talking motion pictures at the source, and to provide for the proper distribution thereof." No motion picture could be distributed "until it shall have a license from the Commission . . . and the selection and treatment of subject material shall be in accord with the public welfare." Just who is to decide what is in accord with the public welfare is not brought out.

Along with the familiar ukase against films which "emphasize and exaggerate sex appeal," "make drunkenness and gambling attractive," "exhibit nakedness" etc. is the most vicious section of the bill which provides that licenses are not to be granted to motion pictures which "ridicule or deprecate public officials, officers of the law, the United States Army, the United States Navy or other governmental authority" or which "tend to weaken the authority of the law" or which contain scenes which "unduly emphasize bloodshed and violence."

Unquestionably, the bill is anti-labor in intent.

RADIO is already under indirect Federal censorship, since the Federal Communications Commission licenses all broadcasting stations. It is accepted in the trade that renewal of licenses depends on the content of programs. The air is open to the fulminations of the Hearsts, Longs, Coughlins, and Johnsons. But let some speak truthfully or try to speak on topics such as unemployment insurance, Negro discrimination, or Fascism, and the red pencil of station censorship is freely applied; if the broadcast is not cancelled.

On January 8 of this year, the International Labor Defense contracted with KTAB, San Francisco for a fifteen minute broadcast. Scheduled to speak on the program were Leo Gallagher, I.L.D. attorney and recent popular candidate for Governor, and Albert Hougardy, one of the defendants in the notorious Sacramento Criminal Syndicalism case in which workers were recently framed on this trial.

The day before the broadcast, KTAB cancelled the program. At the same time, the regular weekly program of the San Francisco Workers School was also cancelled, along with a scheduled broadcast on unemployment insurance.

Unity Players receiving George Pierce Baker Cup for *Waiting For Lefty*, first prize winner, Yale Drama Tournament.

The Industrial Association, and other reactionary interests had brought pressure to bear on KTAB.

Other instances of radio censorship are numerous. To mention only two: During the past year WNYC owned and operated by the City of New York, cancelled a scheduled broadcast by Carmen Heider on "Fascist Tendencies In The United States"; and another by Thomas H. Haas on "Poisons Of Prejudice," dealing with the exploitation of the Negro. In each case, the only reason given by station officials was "We can't broadcast this; it's controversial."

Genuine opposition to censorship has crystallized. At its head is the newly formed Committee Against Theatre Censorship. It is strongly endorsed by the New Theatre League, Theatre Union, Group Theatre, American Union Against Reaction, and other organizations. Branches have been established in Boston, New Haven, Chicago and Philadelphia. It has been endorsed by leading theatre people and critics, among them Brooks Atkinson, Anita Block, Roman Bohnen, Albert Bein, John Mason Brown, Michael Blankfort, William Boehnel, Clifton Fadiman, Bennett Cerf, Joseph Wood Krutch, Bruce Bliven, John Howard Lawson, Clifford Odets, Lawrence Langner, Elmer Rice, and Richard Watts, Jr. The address of the Committee is, temporarily, at the New Theatre League office, 114 West 14th St., New York City. It has already issued thousands of leaflets and hundreds of protests, and held meetings, in the Boston and New Haven cases. All theatres should get in touch with this committee, send in the names of local people who endorse its program, and report to it at once any attempt to curtail freedom of speech on the stage. It is necessary to let the authorities feel the strength of the protests that can be mobilized when they attempt censorship.

Jean Lenthier and Philip Goldberg, two of the four members of the New Theatre Players of Boston, whose arrest for profanity in connection with the Boston production of *Waiting For Lefty*, were found guilty; and two others, Bob Allen and Richard Keller, were dismissed when the fact that the police had not even listened to the profane lines they were charged with having given became too painfully evident even to legionnaire Judge Miles. Characteristically, Judge Miles sidestepped the issues of censorship and civil liberties and tried to confine the defense to the question of fact. Forced to recognize that this was no ordinary vice charge, he said in his summation "if this is what the stage must do, then I say, away with the stage."

An appeal was taken, and the fight against censorship and violation of the constitutional rights of free speech and free assembly will be carried to the superior court by the New Theatre Players of Boston.

The New Theatre League urges all theatres to be alive to this issue. They should consider affiliation with the League which has as part of its broad program the resolution to struggle against war, fascism, and censorship. Only by united mass action can the censors be defeated!





# Coal Diggers of 1935

A Criticism of "BLACK FURY" by the author of "BLACK PIT"

By ALBERT MALTZ

**B**LACK FURY, a Warner Brothers-First National Picture, is vastly superior to the average Hollywood movie in dramatic interest, freshness of material, acting and photography. It represents the first attempt of a major film company to dramatize directly the conditions of an industry and the events of a strike. If the picture is a success, we may expect other companies to follow the leader. It is important, therefore, to examine this pioneer adventure, to see how, pretending sympathy with the miners, Hollywood has constructed a story the main values of which are viciously anti-labor.

In this strike picture we never know why the workers are striking; specific demands are never once presented; we never see the miners on the picket line but, on the contrary, see them in the saloon. The main motivations are love and gangsterism. It is so incredibly inaccurate in its portrait of miners and mine conditions, so cleverly reactionary in its account of a strike, that one wonders how to crowd into a few thousand words the mass of distortion, of subtle perversion and false selection which the picture contains.

The story is developed in the following manner: The miners are working under the "Shalerville Agreement," a pact between the "Federated Mine Workers" and the operators. The vice-president of the "F.M.W.," an old-line labor leader, thus characterizes the agreement: "In return for higher wages and better working conditions, we promised that the mine operators wouldn't have any labor trouble during the period of the Shalerville agreement. We gave our word of honor." At the start, therefore, we are told that the miners have higher wages and better working conditions than ever before; the scenario writer does not permit any character to expose this picture of conditions in the mines today.

Cronin, a young miner, leads a movement against the pact. He is characterized as a radical, a militant fighting for the rank and file. "We sweat blood to pay the union officials their fat salaries," he says. Significantly enough, Cronin never presents specific demands; no logical reason exists for so many miners to follow him.

This emphasizes the message of the picture, the old lie of the reactionaries, that workers never have any real reason to strike, that they are merely stirred up, somehow, by the magic of an "agitator."

Cronin's only specific statement is, "We were sold out at Shalerville." How the miners were sold out is concealed. When the vice president insists "We got things where we think they're pretty good," the authors never permit the "militant" to answer him as he would be answered today in any mine local in the country. Never-

theless, Cronin *will* appear to be a real militant to some unclassconscious workers. This is the picture's danger.

We have, then, an insurgent rank and file which, for no specific reason, is willing to break an agreement "honorably" entered into with the mine operators, an agreement which the operators, we are led to infer, have carried out to the letter.

Into a union meeting split by this issue, comes Joe Radek (Paul Muni), drunk. Joe's girl, Anna, has just left him to run away with a Coal and Iron policeman and Joe, thinking about Anna, yells out, "Fight, sure fight, betcha m'life, fight!" Immediately hundreds of miners jump to their feet, throw their union buttons at the vice president.

A highly educational spectacle! Driven by the shouts of a drunken man, the miners decide to strike. There could not be a more perverted picture of the reasons and the manner in which any group of workers really decide to go on strike.

We soon discover that the militant, Cronin, is a paid provocateur in the employ of a strike-breaking agency seeking business. The significance of this is pressed home. Cronin, the "militant," is a racketeer. His militant phrases are not to be believed. The vice president of the "F.M.W." (the John L. Lewis, the Van Bittner, the Mike Tigue, the Ramsey) was right after all when he said, "Don't you fellers listen to any of that radical talk. It's just gonna stir up trouble and you'll be worse off than before . . . always remember that half a loaf is better than none."

In short, precisely when the awakening of the rank and file of the American workers has precipitated a struggle against reactionary leadership in practically every major union in the United States, a motion picture presents "the militant" as a paid provocateur who absconds when the union has been split and the strike started. Here is a subtle, vicious blow at militant trade-unionism.

**T**HE rest of the picture is in the same tone.

After the strike meeting, union officials prevent all those without buttons from going to work. In retaliation, Joe Radek leads the insurgents into the mine, and we are treated to another spectacle: A fight between two groups of miners. A complete lock-out follows. "We try to play fair with our men," says the unhappy mine operator, "but when they double-cross us, we are through with them."

A Judge now declares the Shalerville agreement to be null and void, and the mine is reopened under the old wage scale. The miners refuse to go back without the agreement. Headlines scream: "Strike cripples coal fields." The oper-

ators, presented in the picture as having no other course, commission the detective agency to hire scabs and deputize strike-breakers. Of course, the operators love their workers and warn the agency against using violence. The "duped" miners now have neither job nor agreement. When the provocateur runs away, the blame falls on Joe Radek.

Here is another "realistic" touch. Since, in the coal fields of Hollywood, miners have not yet learned how to picket, they stand around booing the scabs. Suddenly the Coal and Iron police appear. A miner yells "c'mon, boys, let's show 'em." *Immediately the miners seize sticks and proceed to attack the mounted, armed police* in this "dynamic drama of the coal cavers of Pennsylvania."

The strike drags on. Just how it is conducted, how it spreads to the whole coal field, we never know. The miners have no apparent organization, no committees, no relief mechanism, no pickets. We only see them in a saloon, talking of going back to work when they are refused credit for whiskey.

The strikers are evicted from the company houses. They don't set up tents or build makeshift barracks. We see them moving to other homes which have been miraculously waiting for them. Illustrating the hardships of the striking workers, the film shows a charming group of children playing ball in the "strike colony," a golden-haired child, modishly dressed, who complains that she is breaking in new shoes.

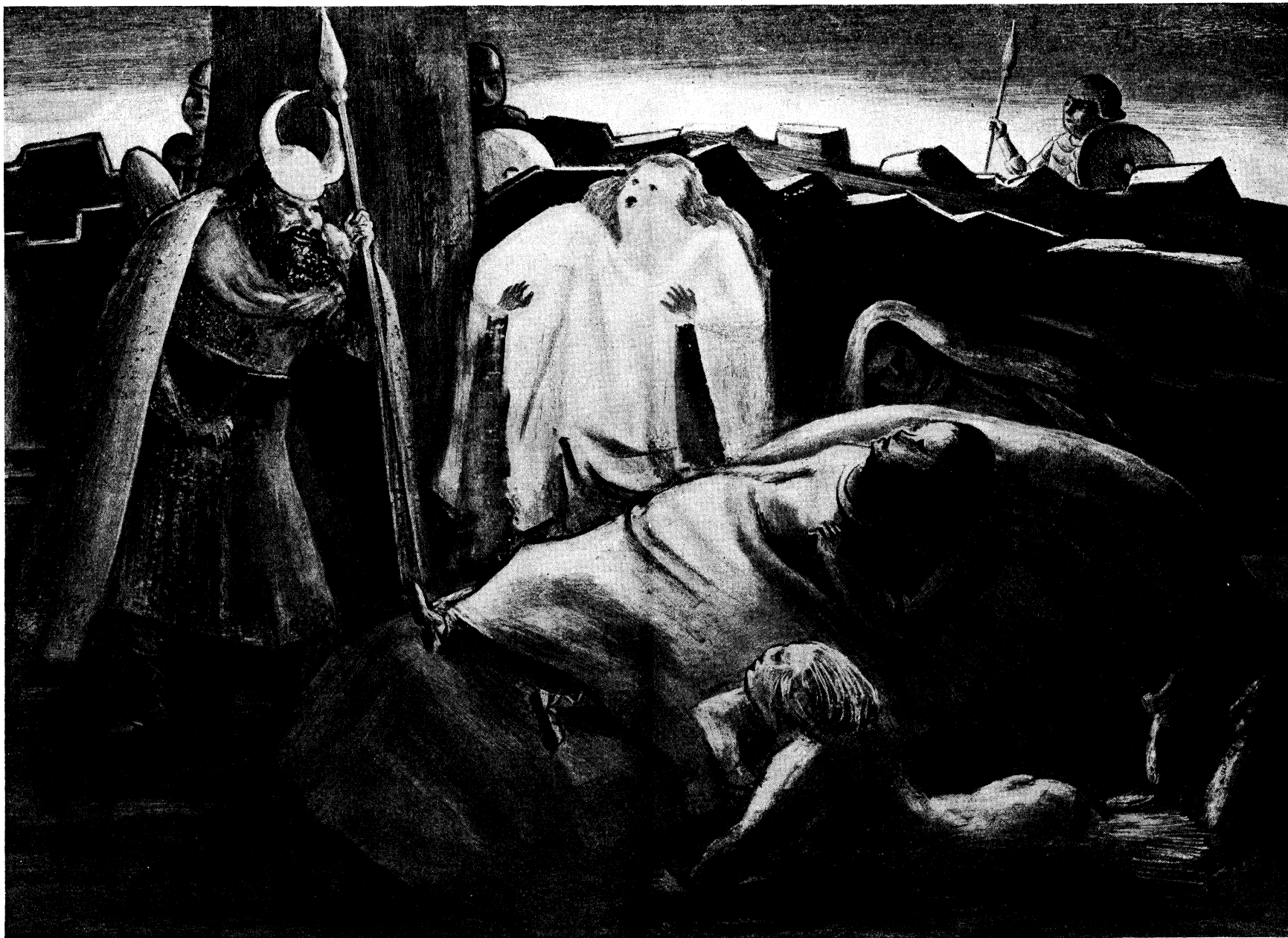
This is "artistic selection." This is the treatment Hollywood accords the incalculable heroism and misery of workers on strike; a child complains of new shoes; strikers spend their time drinking.

The only semi-truthful element in the picture is the brutality of the deputized strike-breakers. But this, too, is handled cleverly to distort the truth and to absolve the coal operators from blame. Not only does the mine owner hire them "against his will" (and the successful history of agencies like Bergoff's has shown this to be another lie), but the specific scene of brutality which results in the death of a miner occurs not in an attack by the police on a picket line but in the miner's efforts to protect Anna from the unwelcome advances of a police thug. Perfect! First the miner attacks the police; then there is a fight over a girl. Later, as a final, realistic stroke, McGee, leader of the strike-breakers, is arrested and charged with the murder of the miner. In this way, everybody is whitewashed; the forces of law, order and capitalist justice are upheld.

The film's last sequence is magnificently phony. Joe Radek, heartbroken because his fellow-miners believe he was a partner of Cronin's in betraying them, determines that the strike shall not be lost. He steals dynamite from the unguarded store house, enters the unguarded mine, and in about twenty minutes places charges of dynamite in such strategic positions that he controls the entire mine, an impossibility in any mine as large as this is said to be. He conducts a one-man strike for five days, threatening to blow up the



Tristan and Isolde



Tristan and Isolde

Adolph Dehn

whole mine unless the strikers are taken back under the old agreement.

This absurdly heroic picture avoids telling how strikes are conducted and won. By centering attention on one man's terroristic act, the picture gives a false, dangerously provoking impression, but it carefully avoids any mention of mass pressure, mass picketing and the strength of the working class on strike. On the contrary, we are led to believe that the miners as a whole have no strength, require a terroristic act to win their strike.

But Joe Radek wins. He wins because an all-just Washington arbitration board steps in, decides that there never was any reason for a strike, that it was just an inter-union brawl brewed by racketeers. Everyone is happy: The miners get back their Shalerville agreement and Joe Radek is re-united with Anna, who, after all, has had her fling with the Coal and Iron cop and now realizes that Joe is her true love.

**H**ERE then, is the Hollywood truth. Strikes are started by racketeers, militant workers are paid stool pigeons; strike are unwarranted; miners are stupid sheep; mine operators are fair-play boy scouts who counsel their hired thugs not to use violence!

The picture must be criticized on other grounds as well. Hollywood always claims technical perfection. In this picture, there are a thousand technical errors. But, under examination, all of them have the same purpose and fit the same class bias! They all tend to prettify this portrayal of the life and work of a miner.

The miners go to work gayly, a perfect illustration of Herby Hoover's fiction of the full dinner pail and the contented citizen. They work genially in well lighted "rooms" ten feet high instead of lying on their bellies or crouching down, their feet in water, the roof but two inches over their heads. The fury of the speed-up that makes a miner loading coal seem like the fastest thing

on earth, is never shown. Whatever else in this film may escape an unclassconscious miner, the shots of Paul Muni gayly singing while he taps the coal sets the phony tone of *Black Fury*.

What Hollywood has cleverly done is to show us the "face entry" of a mine and not the "room" where the men really get out the coal. And the picture completely avoids any of the squalor of a coal town, the exploitation of the miners, the frightful toll of deaths and injuries forced by speed-up (one out of twelve men killed or seriously injured every year), the company's cheating on weighing of coal, the low wages, the spy system, the company store racket. Everything that has been the basis for a thousand, better strikes is omitted; everything that might picture the true life of the miner is distorted. Instead we get a picturesque background, a trite love story, a vicious and phony strike, and a ridiculous, impossible, terroristic solution. This is the *Black Fury* version of the class struggle!

# A Scene from "Floridsdorf"

By FRIEDRICH WOLF

## WEISSEL BEFORE THE COURT MARTIAL

*Room in the Military Court in Vienna, District II: Presiding Judge, Prosecuting Attorney, two Associate Judges, Defense Attorney. Rudi the captured Schutzbundler, is being examined.*

PRESIDING JUDGE (*takes a paper from his portfolio; to Rudi*). Well, this is the evidence.

RUDI. Yes, Your Honor.

PRESIDING JUDGE (*reads*). "Menu card . . . Café International. . . Drinks. . . Today's Menu." What's this? (*turns card*) Oh, this way?

PROSECUTING ATTORNEY (*continuing*). "Bisamberg. . . Floridsdorf Bridge. . . Police Commissariat"? A military sketch. . .

FIRST ASSOCIATE JUDGE (*likewise*). And there are the arrows showing the line of attack. . .

SECOND ASSOCIATE JUDGE. Over the bridge to the inner city. . .

RUDI. That's how he wanted it.

PRES. JUDGE. Defendant! Consider carefully, what you say. All those arrested up to now deny this evidence. They insist there was only one plan—to defend the workers' apartments. According to this, you yourself belong to a special group of terrorists?

RUDI (*frightened*). Group of terrorists? I? Don't write, Your Honor, don't write! I'm innocent. I've confessed everything. I'm not a criminal. When I handed over the evidence to the honored court, I did it because I wanted to repent, for the sake of a new life! All of us were simply misled, Your Honor. Except a few . . . fish caught in a net. But he spread the net; he made the plans!

PRES. JUDGE. Defendant! This evidence (*holds the menu card high*) can cost Fire Chief Weissel his head. Are you sure this is his drawing?

RUDI. Drawn by Weissel himself, Your Honor, on the same day in the Café International, and discovered by me! Your Honor, hold the menu card under his nose, he'll turn white as a sheet.

PRES. JUDGE (*to officer*). Take him away! Get Weissel!

RUDI. Just a moment, Your Honor, just a second! I am innocent. I have confessed everything. I have a young sweetheart, Your Honor, whom I hope to marry!

PRES. JUDGE. Your sweetheart is not on trial.

RUDI (*resists the officer who wants to force him out*). The happiness of two young people, Your Honor! We've planned our home already, our home! I'm innocent. I've given you the evidence.

PRES. JUDGE (*with menu card*). The menu card is dated December 12, 1933. You discovered it on the same day, as you just said. For two months you kept hidden this dangerous and criminal plan that could have turned all Vienna into a smoking heap of ruins. You are guilty as accessory before the fact.

RUDI (*desperate*). Your Honor. . . (*he is dragged out by the officer*).

PROS. ATT. (*takes a piece of paper out of his portfolio and compares it with the plan of attack on the menu card*). May it please Your Honor, here is one of Weissel's service-reports from the fire station in his own handwriting and here is the plan of attack . . . the writing's the same!

PRES. JUDGE. Let him lie about it now!

FIRST ASSOC. JUDGE. Inconceivable! A government official. . .

*WEISSEL is brought in by the officer; he is wearing his fire chief uniform with his insignia of rank torn off.*

PRES. JUDGE (*reading from a document*). You are George Weissel; engineer; thirty-five years old; married; formerly chief of the fire station in Floridsdorf?

WEISSEL. I am.

PRES. JUDGE. You were a student in a technical school. For a time leader of the academic legion of the Republican Schutzbund. Is that right?

WEISSEL. Right.

PRES. JUDGE. What was their purpose?

WEISSEL. Protection of the workers' interests and of the republican constitution.

PRES. JUDGE. Even on the twelfth of February?

WEISSEL. Even on the twelfth of February.

PRES. JUDGE. Defendant! Are you aware of the fact that the Schutzbund in Linz met the police with rifle fire, that the Schutzbundlers in Stadlau-Floridsdorf stormed the police stations and that many policemen, (*raising his voice*) even police officers, fell under the rebels' fire?

WEISSEL. It's certainly known to you, Your Honor, that the government since March 1933 has violated the Constitution a dozen times, that it dispersed Parliament, broke up workers' organizations, had shop-councils arrested, that the Heimwehr attacks on workers' homes were increasing.

PRES. JUDGE. You think then, the workers had to defend themselves against this?

WEISSEL. Yes.

PRES. JUDGE. So the fighting was a defensive action?

WEISSEL. According to the instructions of the Schutzbund leadership.

PRES. JUDGE. Do you know of other instructions, say of subordinate leaders?

*WEISSEL is silent.*

PRES. JUDGE. Defendant! If you have the courage to behave as you have; if you told Fire Commissioner Wagner over the telephone, when he ordered you to lay down arms: "I am a revolutionary and I'm performing my revolutionary duty!"—then, Weissel, you must now have the courage to confess it. Do you admit that you wanted to fight against the government?

WEISSEL. Yes.

PRES. JUDGE. From whom did you get orders?

*WEISSEL remains silent.*

PRES. JUDGE. I don't want any names. But you yourself spoke of instructions of the party leadership.

WEISSEL (*with inner excitement*). Instructions of the party leadership. Right. That meant: Wait! Ground Arms! Till Dollfuss and the Heimwehr had arrested the last functionary and shop-council and had turned the last party headquarters upside-down.

FIRST ASSOC. JUDGE. The man's a Communist!

PRES. JUDGE. One moment, gentlemen! Weissel, you had no party orders to attack. Well then, you acted on your own initiative?

WEISSEL. As part of the initiative of the masses.

DEFENSE ATT. Herr Engineer, I wish to remind you of your right of refusing to testify.

PRES. JUDGE. I am convinced the accused knows exactly what refusing to testify means. Weissel! So there was no leader among you who developed definite plans; only the initiative of the masses. That was the driving force, the soul of the uprising?

WEISSEL (*looks at him*). Your Honor. Of course there were leaders among us with definite plans and views, able leaders with the courage to face death. But the masses would never have started fighting for plans that were not their own . . . never, if the people, oppressed by White Terror and poverty, had not felt more and more clearly, day by day, that there was no parliamentary way out of this blind alley—only the way of revolutionary struggle. Without this steam pressure no engineer can start his locomotive, and no leader, the masses!

PRES. JUDGE. Well, then such leaders did start the masses?

WEISSEL. Too few.

PRES. JUDGE. When they stormed the police stations!

WEISSEL. Too few.

PROS. ATT. And the embankment!

WEISSEL. Not enough.

PRES. JUDGE. And you yourself?

WEISSEL. I, too—not enough.

PRES. JUDGE. (*thrusts the sketch of attack at him*). Do you know this?

*Silence—all look tensely at Weissel. He takes the sketch, looks at it, turns it around, looks at the card, examines the sketch again.*

PRES. JUDGE. Weissel! Do you know this sketch?

WEISSEL. Yes, Your Honor.

PRES. JUDGE. Do you know who drew it?

WEISSEL (*calmly*). I.

PROS. ATT. A military plan of attack!

WEISSEL (*smiling at the Prosecuting Attorney's ardor*). A plan attack that couldn't be realized.

PROS. ATT. (*indignant*). That sounds as if you'd like to say, "unfortunately."

WEISSEL. Certainly, Herr Prosecutor, unfortunately! Because if we had been able to realize this plan, then, Your Honors, you would be standing where I stand now.

PROS. ATT. (*jumping up*). A threat!

FIRST ASSOC. JUDGE (*likewise*). A provocation!

PRES. JUDGE. Defendant, you're risking your head!

WEISSEL. I know exactly what I'm doing. I know exactly what I've done. And if I faced it again, I'd do it again, only better.

DEF. ATT. (*quickly interrupting*). Your Honors, permit me to intervene. It is my duty as lawyer for the defense to remind you of one point which, no doubt, belongs to the sphere of medicine rather than law. Your Honors, you yourselves cannot deny that the accused impresses one as a fearless, idealistic man. He acted purely from idealism. He grew up as a child of poor people. (*with lawyer's emotion*) His mother denied herself the last bite for the sake of the hungry mouths of her large brood of children. The accused, therefore, sucked in his "socialism" blamelessly, with his mother's milk, as it were. The socialism that we know represents a specific form of hunger psychosis. Your Honors, I am unshakably convinced that if this man, Weissel, had not grown up in that dark atmosphere of poverty, but on the bright heights of mankind, Your Honors, this Weissel with his courage, with his feeling of responsibility would have become one of our best Heimwehr leaders. He would. . . .

WEISSEL. Your Honor, must I let myself be insulted by my own lawyer?

PRES. JUDGE I forbid you to talk that way.

DEF. ATT. And here I am pleading for him!

WEISSEL (*calm again*). Don't bother, Herr Attorney. How can you plead for me? You belong to the class that shot at workers' houses with artillery and machine-guns. I come from the other class, the working class, and I also belong to that class as engineer and intellectual, the class that is being attacked by you in a life and death struggle because its life and rise will be your death!

PRES. JUDGE. Defendant! Please don't mistake audacity for courage. Your case is clear. (*to the officer*) Call Fireman Kienzl. Weissel, you were the sole responsible fire-chief at the fire station?

WEISSEL. Yes.

PRES. JUDGE. How many were at the station on the twelfth?

WEISSEL. Sixty.

KIENZL, *a man of about forty, rather corpulent, in fireman's uniform, is brought in.*

PRES. JUDGE. Fireman Kienzl?

KIENZL (*with military precision*). Present.

PRES. JUDGE (*from document*). You are married; two children; official with regular income. (*jovially*) Well now, tell us, Kienzl, you look like a reasonable and respectable person, how did you, of all people, have anything to do with this wild shooting? Was it really fun for you to shoot at the police and possibly be shot yourself?

KIENZL (*uncertain*). Fun, Your Honor? It wasn't fun.

PRES. JUDGE. But really Kienzl, you're a grown-up man. You must have said to yourself, "What I am doing may cost fathers of families like myself their lives." That's a mad adventure. That's civil war. That's a crime, Kienzl.

Didn't you think of your own family—your wife and child?

KIENZL (*sluggishly*). Of course I thought of it, Your Honor. I thought of it the morning the bullets whistled round our noses; in prison I thought of it too. But before that I had also been thinking of my brother's wife and children and do you know, Your Honor, those kids haven't a thing to eat because my brother's been out of a job a year. . . . Well, Your Honor, are you well off then, even if you have a job?

PRES. JUDGE. Pretty confused, my good man!

PROS. ATT. Tactics!

PRES. JUDGE. Kienzl, answer with yes or no. Did you have arms?

KIENZL. Yes.

PRES. JUDGE. Did you shoot with the arms?

KIENZL. When they attacked us.

PRES. JUDGE. Where do your service regulations provide that you, an official, are to shoot at the police, at the executive forces of the state?

WEISSEL (*quickly*). I, as his immediate superior, gave Kienzl orders to do it.

PRES. JUDGE. But you yourself, Weissel, paid no attention to the orders of your superior, Commissioner Wagner, to surrender arms at once!

WEISSEL. From your point of view Your Honor, that makes me guilty and liable to punishment; in exactly the same way Kienzl would now have been liable to punishment if he had not followed my orders.

PROS. ATT. (*interrupting*). Kienzl! Consider carefully. Would you follow the orders of a lunatic?

KIENZL. A lunatic?

PROS. ATT. For example: Your superior orders you to kill your own child with your fire-ax, or jump head first from the seventy foot fire-ladder. . . . Kienzl! Would you carry out these orders?

WEISSEL (*interrupting*). Your Honor. The situation was entirely different. There was no choice left to the firemen. I stood before those who hesitated, and at the point of a gun forced them to shoot.

PRES. JUDGE. You take the total responsibility upon yourself?

WEISSEL. Yes.

PROS. ATT. Mad!

PRES. JUDGE. Weissel! (*gently*) You too have a wife and child at home. Your behavior here in court can be interpreted as insanity, or as a new provocation against the state. Weissel, the battle is over. Your comrades—arrested, fallen, fled. I tell you again, your behavior here in court is insanity.

DEF. ATT. (*eagerly*). Your Honors! I am in complete agreement with the court's opinion. I move that the accused be examined to determine his mental competence and that he be transferred to a psychopathic ward for observation.

WEISSEL (*calmly*). I've asked you once already, Herr Attorney, not to trouble yourself about me, but to keep quiet. Your Honors! I am no longer a child. My mind is perfectly clear. I know exactly what is at stake. I was prepared to give up my life for the cause of the working class. I take nothing back. I would never have

acted differently . . . (*deliberating*) that is—if we had known before the attack what we know today, we would have had more guns, more men, more comrades in arms—we would have attacked and won.

PROS. ATT. We would have. . . .

WEISSEL (*passionately*). Yes, Herr Prosecutor! Today you can still sneer at us because of the mistakes we made, because we were too unclear, too faint-hearted, too inexperienced; because now, for all these reasons, we stand before you in handcuffs and because gallows are now erected all over the country. But gentlemen, don't be so sure! There'll come a time when we'll act differently; under other conditions; when we'll have learned to conquer from today's great lesson as only one working class in the world knew how to conquer up to now.

PRES. JUDGE (*jumping up*). I forbid you to speak! Gentlemen, do you have any questions you wish to put to the accused? (*all say: "No"*) The court will withdraw to deliberate on the verdict.

*Exit COURT. Silence.*

KIENZL. Colleague Weissel, Chief Weissel. . . .

WEISSEL. You can say "colleague."

OFFICER. No talking here!

WEISSEL (*loudly*). A last word to my wife. (*Officer turns away*) I know all this will be hard on her. Tell her to change her name. But she must tell my boy the truth, the whole truth about Fire Chief Weissel!

KIENZL (*softly*). But Comrade Weissel, it's impossible, it's unthinkable! Why did you talk so recklessly before the judge?

WEISSEL (*smiling*). Kienzl, it wasn't before the judge I spoke at all. I spoke *before you* and *for you*, Kienzl. For you and for the comrades outside. I spoke for them. Kienzl, my head is lost. I know the gentlemen better than you. But while my head's still on, it mustn't be shaky. (*passionately*) And your heads mustn't either, Kienzl. Tell the others, Kienzl, never to compromise with them even if they speak words of honey and use silk gloves. Tell the others, Kienzl! Kienzl *gives him his hand.*

*The COURT re-enters.*

PRES. JUDGE (*solemnly*). We proceed to the sentence: George Weissel, thirty-five years old, formerly chief of the Floridsdorf Fire Station, by decree of the court martial of Vienna II, according to Paragraph 75 of the Criminal Code, is sentenced to death by hanging for rebellion. Sentence cannot be appealed and is to be executed within two hours. Do you wish spiritual counsel, Weissel?

WEISSEL. No.

KIENZL. Comrade Weissel! (*wants to go to him*)

WEISSEL. Courage, Kienzl. Stiff upper lip. Promise me you'll keep your courage, you and the others! (*suddenly*) And don't forget us, don't forget us. We all want to live, even when we're dead . . . (*softly*) we, the fallen and hanged of Vienna and Austria.

PRES. JUDGE (*quickly*). Court is adjourned.

WEISSEL (*as the Officer grabs him*). Don't forget us when you fight on. Don't forget us. . . . (*Officer pulls his hands back; Weissel resists again*) Long live the fighting and conquering proletariat! BLACK OUT

# The Little Theatres

By PAUL ROMAINE

WHEN Antoine established the "Free Theatre" in Paris, (1887), he was expressing in this medium of art the industrial revolution that was taking place in Europe and America. The production of the plays of Ibsen, Strindberg, Tolstoy and Brieux were a powerful blow against the romanticism of Scribe, Sardou, etc. who were expressing the sour cream-puff ideas of the French aristocracy.

Antoine's idea of a theatre reflecting the life about it gave rise to similar theatres throughout Europe—to name only a few that injected virility into a theatre that was far behind the bourgeois revolutions that had overthrown feudalism in the 18th and 19th centuries in most countries: (1891) The Independent Theatre, London (first produced Shaw); (1889) the Freie Bühne, Berlin (first produced Hauptmann); (1898) the Moscow Art Theatre, Moscow (first produced Chekov, etc.); (1900) the London Stage Society (first produced Galsworthy); (1900) the Irish Players—later Abbey Theatre; (1902) Synge, Yeats, etc.; (1902) the Kleines Theater, Berlin.

Antoine's idea reached America in about 1910 (exempting the Hull House Players who had different roots), with the establishment of the Wisconsin Players in Madison and Milwaukee. In 1911 Maurice Brown founded the famous "Little Theatre" in Chicago, then came the Washington Square Players (out of which grew the Theatre Guild) and the Provincetown Players (Cook, O'Neill, Jones, etc.), both in 1915. In 1916 Stuart Walker founded the Portmanteau Players and 1917 saw the birth of the Greenwich Village Theatre and the Negro Players in New York,—all were among the "pioneers" in America.

These and countless others of like nature that followed them, increasingly sought to do away with "commercialism" and were established "from love of drama, not from love of gain." Most of them discovered, however, that "doing away with commercialism," was a pretty difficult job, never realizing that first we have to do away with capitalism before we free the theatre from either capitalism in general or the box-office in particular, which is what they unknowingly meant by "commercialism."

I do not question that the vast majority of Little Theatres were established "from love of drama, not from love of gain," but this only led them into the erroneous "art for art's sake" conception which stifled thousands of them, stunted their growth by limiting their audiences to the "carriage-trade" and in many cases gave them no further reason for existence and many of them died. Certainly economics is one of the last things to be ignored under capitalism—not the first.

The professional theatre began dying on the road about 1915. The famous American stock companies built around a "star" had seen their most prosperous days. With the boom prices of 1918, the costs of mounting a production and railroad travel increasing; the box-office prices going sky high; the sweeping interest everywhere in the motion pictures and the mad scramble for profits—all these were powerful factors in smashing the "road business" during the 20 years of the Broadway "boom."

In 1928 the number of first class theatres in New York had increased to 70 while the number of legitimate theatres in the U.S.A. doing business with some regularity, fell from 1520 in 1910 to 634 in 1925. The average number of new plays produced in New York each year rose from 72 in 1900-04 to 208 in 1925-27, but the average number of plays on tour these same years fell from 308 to 68.

In the peak season of '27-'28 about 12,000 plays were offered to agents and managers and rejected as against 200 odd plays produced. The risk of failure of these plays was about 64%. With this was linked, of course, the actor's gamble—his insecurity, and naturally that of all other theatre workers.

HAVING outlined the objective conditions that gave birth to the Little Theatre movement, let us now examine what took the place of the road during the Broadway boom.

One of the most notable differences in the European and American Little Theatre groups is that the former, for the most part, concentrated in the large cities while in America they reached into hundreds of small cities and towns as well.

Three groupings of Little Theatres developed with the collapse of the "road": A. Independent. B. Those connected with high schools. C. Those connected with colleges, universities and normal schools. It was these groups that sought to fill the gaps left by the decline of professional companies touring the country.

The first group (A.) developed to the extent of the following: The Pasadena Community Playhouse with 40 employes, a \$400,000 theatre and 132,000 yearly admissions; The Cleveland Playhouse (1916) with a \$100,000 budget, a \$325,000 theatre and over 200,000 yearly admissions at \$1.00, etc., etc.

The average budget of the independent group increased to \$15,189. They were tax exempt and raised their finances in such various ways as:

1. Ticket sales might fall in these divisions: (a) Box-office—single tickets. (b) Subscription only—no box-office. (c) Combination of both the

above. (d) Scrip—or bulk (block) sales of tickets or house. (e) Repertory—\$1.00 per member, permitting discount. Of these the ordinary subscription method proved the best.

2. Endowments of theatres by members (At \$10.00—\$25.00 etc.).

3. Straight endowment by wealthy people. (\$10,000, etc., etc.).

In the four seasons ending May 1929, 789 of the above groups staged a total of 3,862 productions of either full length drama or programs of 1, 2, 3, or 4 one-act plays. These 3,862 productions represent 1540 different plays.

The most popular authors (according to the number of productions) are G. B. Shaw—108; A. A. Milne—103; George Kelley—87; Shakespeare—80. Shaw's leadership indicates they are interested in plays of ideas and a certain amount of social content.

The favorite plays reveal that 50 were produced more than ten times—the leaders rank as follow: 1st Sun-Up—51 times; 2nd The Valiant—42 times; 3rd Outward Bound—42 times; 4th The Goose Hangs High—32 times.

In frequency of production, Milne's *Mr. Pim Passes By* (20); G. B. Shaw's, *Candida* is close behind, (18); then comes *Twelfth Night* (16); *Dear Brutus* (15); Ibsen's *Doll's House* (12); *Anna Christie* (10). This is not such a sickly list when one considers the handicaps that exist in many high schools as far as dramatic freedom is concerned—certainly much more restricted than the colleges in this respect.

As for type of plays, comedy leads with 54% and drama in second place with 21%. Farce, tragedy, fantasy, melodrama, etc., all fall below 7% which indicates a certain vitality in their productions, especially with the absence of the latter two types of plays mentioned.

Colleges and universities have also played an important role in the development of the Little Theatre movement.

The high school dramatic survey made by the Russell Sage Foundation reveals some factors of great interest to the New Theatre League.

In 1933 the United States Office of Education reported 22,354 high schools in the U.S.A. One-tenth of those having the largest enrollment (or 2,099 schools) were sent inquiries. Replies were received from 1,119. Of these, 68% (or 757) reported the existence of drama clubs; 354 (or 32%) reported courses in dramatics and are a study in themselves. The contributions of many (Harvard, Carnegie Tech, Yale, Vassar, The North Carolina Playmakers, etc.) have become very well known. Though it is difficult to be accurate, there are about 1200 independent and college groups (exclusive of high schools, etc.) that offer tremendous reservoirs for the New Theatre League groups to draw from as well as work in.

It should be noted that the two serious attempts that have been made to organize the Little Theatres nationally have failed. The Drama League of America came closest to accomplishing this but could not keep the organizational threads together and they unravelled as they had always done in the past. Attempts are again being made,





From *Black Pit* by Albert Maltz.

Civic Repertory Theatre

(the recent National Theatre Conference, for example) but it looks more hopeless than ever. Most of the groups are weaker as a result of the economic crisis and more isolated from each other than ever before despite the good work done by the Theatre Arts Monthly in reporting and encouraging the little theatres.

In this respect the LOWT (League of Workers Theatres) achieved what the bourgeois Little Theatre failed to—the building of a strong, national organization which will double its strength in a short while as the “New Theatre League,” expanding their front so as to involve a great number of theatre groups and masses of theatre workers on the broad program of the struggle against war, Fascism and censorship.

**T**HE deepening of the crisis aggravated the struggle for existence that the Little Theatre had begun to encounter even before 1929. There are several contributing factors to their rapid decline, all of which are rooted in capitalist economy.

1. Many had been built around an individual who at least received a living out of his work (if not a great deal more) as director, manager, etc. When they found they could no longer have even one paid person, such a responsible party left and invariably that was the end or the beginning of the end of that theatre group.

2. Endowments by members dropped to such an extent that there were no funds to function with, or precisely the same result accrued from the withdrawal of an individual wealthy patron who found other, less expensive “amusements.”

3. Capitalist culture having reached unprecedented depths, most of its playwrights lost vitality and freshness in expression. They no longer experimented with the new forms and

social content about them. They refused to reflect this life. The Little Theatre had thrived on hewing new paths in the dramatic world, on the expression of new ideas and ideals. Their playwrights became hackneyed and phlegmatic and their plays often had the smell of the stables or heaven about them.

To remedy this (3 above) they began to draw upon Broadway for plays at a time when Broadway had less to offer them than ever before in the way of stimulating and vital plays.

As far as high schools and colleges are concerned: Many of them were forced to drop the drama entirely because it was a “frill” and money was available only for the three “R’s.” Some of them closed shop completely, others curtailed their drama appropriations to the point where it became a purely mechanical book study and not a living stage.

While the little theatre movement has been dying slowly, the workers theatres have been overcoming their early artistic and organizational weaknesses and forging ahead rapidly. It is significant that in 1932, the first year that the annual National Little Theatre Tournament was not held, *they* could not afford it, the first workers’ theatre tournament was held in New York City. Within a year after its formation in October 1932, the League of Workers Theatres succeeded in involving 300 groups in its work. Today, with the early sectarianism of these groups largely overcome, and with their reorganization in the broader New Theatre League, I see no reason why the New Theatre groups should not progress even more rapidly than in the past. Unlike the Little Theatres, the new theatres have assured themselves of an audience from the start by presenting plays that dramatize the real lives of the people they are intended

for, at low prices that they can afford to pay. Their strength and inspiration lies in their mass-audiences. They see the objective political and economic issues more lucidly than ever before, and this gives them a firm cultural base from which to take their cues and direction in the future.

In conclusion, we must not underestimate the important work being done by a few of the most progressive little theatres. Although even the best of them mix a lot of Broadway trash in with the better plays they present, their repertoire often is higher in quality and significance than the average on Broadway. The Cleveland Playhouse, for example, which in a single season may produce plays by Toller, Gorki, Shakespeare, Rice, Shaw, O’Neill and Lynn Riggs, then announces such a definitely left play as Wolf’s *Sailors of Cattaro*. Or the Hedgerow Theatre, under Jasper Deeter’s skilful direction which is presenting Piscator’s version of Dreiser’s *American Tragedy* this May. And, occasionally, as in the case of the North Carolina Playmakers under the direction of Prof. Koch, a progressive little theatre gets the jump on the left theatres. *Strike Song*, Theatre Union’s next production, was written by two native Playmakers, J. O. and Loretto Bailey, and was presented on the Playmaker’s stage in 1932 despite the protests and threats of the textile interests who attacked the play as seditious and communistic. As Prof. Koch declared in the recent statewide Drama Festival at Chapel Hill, the little theatres, if they are to survive, must deal with current social problems that will interest the widest possible audiences. And recently, I was surprised and pleased to see in the February issue of a New Orleans magazine called *Little Theatres of the South*, one article which praised Theatre Union as the most vital force in the American theatre today, and another article “Drama as a Social Instrument” by Thomas J. Reed declares that the little theatres “*must face reality—must learn to change social conditions . . . when we say that we do not want to face reality . . . then we admit we are decaying socially and we are willing to await death without a fight . . . Let us get down to hard work and make our dramatic efforts count for something worthwhile.*” If, in Huey Long’s home town, Mr. Reed asks “Who wants to fiddle while Rome burns?”, can we doubt that many other little theatre progressives are taking stock of their position?

There are many fine talents in the Little Theatres who would prove invaluable in speeding the artistic and technical development of the New Theatres. As their patron-audiences dwindle, the Little Theatres may well seek a new audience by presenting significant social plays. There is every reason to believe that most of the Little Theatres have common interests with the groups already affiliated with the New Theatre League. Certainly, the minimum program of the League (against war and fascism, against censorship) is one on which the most progressive of the Little Theatres can find a common ground with the left theatres.



From *Black Pit* by Albert Maltz.

Civic Repertory Theatre

# I Work on the Drama Project

ANONYMOUS

**A**CTORS, stagehands and scenic artists! You have walked the streets just as I have. You know what it means to run from 57th Street to 40th Street to track down the vaguest rumor of a job. You know that with each passing month it's increasingly harder to find even a sure-fire flop which could give you the meagre two weeks minimum for six weeks of time and effort. And what have you done about it?

Three thousand of you—scene designers, stagehands, actors, directors—have looked, hunted and searched for a job—some kind of a job—any job. And finally when your false pride began to disappear with your shoe leather, you did just what I did. You dragged yourself, or kidded yourself into going down to 15th Street, to the Port of Authority Building, to the Drama Department—and meekly applied for a chance to earn as much of a living as the NRA, under Roosevelt's patronage of theatres, would permit you to earn.

Three thousand of us have applied for Work Relief. Three thousand of us have had to *prove* that we were paupers by submitting to the Means Test. Three thousand of us *admitted* to ourselves that we were economically beaten. And how many others are there whose vitality, whose love for the theatre is being worn to a mighty thin frazzle by the unequal fight just *trying* to get a job on Broadway?

And now what's to be done for all of us in the theatre? What can be done to relieve this unhealthy condition? Briefly, what has been done?

Three thousand of us have done all that we could. We have registered at the Drama Department of the Works Division of the Emergency Relief Bureau and our names have been duly filed on a little card in a nice, green, all-steel filing cabinet. Out of these three thousand, hardly a third have been chosen. And of that 800 odd, only 400 are actors. Only 400 of us were lucky enough, or crafty enough, or fought hard enough to be rewarded with a twenty-four dollar a week job.

Contrary to an apparently popular misconception, the Drama Project was not the result of either the concerted effort of actors or New Deal benevolence. It was achieved by the individual efforts of one man who knew the right "big shot," who had the necessary political backing to create a job for himself. The Project was a means, not an end. *He* wanted a job and *he* got it. That was almost two years ago.

Suddenly, one day, a startled theatrical world of unemployed artists and artisans discovered that fifty of their number had been selected by an unidentified Providence to get a morsel of relief out of the NRA pot. How, where, why it started, or how the fifty were picked, nobody knew. Then, one by one, actors thronged the

offices of their union headquarters where this secret project was harbored, only to discover that the bag was closed—no more jobs. There was a brief flurry, another individual and his few cohorts, taking advantage of the slight excitement, managed to inject themselves into the political whirlpool, and soon a hundred and twenty actors were employed on a Drama Project which has wriggled itself into its present form.

At first, for a very short time, actors were employed for four weeks only, but before long the regular period of employment was eight weeks. The executives were to continue, the directors were to continue, the plays were to continue—but the casts were to be changed. So that just as soon as a hungry actor got the wrinkles out of his belly, he was left to starve again. Of course there were exceptions. *If an individual actor knew the head of the project or if he could pull the right strings, that individual actor might manage to get himself overlooked in the regular eight-week turnover.* Some few of that first fifty have never stopped working. Most of the others were dropped and have never been able to get on the project again—not even since the term of employment has been made indeterminate, depending only on the length of the run of the particular play or the actor's fitness for a part in a new play.

**F**ROM the beginning, the Drama Project has had a haphazard, political growth, from CWA to CWS to DPW and now to ERB. But always it has been a composite of individual effort. Here a politician managed to squeeze in a few clerks, there a few stenographers and receptionists, occasionally more actors, then again a few directors, and finally a few playwrights. Today the personnel consists of approximately 400 actors, 100 stagehands and scenic artists, 10 directors, 10 playwrights, 50 puppeteers, 200 amateur and Little Theatre directors and the rest are office help, timekeepers and supervisors.

So far so good. At least those 800 people are eating. But 800 jobs are not enough, and what about the jobs they are doing? What are the working conditions? What kind of plays? What kind of scenery? In short, has the project developed as a force for good theatre?

Have you ever seen a CWA play? Or if you did see one, could you ever bring yourself to see a second one? Mediocrity shrieks from the very titles of most of them: *The Fall Guy*, *Skinner's Dress Suit*, *One of the Family*, *Your Uncle Dudley*, *Brother Mose*, and *Mabel Looks Ahead!!!* And the last named is an original, created out of the very sinews of the Project. Then there is *Meet the Enemy*, another original, created by the Colonel Booth, *head* of the project, a vicious pro-war play, which has been dis-

cussed in a previous issue of *NEW THEATRE*. Add to all this "Americana" some of the classics: *Alcestis*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *The Rivals*, *Julius Caesar* and you have a fair sample of what is offered to the audiences. Naturally, no drama dealing with current social conditions has been presented.

And how are these plays done? If you've ever seen one, you know that it's putting it mildly to say that they're unspeakably bad. It wouldn't be fair to leave such a bald criticism without some comment. It is not the individual actor's fault. It is not any individual's fault. The department is run by and for political ends. There is practically no effort to coordinate the best of the unemployed directors, actors and scenic artists into a thoroughly cooperative and cohesive whole. Politics, politics everywhere.

And the bookings! Inept, and sometimes stupid. *Alcestis* played before an audience of school children. That was part of the show-window politics—part of the educational program. But no preparation had been made. The children had never been instructed in Greek Tragedy and they were bored. At a later booking in a school the principal had been forewarned, and after the children had all been assembled in the auditorium, he locked the doors to be sure that they would all see it and like it.

The classics should be played, but when they are presented so unattractively, badly staged, with inferior scenery and before audiences whose appetites have not been whetted for such delicate morsels of the theatre, they had better be left undone. It is better to save "culture" until it can be properly administered. There's a reason behind this educational effort. Shakespeare and Sheridan have long since stopped their demands for royalties. And so, also, have the authors of the "Americana" which the Project presents. There must be funds provided, to pay royalties, so that intelligent, timely plays can be presented and this must be done before a large, potential theatre audience is driven back to Hollywood's cheap movies. There are plenty of unemployed playwrights who could turn out worthwhile plays for the Drama Project.

And about the classics? Why not a school, financed by relief funds where actors and directors can learn how such things should be done. Such a school need not be managed by the traditions of the past, but might well discover new and interesting methods of presentation. It might train a corps of lecturers who could precede the plays and make the performance an enjoyable as well as a cultural experience for the audience.

To get back to the facts, under what conditions do the actors work? I have been through the mill of several auditions. I have played the great subways, bus and elevated circuit, and I

have been to the camps—the CCC camps. Playing in New York City is not too pleasant, but except for minor inconveniences it is reasonably well managed. But the CCC camps are another story! I'm quite young and I came through the winter with practically no damage to my health. But many a seasoned trouper who has been over the bumps for years has told me that never before has he had to endure such hardships. Most of the camps treated us fairly well. The men usually slept in a big room ordinarily used as the infirmary. And the girls were put up in a cheap hotel or rooming house. But the jumps in an open army truck, in twenty below zero weather! The camps where the food was not right or the sleeping quarters were badly arranged! And where it was against the rules of the Drama Department to make any complaint to anyone but the company supervisor who usually saw to it that the complaint never reached any further than his own ears. Or if he did forward it to the New York office, the complainant was completely discredited and was accused of being a Red, and was himself reprimanded, or as in several cases, the unfortunate actor lost his job.



“... and of what does Art consist. It embraces in this order, literature, music, real beauty—nature, sculpture, painting and the drama.”

—LA GUARDIA, on relief projects.

Every actor who is accepted for a part in a CWA play must be willing to play the camp circuits. The bookings are so arranged that companies are away for from four to six weeks and then back in New York for only a few days. For those who have no family responsibilities or who need the out-of-doors, this is no hardship. Room and board is furnished (except in some camps which charge the actor one dollar for keeping him on Sunday) and the actor still receives his twenty-four dollars a week. But setting aside the fact that a man or woman with a family to support is not as well off as when he plays in town, how can any actor on the road get himself off the relief rolls? There is not one satisfied actor on the relief rolls. All are constantly trying to get a regular job.

THIS brings us back to those of you who have not yet been forced to hope for a job on the CWA. The CWA is your problem, whether you want it to be or not. How do you know you may not be forced to apply for a CWA job some day? How long can you hope to have jobs uptown when the Theatre is rotting away? Potential CWA audiences are being alienated. Your fellow actors are going stale and losing their morale, performing in bad plays. *And*, they are being forced by that very NRA which set your minimum at forty dollars a week, to work for twenty-four dollars a week. How long do you think it will be before the uptown minimum will be reduced because there will be plenty of former CWA actors willing to work for less? What can you more fortunate, or should I say, less desperate members of Actor's Equity do? How can you help to see to it that the National Theatre which the Relief Administration is vaguely hinting about, will not also be a rotten, political football? Can you, each one of you, as individuals, go to the President? Can you go to the Mayor? Can we, who are already on relief, go to Colonel Booth? We need our jobs. We can't risk our individual necks (even though they're only worth twenty-four dollars a week) on the open market. And you, our more fortunate brother actors, would be lost in the shuffle at Washington. Even Mr. La Guardia would be extremely busy the day any one of you called. In fact, Fiorello might even sic his police on to you, as he has done to several protesting delegations. Strangely enough, we already have the means to fight for a better theatre. We are already organized. Every one of us belongs to Actors' Equity Association. Equity must become active in this problem of CWA. Do you know that Equity has never made a single official move to help the plight of its members on CWA? Not one. And only one of its higher officers, Mr. Paul Turner, has actively concerned himself with the problem. And he has acted entirely on his own, strictly out of personal interest in the situation.

There has been only one united effort within Equity that has been helpful, and that's the Actors' Forum. That section of Equity has done everything it could to bring the problem of the

## An Appeal

Dear Friend:

I've been in the New Theatre League national office just long enough to realize that you, and I, and every other person who really cares about the future of the American theatre must act quickly and generously if the very base of the new theatres of social protest that all the critics are raving about is not to be left to die for want of a few people able and interested enough to help.

Three hundred New Theatres call upon them for plays, technical advice, etc. Out in Gary, San Francisco, Chicago, Pittsburgh and Cleveland, there are theatres who depend on them for guidance. From New Haven, Boston, Philadelphia suppressed theatres call for assistance in their fight for the right to a free stage.

And they do the work, ten of them, working twelve, fifteen hours a day, every day—for \$10 a week. Sure, they'd like to make more! You can hardly live on \$10 a week. But the work must go on—and there are no “angels.”

Right now, owing to some bad luck—two burglaries, three theatre nights which lost money—their work may be snowed under by a landlord's eviction and a printer's bill already 60 days old.

Those of us who can have already contributed. But more is needed. Not much really—when you consider that the average Broadway “flop” costs far more before the curtain even comes up. They need \$5,000 to carry on their work. And they need it soon.

That's why I'm writing this letter to you. Because as a reader of NEW THEATRE your name is one of 10,000 friends of all that is progressive and important in the theatre, people who are sympathetic to the kind of plays that mean something—to the new social drama.

Will you help make NEW THEATRE's future secure by subscribing now? Will you also contribute from \$1 to \$25 or whatever you can afford? This \$5,000 can be raised and the work of New Theatre League can be carried on if every reader of these lines contributes now.

Sincerely yours for a vital American social theatre,

JOHN HOWARD LAWSON

P. S.—Address funds payable NEW THEATRE, 114 W. 14 St., New York City.

CWA actor before the Equity Council. But for its efforts, the incumbent powers of Equity accuse it of being a block to progressive legislation, when as a matter of fact, it is the desire of every member to strengthen Equity. The Forum needs your understanding support! It must grow until the entire membership of Equity is activated in the struggle to improve actors' conditions! CWA actors, any actors who have had to be delinquent in the payment of dues, must have a place to discuss their problems, which, after all, are the problems of the majority of Equity members, in these depression days. Get together at the Forum meetings. Don't let anyone mislead you into believing that the Forum is an anti-Equity bloc. Discover for yourselves that your individual problems are common to all actors. Discuss ways and means of correcting conditions as they exist and then do everything in your collective power to see your ideas carried through the collective efforts of the entire Equity membership.

# Till the Day I Die

By RUDOLPH WITTENBERG

MY first impression was one of surprise. Left-wing theatre on Broadway; many magazines and newspapers discussing the phenomenon seriously: the *N. Y. Times* declaring the poverty of the bourgeois theatres and the strength of the class-conscious left art movement. And at the same time, come reports of the suppression in other cities of one of these plays the critics praise so effusively.

The whole thing made me think of a similar time in Germany. Russian films were in style. The books of radical authors were read in the best salons. And the tuxedoed gentlemen of Kurfurstendamm took their evening-dressed ladies to a great sensation: the Piscator theatre on the Nollendorfer Platz. After all the revues with nude girls, or bawdy performances of classics, or underworld expeditions—at last something new! Real Communists acting. The audience was disappointed that they didn't have knives between their teeth, but still it was exciting—something new in art!

Then the vogue waned. The theatre showed pacifist films instead of militant plays, and the National Socialists tried to break up the showings with stink bombs and white mice. Piscator had lost his audience and was playing on a little stage in East Berlin. At the same time, at workers' gatherings, were emerging small, still very primitive, agit-prop troupes. Organizational ties between the professional and the workers theatres could not be as strong as they are today in America, with the New Theatre League. The time was not ripe for such a broad united front movement as we find today on nearly all cultural fronts in every capitalist country. In recent years the international workers theatres have laid the indispensable foundation for such a union of agit-prop and professional theatres, for politically clear content and high artistic achievement such as the Group Theatre has brought us in *Waiting for Lefty*. Of course such a performance is possible only with the talent of Clifford Odets as a playwright, and the Group as actors.

*Waiting for Lefty* and *Awake and Sing* have been sufficiently reviewed here. In the third Odets play to reach Broadway a certain danger becomes visible for the first time—the danger of a perhaps unconscious catering to the sensation-lust of that part of the audience which, in spite of differences of language and habits, has a threatening resemblance to the audiences that smothered the Piscator theatre. It is very necessary to reach middle class audiences, and to lead them, but they can be destructive if one follows them. In addition, the sudden demand of the art-market is sometimes damaging to the self-criticism of even the most capable playwright. *Till the Day I Die* was written in only five days. A five-day week and a five-year plan do not mean that a good play can be written in five days. *Till the Day I Die* has all the marks of premature birth.

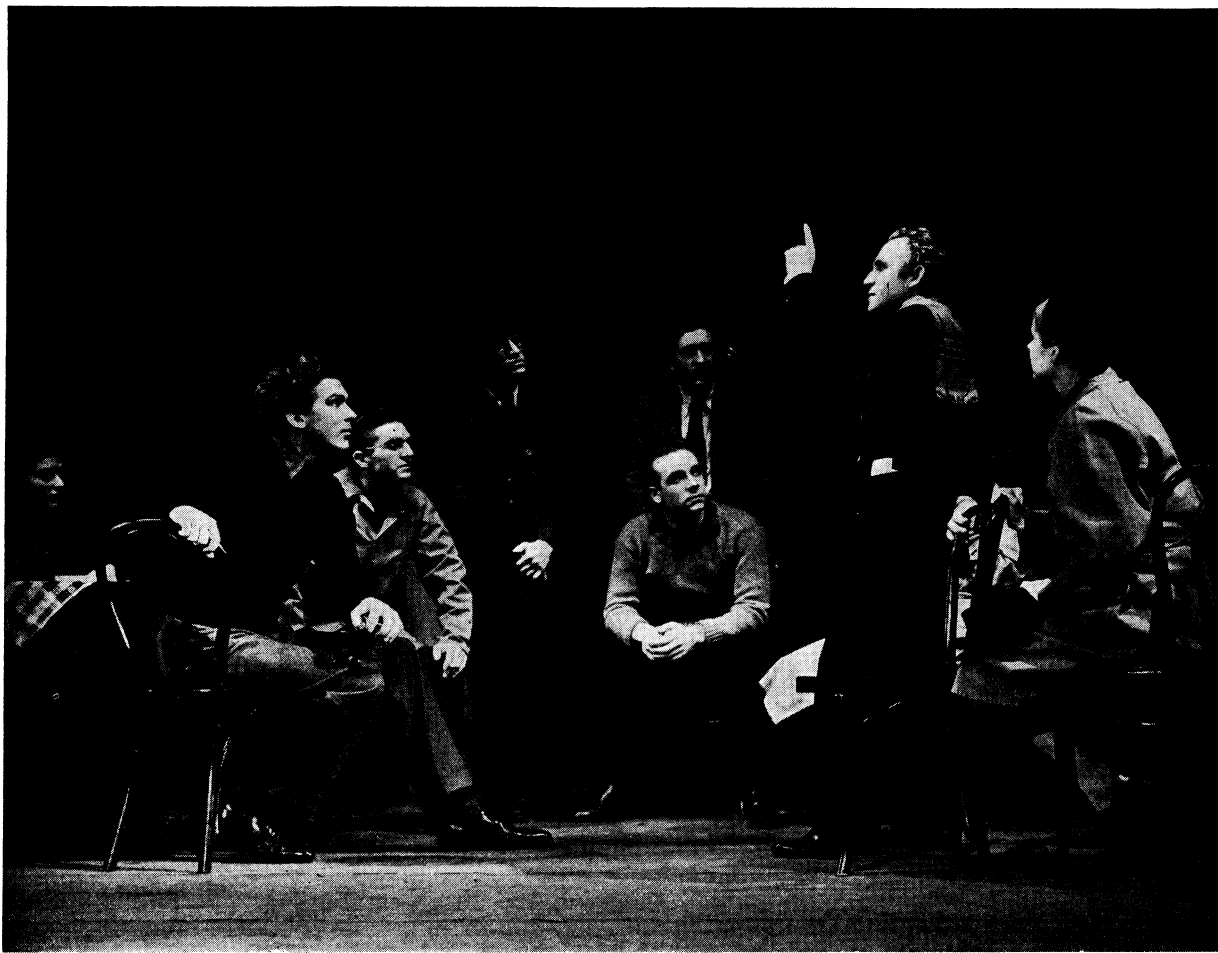
THE potent material that was smuggled from Berlin to Prague presented difficulties even to the German author there. It was too grim to treat fictionally. A German Communist was arrested doing underground work. He was tortured in Columbia House and released after a few weeks. The comrades in his district did not give him work immediately, because they were suspicious of his being released before the rest. They had had experiences with stool pigeons and had to guard against every chance of treachery. So, although he had told the police nothing, this man remained without contact with the movement for a long time. When he was arrested a second time and again tortured to make him reveal names, the Nazis tormented him with the fact that his comrades no longer trusted him. The man continued silent, but was less firm . . . he took money from the Nazis, and clothing, and returned to his district. The Nazis followed him, and whomever he spoke to they arrested. He realized that his weakness was making him a traitor against his will. His life had become intolerable and purposeless. The Fascists were still his enemies, but he had had to be expelled from the ranks of those who were fighting them. He went to his brother, and asked him to kill him. The brother did his duty and shot him. . . F. C. Weiskopf chose for this material the simplest possible form. He turned it into a "letter" for the *Neuen Deutschen Blätter*.

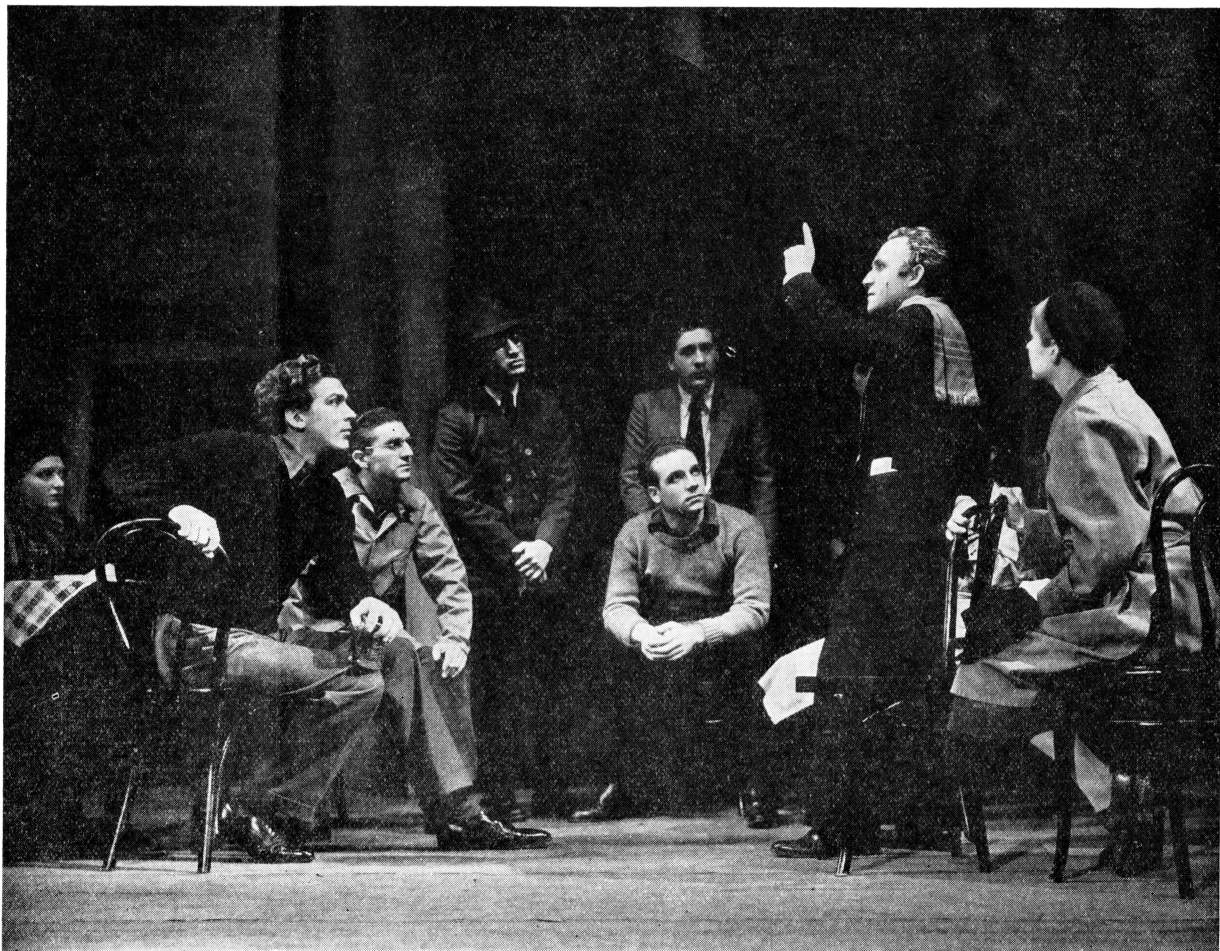
Neither the long voyage to a country remote from Germany, nor the editor's office of the *New Masses* where this letter was translated into English, has made this stark material more suitable for a novelized or dramatic treatment. The plot and the decisions of the characters cannot but appear inhuman to a public which does not know the beautiful and strong parts of the battle. Without this understanding the scenes will seem romantic—and repellent. There are things which do not belong indiscriminately on the stage at certain periods. In this historical moment when the left-wing theatre has conquered Broadway, plays belong there which encourage the audience and help them to make clear decisions instead of frightening them.

Moreover in translation into dramatic form the simplicity of this potent material has been lost. Odets was forced to stretch this material in length and width, but he has not plumbed its depth. The six scenes offer every element of reportage, but they do not show the development of the main character, Ernst Taussig, and his human and political failure. The socialist realism that is the strength of *Waiting for Lefty* is replaced in this piece by a half-naturalistic, half-fantastic style. Neither the scenes in Columbia House nor those of the underground work give a complete impression of reality. Instead they give us the subjective impression of the author himself.

Unit-Meeting scene from *Till The Day I Die* by Clifford Odets. The Group Theatre

Vandamm





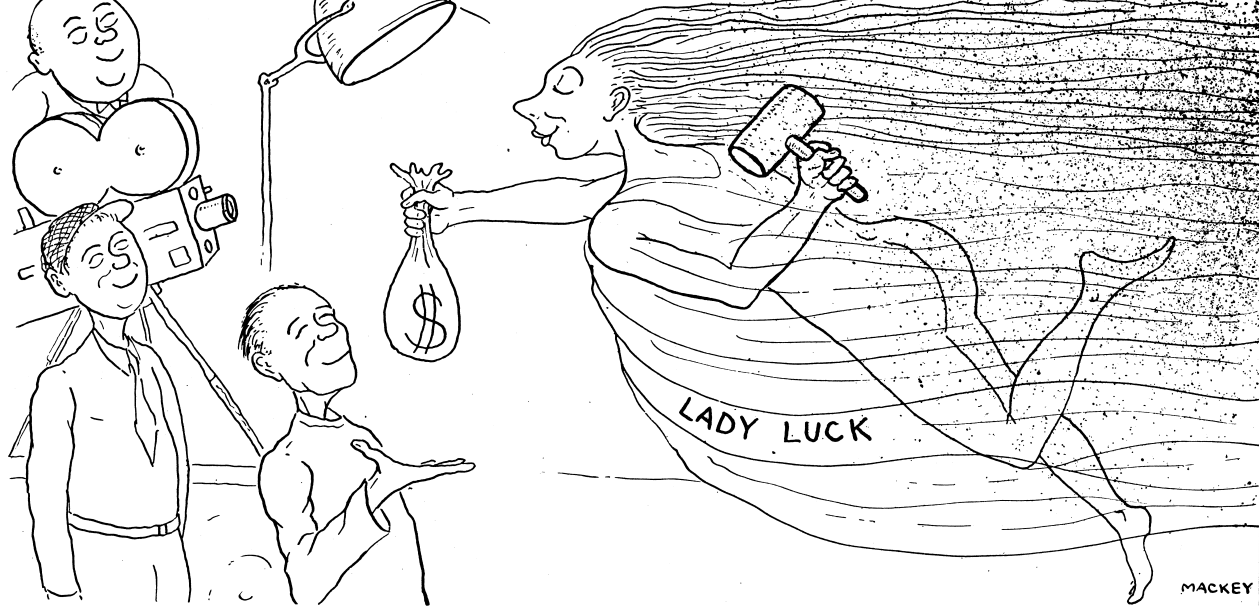
It is now the style in some of our pieces to show how the S. A. and S. S. tear down their epaulettes, throw away their Hakenkreuz flags, and shoot themselves—just as we used to show workers on the stage who chased the capitalists away and immediately became Reds. This is all wish-fulfillment. So is the picture of nervousness and stupidity in the Nazis. The officer of the Secret Police is almost a comic figure in the Odets play. In reality these people are often the most clever and capable representatives of their class.

The picture of underground work is also lacking in sufficient knowledge and understanding. Particularly vague and disturbing is the fifth scene which shows us ten revolutionary workers in a unit meeting. Three years ago such meetings took place. Since Hitler came to power, the anti-Fascist workers have been forced to find new ways to hold small meetings. Such large meetings, with workers coming together in proletarian clothes, are unthinkable. The atmosphere given to this scene, as to the sixth, does not inspire an anti-Fascist here to continue his work, though it may satisfy the craving for sensation of a part of the audience.

In spite of all this, the actors of the Group Theatre bring us real people. The performance of Alexander Kirkland makes as plausible as possible the development of the worker, Taussig. Margaret Barker played the rôle of Taussig's girl with great sensitivity. Walter Coy, who plays the brother, brings to the stage a person such as really lives in Germany today. Particularly good is the interpretation of Major Duhring by Roman Bohnen—the type of old conservative officer who despises the National Socialists. The close ensemble work of all the members of the Group shows us a real collective spirit which will not be misled by applause and will help the author to bring us even greater plays. Their competence and collective spirit will surely demand of an author of the ability of Clifford Odets that he help conquer the moment of danger, and resist the temptation of bringing the Broadway audience the sensationalism they wish to see. This is the temptation which defeated similar theatres in other countries as fascism approached, and the Group must learn from them. While it is important to reach this audience, it is their contact with the workers' theatre which will give them a basis for stability, clear work, and permanence.

(Rudolph Wittenberg, a German author in exile, described the activities of the *German Underground Theatres* in our March issue, copies of which are still available.)

**AS WE GO TO PRESS:** The Group Theatre players inform us that two new short revolutionary plays by Art Smith and Elia Kazan will be ready for a special Sunday "New Theatre Night" benefit, at the Belasco Theatre, May 26. An added feature will be a new monologue, written for Morris Carnovsky by Clifford Odets. **NEW THEATRE readers:** plan now to attend this "first night" of new revolutionary plays. Tickets are on sale at NEW THEATRE, 114 W. 14 St. CH. 2-9523.



## Luck Comes to the Proletariat

By LOUIS NORDEN

THE philosophy of capitalism grew out of an era of economic expansion; the rapidity of industrial development was due almost entirely to a lust for profits quick to take advantage of every new technical advance that might further the ends of the bourgeois money-grabbers.

The axioms of industry, loyalty and thrift, were natural concomitants, drummed into the ears of youths and adults, false hopes for the exploited who had not yet been disillusioned by a six-year depression. It was the era when school, church and press combined to enlist all in the belief that a man could lift himself by his bootstraps, could become president or millionaire, or both.

The movies did their share to spread this gospel of St. Success. For years, the films told, and still sometimes tell to a generation that no longer believes, the story of the poor boy who makes good by his own efforts. Only last year, *The Power and the Glory* was based on the old theme. At the end was the bourgeois moral, "wealth isn't all," sop for those whose dreams of success haven't come through.

Incongruous today, pictures of that type bore. The moral no longer helps to keep peace in the family, and another "hope" philosophy is injected into the films: "Even if, my lad, you believe that hard work will bring you nothing but calloused palms and an insufficient weekly salary, you must realize that God is still in his heavens and that he has great things in store for you. Luck, fate or God may enter your life at any moment to make you rich."

The interest in lotteries, for example, has been aroused during the past few years in the same manner. If the worker can be persuaded to believe that luck may some day dump a fortune into his lap, he will be more apt to grin and bear

the indignities of economic pressure; he will be less likely to join in mass protest. Lotteries, and the dissemination of lottery information, have long been against the law, yet the newspapers are never prosecuted nor was action taken against *The Winning Ticket*, a film comedy featuring Leo Carrillo, which appeared two months ago to aid "unwittingly" in the sale of sweepstake tickets.

Luck comes to the proletariat! That's the first of the "new trends in pictures." Here's a sample synopsis:

Take a boy, preferably a timid one, madly in love. The girl he admires at a distance recognizes latent talents which might bring him success if it were not for his timidity. Now, have him lose his job. His diffidence is as good a reason as any. Despondent, he leaves the building where he has worked for many years. At this point, you inject your secondary plot. Something happens to him. He resembles a gangster, or he sees an heiress being kidnapped, or oil is found on a piece of land which he owns. Don't forget to put in a chase or a fight. He captures the gangster, saves the heiress, or stops crooks from making off with the deed to his land. Thus does he make a million bucks and suddenly, for him, the depression is over. For your final close-up, he imprints a not-too-virginal kiss upon the heated lips of the girl who has been waiting much too long.

*The Whole Town's Talking*, with Edward G. Robinson, was such a picture, one of the important films of last month. For May we have *\$10 Raise*, with Edward Everett Horton, Karen Morley and Burton Churchill, a nicely produced comedy, with some riotously funny characters. Except for its ending, it is thoroughly enjoyable. The same philosophy, handled with greater deftness, is in *One New York Night* with Franchot Tone and Una Merkel, in which a telephone girl in a New York hotel meets a rich young man from Wyoming at 9 P. M. and is on her honey-

mon by midnight. A third picture of the same type is *Baby Face Harrington* in which Charles Butterworth plays the rôle of the timid young man.

*\$10 Raise* is a realistic picture of a middle-aged bookkeeper in the employ of a pompous ass who gives away turkeys to his employees each Christmas and, therefore, considers himself a humanitarian. How he humiliates his employees, browbeats them, holds over them the threat of unemployment as a club to keep down salaries—all of these, taken right out of life, are trenchantly portrayed. Horton, as the bookkeeper, hasn't had a raise in years, needs \$10 a week more to get married. He is servile, hopeful, full of an idealism that the audience recognizes as the old humbug. The comradeship of the workers in the office is shown—and shown well. When luck strikes at Horton's door, when he uses his new wealth to grab the business from his boss and the hungry bankers who seek control, he gets his big opportunity to give his employer the kick he has so long deserved. Horton has the spot all picked out. The boss does not know that Horton has bought up the business. He learns that when he walks into the office; finds Horton behind his desk. Horton summarily fires him. The boss becomes abject, ready to turn over a new leaf. Horton rises from the boss's chair and pats him on the back. "You sit in that chair," he says. "It belongs to you. You built up this business."

*One New York Night*, though it's built on the old *Grand Hotel* pattern, is distinguished by Franchot Tone's comic performance of a naive young man. In New York—to pick himself a wife—he becomes involved in a murder and interests himself in the mystery's solution. A trite story but Franchot Tone and Miss Merkel are worth while watching.

THE popular reception of such war classics as *Here Comes the Navy*, *Flirtation Walk*, *Devil Dogs of the Air*, and *West Point of the Air*, the last being this month's release, has not been up to the producers' expectations. If you have been fed on the belief that all pictures are made for the box-office, you might conclude that the producers will therefore cease the manufacture of war films. But, since the banks are in control of the studios, pictures of this type, though they lose money, are in demand to assist in building up a mass acceptance of preparedness and war.

*West Point of the Air* illustrates what we may expect in the future. Made by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, it is essentially a much better picture from a production standpoint than the others previously mentioned, all made by Warner Brothers. With Wallace Beery in the rôle of an old Army sergeant who wants his son to be a flier and a MAN, the picture sets out to prove that the air force is a school to make *real* men. You hear such lines as these:

"Aviation has been growing up. Every inch of the way has been made by sacrifices."

"The army is the only place in the world where a man must think of others besides himself."

The boy, played by Robert Young, realizes that the army is breaking his spirit and turning him into a cruel killer. When he wants to resign, after seeing his best friend injured, another burned to death, Beery smacks him down, exclaiming "Men don't talk like that!" Here is a new approach for war propaganda. Realizing all the anti-war sentiment since Versailles, sentiment based on mass horror at the cruelties of war, the film does not ignore this point of view but rather over-rides it by showing the cruelties and then insisting that a MAN can take it.

To be doubly sure that the audience will agree with the ideology expressed by Beery, the producers have given the other side of the argument to the film's wicked temptress who is "tired of all this sentimentalizing about the army." She almost succeeds in her efforts to get the boy to resign. The audience isn't supposed to like her and, a perfect *non sequitur*, isn't supposed to like her ideas. The producers have made an error in judgment, however, for she is far more attractive than the milk-and-water heroine.

When Papa Beery risks his life to save his boy from being branded a coward, Son Robert Young realizes that Papa was right. But even Beery's fine performance doesn't make the audience believe that the army is the democratic home for nice young men that the producers would have you believe it to be, or that the chief task of the officers is to turn out MEN.

Coming pictures in the same category are another Warner Brothers' musical about Annapolis in the *Flirtation Walk* manner; Paramount's scheduled *Annapolis Farewell* and *War Is Declared*. Short subjects are also subject to the same influences: *Tars and Stripes* with Buster Keaton and *The Leathernecks* with Harry Langdon.

THIS month sees an even greater number of "sop" films than usual. Made "primarily to entertain," they are packed with girls, loaded with songs and crammed with comedy, if you are to believe the ads. They cost fortunes to produce and yet, Warner Brothers' profit and loss statement proves that pictures of this type haven't made money.

The latest are *Go Into Your Dance* with Al Jolson and Ruby Keeler; *Stolen Harmony* with Ben Bernie and George Raft; *Mississippi* with Bing Crosby and W. C. Fields; *Brewster's Millions*, a British importation, with Jack Buchanan and Lily Damita; and *George White's Scandals*. None but *Mississippi* has anything to recommend it. *Mississippi* has W. C. Fields.

The age that reeked with sentimentalism, that spawned "mammy" songs and Al Jolson is over, and Jolson's day as a specialized performer is finished. He demonstrates this in *Go Into Your Dance*. He has signed a producer's contract, however, indicating that the superficial sentimentalism which he represents is in for a revival, probably in connection with war preparedness.

*Brewster's Millions* demonstrates the difficulties a young man would have in spending a million dollars. This for millions counting pennies on relief! To make the story more palatable today the producers build a musical comedy around it.

*Mississippi*, the often told romantic story of the old South, a concoction that hides the hideousness of today's slavery, is no better than the others, with the exception of Fields' performance. Crosby, having gained weight, looks ridiculous "crooning." Rodgers and Hart's music, once brilliant, is of the June-moon variety. Only Fields remains, and his portrayal of the old-time steamboat captain who has a penchant for "tall" stories, is worth while seeing if you can sit through long, boring stretches.

All of these will be even less satisfying if you've seen *Moscow Laughs*. Though most of the bourgeois critics lambasted Gregory Alexandrov for taking his slapstick comedy right from Hollywood, I should like to insist that *Moscow Laughs* offers a great deal more to Hollywood than it has taken from it. Music is deftly integrated into the story, in marked contrast to the Hollywood procedure of dragging a song and dance in by their heels. The comedy, slapstick though much of it was, was well motivated by the lives of the people in the story. If *Moscow Laughs* comes your way again, see it. You'll have more fun laughing at the antics of Leonid Utesov than you will in shedding crocodile tears at the mock heroics of Al Jolson.

THE approaching build-up of a nationalistic spirit is also evident in the month's films. Still being handled indirectly, it will probably not come out into the open until the demagogues begin shouting directly for war and fascism. The trend crops out in such pictures as George Arliss' *Richelieu* and the Toeplitz production, *The Dictator*, with Clive Brook and Madeleine Carroll. Both of them preach, by analogy, the unity of the state, the centralization of power.

*Richelieu* tells of the land-owning nobles who, during the reign of Louis XIII, seeking control of the state, were willing to sell out to Austria, England and Spain to achieve their ends. Richelieu is pictured as an altruistic prelate who saw through their designs, uncovered their plot against the king, proceeded to unify the state and make France a power. Once again the masses are pictured as numbskulls easily swayed by the hired stool pigeons of both sides.

Richelieu was not the altruistic soul epigrammatically portrayed by Arliss. He saw that English and Spanish domination of the seas blocked France's growth into a colonial empire. Warring nobles within the nation made it necessary for him to take away their power before he could wage a war against outside forces. An increase in the size of the empire meant added revenue to Richelieu's rapidly filling coffers. He foresaw the changing economic order and turned it to his advantage. This the picture does not admit, nor would the portrayal of that character be to Mr. Arliss' liking. As told on the screen, the story bears on the present situation. Change the bad nobles, who wanted to sell out the nation, into bad capitalists with similar ambitions, and you have the demagogic arguments for the "totalitarian state." *Richelieu*, a well produced film, is the typical Arliss pageant. He builds his characterizations upon a series of epigrams. As

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# Pie In The Sky

By RAY LUDLOW

**T**O *Pie In The Sky*, by Nykino, film division of the Theatre of Action, goes the honor of being the first mature enacted film produced by the American revolutionary film movement. In no sense does the picture successfully solve the cinematization of a revolutionary point of view. But because it incorporates the distinctive work of two seasoned artists, Ralph Steiner, photographer, and Elia Kazan, Group Theatre actor, it merits serious consideration.

Partly by accident and partly by design, *Pie In The Sky* does an important thing. It explores, for the first time in American cinema, the application to the screen of the acting technique elaborated by Stanislavsky and the Moscow Art Theatre. That technique, along with others deriving out of it, has been used with striking results by the leading left theatres, including the Group Theatre, the Artef, and the Theatre of Action.

The history of *Pie In The Sky* begins last spring when a group of five, headed by Ralph Steiner, and including besides, Elia Kazan, Elman Koolish, Irving Lerner and Molly Day Thacher, set out to make some experiments with film sequences. The location chosen was a Long Island dump. Here, under the inspiration of the gangrenous locale and its heterogeneous junk, an idea and a story formed, and a project for a picture took shape. The particular objects in the location suggested ideas and business for the film and an improvisatory spirit contributed an unusual share to the whole creation. An introductory indoor scene was added later to lead into the story. No one acted as director in the full sense of the word.

*Pie In The Sky* in its simple outlines is a satire on organized religion, and that system of Christian Charity which throws a sop to the hungry and jobless, at the same time indoctrinating them, Salvation Army fashion, with an acceptance of their lot. The film's title is taken from the famous I.W.W. song to the effect that "You'll Get Pie in the Sky Bye and Bye."

It opens in a mission hall; the inevitable sermon is being preached to the hungry "bums." Those who pray receive pie as their reward, sliced by the reverend's own hand. But there are too many unemployed and not enough pie! Two who get nothing to eat (Elia Kazan and

Elman Koolish) are advised to pray again. Disgusted, they leave. In their aimless wandering they find a dump. And on the dump they find a measure of peace and the opportunity to indulge in the wild dreams of the dispossessed. A discarded dressmaker's dummy becomes a woman to fondle; a junked flivver becomes their luxurious Rolls Royce. A new development results from the discovery of some decaying objects with religious associations.

These suggest the Church again. Costuming himself in old Christmas wreaths and a germ laden carpet, one of the down-and-outs conceives a grotesque parody upon a ceremony of the Greek Catholic Church. The scarecrow priest shakes a censer (a discarded, twisted bird-cage) over his companion's head, and orders him to kneel and pray for pie. The other falls into the spirit of the thing. The priest (Elia Kazan) misses no tricks. Holy water and ritual, he observes the rules of the churchly game which he knows from experience: prayer produces no pie. Only, when the bums tire and fall asleep and dream does their short order on the heavenly kitchen materialize. Needless to say, it disappears immediately upon awakening. . . .

Considered as a film experiment, which is all its producers claim for it, *Pie In The Sky* has both excellent photography and imaginative acting to recommend it. As a revolutionary film, however, it is unsatisfactory as it is not very appropriate for showings before mass audiences. The fierceness and baldness with which it ridicules the Church would prove antagonistic to an average working-class audience.

Working with a 16 mm. camera and outdoor lighting, far from ideal conditions, Ralph Steiner establishes a clear and direct approach to essentials. His characters are photographed against the simplest and least confusing backgrounds—very often the sky—and his lens does not hesitate to pick up in sharp focus the real-life texture of skin and clothes. Finally, he makes splendid use of the inventive qualities of his camera. One of the best examples of this characteristic is the manner in which he coöperates with his actors to depict a wild automobile ride. Actually, the ride is nothing more than two bums bouncing up and down on the springs of a junked flivver.

# The Dance as Theatre

By LINCOLN KERSTEIN

But the camera section frames just the close-up we have been trained to see in a Hollywood film auto ride; a section which incorporates two speed-tense faces, above the windshield. As the camera moves away, and the frame enlarges, the spectator finds himself laughably duped.

IT is generally accepted that the position of the actor in the film today is an unsatisfactory one. It has been demonstrated by Russian experimental films that the actor can be reduced to a sort of living prop, shots of which can be so put together by the director as to tell a story. The directors who have conducted such experiments rely upon concepts of the camera eye, and the effects to be gained by cutting and combining film in rhythmic patterns of montage to produce emotion, narration and the intellectual direction of their story.

The rôle of the actor in a Hollywood film, where enacted plots are still the general rule, is limited for less valid reasons. For almost thirty years, Hollywood has been faced with the problem of originating an acting technique suited to the camera eye. Except for a few individual performers, they have failed to do so. It has chosen to feature legs and faces, not to develop actors.

The late Milton Sills listed the differences from the stage which the camera effects in acting conditions. The cinema actor lacks the sympathetic living audience, he is beset by innumerable distractions, such as lighting apparatus and attendants, which he must learn to forget, and, finally, he must be extremely facile in the expression of appropriate and immediate emotion for two or three minute scenes, taken without sequence of thought or feeling.

Though the method of Stanislavsky was conceived for the stage, it is amazing how it meets the problems of cinema acting head on. Stanislavsky asks the actor to concentrate upon an object or person he is working with, instead of playing to the audience. He trains him in the use of objects in a way which simulates inventiveness in their use and gives significance and reality to the handling of them. In a camera close-up the theatre value of this is magnified. And finally, he stresses the system of affective memory as a means for evoking genuine and immediate emotion.

All these things come through in *Pie In The Sky*. Here was a type of acting with which the camera was able to cooperate, and yet not dominate. When it is remembered that Sills, chosen to write the *Encyclopedia Britannica* article on motion picture acting, says forlornly: "for some time the art of acting for the screen has remained relatively static; it has made little advance either in technique or significance. . . . If in the future there is to be any important change in histrionic method, it seems now it must follow some new mechanical development." The importance of the Stanislavsky method as used in *Pie In The Sky* takes on added stature, and makes this film required seeing for the film-makers and actors of the American cinema and theatre.

A HEALTHY revival in interest towards the more absolute forms of theatrical dancing has recently been precipitated in this country. Too often, the defenders of ballet have entrenched themselves behind specious argument or snobbish preference, and the proponents of the "modern dance" have countered with chauvinistic denials and extravagant ignorance. For the purpose of at least a temporary clarification let us examine the authority and origin of each of these camps in the light of one function: dance as theatre—theatre in the service of the greatest mass public.

The most devoted and understanding champions of ballet are not depressed by these last fifteen years in the history of the Russian Ballet in Western Europe, or after the death of Diaghilev, its various split-up successors in France and America, or for that matter, the fact that the form of ballet has come to a standstill in Russia, the land of its greatest development. They realize the grave faults of taste and function to which ballet has been subjected, the overemphasis on subordinate aids of paint and music, the vicious personalism of the attendant publicity, the frivolity and repetition and emptiness of much of the production, the low standard of technical perfection in the companies as a whole. But fifteen years of comparative decadence is a short time in the form's history. Ballet has been worse; for example, in Italy around 1870, in France around 1905. It will be better, in Russia and America, about 1940. To those hopeful enthusiasts of free expression who would jettison ballet in one night, their worst suspicions having been luckily corroborated by this apparent decadence, there is only one question to ask: Is it wise to cast away a form which is the residual, collective effort of four hundred years towards what is most legible on a theatre's stage to a theatre's audience, a form which has been nourished from every culture in the western world, from acrobats and folk dancers, from painters and sculptors, from national schools in France, Italy, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Poland and Russia—is it wise, we ask, to throw over this effort for a new form, the "modern" dance, which has only a few ardent personalities to support its gospel, none of them more venerable than our fathers?

The history of ballet is open to anyone. The modern dance is more difficult to trace; even any superficial attempt to do so, as this brief sketch, cannot but irritate some adherent of one of the "sources" of the movement. As a common springboard, let us admit Isadora Duncan, an American, was the grandmother of this revolution. The "modern" dance is still to be considered a change more in "attitude" than in form. Anyone admits that Duncan's attitude was a new one, at least for the preceding seventy-five years. Her own renaissance of Greek ideals towards

her belief that humanity could be made to dance, her instinct towards mass dance is such a wonderful intention that it makes up for the fact that she left little of actual use behind her. Her intense personality devoured the possibility of learning from her school, with herself no longer in the flesh to teach. It is only historically interesting to settle who actually precipitated the romantic revolution in theatre dancing, Duncan or Fokine. Both arrived spontaneously; the germs of the idea were in the air. There were the skirt dances of Loie Fuller, and the ancient tradition of inspiration from remains in the Roman Forum and the Parthenon. But it is still Duncan for our memory. And plus Duncan, Dalcroze. We are perhaps prone to forget the contribution of Dalcroze. As far as dance goes, his connection with music may seem to us, when mastered, naive, oversimplified, but it was against Dalcroze that the initial force of Laban, and from him, Wigman, was launched. Laban had a static plasticity of the reconstruction of the pediments from Aegina. Clean, rigid, definite, they recall in their strictures some further, freer energy. Perhaps that freedom was Wigman. Her semimystical attitude towards spontaneous improvisation, using a school of gesture previously digested, is a serious factor in the route of the dance today. But it is an attitude, similar to Isadora's; its roots in limits of an individual personality, although her school is more legible to us than Duncan's. Similar to Isadora's lack of a use of the male dancer is Wigman's; similar to Duncan's constant use of nineteenth century romantic music is the German's preference for post-Schoenberg atonality. Both Duncan and Wigman were more occupied in the manifestation of their personal gospel than in theatrical spectacle. It has been left to their diluters and pupils to corrupt their purity into the service of theatre.

IN the field of ballet the "modern" dance entered early with Fokine. Except more exactly from an archaeological point of view and less significantly from a human attitude, he saw Greece, the springboard, first in the reconstructions of Alma Tadema and the Last Days of Pompeii, later as Hellenistic sarcophagi and late Graeco-Roman draped figures. Greece permitted him to throw away toe shoes, loosen spinal columns, make torsos, heads and arms monumental. It was his arrangement for the Tannhäuser Bacchanal which is the link in front of Nijinsky's *Afternoon of a Faun*. It is useless to quibble over traced influence. Fokine's satyrs, Nijinsky's faun may go back to the same Greek vases in the Hermitage or the Louvre. Nijinsky eliminated elements that were merely parade, clipped gesture to telegraphic, pantomimic meaning: abrupt, accented, almost independent of the flow of Debussy. But his mind was always involved with the problem of ballet: dancers on a stage facing an audience. He grouped his frieze in terms of greatest legibility on a single plane in

their most significant profile. No movements were used that could not be read. Interlacings could be seen as braidings of arm and arm, not a confusion of limbs. In *The Rites of Spring* there was the music, in addition, to support kinetic counterpoint. This exhausting, now legendary effort, is of vital historical note. No longer Greece (or Asia, or native Russia, or the eighteenth century) anthropology was used as the museums had been. Roerich's Scythians replaced Bakst's Persians. This was not a revival, as the Orient has been theatre since Marco Polo. This was revivification, considered and externalized. Nijinsky lived on through his sister Bronislava. She designed Stravinsky's *Village Wedding*, an uncompromising set of contrasts. It was she who was responsible for the long list of Diaghilev ballets which had as subjects the passing present. In Russia there was (and is) Kazian Golizovsky, who in Moscow after the Revolution conceived dance patterns of such violent, erotic, unorthodox originality that in spite of minor success, he has scarcely survived his real early innovations.

So, thinking of these names, is the "modern" dance an attitude in itself; an attitude a facet of which alone is common to all its originators, and that one facet, abhorrence of the old ballet, or is the "modern" dance a series of philosophies of movement having their accidental origin in several energetic personalities, which die or fade with their death?

The strongest single factor in the "modern" dance here, as everywhere, is the element of personalism. The work of each group or school would seem to vary little enough if we, for example, had an Eskimo's eyes. But accustomed to it, each group has the imitated variants of the leader's personal style. Their work is as effective as the leader's personality is strong, coherent and dynamic. Very often the group, as a whole, imitates the leader's personal mannerisms, plus her public gesture, i.e., clothes, hairdress, etc. Thus the groups, like cells, become subdivisions of the leader's character, each subject to the leader's preferences and limitations, each believing theirs is the single truth. Aside from the compositional gift of Martha Graham, it is difficult for this writer to see any except a derivative talent in American concert personalities, that is, anything to put beside the above mentioned names in the roster of contemporary innovation. It is given to very few to be an innovator: it is demanded of everyone presumptuous enough to risk a name alone on a program to be as developed and as open as they can be in their chosen field. This, few Americans are. The form of concert dance at best is a restricted substitute. Its audience, however constant and ardent, is small, of an anticipatory enthusiasm that defeats constructive criticism. The dance recital is increasingly more expensive to maintain, less interesting to watch. The great single error of the "modern" dance is that in every varying school the personality of the founder is canonized, rather than any method toward spectacle. In each case the personality fades. The methodology of spectacle is scarcely refreshed, seldom reinforced.

Then what is proposed to remedy the situation? Study of the form of ballet as we are given it now, of course. In order to allow a clear field for an exposition of its advantages, let there be stated at the outset the most serious objections to ballet as it has been:

Ballet style is too much a product of conditioned environment, i.e., court life in France and Russia, to ever have any relevance to the present. (Similarly Wigman's nervous, gastric gesture can be said to be based on the horror of Central Europe after the Treaty of Versailles. What has that to do with the future of America?) Ballet, as a form, has been entirely the pleasure of a limited audience either of court or cosmopolitan snobs. (As early as the eighteenth century it displaced opera as a popular drawing-card. In the nineteenth, it drove both opera and drama from the boards.) It involves long, tiresome, rigorous training with an endowed school. (The training for any other profession is equally long and tiresome, c.f., music, medicine, law. As for the school, such a one is no more impossible than similar existent ones for music, medicine or law.) The well-known concert dancers in this country are not trained in ballet, and are too old or undesirable of starting now. It would mean their elimination as a force if ballet were countenanced. (This last is a serious objection and deserves to be answered individually by those concerned.) The style of ballet gesture is affected, the bearing of a ballet dancer is mannered to the point of narcissism, the use of ballet acrobatics is meaningless except for show; the future of dancing is in the hope of mass dance—a mass dance founded on the attitude of the "modern" form. The rest of this essay will attempt to deal with these valid objections.

**T**HE substructure of ballet movement is a belief in the basic perpendicularity of the human being, man's most significant initial posture being his erect position on two legs. The first absolute ballet pose is an accentuation of this base, with an emphasis on the feet being well turned out, towards the greatest possible frontal silhouette. Always spectator, audience, is in mind. Ballet exercises are only secondarily healthful; indirectly of psychic value. Primarily they tend to give the dancer complete capability within the spectacular spheres, of earth as well as air. Ballet was codified in the late days of the Renaissance when the human scale was still pre-eminent. The erect biped was a militant biped, the yardstick of the world's conquests. The baroque gestures of the arms which point in, towards the self, or out, to the self's possessions or accomplishments are less an echo of court procedure than they are of a state of mind. The head up, chin in, stomach tight, buttocks tense, shoulders high but easy, feet turned out creates a gracious, receptive, open commanding posture. This is not merely the stance of courtiers or soldiers. It is not mincing, automatic or jerky. Its elegance is not the mark of a tyrant class. It is the most simple, dignified assertion of man's spectacular possession of a power to stand on two feet, to balance his column of bone and flesh on a small flexible base. Its origin was in the court assemblies of the fifteenth, sixteenth and

seventeenth centuries, when at receptions, investitures and entrances, the monarch or ruling prince occupied the role of grand model, his entourage imitating him, the head of the state, and being themselves subsequently imitated. The tension necessary to constrict the muscles of the belly reminded one of individual self-control and self-respect. Each man having his body as instrument, should inhabit it with the distinction it deserves. In the seventeenth century, court assemblies and ball rooms were indistinguishable from theatrical scenes. Louis the Fourteenth was the first gentleman as well as the first dancer of France. It requires tension to remain erect, even artifice, or lacking artifice, a technique. The practice of theatres accelerated this technique. It was a short step from developing a technique of tension to one of extension.

The three great principles of ballet technique are the tension of perpendicular frontality, the extension of the human silhouette in a linear plane, the plasticity derived from display of different aspects of the body turning on the ground, or rising and falling in the air. It is not a natural idiom, that is, it does not come within the realm of daily habit to lift the legs as high, or as long as is demanded in ballet. By constant exercise the range of extension from toe to finger tip is enormously increased. It is not natural for ordinary purposes to leap as high as it is to leap long. By observance of the laws of spectacle, not only can the body be made to jump extremely high, but it can be made to seem to jump even higher. In short, ballet practice releases the body into the possibilities of space movement in a wholly different range from the inertia of familiar practice. The insistence on acrobatics, the abuse of excessive graciousness of ballet gesture by the French and Italian teachers of the late nineteenth century is unfortunate but not damaging to its future. A simple substructure remains. It need never be used, unless, after considerable research, as was the case with Laban and Nijinsky, an inquisitive dance designer returns to its simple, limited form, as, after all, one most people can readily understand at the greatest distance, the form that can best suffer embroidery without confusion, the form that best supports the shifting demands of the theatre.

The theatre's one universal law is the necessity of being effective. The laws of ballet offer a concise and scientific set of rules enabling one to obey this law. The use of the science, and the nature of the effect after it has been mastered, depends on the taste and imagination of individual choreographers. But to ignore these rules is to limit oneself, not merely to the expression of a rudimentary vernacular of the speech in movement, but to ignore the key not only of a developed vocabulary but of all its infinite dialects as well. The science of the effective is surely more easily felt than defined. But let us consider the problems of entrance and exit as a hint of its extent.

To enter a scene one positively displaces a previous emptiness or adds to a previous presence. In either case it is easy for the existent condition to overwhelm, or at least dull the entrance—in

itself a positive, sharp act. An entrance is an apparition. To nothing, something is added. To something already there, a heightened meaning is given. In the monolithic antique statues of gods and heroes, the upright human form is seen as revealed, open, made intensely known. The arm precedes, proclaims. The foot almost lags, hesitating, denoting a link with the place from whence it came. There is no question as to a difference between a picture from a sequence of film showing a man walking, and the first flash of the same man arriving or having arrived. Similarly an exit. The air that has been fluid with the dancer's movement, positive with an energy's presence, is vacated. Positive is negated. Now there is nothing. The drama of a door shut quietly, a door banged shut. To leave, to disappear, to fade, to vanish. Arrivals and departures with the aid of large leaps or other accents can be made inherently significant, with no need for arches or doors to frame them.

THEN, the whole grammar of adagio. "Modern" dancers very seldom use the opposition of men and women dancing together in a sustained sequence. By some kind of remote and puritanical rationalization they consider the significance of "adagio" as purely sexual, which, if logically reversed would mean that their own style is, if nothing more limited, unisexual. Rather, adagio enables a woman to do supremely well what would be impossible for her to do unaided. The necessary muscular tension, the long measure of supported, vibrant, cooperative action is exhilarating as an unbroken line of swelling melody. It has functions of intensification, invitation and demonstration far broader than merely symbolic love scenes. It is not merely a man and a woman dancing together, but men and women in participant, combined effort. Ballet instructs them as to the exact balance of bodies, how quickest to find a partner's center of gravity, what is possible by way of exchanges in the air, how least to tire oneself and one's partner.

Paralleling the adagio is the allegro type of movement; the use of points or toe shoes for girls, of turns or pirouettes for men. Not only is the point of the toe a simpler pivot than the rest of the foot—by use of the toes interesting and otherwise impossible effects are put at the designer's disposal—the effect, for example of even, swelling, irresistible, pressing advance, or of uniform, imperceptible but actual recession. The shift from flat foot to the toe involves a rise of the dancer's frame as sympathetic as a caught breath. Turns, while they not only emphasize the plasticity of the body, both back and front seen at once, also provide a chain of rapid action which can be cut off into sharp immobility as by a knife. The sudden, exact arrest after a violent regular movement only possible through ballet technique, is an intensely dramatic emphasis in the development of any indicated sequence. Leaps, the feet braiding, the chest swelling like a bird's, the back a real rainbow, all the possible realizations of the impossible, the capture of the breath and bloodstream's rhythm of an audience by successive dazzlement and aerial possession is all the province and the urgent

possibility of ballet—lyric, intense, brilliant and capable of repetition.

There remains, at this point, only the actual spectacle, productions of ballets or dance dramas which subordinate the given technique to the superior demands of important subject matter, not divertissement, not circus, not revival of past periods, but living expression of the immediate. These have not been seen, but they will be seen. Only a technique which gives to the dancer all the effective capabilities of his or her instrument can express the deep terror, excitement and hope of our inflammable civilization. Before dismissing it as bourgeois, exhausted or irrelevant, let each doubting "modern" dancer spend one single week at bar exercises, actually feeling in belly,

buttock, knee and neck the meaning of the five positions. Let them realize the apparent pride visible in a truly erect stance of brain and skull equilibrated on a steady backbone, so they can transmit not only to students but to their vast eager waiting audience the obvious revelation that dancers and men, after the back-breaking, centrifugal, spasmodic years, can appear as tall as their own stature.

NOTE:—The above article by Lincoln Kirstein is the first of a series of articles that will appear in NEW THEATRE dealing with a survey of the dance in America today. Next, Mr. Paul Love, in the June issue of the magazine, will initiate the discussion of the modern dance, refuting several of the points Mr. Kirstein makes, and advancing many of his own. We invite comment and discussion from our readers.

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# Directing the New Dance

By EDITH SEGAL

**I**NSPIRATION may seem more like the personal property of the dancer than anything he owns, but when we go to the roots of the subject-matter or mood of any dance, we will find them embedded in life itself, and in us particularly only as a part of that life. For the Revolutionary dance director and group one thing must be clear: regardless of the immediate source of "inspiration"—music, movement, idea,—in the final analysis the subject-matter is social and is the concern of all the participants in the dance. This applies particularly to group dances, although solo dances must be treated also as social products, as expressions of individuals as part of society. The idea comes from the world around us. We translate it into artistic form and expression depending upon our particular talent and training as artists. It is returned to society after going through this sieve, and is significant as a work of art if we have been able, in this process, not only to retain, but to magnify the nerve centers of life, to evaluate emotionally, intellectually and artistically the forces that determine our existence,—to evaluate them in such a way that our audiences will feel with us and come with us.

The theme or subject-matter of the group dance is therefore not the private property of the director, or even of the group, but that of the audience, of society. It is therefore imperative, that not only the director (who may be responsible for the actual choice of subject) but that every member of the dance group has an understanding of the theme and a definite point of view about it. This means organized discussion of the subject-matter before attacking it as dance.

The particular form in which the subject-matter will find expression depends to a large extent on the degree of imagination and technical development of the director and group. The results will differ also, depending on the actual creative method used by the director. He may dictate all the floor patterns and detailed group and individual movements, the group having no voice at all in the creation. This is hardly satisfactory for a revolutionary dance group. On the other hand he may be the director who comes entirely unprepared and allows the group to improvise. This is not desirable either, as it must lead to chaos. Or he may come with a general plan for the dance, based on the collective discussion, and even have set detailed movements in mind. His approach to the group however, is one that encourages participation by them.

Where the director has set movements planned, he should aim to bring the group to that same end through suggestions, in technical or any other terms, so that the group will feel the growth of the movements out of themselves, rather than have them imposed. This method in-

volves a conscious effort on the part of the director to develop the creative talent of the group members. It also requires much time. No doubt it is easier and simpler to dictate each movement and see it executed immediately, but there is a danger in cutting the group off entirely from the creative process. There must be a give-and-take attitude on the part of the director and group, with final word in the hands of the director. Discussions of progress of work should be encouraged after rehearsals, when basic differences in treatment can be threshed out and settled before the next rehearsal.

We shall take as an example the method used in the creation of the dance *Southern Holiday*. The group and director discuss the character of the lynchers, their rôle as the open expression of the barbarism of the ruling class; the Negro, whether he is to be meek or defiant; his reaction to the white as well as Negro workers who come to help him; whether we will show the complete or partial victory of the workers. We decide that the dance will start with a hunt by the lynchers for the Negro. We try various ways of running, leaping. Some do it with the torso erect, some with the back straight but in a horizontal position, some crouched, some with head going from side to side. We try it in groups and singly. After the director has seen them all, it is decided to choose the leap with the torso low and energized, because it best emphasizes the animal-like nature of the lynchers.

**T**HE Negro boy tries various runs, which grow out of the character of the lynchers' runs. This calls into play his technical equipment and his understanding of the character pursued. Then he finds himself trapped by the lynchers. They drag him to the center of the stage. The director proposes a rhythmic pattern of counterpoint for this. The dancers contribute by assuming characteristic positions which are based on their understanding of the relationship between themselves and as a group against the Negro. The director, being the only one who can view them as a group, decides on the final positions. The lynchers now

try various movements of torture. They may be very realistic in the first attempt, in fact, with young and inexperienced dancers, they always are. But after reworking them, they become stylized, retaining the original emotion which prompted them.

The rôle of the director is to guide these developments and then to select. Of course the group must have faith in the leadership of the director. On the one hand he must make the group feel free to create, on the other the group must be ready to accept the decisions of the director, for after all, only he can correctly judge the relative value of all the contributions, being responsible for the unity of the work as a whole. As the dance grows and is completed, the group as well as the director is in a position to check on the original intention, which was based on a thorough understanding of the theme. Have we in a convincing artistic manner exposed the rôle of the lynchers,—their ruthlessness, their viciousness? Have we developed in dance ideas, the Negro, from a weak victim to a proud fighter for his rights? Have we made the struggle between the lynchers and the workers too simple, the victory of the workers too easy?

This is the concern and responsibility of every member of the group, and can be accepted by them as such only if they are drawn into the work from the outset, through thorough discussion of the theme and participation in the dance creation to as large an extent as is possible under the guidance and leadership of the director.

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# Dance Reviews

MONTE CARLO BALLET—Majestic Theatre—April

*Union Pacific* which was given its first performance last year was produced again during the short season which the Monte Carlo Ballet gave at the Majestic Theatre last month. The libretto, by Archibald Macleish can be classed together with *Jardin Publique* as the only attempt of the Monte Carlo Ballet to deal with a more or less contemporary scene. But by what circuitous route, by what hesitant and tortuous circumlocutions do they approach the problems of reality. *Union Pacific* takes its theme from the completion of the first American railroad in 1869. The railroad was built in two sections; the one from the east by Irish workmen, the other, coming from west to east, by Chinese. The construction work became a competitive race which ended in the meeting of the two roads. An obvious attempt was made here to deal with significant material, yet this attempt resulted in an artistic fiasco because of the essential incongruity between technique and content. Workmen move with a certain rhythmic precision, grace and strength that arise from the performing of a physical act with the absolute economy of effort and movement necessary to achieve maximum efficiency. When one pauses to watch a group of laborers on construction work one is struck by the genuine beauty and strength displayed. There is no wasted effort, but an absolute concentration of muscular activity. There was no such intensification of movement in the ballet's depiction of men at work. There was, on the other hand, a vague dispersion of effort in all directions. Moreover, aside from the choreographic aspect, the very quality of the movement used had no masculine strength and vibrancy; it was utterly without muscular drive and tension. The laborers merely pranced about for the most part, the Irish in their bogus beards, and cute checked blouses—the Chinese dressed in shining pongee with little pigtailed bobbing up and down as they made tiny running steps about the stage. They were neither realistic nor abstract representations of laborers; they were false faces making false gestures about something they had vaguely heard of. Occasionally they would make a pretended work gesture, but they succeeded in looking pretty foolish most of the time.

*Union Pacific* is one of the few ballets which attempts to deal with nonfantastic and nonmystic material. As such it is an interesting experiment even though its results give negative conclusions. The fact that it fails to realize the essential nature of the material with which it is dealing, and to transmute it into symbols that are esthetically true, seems to be the inevitable result of attempting to make ballet express what it apparently cannot express. However, a series of such impasses may shock the ballet-maitres into taking stock of present day ballet limitations, and with awareness of the situation may come the desire to change it. In this way failures, as well as successes can contribute to the progress of the dance.

VIRGINIA MISHNUN

## NEW DANCE LEAGUE SOLO RECITAL

SOLO dancing in the new dance movement is an artistic and ideological problem unto itself which this short review cannot discuss fully. But certain problems can be discussed in relation to the solo recital of the New Dance League on April 7th. In general, it should be the peculiar problem of the solo dancer to accomplish what the group dance cannot do as well or as economically. There is one exception. Emotions which the revolutionary movement inspires: militancy, defiance, courage, are the conviction of both the group and soloist. When the single dancer has conviction and strength, her dance has an agitational value equal to that of the group. *Agitation* by Marie Marchowsky, *Mother of Vengeance* and *Action* by Ernestine Henoch, were exciting because, the audience sensed the intensity of the dancers and responded sympathetically. *Despair* and *Invictus* were less successful. *Invictus*, which should have carried the answer to *Despair* was too

personal an expression, without sufficient depth and strength to stir the audience. This is no reflection on the dancer, Rose Crystal; it is a reflection of her training in which profundity of expression is sacrificed for embellishment of form.

The depiction of type, however, or comment upon the liberal, the parasite, the demagogue, the exploited worker, bourgeois mores, or individual problems, is entirely within the province of the soloist. Unless one creates a story-telling ballet, this material can be presented in satiric or serious dramatic dance portraits. These are usually successful and project a clear idea, almost without fail, in a dance language that is comprehensible to an entire audience. *Waltz* by Ernestine Henoch, *Demagog* by Bill Matons, the three dances by Fe Alf, *Girls in Conflict*, *Slavery* and *Degradation*, were uniformly good because the subject matter demanded individual rather than group treatment. *Attic Sophistication* and *Gossip* could have been equally interesting if the dancer had clarified her satiric intentions and made clear as to what she was satirizing and spared every effort to present a definite portrait.

There is another element more difficult to project in a solo number. These are emotions, not necessarily the immediate concern of the revolutionary audience; they remain abstract generalizations because the dancer has no desire to relate them specifically to the audience, or she is unclear as to what she wishes to present. Both Eleanor King and Lil Liandre are undeniably talented, praiseworthy dancers, but their orientation to the revolutionary movement is as indefinite and as vague as their dances. *Song of Earth* is frail and lovely; but the audience who attends New Dance League recitals is familiar with an earth far removed from this delicate pastoral lyricism. *Mother of Tears*, originally created on a theme inimical to a revolutionary ideology, seemed unsuited to the program. *Call* by Lil Liandre, well danced, remained abstract throughout, and no amount of "reading into" the dance could bring it closer to the audience. This does not mean that the movements were not specific; the audience knew it was a *call*, but it was a call heard from a distance, the meaning of which was unclear. We hold no brief for literal dances, but there must be some dramatic element in the dance to stir the onlooker, and this was definitely lacking in *Call*.

One must refrain from a more complete evaluation of the contribution of these dancers until they have created newer works. As they become increasingly sympathetic with their audience, their development along class-conscious lines will take place. Until then, we can praise their talent and trust that they will present it in the best manner and to the greatest advantage.

ELIZABETH SKRIP

SOREL-ABRAMOVITCH AND GROKE—Majestic Theatre—April 7.

THE arrival of Ruth Sorel-Abramovitch and George Groke from Germany promised to be one of the exciting events of the dance season. If they had been seen in 1930 instead of 1935, such might have been the case. At present, however, they do little more than convince us that, despite this and despite that, we possess in America a powerful and vital dance.

Both Sorel-Abramovitch and Groke are well trained and, in many respects, masterly technicians, although the former far outshadows the latter in sureness of execution and in projection. Groke has a tendency to wobble every time the movement comes to a slight pause and his finales were too often ruined by his seeming inability to hold the posture he had dictated for himself.

In subject matter and even in title, the program might just as well (or better) have been performed by Georgi and Kreutzberg, since it was composed of the identical Salomes, Diabolic Figures, Capriccios, Peasant Dances, etc. These subjects viewed from any light, are more than a little passe. The only dance that struck a modern note in the entire program was Groke's *At the Machine*, which was excellent for muscular co-ordination, but even it was nothing more than a replica of machine movement. The contemporary dancer has long since discarded such verbatim ac-

counts, being too actively interested in demonstrating the results and the possible answer.

The *Peasant's Dance Suite* was by far the most successful number on the program. It was built choreographically and not so much in the manner of a Chalf charac erization. Sorel-Abramovitch's *Salome* had some interesting passages but it was too close to a burlesque strip-act. The audience was audibly disappointed when it discovered a short skirt under the seventh veil—after all that! Add to all these things the fact that there were so many hands that you often couldn't see the dance and that Groke was likely to be coy and cute, and the disappointment should be manifest.—P.L.

HAROLD KREUTZBERG—Guild Theatre—March 17

HAROLD KREUTZBERG is a dancer who, for sheer fluency of movement, and virtuosity of execution, has practically no equal. His breathtaking performances and his ingratiating demeanor on the stage, a demeanor that shows affection both for himself and his audience, so enchants his onlookers that encore after encore is demanded and the audience seemingly is left in the best of humor. To members of a dance audience who look for significant content, and these numbers are increasing, Harold Kreutzberg, however, is unpardonably inadequate. Each dance is lighter and frothier than the preceding one, each attempt at meaning finally reduces itself to the most inconsequential statement. He is most gratifying, and then only for his undeniable charm and technical facility, in his lighter presentations, *Spanish Impressions*, *Merry Pranks of Till Eulenspiegel*, *Hungarian Dances*. His impish and nonchalant character forestalls serious criticism, unless one criticizes the world which produced him. One can merely grow sad that such talent is lavished on the most trifling of dance substance.

LILLIAN SHAPERO AND GROUP—Mecca Temple—April 13.

THE Tragic Carnival ballet, with music by Alexander Krein, was presented by Lillian Shapero on a program of Soviet music. How much of the three dances was actually based on the legend by L. Peretz, this reviewer is unable to say. The dances seemed free interpretations of the music, music which, while helpful in supporting the dramatic texture of the ballet, scarcely was representative of the best the Soviet world can offer. Lillian Shapero, working under limitations of time, and with a group that came together for the most part only for this occasion, did a commendable piece of work. The dances were restrained and sensitive, and the thin thread of narrative projected with clarity. We hope the group performing with Miss Shapero will form the basis for a dance unit that can become an integral part of the New Dance League, and present material more intimately bound up with the program of the revolutionary dance. For a newly formed group, they made an auspicious beginning.

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# Moscow Dance Week

By ELIZABETH WINTERS

A SURVEY of the Soviet dance, sponsored by the Peoples' Commissariat of Education, took place in Moscow from the fourth to the twenty-second of February. Young solo dancers, dance groups for theatre and concert hall presented their repertoires. Peoples of the Soviet Union have always loved the dance, but only the classical ballet reached its zenith in Russia. Now the Soviet Union demands new forms for the dance.

Today the Soviet dance must represent the victories of socialism and the relation of the Soviet proletariat to the international oppressed workers. It must be audacious, daring, militant, gay, optimistic and class conscious. In this search for a new form and content, use must be made of all the expressions inherited from the past.

While a close study of the classical ballet gives the dancer great technical skill, study of western dance helps the dancer to understand personal content, since the western dance aims at an interpretation of strong individualism. An understanding of these two methods of the dance should help to explain many of the problems of the theatre and concert hall today, and indicates the future course of action that the Soviet dance must take to achieve new forms.

A particularly good example of this endeavour at a new kind of expression is shown by Ludmilla Spokoiskaya in her dance with masks called *A Woman Under Fascism*. In a few short dance scenes she reveals a nun, who changes into a prostitute dancing with a fascist (a mask in her arms), then with a rich man—now the prostitute changes into a nun again, her cross becomes a weapon against the advance of communism. This dance made a deep impression on the spectators.

The evening of national dances was one of the best. The Gypsy Theatre, the only one of its kind in the world, and the Georgians, presented national dances that were greeted with enthusiasm. Tahyana Morozova presented stylistic dances from Urbejistan with rare simplicity of gesture.

The dance theatre of Vera Maja presented a mixed program of easy sketches and acrobatic dances. This theatre is not on a high cultural level but the dance pantomime "bourgeois boxing" is interesting both from the technical point of view and that of content. This dance satirizes boxing which has become merely a business in bourgeois society, and reveals the boxer as an arrogant individual.

The leader of the "plastic ballet," Ina Bistrenina, spoke at the beginning of her performance on three directions of the dance and about the path of "heroic development." Her characterization of the new dance is not sufficient, since it did not include socialist realism. She presented a varied program: large choir dances

to the music by Beethoven, Grieg, Chopin, etc. No doubt this group sets before itself great tasks. It possesses very talented and technically excellent dancers. Artistically she has not yet mastered clearness of theme and construction. She vacillates between formalism, symbolism and narrow psychology. She fails to convey to her dancers a clear and distinct form for this reason.

Sylvia Chen a young and very talented Chinese dancer, who has worked in the Soviet Union for about four years, presented short social sketches, such as *Ricksha Coolie*, *Pictures of Shanghai*, etc. She has great power of expression and sense of pantomime. She lacks precision that would lead to higher forms, which she may attain through continued diligent work.

Emil Mey, dancer from Natalie Satz's Children's Theatre presented excellent and very witty grotesques, that were not very significant from the point of view of the dance, but were very strong as pantomime expressions. For him the only form of expression is the grotesque, as yet. So far he does not reveal a grasp of positive content. Emil Mey's group from the children's theatre, however, grasps reality in a variegated, cheerful and gay form that is largely pantomimic.

Anna Redel and Michael Kryotalev are a well suited and talented dance pair. They showed an easy program of acrobatics, circus attractions, a tango—graceful, charming and pleasant. They were well received and much applauded. They are unpretentious, master the work that they set out to do, and do not aspire beyond the work they are capable of mastering.

The last evening of the dance week was devoted to the dance school of the Central Culture Park. This was a long pantomimic dance called *The Flute* and performed by non-professional dancers. This showed excellent possibilities for the mass dance, it had verve and liveliness but lacked critical analysis of subject matter.

It is obvious from the work of many of the young dancers that they are eagerly seeking for new themes, new forms, new movements, new music. They try to present in their dance the questions and problems of the capitalist countries, and we wish that they continue their efforts in the construction of a new Soviet dance.

A dance discussion group is taking place in Moscow. This group will study and try to clarify ideological and technical questions. There is also a collective of young dancers now being formed whose task it will be to lead the pioneer work of the Soviet dance.

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# Current Plays

*Flowers of the Forest*, by John van Druten.

Staged by Auriol Dee, settings by Jo Mielzner, entire production under the supervision of Guthrie McClintic. Presented by Katharine Cornell at the Martin Beck Theatre.

**E**PISODIC in the extreme and lacking a straight dramatic line, *Flowers of the Forest*, is a dull and ineffectual story of the war. A book, a young pacifist, gramophone records from the home of her recently deceased father, the reading of a war poem written by her lover who was killed at the front, conjure for Naomi Jacklin (Katharine Cornell) memories of the war. And so, dramatic purpose unknowing, the audience is taken back twenty years to October, 1914. The second scene is dull because it is largely a reiteration of the first. Naomi and the young poet are in love. He is full of glory, exaltation and heroism. Two years later, the young poet, home on leave, is a bitter, disillusioned man. He no longer glories in war. He sees war only as a "bloody" duty to be done. All his exaltation has turned to hatred. Left alone with Naomi after he has been taken to task by her father for his bitterness, in his hatred for all the carnage and killing, he repudiates what was once a great desire, to have a son. Learning that Naomi is bearing his child, he offers to marry her, but she, doubting his love, refuses, and determines to do away with the child. In the last act, through the agency of a high-handed piece of hokum, the second sight of a tubercular youth, she hears the last lines of a poem her wounded and dying lover never completed. They contain the declaration that "the glory is in living, not in dying," and an affirmation of his love.

Mr. Van Druten may be emphatically opposed to war but those people who accept as adequate so blind and confused a treatment of the issues will find, if war comes, that they have somehow wandered into the camp of the war makers. That is why *Flowers of the Forest* is a doubly bad play. It is technically bad. It is not dramatic. It is talky. And it lacks a central dramatic problem which is logically resolved. On the other hand it is a million miles away in content and feeling from the real proximity of another war. Its very confusion is disarming at a time when all who are against war should be on guard. Although it is true that the "glory is in living and not in dying," Mr. Van Druten does not say how to get one and not the other.

Mr. Van Druten, unfortunately, is given to pulling his punches. He does so either because he will not strike hard or because he does not know where to strike. Songs are written glorifying war, vicars preach sermons which promise absolution from sin for all who enlist, the press prints rabid editorials, but at whose instigation and for whose direct profit, Mr. Van Druten never says.

As a war play which ostensibly condemns war it is pathetically inadequate and hopelessly confused.

Burgess Meredith was excellent as the tubercular youth, playing the part with a hectic, unhealthy energy. Margalo Gillmore, the sister, captured a change of gait, voice, and movement in the time transition, which was almost completely lacking in Miss Cornell's performance. The mawkish playing of a badly written love scene will add nothing to Miss Cornell's stature as America's foremost actress. John Emery and Leslie Bingham were good. The others struggled with the ineffectual play as best they could.

OSCAR SAUL

## On New Theatre's "Best" List

*NOTE: Though the critics praise the left drama today, the Theatre Union, the Group Theatre, the Artef, the Theatre of Action and other theatres of social protest cannot rely on reviews alone to keep their work alive. We urge our readers not only to patronize their plays but to agitate for them, to organize theatre parties and benefits, and to urge their friends and acquaintances to see the professional and amateur new theatres in action.*

*Waiting For Lefty* and *Till The Day I Die* by Clifford Odets, the playwright with the kind of proletarian punch that frightened the Boston and New Haven censors into suppressing *Lefty*. Two revolutionary plays on Broadway (Longacre Theatre, W. 48 St. that no NEW THEATRE reader can afford to miss. Odets' thrilling taxi strike drama is the most exciting show in New York, and marks a milestone in the development of the American new theatre movement. We are proud that *Waiting For Lefty* was written specifically for the New Masses-New Theatre play contest (which it won hands down), and that it was first presented on a New Theatre Night, under the auspices of this magazine. Now *Lefty* has been completely recast by the Group. Elia Kazan as "Agate" and Russell Collins as "Fatt" give remarkable performances. How many times have you seen *Lefty*?

*Black Pit*, Albert Maltz's "morality play of the proletariat" is too important to miss despite differences of left dramatic critics as to the revolutionary value of the play. As a matter of fact, *Black Pit* is a fine and important revolutionary play, despite certain weaknesses that derive from the author's concentration on the central stool-pigeon character almost to the exclusion of the body of miners in the community, thus failing to bring out most effectively the tragic results of the stool-pigeon's betrayal. Nevertheless, Theatre Union's *Black Pit* is a powerful and stirring play, an original and sensitive dramatization of the class struggle in terms of human emotions. Martin Wolfson, as "Tony," is outstanding. (Civic Repertory Theatre, 103 W. 14 St.).

Artef Players (Artef Theatre, W. 48 St.). I don't understand a word of Yiddish, but I want to go on record that *Recruits* remains in my memory as the most imaginative and beautiful production of the year. Beno Schneider's sensitivity and inventiveness, his brilliant use of color and startling and full use of the stage are unforgettable. Now, with the Artef Players appearing six nights a week in its own house on Broadway, and with Maxim Gorki's *Yegor Bulitchev* and *Dostigayev*, as well as *Recruits*, in its repertoire, you're missing the American equivalent of the great Soviet Jewish State Theatre if you don't see this remarkable workers theatre. (The Artef announces Sholom Alechem's *Aristocrats* for early in May).

*Awake and Sing* by Clifford Odets (Group Theatre: Belasco, W. 44 St.). It is my opinion that this Odets play never received the welcome it deserved in the left press. After *Waiting For Lefty*, a more militant play was expected. And some critics had the audacity to "excuse" *Awake and Sing*, on the grounds that it was an early effort. This vivid portrayal of the crushing effects of the vice-like middle-class homes that generate



The Artef Players in *Recruits*

so many revolutionaries who learn to "awake and sing" in the class struggle, only after they have rebelled first of all against their constricting home life, has been generally underestimated. In its sparkling dialogue, its sharp characterization, its sure dramatic drive, *Awake and Sing* is a play that should interest left theatre goers. In fact, if every line about "pamphlets" were left out of *Awake and Sing*, it would be a good "revolutionary" play. Its unforgettable picture of a family driven by poverty to tear at each other's hearts and happiness may be more important in its ultimate effect than many a strike play. Luther Adler contributes a remarkable performance. Morris Carnovsky, Phoebe Brand, Stella Adler, Jules Garfield, Sanford Meisner, and Art Smith give added stature to Odets' rich script.

*Tobacco Road* by Jack Kirkland, based on the novel by Erskine Caldwell. (Forrest Theatre, W. 49 St.). Now in its second year, with James Bell as Lester Jeeter, this drama of poverty-stricken "poor whites" is well worth seeing again.

*Children's Hour* by Lillian Hellman. (Maxine Elliott's Theatre, E. 39 St.). Ann Revere, Catherine Emery, and Florence McGee make this drama about a depraved brat who ruins the lives of two young women, whom she accuses of being lesbians, one of the most moving plays of the season. —H. K.

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The Artef Players in Recruits

# Current Films

**BLACK FURY** (Paul Muni)—Reviewed in this issue.  
**THE SCOUNDREL** (Noel Coward)—The second Hech-MacArthur production; Coward's film debut. A sophisticated horror story in which mysticism runs wild. It says nothing, brilliantly. Superb Lee Garmes photography.

**BREWSTER'S MILLIONS** (Jack Buchanan, Lily Damita)—Reviewed in this issue.

**CARDINAL RICHELIEU** (George Arliss)—Reviewed in this issue.

**STOLEN HARMONY** (Ben Bernie, George Raft)—Gangsters kidnap Bernie's band. Raft saves them, captures the gangsters. Lloyd Nolan (star of *One Sunday Afternoon* on Broadway) makes an impressive debut. The film is tripe.

**ONE NEW YORK NIGHT** (Franchot Tone, Una Merkel)—Reviewed in this issue.

**GO INTO YOUR DANCE** (Al Jolson, Ruby Keeler)—Reviewed in this issue.

**STAR OF MIDNIGHT** (William Powell, Ginger Rogers)—Another attempt to capitalize on the *Thin Man* type of sophisticated mystery. It tries to substitute sophistication for action, doesn't quite come off. Better than average.

**CASE OF THE CURIOUS BRIDE** (Warren William, Claire Dodd)—The first entertaining mystery story in months.

**HOLD 'EM YALE** (William Frawley, Warren Hymer)—The first two reels are intolerable, building up romantic interest. From then on, the picture is the best yet made from Damon Runyon's stories of the Broadway "muggs" who befriend old ladies, little children and innocent girls.

**TRAVELLING SALESLADY** (Glenda Farrell, Joan Blondell, Hugh Herbert)—Sex conscious, swell-looking sales ladies use their wiles to sell whiskey-flavored toothpaste.

**LADDIE** (John Beals, Gloria Stuart)—Hails a "back-to-the-soil" movement, paving the way for the subsistence farms that demagogues are already cheering. It idealizes the economic independence of the nineteenth century farmer, embodied in the song, "He is nature's nobleman, the independent farmer." The plight of the farmer today is thus easily ignored. In the tradition of *Little Women*, *Little Men*, *Anne of Green Gables*—and not as well done.

**THE DEVIL IS A WOMAN** (Marlene Dietrich)—Farewell to Paramount by Josef von Sternberg, probably the outstanding photographer in the industry. Again he demonstrates his superb ability at the camera and the fact that he knows nothing whatever about the drama or its direction. It's another variation on the *Carmen* story, from a script allegedly by John Dos Passos.

**\$10 RAISE** (Edward Everett Horton, Karen Morley, Burton Churchill)—Reviewed in this issue.

**THE DICTATOR** (Clive Brook, Madeleine Carroll)—Reviewed in this issue.

**GEORGE WHITE'S SCANDALS**—The worst of all screen musicals.

**NAUGHTY MARIETTA** (Jeannette MacDonald, Nelson Eddy)—The finest recording of the season for Victor Herbert's once-imposing melodies. The scenes in frontier New Orleans when the pioneers greet the arrival of the "casquette" girls are excellent. The rest is just an opportunity for the stars to sing.

**WEST POINT OF THE AIR** (Wallace Beery)—Reviewed in this issue.

**MISSISSIPPI** (Bing Crosby, W. C. Fields, Joan Bennett)—Reviewed in this issue.

**ILL LOVE YOU ALWAYS** (Nancy Carroll, directed by Leo Bulgakov)—The first American picture to point out that while engineers are starving in America, Russia is going full steam ahead. Purporting to be a social drama about the plight of the technician in this country, it develops a sickly love story from which it never recovers.

**THE MYSTERY OF EDWIN DROOD** (Claude Rains, Douglass Montgomery)—Good melodrama in the Dickens style, probably the best of the recent cycle.

# Towards a New Theatre

The New Theatre League is the national organization of all the new social theatres which are springing up to mark a renaissance in the American theatre, to indicate the upsurge of a living drama that reflects contemporary life and struggle, and that stands as a bulwark against the cultural degradation and menace of fascism, censorship and war. Little theatres, student, trade-union and farmers dramatic groups—all are linked together in the New Theatre League.

Anyone connected with any theatre, amateur or professional, can join the N.T.L. Amateurs without past experience can join if they belong to or are establishing a new theatre. Write now! Membership, only 25c a year.

## NEW THEATRE LEAGUE SERVICES

**REPERTORY**—*Exhibit A* by McCall.  
*Great Philanthropist* by P. Barber.  
*Sharecroppers Unite* by Levin.  
*We Shall Conquer* by Ben Blake.  
*Hunger Strike* by W. Anderson.  
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**THE FLORENTINE DAGGER** (C. Aubrey Smith, Margaret Lindsay)—Beautiful photography wasted on an insignificant melodrama.

**VANESSA**—*Her Love Story*. (Helen Hayes, Robert Montgomery)—Hugh Walpole's romantic story tearfully produced. Love sacrifice on the Altars of Duty and Honor.

**LES MISERABLES** (Fredric March, Charles Laughton)—The pretentious advertising tries to create an awe that may succeed in stifling criticism. It doesn't. Richard Boleslavski directed this grandiose production of the ancient, dated novel. Symbolism is thrown in by the carload; Fredric March strikes all his heroic poses; only Laughton impresses. Dimly lit throughout, the picture is hard to see, harder to sit through. Boleslavski's portrayal of the French students on the barricades shows either lack of knowledge or gross distortion plus a great deal of utter stupidity. The picture has splendid moments, notably those in the convict galleys, but from then on, bathos rules.

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# Shifting Scenes

By ALICE EVANS

NATIONAL Theatre week will be celebrated this year by all the theatres affiliated with the New Theatre League. Also numerous theatres becoming interested in the new social theatre movement have expressed an indication to participate in the competitions and programs being arranged May 12-19. Socialist, Communist, Little Theatre, and student dramatic groups have been writing in to the League asking for repertory and organizational guidance. A burst of publicity given the New Theatre League in the newspapers and theatre publications has stimulated a great increase in the number of inquiries received daily at the League national headquarters. Applications for membership have increased from both amateur and professional theatres. There is no doubt that the growing danger of imperialist war, the increase in anti-workingclass terror, the wave of censorship have begun to shake some of the most solidly conservative theatres out of their "art-for-art's sake" attitude and bring the problems of a living theatre to their active attention. National Theatre Week will involve the participation of these new elements for the first time in our programs and competitions. The New Theatre League welcomes their presence and extends this welcome to all other progressive theatres.

May 1st, the day of tremendous united front celebrations by workers of all political opinions and all countries of the world, has a particular significance for the New Theatre League in its fight against war, fascism and censorship. Floats for the May Day parade, megaphone squads, special pageants and plays, dealing mainly with the revolutionary traditions of American History, and the active participation of all groups—these are the New Theatre League's contributions.

*Waiting For Lefty*, by Clifford Odets, takes the prize as the most-produced play in the entire repertory of the social theatres, playing in almost a dozen cities simultaneously at present. Running it a close second is *Newsboy*, from the poem by V. J. Jerome as coordinated by the Theatre of Action (WLT) of New York. After playing to workers' audiences from coast to coast, *Newsboy* has graduated into academic circles, and is now being produced at Dartmouth College, Long Island University, and the Yale Drama School. From across the ocean, the London Theatre of Action writes: "Our best production to date has been *Newsboy*, which was shown at Hyde Socialist Church on March 17. The technique was new to the audience but they soon got the hang of it, and after the applause had finished we felt that we had done something worthwhile."

The student anti-war strike on April 12th, which reached such tremendous proportions, was climaxed at Penn State Players' performance of *Peace on Earth*, in which the scene is a college campus. One of the actors writes: "The play went off beautifully, every scene going like clockwork. The people in the audience were on the edge of their seats from first act to final curtain. Everybody who saw it agreed that it was the finest piece of work ever done by the Penn State Players."

A packed house and cheering audience, composed entirely of members of the American Federation of Labor, greeted the Chicago Group Theatre (formerly CWT) when they performed the song and dance, *Perkins-Green Duet*, and a number of other sketches. . . . The group is now working on *Waiting For Lefty*. The Scandinavian Blue Blouses, a new English-speaking Theatre composed mainly of building trades workers, gave a fine performance of *Woman's Might*, their second dramatic production. The Workers Laboratory Theatre of Chicago, one of the few Negro and white dramatic groups in the country, is working on a new play, *The Cupboard*, dealing with the attempted frame-up of a militant stockyards worker.

"Economics without tears and history with footlights instead of footnotes can be successfully taught by this new method of mass education. . . . Our plays hold the mirror of social struggle in the United States, 1935 model, up to the workers; they recognize themselves and take new heart."

This is the motto of Brookwood Labor College Theatre, which has toured thousands of miles with its plays, and participated in the Labor Drama Festival held in New York City, April 20-21st. Others on the program were the Rebel Arts Drama Group, the Young Circle League Players, and several dramatic companies of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. New Theatre League hails this creative contribution to the social drama movement of today, and invites these groups to participate in National Theatre Week against War, Fascism and Censorship, May 12-20.

Speaking of marionettes, the National Biscuit Company strikers in New York count Bunin's puppets as prize pickets these days, since the gifted little men performed *U Don't Needa Biscuit* by Oscar Saul before a cheering audience of strikers. The puppets won a similar ovation when they presented *The Return of the Professor* by Saul to a mass meeting of student anti-war strikers. The Socialist Rebel Arts Puppeteers have been well-received with their N.B.C. strike-skit. Three large mass organizations in New York City held dramatic tournaments during the last month, and the results proved exciting. The International Workers Order Contest showed decided improvement in artistic level of performance, and creative achievement in the two winning companies, Branch Y89 and Branch 603, which presented *Waiting For Lefty*, and the *Inquiring Reporter*, as well as the runner-up, Branch Y-4, which produced *A Letter from the Village*.

The Jewish Workers Clubs Tournament on April 13th and 14th was won by the Harlem Workers Club, with the play *Finances*. Fifteen clubs participated in the contest. *There Will Be No Performance*, a comedy by Lagos Egri, given by the Boro Park Cultural Club won the Associated Workers Clubs Contest on the same Sunday.

FROM London, Shanghai, Baltimore, Seattle, Chicago, and the tiny hamlets of the South have come requests in the last month . . . Plays! Plays! Plays! From colleges and universities, from trade unions and settlement houses, from Little Theatres and professionals—comes the same question "What good social plays do you have?" In addition to answering these requests the Repertory Department of the New Theatre League has attempted to analyze them. The types of plays requested fall into three general categories:

1. *Plays dealing with the fight against war and fascism.* These are the most in demand, and are requested by the most varied elements.
2. *Plays dealing with the problems of trade unions.*
3. *Plays dealing with the experiences of the oppressed Negro people and their progress toward equality and freedom.*

To expand our repertory material and fill these requests is our most urgent need at present. To stimulate competent playwrights to work on one-act plays for the amateur social theatres and to deal with these subjects, the New Theatre League plans a series of play contests. As soon as funds are available for prizes, the contests will be announced. All playwrights are hereby given notice to begin work at once! Watch NEW THEATRE and the daily papers for announcements of the contests. Already, the Repertory Department has six new plays to announce.

*Exhibit A*, by Frank and Almuth McColl, is one of the most valuable. It is the story of a World War veteran, crippled, bitter, disillusioned, who refuses to support reactionary forces in the American Legion, of which he is a prominent member, and smashes the "patriot's" plans by offering himself as an exhibit to anti-war demonstration. This is a stirring character study, with a sensational ending. (Cast of 2 women, 3 men and a boy, and a playing time of 20 minutes).

*Hunger Strike*, by Walt Anderson shows the coal miners of Pecs, Hungary, starved and ill-paid, seizing the mines, fighting off the terrors of starvation and madness, and grimly holding out until they force the owners to capitulate. Here is vital, imaginative drama, with gripping and integral theatrical effects. (Playing time is 30 minutes, and cast requires 7 men, 6 women and a crowd of mostly women).

*The Great Philanthropist*, by Philip Barber, won the

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prize in the 15-minute play division of the *New Theatre-New Masses* Contest. In the play two young girls, members of the striking department store workers' union, chain themselves to posts at a charity dinner for their boss and tell the truth about him, while their fellow-strikers picket outside. Arrests, mass sentiment for the strike and a taxi drivers' sympathy bring the play to an exciting finish. (To be played by 6 men and 4 women).

*We Shall Conquer*, by Ben Blake is a significant anti-fascist play, with suspense, power and a "punch" at the end. A militant German worker, tortured by Hitler's henchmen in Fascist dungeons refuses to betray his comrades, and goes to death after striking a prophetic blow at the Nazi inquisitioners. (It plays twenty minutes and requires 8 men).

*Sharecroppers Unite*, by L. Levin, brings us a strongly dramatic scene in the terror-ridden South. Negro and white sharecroppers, brought together by their

common hunger and the forceful leadership of a young Negro from the North, save him from lynching at the hands of white landlords. (Requires 6 men and 2 women, and plays 20 minutes).

*Newsboy*, the dramatic montage sketch made famous by the dynamic production of the New York Theatre of Action, has been revised for the American League Against War and Fascism. Hearst, Father Coughlin, and Huey Long enter the scene, and a forceful anti-war appeal has been added. (Plays twenty minutes, and can be done by from 8 to 15 characters).

On all of these plays, royalty fees of \$1.00 for the first performance and fifty cents for all subsequent showings is required. They can be secured from the Repertory Dept. of the NTL, 114 W. 14th St., N. Y. C., or from 20 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago, Ill. The price is 20c for each play except *Hunger Strike*, which is 30c, and there is a 50% discount to members of the New Theatre League.

## Men Dancers

WHAT accounts for the dearth of male dancers in America? The rest of the world may boast of Laban, Kreutzberg, Shankar, Escudero, Chabukani, Woizikowski, Massine, Groke, etc. The United States, at the most, has a meager handful. One reason for such a paucity of male dancers seems worthy of mention: whereas the ballet in one case, and national tradition in the other, enabled men to become great dancers, the modern dance (save in the case of the German school), marching under the banner of the great Isadora, placed a premium on lightness, grace and "beauty," to which few men dancers could or would subscribe. Because of that stress on feminine grace, thematic material became less and less suitable for masculine use. It became a ticklish job for men to dance Schubert waltzes, funeral cortéges à la Duncan, dances of Sorrow and Joy, or interpretations of romantic music. Audiences did not hesitate to laugh off the stage those men who did try to express themselves in the then completely effeminized dance medium. This suspicious attitude on the part of audiences has continued to militate against the male dancer even to date, despite the fact that technics have become broader and solidier.

This does not mean, however, that men cannot or should not become important dancers. We are certain that were men assured a field where their unique contribution to the dance—their contribution of virility, activity, power, dynamic space-filling movement—would be appreciated, increasing numbers of men would study and create in this medium. It is on this premise that NEW THEATRE and the New Dance League are sponsoring dance recitals of men at the Park Theatre, May 3rd and 4th.

A RECENT activity of importance in the New Dance Group has been the organization of a Week-End School, with a membership limited to the personnel of the two performing troupes and the teachers in the Group. The school is held on Saturdays and Sundays and has as its instructors Louis Horst, who is conducting a course in Dance Composition, Gertrude Chanin, who is teaching Dalcroze Eurhythmics, Gertrude Shurr who is instructing the group in Martha Graham technic. This course will be a permanent institution in the New Dance Group, and will benefit the entire membership. In addition, a men's class is given on both Tuesday evenings and Sunday mornings

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## Luck Comes to the Proletariat

(Continued from Page 18)

usual, however, Arliss is never so much the character as he is George Arliss.

*The Dictator* is exactly the same kind of picture. It is, however, a splendid illustration of the manner in which English producers have advanced in technique. The picture is produced, staged and photographed as well as the best of Hollywood's efforts. Even its dullness is in the Hollywood pattern. Its inherent propaganda for nationalism lies in the analogy that can be drawn. *The Dictator* tells the story of Johan Frederick Struensee, court physician to Christian VII of Denmark. One of the followers of Diderot and the early eighteenth century encyclopædists, Struensee became one of the bourgeois revolutionaries. He used his domination of the morbid, degenerate king and his love affair with the Queen to overthrow the rule of the land-owners. The film follows historical fact much more closely than does *Richelieu*. It fails to show, however, that Struensee's reforms were bourgeois reforms, not directed toward the people as a whole. His freeing of the peasants, for example, was not because of his love for them, the the picture infers, but was the first step in the creation of a class of wage laborers so necessary to the rising bourgeois economy.

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