

THE AMATEUR STAGE

AUTHORS HAVE THEIR RIGHTS

Conducted by LESLIE REES

AMATEURS AND THE RIGHT TO CUT

By GEOFFREY WHITWORTH (Secretary of the British Drama League)

I RECEIVED a letter the other day from a correspondent in the Isle of Man, the secretary of an amateur dramatic society, who told me of his intention to produce a version of a well-known modern play, with several scenes totally omitted, so as to bring it, as he said, "within the compass of his players and the interest of the audience."

Such a course is exactly comparable to the reproduction of a full-length portrait as a head-and-shoulder study—all right, perhaps so far as it goes, but equally, perhaps, nothing short of a travesty of the original composition as it left the artist's brush. Surely, then, the least that any self-respecting society can do is to make sure of the playwright's consent to the cutting of his play when first asking permission to act it.

Another point emerges in regard to the relations between authors and the amateur theatre. At village drama competitions and the like, I have often noticed that the names of authors find no place in advertisements of the performances or even in the programmes. This is ungracious to the author, for it implies that his work is of secondary importance, deserving no greater acknowledgment than the anonymity which is accorded to the purveyor of the heating or lighting supply.

BARN THEATRE, WELWYN

New Enterprise Produces "Misalliance"

FOUR Welwyn Garden City theatrical societies, in their search for a permanent home for their productions, have found in a two-hundred-year-old dilapidated barn the ideal theatre.

This barn, probably the oldest building in the "city," is until very recently a dairy. It has now been adorned by these four societies, whose hope it is to produce between them a show once every fortnight.

All four societies are well-known in the neighbourhood, and each has its individual style and favourite types of production. It is unlikely, at present at least, that any amalgamation of the four societies into a repertory company will take place.

It is very much hoped that the venture will at least pay its way, though there is no talk at present of making profits.

H. A. G. Baker, one of the live wires of the movement, showed us over the well-lit-up stage on Monday night, when the Barn Theatre's first full-length play was produced by the local dramatic society.

Mr. Baker himself produced and starred in this production of Shaw's "Misalliance."

It was a very sound performance. In the most interesting cast with only a few possible weaknesses, the convincing performance of Mr. Baker, the curiously domineering of Marguerite, Basil Marriott's dignified Lord, and Joyce Muirhead's noble efforts in an exacting comedy. Roy Brewer was one of the most effective Socialist speakers when asserting his manhood.

Members of the cast have the look of interesting characters, but the only flaw in the production is perhaps a certain fragmentary quality in the epigrammatic Shaw's dialogue.

DRAMA PLAYERS

Programme of Italian Plays

The Drama Players, Vittorio Rietti has surrounded him a band of players of merit. "Elena," a dramatic play by Remo

Romano, calls for acting of a high order, and its performance by these actors at the Queen's Gate Hall was admirable. Chief praise must be accorded to Mary Montgomery, who carried with exceptional skill the part of Elena, the young girl faced on the threshold of life with an overwhelming tragedy of love; and if here and there, perhaps, the brilliancy of her study as a whole tended to obscure the more subtle detail, one must admit on the part of this young actress a very fine performance of a strenuous and complex part.

Philip Graham, as the lover involved in the tragedy, was also exceptional, with a nobly restrained and convincing piece of acting, while Vittorio Rietti gave a fine study of Elena's father. A word of praise, also, to Evelyn Evers



VIVIENNE OSBORNE, a new star, in "Husband's Holiday"

as the delightful chaperone, Apollonia, whose humour was nicely calculated to the right proportions, and to Patrick Bernard, a competent, if somewhat morbid, Giovanni.

This very fine performance tends to overshadow the curtain raiser, "Playboys," by A. Pinero, by which it was preceded; but while the actors in this playlet were, for the most part, limited in their qualifications, they succeeded very effectively in bringing out the humour of the piece.

A word of appreciation is due to Mr. Rietti for his good work as producer and for his translation of Romano's play.

OLD MASONIC D.S.

"The Lilies of the Field"

J. H. TURNER'S comedy, for years a "best-stager" with amateur companies, was freshly and enjoyably produced by Sydney W. Folker and the Old Masonic Dramatic Society.

It is an amusing and technically a very skilful play, which rarely fails to go down well with the audience. Mr. Turner's particular brand of humour, which consists in stringing together a mass of epigrammatic wisecracks, often quite irrelevant to the immediate discussion, and calling it dialogue (and getting away with it), demands rather careful treatment by the actors.

The safest method is to take the play rather quickly, shooting out the bits of repartee with very short pauses; otherwise it tends to become a series of unattractively relevant, and apropos of nothing in particular, and made by rather ordinary people.

It would be a fair criticism of this production to say that it was taken somewhat too slowly; otherwise a very able performance, in which the acting was intelligent and consistent. To name any particular performers would perhaps be misleading, though Rose and Cecil Bathurst, Nellie White, and Mildred Boatwood were all very good. An unfortunate slip of memory in the first act was the only real flaw in a commendable production of this obsolete play.

HAMPSTEAD IMPS D.S.

"Phantasia"—A Good Idea Poorly Realised

THE idea behind this episodic production by the Hampstead Imps of the Junior Imperial League was a good one; but the general level of the production was not high. There was little, if any, point to the various sketches which were meant to make up the show, and absolutely no humour.

The acting, too, was too restrained and apathetic—with two or three notable exceptions. Had there been any guiding theme running through the component parts the production would have been greatly improved; as it was, it was sketches which were meant to make up the show, and absolutely no humour.

A production of this nature should be judged by standards reasonable in

considering amateur productions; even then it was a careless and thoughtless effort.

By far the best of the company was Colin Cunningham, the well-known tenor, who sang beautifully, and made the best of the trite lines he had to speak. Roni and Maud Norman-Watkins danced delightfully and with a pleasing enthusiasm. The costumes were good; the stage management insufficiently rehearsed.

INSURANCE FESTIVAL

"The Emerald Isle"

MEMBERS of the Insurance Musical Festival Company gave a fairly good rendering of the concert version of "The Emerald Isle," by Arthur Sullivan and Edward German.

The chorus, nearly all strong, was rather disappointing. At times when they should have sung with much gusto they failed to put any inspiration or force into their singing, and when they sang in modulated tones they were hardly to be heard.

That this did not detract too much from the enjoyment of one of Sullivan's most charming operas.

The composition is divided almost equally between Sullivan and German, and the words of Basil Hoag are strikingly reminiscent of the once exclusive style of W. S. Gilbert.

Dorothy Bennett, Esther Coleman, Bruce Flegg, and Kenneth Ellis were good in the principal parts. Mr. Ellis sang particularly well the Lord Lieutenant's song of how he found his wife.

AMATEUR NOTES

The Clifton Arts Club's latest effort in a ballet, "Aladdin," presented at the club's own theatre.

A parody on the usual type of pantomime, it guys the characters and incidents of the ordinary show. One of the most successful parts of the ballet, "Le tramway de ville," a laughable travesty of the real thing.

The "book" was written by Cyril Roberts, who made good points by topical and local allusions which secured many laughs from the audience. The members of the cast entered into the spirit of the thing and kept the fun going, but the success of the production rested chiefly upon the skilful work of Nora Roberts, producer.

William Everett was responsible for the music, and Barry Thatcher for the scenery.

As a result of a recent production of "Gipsy Love" at the Palace Theatre, Blackburn, the Blackburn Amateur Dramatic and Musical Society has been able to hand over something like £200 to the local infirmary. Incidentally, since its inception in 1913, the society has benefited local charities to the extent of £4,000.

REPERTORY PLAYERS

Ellaline Terriss at the Annual Dinner

Miss Ellaline Terriss celebrated her forty-fourth anniversary of her stage birth-day by attending, as guest of honour, the tenth annual dinner of the Repertory Players, held at Park Lane Hotel last Sunday. This was the first function at which this eighty-year (as she said) young actress had been permitted to be present since her recent illness.

Henry Ainley was in the chair, and when he proposed the toasts of the evening, he did so in terms of affection—terms that were obviously an interpretation of the feelings of all those present. The "Phoebe Throsel" to whom he made a reference, made a delightful suggestion to the R.P. by offering, as she was a "veteran ingenue," to act for them at any time, should they desire her services.

The speeches by Gwen Francon Davies, Campbell Gullan, and Frank Woodbridge were short. Alec Roca made a few interesting remarks on critics, the censor, and the County Council. Seymour Hicks, deputising for Owen Nares, was, of course, witty.

It should be noted that the Repertory Players have now been running very successfully for eleven years. They have done much good work since the days when they established themselves in tea rooms under a greengrocer's shop in St. Martin's lane. However, they would be glad to have assistance in augmenting their resources. Communications should be addressed to Miss Corahill, at 24, Charing Cross-mansions, W.C.2.

LONDON MUSIC HALLS CHISWICK

ENGLAND'S "Premiere" cornetist, the title adopted by Evelyn Hardy, is fully borne out by her fine performance in conjunction with the All-English Brass Band.

Dinkie Deaton Trio add their contribution by some artistic dancing and pleasing vocalism. Ministry at its best is provided by "The Impressionable Girl" who is Betty Warren; her success is emphatic.

Equally amusing, in her own inimitable way, is Audrey Knight, described as "A little lump of fun. She is admirably supported by Sonny Day. Gautier's "Bricklayers" turn out to be a highly intelligent troupe of dogs who give a wonderful show.

The house rocked with merriment at Will Fyffe's superb character impersonations. Every time von demonstrative plaudits and his success was tremendous. Quite a lot of fun is provided by Bennett and Williams, and a child xylophonist, little Doreen, should be encouraged.

EMPRESS, BRIXTON

A NEW twist is given to familiar numbers by Layton and Johnstone, who are receiving an overwhelming greeting at the Empress this week.

The act of Tom Payne and Vera Hill, as the cute commercial traveller and the fascinating dairymaid, causes continuous merriment.

An entertaining conjuring act is given by Donald Stuart, who can well lay claim to being the longest laugh in variety, and the ventriloquist offering of El Ray and Lady is popular by reason of its clever contrasts.

And Mona Kay do some capital impersonations, of which their Russian dancers are particularly striking.

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"LORD O' CREATION" New Play by the Scottish National Players

This new play by Norman McCowan, the successful author of "The Infinite Shoebuck" was produced at the Lyric, Glasgow, by the Scottish National Players and promises to be one of the markedly popular productions of the company.

The play is bright comedy of a sufficient lightness to make its improbabilities readily excusable. It concerns the secret double life of a man who marries a humble fisher lass while attaining to high social position in another sphere.

The heaviest burden is borne manfully by Andrew Stewart as Baird, whilst, as Janet, Nan Scott, as always, thoroughly clear-headed in conception and competent in execution.

A clever character study is supplied by James Sloan as an old fisherman, while a word of praise is also due to Graham Dow.

Mr. Edward Mortimer, the Hon. Secretary of the O.P. Club, informs us that the club is giving a complimentary dinner to Mr. and Mrs. Alec L. Bea and Mr. A. R. Whitmore, in recognition of the "Glorious Failure" of the Embassy Theatre. The dinner will take place at the Hotel Grand Central on Sunday, February 28, with Lady Tree in the chair.

The "Gotham Quartette," who appeared in "Under the Greenwood Tree," are now appearing at Maska-layne's Theatre, as "The Gainsborough Singers." They were so successful last week that they have been engaged for a further five weeks.

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