

# New Theatre

DRAMA • FILM • DANCE

SEPTEMBER  
OCTOBER  
1933



ACTRESS OF THE MONGOLIAN THEATRE  
"ULAN-BATOR-HOTE"

**10**  
**CENTS**

PROSPECTS FOR THE AMERICAN THEATRE... *by*  
SIDNEY HOWARD • ALFRED KREYMBORG • BARRETT CLARK • ANITA BLOCK • ROSE  
MCCLENDON • ALBERT MALTZ • FRANK GILMORE • MICHAEL GOLD • PAUL PETERS

# New Theatre needs 1000 subscribers by January 1, 1934!

In order to publish a printed and larger magazine that will better meet the growing interest in the Revolutionary Theatre, New Theatre deals with the questions and topics of vital importance to everyone in and of the theatre today; audience, actor, playwright, director, stage technicians.

OCTOBER ISSUE will continue the discussion on PROSPECTS FOR THE AMERICAN THEATRE

I. EM JO BASSHE (Playwright) says;

"Not a single drama or new form of theatre has come out of the fascist countries. The conservative theatre is half dead."

II. WORTHINGTON MINOR (Director) says;

"Hitlerism is bad because it excludes Jews and somehow that race seems to have an aptitude for dramatics-witness the Christian legend".

III. LEE SIMONSON (noted scenic designer) answers: Can revolutionary plays succeed on Broadway? "I am not a professional prophet. Consult any astrologist for a dogmatic answer. Not beyond the bounds of possibility if....."

Also answers by: John Howard Lawson, Paul Green, Joseph Freeman, Alfred Harding, George Sklar.

Scenery: "The Visual Machine"-conclusion of the article by Mordecai Gorelick (scenic designer of Success Story, 1931, Processional, etc.)

Articles on: NEGRO THEATRE, VIRGIL CEDDES, EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE of VASSAR. Also: Theatres of the Soviet-Art - Broadway - College - Children's - Play Reviews - Book Reviews.

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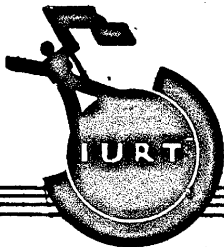
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# new theatre

ORGAN OF THE WORKERS THEATRES OF U.S.A (SECTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL UNION OF REVOLUTIONARY THEATRE) AND WORKERS DANCE LEAGUE... 42 e. 12 th. st. NEW YORK, N.Y.

Editorial Board; Ben Blake, Editor; Mignon Verne, Albert Gilman, David Platt, ASSOC. Eds.; Jac. Charles Dibner, Art Eds.; J. Bonn, V. Cutler, A. Dour, H. Elion, L. Glass, A. Howe, E. Nelson, S. Pevzner, A. Prentis; A. Gilman, Business Mnggr.

Finally, with this issue NEW THEATRE becomes the organ of the Workers Dance League and Workers Film and Photo League.

What has been said above concerning the theatre applies equally to the dance and film. Clearly, this will make for rapid progress in all the revolutionary theatre arts.

## NEW THEATRE

This issue marks a new stage in the development of the magazine that as WORKERS THEATRE has since April, 1931 been guiding the growth of a new theatre, the workers theatre, a theatre whose view-point--as reflected in its plays and in its methods of work--is that of the revolutionary working class.

With this issue, what has heretofore been WORKERS THEATRE now becomes NEW THEATRE. The change is more than a change in name. It signifies a broader conception of the revolutionary workers theatre as the historical successor of the bourgeois theatre, the theatre that as an element of the system of capitalism has already made its contribution to the development of culture and is now in its period of decay.

The workers theatre now understands that it must study the technique of the theatres of the past, adapting the best of the old to the service of the masses--experimenting--studying--criticizing itself. This understanding must be reflected in NEW THEATRE.

The workers theatre now understand that this professional theatre workers and artists who are being expelled by the thousands from the bourgeois theatre must be attracted to the revolutionary theatre, where they can give technical training to the workers, farmers, and students, and where they can practice their art in a more socially useful way than they ever could before. This understanding must be reflected in NEW THEATRE.

To the art theatres and college theatres everywhere, to the many new theatres springing up all over the country,--dissatisfied with the bourgeois theatre seeing thru its commercialism, its vulgarity, its decadence--NEW THEATRE offers its pages with a view to mutually helpful discussion as to how a new, vital, socially useful American theatre can be built. NEW THEATRE will welcome every sincerely progressive trend in the American theatre.

Now more than ever it becomes necessary for every group to work hard to spread the program of the revolutionary theatre to the masses of workers and farmers, to the Negro people, to the students in the colleges and to the people now active in the bourgeois professional and little theatres.

The suffering of the masses is growing.

The degradation of the bourgeois theatre is accelerating.

The need for a mass revolutionary theatre--based upon the realities of our time and involving tens of thousands of workers and artists in socially valuable creative work-- is intense.

This means that now more than ever it devolves upon every group to order and sell more copies of our magazine, NEW THEATRE.

We have increased its size to 24 pages and are including sections on the dance and the film. It will be much easier to sell widely. But only your fullest cooperation can insure the continuation of NEW THEATRE in its present form. Send in your opinions of NEW THEATRE. Read about the subscription and circulation drive, published elsewhere in this issue. Plan your own group's sales drive. Get ads.

Build the circulation of NEW THEATRE.

## HARRY ALAN POTAMKIN

The death of young Harry Alan Potamkin is a tremendous loss to revolutionary culture. He showed great talent among many lines.

He was a brilliant film critic, unequalled in America and with few peers anywhere. He left behind him a body of Marxist film criticism of great value for understanding the development of the film in America and in the Soviet Union. He served on the editorial board of this magazine

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# prospects for the American Theatre

In this issue we begin publication of the replies sent in to our questionnaire on "Prospects for the American Theatre." Copies of this questionnaire went out this summer to leading craftsmen in all fields of theatrical art: Playwrights, actors, directors, scenic artists, union officials, critics, and editors. All artistic and political tendencies were included. Our aim was to get a clear cross-section of American theatrical opinion today. Of course many omissions occurred: In some cases we could not get the addresses. In others, the addresses on hand proved inaccurate, or summer shiftings prevented us from reaching the persons. Therefore we invite people professionally active in any branch of the theatre who have not received the questionnaire to read the questionnaire (republished below) and send in their replies.

Twenty-five replies have come in to date. We are publishing nine of them in this issue -- our space is limited-- and will publish a similar number in each of our next issues. Space considerations prevent us from making a detailed analysis of the replies here. NEW THEATRE expects to publish such an analysis later in pamphlet form. But a few points must be noted.

The greatest number of replies from any section of the theatre came from the playwrights, the artists who deal most directly with social ideas, tend to be very much interested in the social usefulness of the theatre, sensitive to changing social conditions, and understanding of the influence of social developments on the theatre.

Most of those replying were not optimistic for the future of the prevailing American theatre. It is significant that now all were agreed, in words at least, that the theatre "should exclude nothing--as a matter of principle"--not even the class struggle. Most believed that revolutionary plays, with rare exceptions, were bound to fail on Broadway.

Sidney Howard, who spent the summer in farm territory preparing himself to write a play based on the Iowa farmers' strike, yet could say that "great creative stimuli do not come from the outside" -- a concept that modern psychol-

ogy has scientifically disproved. There was still such an unbelievably naive credo as this by Barrett Clark: "After all, such things as 'Revolution', 'Fascism', etc. are unimportant to any real artist. He's too busy putting men and women into his work to worry over such petty and temporary considerations as 'Capitalism', 'Radicalism', etc." Yet Mr. Clark had written just above that the present decline in the American theatre "is purely economic, not fundamental" (whatever the last phrase means). Also, that: "It will recover if other businesses do." And what if they don't? Contrast Paul Peters' clear statement-- or Michael Gold's simple query: "How can Tammany Hall produce great art-- or let's say, the Ku Klux Klan?"

Most writers agreed that there was need for an American workers theatre, many even declaring that this was the only hope for the American theatre.

Replies to the final question proved very interesting. What can the American theatre learn from the Soviet theatre? Paul Peters states some useful things. Again Barret H. Clark deserves to be cited for sheer -- can it be naive? We can learn, he writes, "Not to imitate it. You can't create or foster any art by political methods." (Oh the "non-political" Greek theatre, e.g.!) As for Clark's bit on "political pimps" of artists, they're increasing all over the capitalist world--foremost in the fascist countries-- and the good old U.S.A. may be expected soon to set up a record for mass production in this field as in others (witness the "arts" in the World War-- or the beginnings of NRA ism in the "arts" today). The Soviet Union, a new world in the building the inspiration of thousands of artists the world over, the "fatherland" of Maxim Gorki and Romain Rolland as well as of millions of workers and oppresses peoples everywhere-- is only telling its writers to be "political pimps!"

Here we may quote an authoritative Soviet spokesman, Anatol Lunacharsky, on the function of the Soviet Theatre after the Revolution (from his article, "Stanislavsky, the Theatre, and the Revolution", in No. 4. of International Theatre):

"The Revolution set this task before the

theatre. It said plainly: "Theatre, I need you. Not so that after my labour and struggle, I, the Revolution, may rest in comfortable chairs in a beautiful hall and be entertained with a play. I do not need you merely to laugh freely and 'relieve my spirit'. I need you as an assistant, as a planner, as a counsellor. On your stage I want to see my friends and enemies. I want to see them in the present, the past and the future, in their development and their continuity, I want to see them with my own eyes. I want your methods also and to study them. And not only to study. I want to love this and hate that because of you. I want you to praise before me my exploits and my sacrifices. I want you to illuminate my mistakes for me, my omissions and my scars, and to do this truly, for I do not fear the truth. I want you with the fullness of your magic resources, without any back biting and without any narrow rules, to carry out this task. Theatre, I thirst for knowledge, I thirst to explain my own properties and qualities. I need the most intensive internal life so that my labour on the earth, my fight for happiness will be more intensive and fruitful."

It is this task, too, which the workers of America set before the American theatre. And it is only the revolutionary workers theatre that can aim--and attain-- so high--.

NEW THEATRE hopes that the replies to the questionnaire will result in a reconsideration of values throughout the American theatre. We expect that such a reconsideration will confirm the need for a new American theatre basing itself unequivocally upon the masses of American workers and farmers, and that it will add many new forces to the growing revolutionary theatre movement centering around the League of Workers Theatres of the U.S.A.

1 DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THE AMERICAN THEATRE WILL RECOVER FROM ITS PRESENT DECLINE? WHY?

2 SHOULD THE THEATRE  
 A. SERVE AS AN "ESCAPE" FROM LIFE?  
 B. REFLECT CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL CONFLICTS?  
 C. SHOULD IT EXCLUDE CLASS STRUGGLE FROM ITS THEMES?

3 WHICH OUTLOOK UPON LIFE OFFERS THE GREATEST CREATIVE STIMULATION FOR THE DRAMATIST OF TODAY?  
 A. CONSERVATIVE?  
 B. FASCIST?  
 C. LIBERAL?  
 D. REVOLUTIONARY?

4A. DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THE TREND INDICATED BY SUCH PLAYS AS "STEEL", "1931", AND "WE, THE PEOPLE," IS A FACTOR MAKING FOR A BETTER THEATRE OR A WORSE ONE?

B. CAN REVOLUTIONARY PLAYS (OF THE TYPE REFERRED TO ABOVE) SUCCEED ON BROADWAY?

5A. IS THERE NEED FOR A WORKERS THEATRE IN AMERICA-- A THEATRE CONSCIOUSLY REFLECTING THE VIEWPOINT OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WORKINGCLASS?

B. HAVE YOU SEEN ANY PERFORMANCE BY A WORKERS THEATRE GROUP?

C. DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THE WORKERS THEATRE HOLDS ANY PROMISE FOR THE FUTURE OF THE THEATRE IN AMERICA?

6A. TO WHAT DO YOU ATTRIBUTE THE TREMENDOUS VITALITY OF THE SOVIET THEATRE?

B. DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THIS THEATRE MARKS AN ADVANCE OF THEATRICAL ART?

C. WHAT IN GENERAL, IF ANYTHING, CAN THE AMERICAN THEATRE LEARN FROM THE SOVIET THEATRE?

● Sidney Howard

1. Probably not for many years. It must be reborn as an institution of the people at large. A theatre which charges \$3.30 for admission is no theatre at all but only a business purveying a luxury, as which our theatre has sterilized itself. I do, however, detect signs of a future recovery in the little theatre productions, notably in those of the western university experimental theatres.

2. The theatre must be entertaining before it is anything else. Let it be that and it can be whatever the dramatist chooses besides. Spiked beer is an escape from life. The theatre should inspire a deeper involvement in life. It should exclude nothing which it can entertainingly encompass.

3. Any consistently conscientious outlook on life may be guaranteed to make a bore of any man. Revolutionaries and fascists are permitted to be bores, but not dramatists. Great creative stimuli do not come from the outside except as they arouse opposition in the artist.

4. A- I did not see "Steel". I greatly admired both "1931" and "We, the People." I do not see anything new about the trend they indicate. Euripides was no lover of war when he wrote "The Trojan Women". I thought both "1931" and "We, the People" overladen with undramatized outlook and, in spite of my admiration, feel that they both failed on artistic grounds rather than because of any social protest they contained.

B- It is obvious that, under present conditions the revolutionary play (whatever that is) must be an exceptionally engrossing play

to overcome the naturally conservative prejudices of the \$5.30 customers.

5. A - There is need everywhere for any kind of popular theatre in which large numbers of people can participate. But any theatre (or any other art form, for that matter) which has not got its viewpoint digested to unconsciousness will probably be worthless. The danger for such a workers' theatre lies in the consciousness of the viewpoint, not in the viewpoint itself. Theatrically speaking, the unconscious viewpoint translates itself naturally into drama; the conscious one merely talks about itself.
- B - Yes, with great interest and enjoyment, but always, with the reservations implied in "A".
- C - Of course, but again with the same reservation as regards its present development.
6. I have not been in Russia and have seen no Russian productions since Stanislavsky's. I have never admired Russian acting except in a very few outstanding performers. The vitality of the present Russian theatre seems wholly natural to me. The theatre has always been a living part of the life of Russian and other European cities and people go to it from long habit. The Soviet Theatre is inexpensive and thus within easy reach for a large public. I should think that it must be aided by the dullness of most Soviet motion pictures. I am told that Soviet producers of plays, notably Meyerhold, have contributed richly to the art of the theatre, but, again, I am speaking without experience. The few Soviet plays I have read have been incompetent and dull examples of playwriting. The theatre seems always to prosper in periods of great expansion and upheaval.

● Alfred Kreymborg

1. Yes - providing it takes a more active interest in the vital phases of our lives--which it will have to do to survive and grow.
2. A - Absolutely not.  
B - Yes.  
C - No. This is now one of the great worldly themes.
3. A - No.  
B - No.  
C - Half-baked.  
D - Yes.
4. A - This is a fine trend, but so far, more of a trend than an achievement.  
B - Yes, providing Broadway wakes up and shoves "smart" plays aside.
5. A - Absolutely.  
B - Yes; the evening at the New School and Die Volksbuhne in Berlin.  
C - Yes, because the workers are closer to life than any other class, and, in time, should write and produce vital plays.

6. A - It has the greatest imagination.  
B - Decidedly. It has swept away outmoded forms and extended the scope of the theatre.  
C - We can learn a great deal -- and, at the same time, learn still more by deeply perfecting ourselves through a constant examination and expression of our own lives, as men and artists.

● Barrett H. Clark

1. Present decline is purely economic not fundamental. It will recover if other businesses do.
2. A - Too general. Should include as much as the writer can himself see and feel and make artistically effective. Should exclude nothing--as a matter of principle, otherwise it will be limited and largely synthetic like the present Russian theatre.
3. All depends on the writer. After all, such things as "Revolution", "Fascist" etc. are unimportant to any real artist. He's too busy putting men and women into his work to worry over such petty and temporary considerations as "Capitalism", "Radicalism" etc.
4. A - Better only insofar as they extend the limits of subject-matter.  
B - Yes, but not because they are "revolutionary" or the reverse. Only because (or when) they are alive and when they are, who gives a goddamn if they're "revolutionary" or not?
5. A - Anything "consciously reflecting" etc. is practically doomed. The real playwright wants to reflect, then the product is like to be good.  
B - Never. I'd like to. But I don't think any such thing can be.  
C - I don't believe such a thing is possible. One either cares for the theatre or not. This way of asking the question shows a misunderstanding of the function of the theatre.
6. A - First, I'd like to see proof of its vitality. Or rather, - the Theatre there may be vital, but I've yet to see one really 1st class Soviet play. Production is relatively unimportant. The MS is the test.  
B - It does not - or rather, its plays don't. If you're interested in mere production stunts, all right. Name one good Soviet play that stands on its own feet.  
C - Not to imitate it. You can't create or foster any art by political methods. Until the USSR tells playwrights to go ahead as if they were artists instead of political pimps, it cannot expect real drama. Not that I'm unsympathetic to Russia or her theatre, but I get tired of having the Soviet theatre held up as a shining example to us who (in O'Neill, Green, Riggs and others - G. O'Neill) have it all over the USSR Drama.

Anita Block

1. Yes. Because the theatre is an interpretation and a criticism of life, as living and as vital as life itself and will therefore last as long as life lasts.
2. A - No.  
B - Yes.  
C - Certainly not, - only the same rules of art must be applied to drama on the class struggle as to drama when dealing with any other subject.
3. Revolutionary - because it is the only outlook-upon-life that holds any constructive or creative hope for man's future on this, our earth.
4. A - For a different theatre - one dealing with large social instead of the usual personal problems.  
B - No - not until the people who seek entertainment on Broadway have developed a revolutionary psychology.
5. A - Yes, a tremendous need.  
B - Yes.  
C - Yes; as soon as the workers themselves want the kind of theatre the workers theatre wants to give them.
6. A - To the fact that the subjects treated in the Soviet theatre represent all that is real and important and vital in the lives of the people themselves. In Russian, life and the theatre merge ideally into an integrated unit.  
B - Yes, except in that phase of it which consists purely of local propaganda.  
C - That no commercial theatre of any country can ever reflect the faith and hopes and dreams of that country unless like Russia it owns and controls its own theatre.

Rose Mc Clendon

1. Yes. Because owing to the financial condition prevailing in the present theatre, people who are not primarily lovers of theatre are being forced out.
2. A - B. Both  
C - No.
3. Liberal and Revolutionary
4. A - For better  
B - Eventually
5. A - Yes.  
B - No.  
C - Yes.
6. A - To the fact that it is a state enterprise  
B - Yes.  
C - Elimination of the superfluous government support.

Albert Maltz

1. Yes. I think the American theatre of the near future will largely become a revolutionary theatre, a theatre of the workers of America, in the sense that it is concerned with their problems and is inspired by their revolutionary needs. If the American theatre by any mischance should for the next few years take any other course than a revolutionary one, it must continue its present toboggan into the ash-heap.
2. A - No. "Escape" literature can be extremely entertaining; but the unreal values it subtly injects into the imagination of a nation are more pernicious than false doctrines frankly stated. To what extent the collective, social mind suffers from the hooey it has been fed on since childhood it is impossible to estimate. But I think it would make staggering statistics if statistics could be gotten. In a world where as much rebuilding is needed as in ours, "escape" literature ought to be put on a shelf and labeled "poison."  
  
B - Yes.  
C - No.
3. Revolutionary.
4. A - A better theatre.  
B - No, if they are to conform to a bourgeois budget that necessarily implies a wealthy audience which will usually prefer "smart" plays. Yes if they cater to workers, sympathizers, intellectuals and all classes interested in a theatre of vigor and revolutionary force. But this demands a smaller budget and cheaper admission.
5. A - This is the only thing the American theatre needs today. Nothing else will or can possibly revivify it.  
B - Yes.  
C - Of course.
6. A - It is merely a reflection of the tremendous vitality apparent in the Soviet Union as a whole. We see in America that the theatre of capitalism is dying in rhythm with the entire capitalistic structure. In the Soviet Union we see the opposite.  
B - I don't know enough about the Soviet theatre to judge whether its vitality has advanced theatrical art. But I am sure that the Soviet movie is an enormous advance and on general principles I should be surprised if this were not also true of the Soviet theatre. In content alone I know that the plays since the revolution do mark an advance.

Frank Gillmore

1. Recovery from a decline indicates a return to the full strength of former years and that I don't think will ever happen because of the great and growing competition of other forms of entertainment.

2. The theatre does both these things and many others too. It would be as foolish in my opinion to exclude class struggle from its theme as to concentrate on that to the exclusion of everything else.

3. That depends upon the individual dramatist, and his particular urge.

4. A - I don't think the effect they have left on the theatre is very great one way or the other.

B - Not unless they are good plays. A good play will succeed whether it be propaganda or otherwise.

5. A - Not as far as I know

B - No.

C - I hardly think so.

6. I am sorry to say that I know very little about the Soviet theatre but perhaps its "tremendous vitality" might be due to the enthusiasm of a new and powerful political creed.

6. C - Not having seen Soviet plays produced in the Soviet Union, I should mistrust any of the several generalizations I might make as a result of reading and second hand reports. There must be much that can be learned.

#### Michael Gold

1. It will never recover. The bourgeois world is coming to an end, via Fascism.

2. It does and always will reflect the class struggle. A bourgeois theatre will always exclude the workingclass viewpoint.

3. Of course the Revolutionary. Fascist Italy has only one fair theatre, Bragaglia's, really a hangover. Hitler's theatre will be as bad. How can Tammany Hall produce great art—or let's say, the Ku Klux Klan.

4. For a better theatre, because a more sensitive and modern theatre, one with faith in humanity, instead of money-lust.

B - I doubt it. The New Playwrights went through all that. Also Piscator learned it in Berlin, with a greater audience to draw on. On the other hand, the Japanese seem to have established a popular and professional revolutionary theatre. It depends on local conditions. The overhead and gamble is too great on Broadway. The audience is a selected one, not representative--an audience of very petty bourgeois indeed.

5. A - Yes, of course.

B - Yes.

C - Yes. But our object is not to save the bourgeois theatre. It will go its own way. We really can't compete with it for its own audience but build a new one.

6. A - To the revolutionary masses who have created it. And to the vitality of the revolutionary aims.

B - It is the only place where the theatre really lives today.

C - You can't have a new kind of theatre without new audiences, new plays, new themes and new feelings -- a new life, a revolution, a mass revolution, a Workers revolution--creation--experiment--not the strait jacket of fascism.

#### Paul Peters

1. It's likely to go stumbling along, getting emptier and emptier in content, for a number of years yet. Like its surrounding society, it will no doubt develop fascist tendencies; the movies already have, eg: "Gabriel Over The White House." As long as capitalist society survives, it will have use for the theatre, though it relies mainly on the movies for dramatic propagandist expression. As a vital force in culture, Broadway is dead; but as a tool, it is still useful to capitalist society.

2. A - No theatre that was ever worth the peanuts sold in it was "an escape from life".

B - From Aristophanes down to O'Neill every good dramatist treated contemporary social conflicts.

C - O'Neill in "The Hairy Ape" predicated the class struggle; and then runs away from it, into mysticism, as fast as he can go. A theatre which does not reflect social conflicts is a corpse of a theatre. No theatre dare exclude the most vital theme of its age (and today that is the class struggle) without dying on its feet. Of course, you can keep a dead man propped up for some time, and even have him wave a hand or so; and that is what Broadway is like today.

3. In every age there is some great revitalizing force. Once it was the revolutionary struggle of the bourgeoisie; and out of it came a dramatist like Schiller. Today it is the struggle of the workers; and he who does not know it or won't see it, or isn't somehow emotionally aware of it, is doomed to oblivion. I should say bluntly that a dramatist who isn't a revolutionist today, tho he may become ever so good a craftsman and stylist, must remain an inferior artist. On the other hand, this does not mean that every revolutionist who sits down to write a play automatically becomes a great playwright.

4. A - An ambiguous question, especially since all three plays mentioned are so meretricious as plays. But undoubtedly, the revolutionary worker will be the next "hero" of the drama, if that's what you mean.

B - That depends. If by Broadway you mean the real-estate vultures and the fraudulent art-intelligentsia that now operate on the street, No! But I should like to see this experiment tried: a cooperative group.



some way of dealing with the AFL racketeers, a really good play or two--I know as yet of no really good American revolutionary play--, low prices, an organized audience,

4. B - a group of well-trained theatre people who are revolutionists, know the stage and have their feet on the ground. The critics would fight this group to the death, but in the long run, being scum, the critics would have to give way before the acid of a vital revolutionary theatre. I believe such a theatre would draw vast groups of workers (if prices are kept low enough) and a great many petty bourgeois and intellectual elements. I believe such a theatre could easily become the theatre of America; not only that, but the great theatre of American history. I see obstacles: 1. Plays do not come out of the air, and good playwrights must be developed by the trial and error system; so that, before such a theatre can subsist, an amateur period might be a pre-requisite. 2. And of course, the whole economic base of such a theatre is a troublesome one. But this is a long story.

5. A - See previous questions. Obviously, yes.

B - If by B. you mean the Workers Laboratory Theatre and other agitprop theatres, yes. I think they may well contribute something of style and technique to the future American theatre; I don't believe they will form the base of the new drama.

6. A - To the fact that in the USSR the drama is an integral part of the social and national life. In the USA it is a tidbit for a group of people who on certain nights of the week get tired of bridge, gin or fornication, and hence go to the theatre in the hope of being stimulated on the same plane. The Soviet worker goes to learn, to re-live, to be enriched, to grow.

B - I don't know of anything great that has come out of the Soviet theatre yet. The Soviet movie is great; and seems destined to be the real expression of drama in the USSR, as by its very nature and the nature of Soviet dramatic material, the camera should be. However, I believe that if anything new and great can come from the theatre, it must come from such a theatre.

C - To go to the vital problems of the age for material. To rid itself of the racketeers, the business men, the art-fakirs (another type of racketeer), the promoters and speculators; in short, to become a school, an art, a public utility for the masses of people, not a gambling business. Under capitalism, where all art is a racket, this is impossible to do, except by a revolutionary group. To turn to the workers for an audience. This will require education, patience and time, since the workers have been deliberately perverted in taste by capitalism, fed narcotics instead of food. But only a worker audience can rejuvenate the theatre.

## Last call! PLAYWRITING CONTEST

The Playwriting Contest announced in our last issue will continue until November 30, 1933. The contest is being conducted by the League of Workers Theatres of the U. S. A. for the purpose of getting suitable repertory for the workers theatres throughout the United States. Surprisingly, the great majority of the plays submitted to date have been written by people not active in the workers theatre. The playwrights in the workers theatre groups are lagging far behind.

The contest is for short plays only, corresponding to the one-act dramatic play, vaudeville, revue, musical comedy, skits, mass recitations, and combinations of various forms.

Any play wright living in the U. S. A. may participate. Plays written in other languages are eligible if submitted in English translation.

Awards will be made to the writers of the three best plays. First prize is "Voices of Revolt", a ten volume set containing the outstanding speeches of ten great historical revolutionists. Second prize is "Voices of October--Art and Literature in Soviet Russia." A joint subscription for one year to NEW THEATRE and INTERNATIONAL THEATRE will be awarded as third prize.

Certificates will also be awarded to the authors. The winning plays will be published by the League. Manuscripts should be sent to the League at 42 East 12 St., New York City.

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### HARRY ALAN POTAMKIN

in its early days, contributing important film articles and reviews. His simple review of "The Road to Life" which appeared in our pages is a masterpiece of film criticism. He made many important contributions to revolutionary children's literature. Jingles, nursery rhymes with a social twist, poems, songs, and stories--in the pages of the New Pioneer--endearred HAP (as he often signed himself) to thousands of workers' and farmers' children. He wrote most of the songs in the recently published "Pioneer Song Book"; (children's songs), which he edited. Children's dramatics interested him very much. He staged many children's productions, experimenting with shadowgraphs, kitchen bands, etc. His best known work in this field was the children's operatta "Strike Me Red", which contains some of the finest children's sketches and songs ever written, thoroughly working class in its viewpoint. Efforts are being made to have "Strike Me Red" published. We hope to be able to publish one or two scenes from it in our next issue.

Potamkin was hardworking, modest, likeable. He was a personal friend of many people active in the workers theatre. Those of us who knew him personally feel his loss even more keenly--but the working class generally has already recognized its severe loss in the death of Comrade Harry Alan Potamkin.



Two of us, members of the John Reed Club and the Cleveland Section of the League of Workers Theatres joined the Ohio Relief March to Columbus. The march was an action to win relief for the enemployed from the state government. Our plans were vague. We thought theoretically of "spontaneous" drama, of evening entertainments. In Massillon, where we met the marchers encamped, we were placed on the Education Committee, and the question of activities became urgent. We looked over our plays. This was not a narrow sectarian march. The only two nearly appropriate plays we had been able to find in Cleveland were "Charity" and "Mr. Morgan goes Calling". Full of young regrets and misgivings, we went to sleep in the frigid open pavilion, on the hard cement floor, the only shelter the marchers could get (and that secretly and without permission) in this city of the "liberal" Farmer-Laborite, Mayor James Coxey, himself once a hunger marcher. There had been dissension among the marchers all day; quarrels and kicks about the food.

Then the next day reality swooped down on us. We were eating our lunch on the road to New Philadelphia, when an army of empty trucks drew up alongside us, and from all directions, cops and deputies and sheriffs and police chiefs, the entire blue-coat force of three counties, leapt out upon us. They lined up, loaded to the ears with cocked rifles and sawed-off shot guns and machine guns and riot-guns, and a tall burly guy yelled out to us:

"Who's your leader?"

Our leader stepped forward and was grimly told that the marchers would have to get the hell on to the trucks, and quick too!

"You ain't stopping anywheres near New Philadelphia tonight! We're taking you right across the county line!"

Our leader nodded ostensibly, said he would have to make the announcement officially to the marchers. This was the wise

tactic. He leapt on a truck, and asked the massed marchers, two-hundred of them, for their voice:

"We accept the ride, but they take us where we planned to go! And no armed men on the trucks! All those in favor --- The usual sign...."

And the marchers raised their clenched fists and let out a roar of militant decision. The rest was easy. We had it our way then. We turned back to a changed line-up; guns had been suddenly lowered or ducked out of sight. The sheriff of the county himself had disappeared. He had to be called, to make the decision of the marchers known to him.

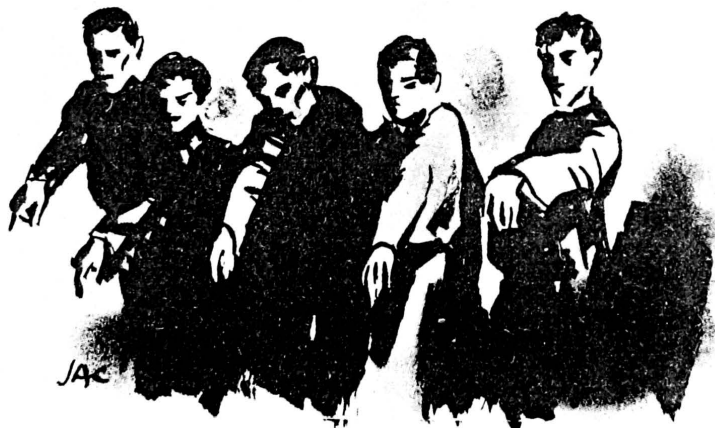
"All - all right, that'll be all right then...."

So the marchers were taxied at county expense to the farm of a sympathizer, a couple of miles from New Philadelphia. All were in high fettle. The sheriff was as smooth as oil now, - and out of this first successful action, the plan for the first play arose whole and ready for performance. About a dozen of the youth were gathered up, and all making contributions, an uproarious playlet was knitted together in quick time. The plot-line completed, roles were assigned, and three running rehearsals held right there. One more after supper - and the program was on. No speeches or dialogues were memorized, no cues, the participants were speaking fresh out of their own bowels! The stage was a cleared space with a rope tied between two boxes; the spotlights of two autos were thrown from the sides; no props or scenery or effects, of course, except the natural ones out of which the play had sprung. It was a great success. It struck the marchers in the face. Why, what was this? It was themselves acting! It was just a minute ago - was it a play already! It was like reading something in a newspaper just a few minutes after witnessing the event. Real working class art-service this - attaining and surpassing the capitalist!

The workers also undoubtedly learned from this something about the "mysteries" of creation, from which they had always been made to feel so terribly aloof!

Next stop was Coshocton. The echo of the victory at New Philadelphia, was like a carpet of welcome to us. We were given the county fair grounds and food for a two-day stay. In the big dining-hall, we rigged the heavy tables together and formed an excellent stage. Circus seats along the sides for the marchers, and park benches from outside for workers from the city who visited us by hundreds. Each night we were here we gave dandy two-hour programs: music, chalk-talks, stirring appeals - hot from action - bidding the unorganized to organize, humor and plays. One play each night.

The first night we gave "Mr. Morgan". Though we had many hours to rehearse it, "Mr. Morgan" was somehow stiff and cold on the boards that night. The marchers felt it distant from them too; the Coshocton workers reacted more warmly to it than they; after all, they hadn't bucked a police terror of 50 armed thugs!



Next day, we thought of means of correcting this. But revolutionary plays are not squeezed out of the mind or will of individuals - it springs naturally from the fighting experience of the revolutionary masses. The best we could do, after all, was take "Charity" and make it over, to serve as an educational feature for our visitors. Education - within and without - was the chief objective of our march. If we could demonstrate to the unorganized workers of Coshocton the living conditions out of which real mass action can rise, we would be performing an important task. We left the first part of "Charity" as it was: we carried the individual worker to a pessimistic conclusion, after he had depended upon the beneficence of capitalist charity; Then we smashed in on his pessimism and indicated concretely the fighting way out of his misery, the way of mass action, the way of the Unemployed Councils.

Nevertheless, the play still did not attain the effect of the New Philadelphia one. The players and the marchers felt

only a partial relationship to the action. And we realized at this time that perhaps there was a certain type of drama that could really live only for the short moment and under the stress of the peculiar conditions and events in which it had been created, still warm from the birth-giving action, and shared by a mass of workers who had been welded together by a common fighting goal, and who had personally partaken of this action. This seemed to indicate certain possibilities, besides: of plays derived directly from actions like this - from strikes, from marches on relief agencies, from eviction resistances, from demonstrations -- summarization of the silent features - and presented within an hour, if need be, or at evening entertainments, to and by the workers who had engaged. In this way, art becomes a medium hardly differentiated from reality - and nevertheless assumes a form which is broad enough to include a full education: drama, humor, satire, clarification of political errors, insistence on correct action, etc.

But further down the road toward Columbus, where the reputation of the marchers had already dimmed, there was more attacks of the armed "authorities" and more militant resistance by the marchers. These entered into the living issue of our two last plays, which were the best and most successful of those given on our march. The workers got to love these plays, and many of them would approach us throughout the day asking if we would have another that night. What disappointment if we said no, and what pleasure if we said yes! Workers' drama had quickly become a part of their lives - how easy it would really be for them to work themselves all the way into true proletarian culture! Unfortunately, this march was merely an isolated period of their lives; but it was nonetheless an exciting promise of what can be done in more permanent ways.

DAVE HILBERMAN HENRY MITCHELL



"Roar China!" at the Meyerhold Theatre

# SCENERY THE VISUAL MACHINE

MORDECAI GORELICK

The task facing the revolutionary scenic designer in this country may be divided into three phases: ideological, esthetic, and mechanical. These aspects are closely interrelated, for purposes of study and may be approached from any of the three angles. I shall begin with the ideology and touch on all three phases, giving most space to the mechanical section.

I take it for granted that the revolutionary designer consciously identifies himself, as a worker, with the revolutionary vanguard of the working class. This implies that the designer must have a Marxist viewpoint, and one which is neither vague nor entirely theoretical; it must be the result of a close study of the revolutionary theory, tested in practical action within revolutionary organizations.

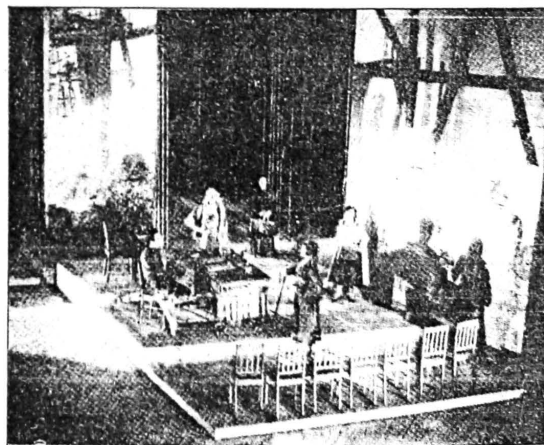
A correct revolutionary viewpoint leads to the following conclusions: The designer sees the necessity for a new technique of stage design; at the same time he does not turn his back on the achievements of the bourgeois stage. A critical appreciation of the past achievements of the theatre is absolutely necessary to the theatre worker, who otherwise becomes sectarian and ignorant of his craft. It is necessary for the designer to realize that the expression of revolutionary content will be hampered, perhaps seriously, by lack of revolutionary technique; at the same time the present bourgeois technique, critically handled, is the basis of proletarian technique; in fact the full flowering of technique can take place only under proletarian auspices, since this development is arrested by the inevitable contraction of bourgeois economy.

The designer must also be warned against that conservatism which underestimates technique and which asserts that the revolutionary content is all that matters, and that this content can make itself felt in any way whatsoever. This is an unworkmanlike and unhistorical view of technique and leads to shoddiness.

Esthetically the designer must realize the implications in art of the era of mass production, which was ushered in by the bourgeoisie and which will be permitted its logical expansion under the

rule of the proletariat. The fact that a new art, developed in the era of mass production, must inevitably replace the remains of art which dates from the era of handicrafts, is a reality which has long been fought by many bourgeois art critics, on the ground that the machine is a form profoundly antagonistic to human expression. This pessimistic view is incorrect, and is unconsciously based on the supposition that the machine is by its nature destructive, whereas the machine is destructive only under the system of capitalism.

The machine is a natural, creative extension of human biology and human culture finds its crystallization freely and naturally in the machine. Hence all blind resistance to the machine, whether in the social or esthetic field, must cease, and the machine must be confidently handled. In the theatre this viewpoint, in the form of bio-mechanics, has been developed chiefly by Meyerhold.

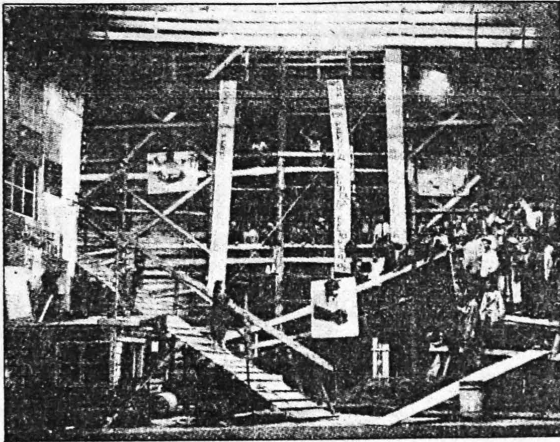


The Theatre of the Revolution. Dramatist: Pogodin: "My Friend". Stage-Manager: A. Popov. Artist: I. Schlepianov

## MOBILE, MACHINE QUALITY

The setting of a play is a machine for the purpose of projecting a play visually to its audience. This definition supersedes the former conception of the setting as an atmospheric background for actors. Earlier revolutionary experiments with the space-function of the setting resulted in the style known as "constructivism", in which geometric arrangements of abstract runways, steps, curves, platforms, etc., took the place of so-called "realistic" or atmospheric settings. Without losing the advantages of constructivism, the further progress of scenic technique has particularized these constructions as recognizable tokens for buildings, roads, streets,

rooms, machinery, et. Revolutionary scenery is limited to those elements which are actually used by the actor to walk on or through, to handle, to counterpose against. Thus the function of this scenery is very much like the function of stage properties. Implied in the revolutionary type of setting is a revolutionary psychology of staging which departs from its tradition of the illusionary, picture-frame stage, the remote, passive audience, and which substitutes objective directness, in close contact with an audience which is actively participant instead of contemplative.



The former Korsh Theatre.  
"Forward." by Katayev.

### TRANSITION FROM PURE CONSTRUCTIVISM TO PARTICULARIZATION

It will be seen that this conception of the stage setting in no way eliminates any technical device or even any type of setting that has ever been used in the whole history of the theatre: it merely adds to these a rebalutation based on the era of large-scale industry.

The American designer who has assimilated these principles has still another problem. At present the material resources of our own revolutionary theatre are extremely limited. This factor involves not only the designer but the whole producing staff, and it must be dealt with realistically and if possible, advantageously. The designer must learn to do his work with a minimum outlay of money and labor.

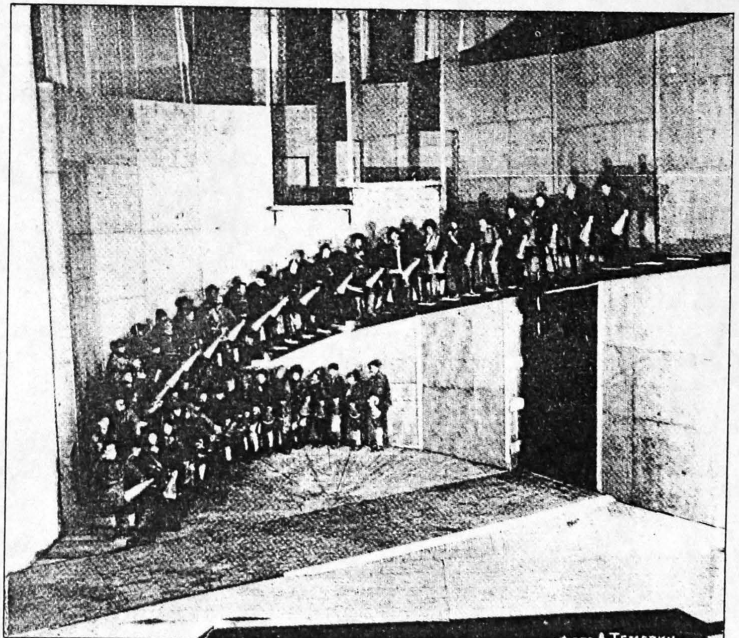
At the same time it is wholly unrealistic to take the attitude that "scenery is unnecessary." Actors without scenery are a physical impossibility, because actors do not move in a void. If actors are performing "without scenery" in a meeting-hall, the hall automatically becomes their scenery, and the appearance of the hall will aid or injure the performance, depending upon the effect intended on the audience. When no special scenery is used, the effect of the natural surroundings must be calculated. This becomes even more important out-of-doors. While it is true that a minimum of good scene-

ry is better than several carloads of bad scenery, nevertheless an adequate amount of good and useful scenery is just as certainly better than an inadequate amount.

The American Revolutionary dramatist must also learn to deal with the material limitations of his theatre. He must cast his plays in such form as to gain great effectiveness with small means. A revolutionary dramatist who thinks he requires elaborate scenery for his play should confer with the designer to learn how much of the proposed scenery can be eliminated by means of changes in the text, especially through greater stylization and directness.

Each play-production is its own problem, and within the framework of the revolutionary ideology, will dictate its own scenic technique, depending on the meaning and stylization of the play, the place where the play is to be performed, the problem of transporting the scenery, the limitation of the budget, and so on.

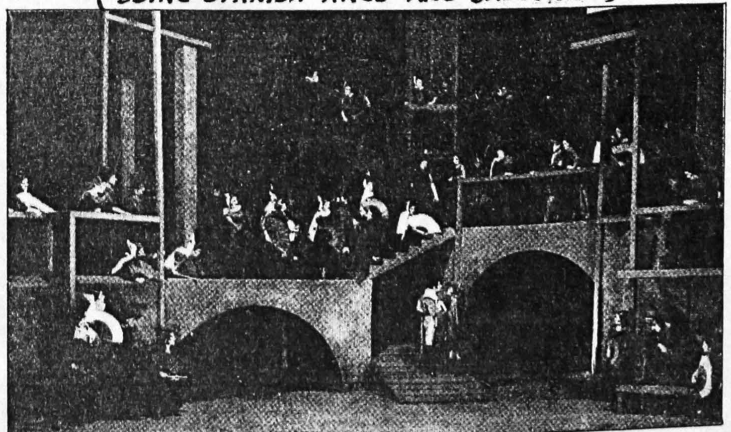
(To be concluded in the next issue)



CONSTRUCTIVISM

### PARTICULARIZED CONSTRUCTIVISM

(USING SPANISH ARCS AND BALCONIES)





One did not have to be very observant now wide-awake this year to be aware of the fact that Chicago was having a worlds fair. Almost every store window, every American Railway Truck displayed a huge attractive sign, "See the World Fair at Chicago Century of Progress Exposition." Now that is exactly what gripes me, a bad advertisement. For this is the way the advertisement should have read.

"CAPITALIST CENTURY OF PROGRESS!  
Seventeen Million Unemployed!  
Wages going down!  
Cost of living going up!  
Workers being clubbed everywhere!  
War Preparation going on!  
All incorporated in Roosevelt's  
"New Deal"!

If you have the fare to see the fair--come to Chicago. If you haven't you can see the "Capitalist Century of Progress" in New York or in any other town in the United States, for that matter."

But evidently the advertisement did not read this way and something had to be done about it, so the Workers Laboratory Theatre organized their forces and began preparations to present just such a Century of Progress.

The "Worlds Fair," as presented by the Theatre of Action section of the Workers Laboratory Theatre, was a tremendous improvement over the political side-show of last year. Altho the side-show was something new in the way of workers entertainment and propaganda, it was very crude. The entire technical, theatrical and political side of the show was rigged up in one week. The freaks merely represented apolitical figure and the rest depended upon the glibness and personality of the barker. This time however, the "Worlds Fair" was planned months in advance. A committee was elected to draw up plans for skits, a committee was organized for the technical work, wide appeal was

made to members in the theatre to write skits, poems and songs for the fair. After all the material had been gathered, rehearsals began. For two weeks the theatre rehearsed, until July 30th, the day of our first presentation of the Worlds Fair at the Daily Worker Picnic at Pleasant Bay Park.

As you entered the park, the first thing that assailed your ears was the boom, boom, boom of a big brass band. Following the direction of the noise, the first thing that you saw was a large tent, a clown, a freakishly dressed person in a college cap, and general barkers, all ballyhooing for the show inside, "Only ten cents, The Greatest Show on Earth".

After a goodly crowd had paid their admission, all barking on the outside ceased and we were ready to begin the show inside.

The First skit was the "Rogues Gallery", - the hall of ill-fame. The background for this skit is a large money bag with the bodies of Secretary Perkins, Hugh S. Johnson, Bill Green and Norman Thomas painted on. Holes on the bodies of these rogues where their heads are supposed to be, were cut out; also holes for their arm, so that they were able to stick their arms and heads thru the scenery.

The contents of this skit is a satire on the NRA, each character singing a song about himself and his bit in the NRA.

Then came the "House of Culture" with a background of the Rockefeller Center. This skit is divided into three acts. Act 1 is "Culture" as seen thru the eyes of the bourgeoisie. Act 2 is the "Umbrella Scene", a dead give-away of college professors who "Teach what we're paid to". Act 3 is the "Power of the Press" a satirical boomerang exposing the hypocrisy of the bourgeois press and its influence on the public.

The next show is the "House of Industry". The first thing that greeted the eyes was the old familiar sign, "No Jobs Today". The sign was hung up by a cop, who immediately began to disperse the crowd in his own brutal manner. On the point of getting a good beating from the audience, who should show up but the darling boss, who in his own sweet way began explaining why and wherefore there are no jobs. But did the workers take his rot? I should say not. "So, demand is desire Plus the ability to pay? Where did you get the cotton, the wheat, the food, the buildings.. who made them?" shouted the workers. I'm sorry, but nothing can be done about it" says the boss. "Oh no?" And then came an onrush of workers. Down went the boss, down went the cop, down went the no-job sign, and up went the new sign, "NOW UNDER WORKERS MANAGEMENT,- Production for Service not for Profit. Men Wanted".

This was just part of the repartee that went on between audience and boss. It was very effective since it embraced the entire audience who came to see the fair. It stimulated the audience to such an extent that many questions and wise-cracks were flung at the boss from persons who were not actually planted in the audience.

From there we moved to the "House of Morgan". This was our biggest number.

First came the Stock Exchange with Morgan & Co. sitting on top, manipulating it. Then the speculators, bull, bears and jackasses running here and there and everywhere, buying selling and shouting, then, Boom! the Depression, and everything that went with the depression, "Bank Crash", "Industry Shut Down", "City Relief Cut". Then Mayor O'Brien of New York appeared on the scene and proposed levying taxes on bridges and taxis and subway fares. Then the "Beer-brings-back-prosperity" ballyhoo and finally Roosevelt and his precious "Brain Trust".

Last came the "House of Agriculture". In this scene the capitalists sing to the farmers, to the tune of "Old McDonald had a Farm" telling them what to do and what not to do, what to grow and what not to grow. But do the farmers take it? Hell no. They sing their song to the capitalists in which the ending:

FOR WORKERS IN CITIES AND SHIP AND FARMS TOGETHER WILL CRUSH YOU ALL brought rounds of applause from the audience, then

FINIS  
same show all over again, only ten cents, greatest show on earth....

Betty Weinstein



Bankers Song-from the House of Morgan  
(at the appearance of O'Brien)

Dont you worry Mr. Johnny, Yoo-hoo  
Stop your crying, John O'Brien, Boo-hoo  
What a pity  
New York City  
Cant pay relief and still pay the  
bankers too.

We can settle such a pickle, poo-poo,  
We'll collect another nickle or two  
From the bridges and the taxis and  
the subway fares  
For the bankers need the interest too.

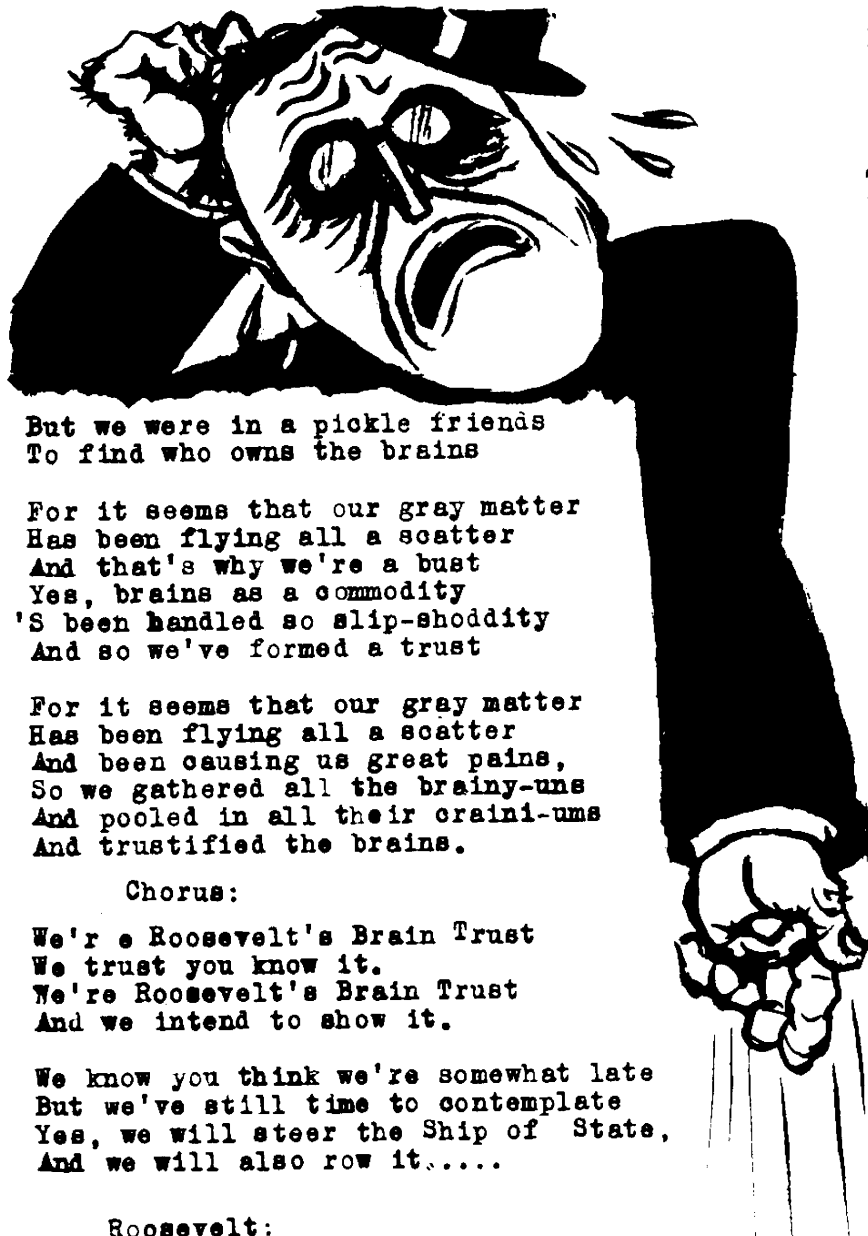
Chorus:(preceding Roosevelt)  
Three point two  
The good old brew  
Soft soap suds will pull us thru  
For beer brings back prosperity.

Song of the Brain Trust,  
Solos by Roosevelt:

Roosevelt:  
My friends I've got a scheme  
This nation to redeem  
From all its troubles.  
When all is said and done  
Our troubles one by one  
Are only bubbles.

The only thing to do  
When things are quite askew  
And in confusion  
To break depression's chains  
Is to apply some brains  
In great profusion.

But we were at great pains  
To find who owns the brains  
For the oil trust owns the oil,  
friends  
And the Steel trust owns the steel  
And the Cotton trust the cotton  
And the textile trust the mills  
And the pickle trust the pickles  
And the railroad trust the trains...



From the House of Agriculture:  
Song of the Landowners and Bankers

Old Man Roosevelt has a plan  
Chorus: Ee-i-Ee-i-0  
To take you farmers off the land  
You oughtta be glad to go

You produce so much  
We're all in dutch  
We cant make profit when there is such  
A surplus stock of cotton and wheat  
Chorus: Ee-i-Ee-i-0

Now if you had a large plantation  
Chorus: Ee-i-Ee-i-0  
You could be a patriot  
And serve your nation  
And make a nice pile of dough

By raising weeds instead of planting  
seeds  
For we must grow less than the country  
needs  
Till prices rise  
As high as the skies  
Chorus: Ee-i-Ee-i-0

Now Roosevelt made an appropriation  
Chorus: Ee-i-Ee-i-0  
For the large land-owners compensation  
And here's how it will grow:

We'll add a nickle here,  
Add a nickle there,  
Bread-a-nickle  
Butter-nickle  
Prices up another nickle  
Lay a little tax on the workers backs  
Chorus: Ee-i-Ee-i-0

Now dont be rash and go too far  
Chorus: Ee-i-Ee-i-0

For if you defy the bankers law  
We'll show you where to go  
With a black jack here  
And a black jack there  
We'll whack-whack  
Beat em back  
Try a little gas attack  
Put you in your places  
Properly.....  
Chorus: Ee-i-Ee-i-0

But we were in a pickle friends  
To find who owns the brains

For it seems that our gray matter  
Has been flying all a scatter  
And that's why we're a bust  
Yes, brains as a commodity  
'S been handled so slip-shoddity  
And so we've formed a trust

For it seems that our gray matter  
Has been flying all a scatter  
And been causing us great pains,  
So we gathered all the brainy-uns  
And pooled in all their braini-uns  
And trustified the brains.

Chorus:

We're e Roosevelt's Brain Trust  
We trust you know it.  
We're Roosevelt's Brain Trust  
And we intend to show it.

We know you think we're somewhat late  
But we've still time to contemplate  
Yes, we will steer the Ship of State,  
And we will also row it.....

Roosevelt:

Pray tell us what to do  
We're in an awful stew  
Its pretty rotten  
We've all been in a trance  
The workers have no pants  
Because we've too much cotton.  
Its causing us great pains,  
So please apply your brains...

Chorus:

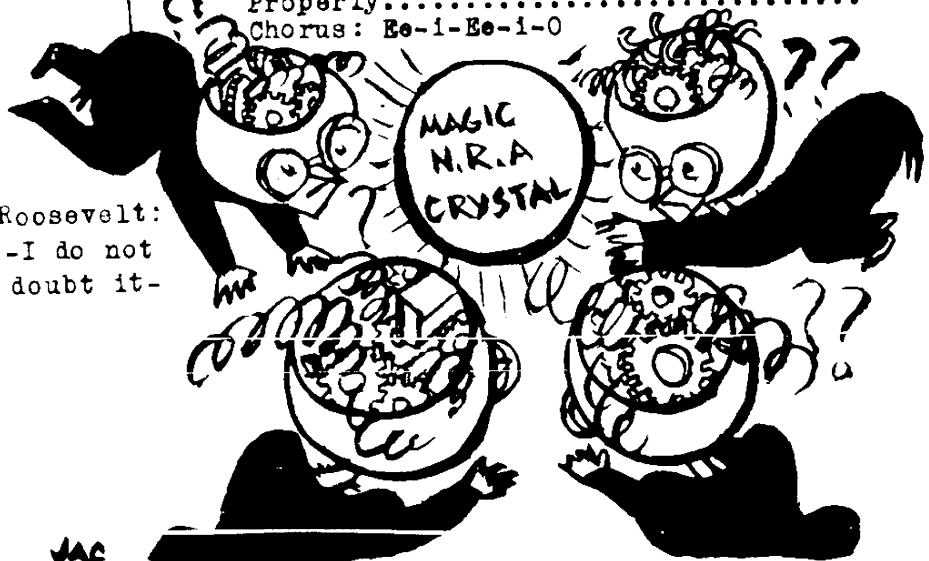
We'll solve this problem  
Its quite elementary  
You just burn half your crop  
The other half you bury  
And this will send the prices high  
The people all will start to cry

But business must meet its expense  
And if the workers have no pants,  
They'll have to do without it!

So,-

Bosses, grafters, have no fear  
Our Capitalism is ruling here  
Land of gang and racketeer,  
Capitalism's ruling here.

Roosevelt:  
-I do not  
doubt it-



JAC



The Farmers Response to Ee-i-Ee-i-0

You've turned our farms into golf links  
Where you can swing your sticks.  
And because we were quiet and lowly,  
You called us rubes and hicks.

Refrain:

Always before, we've stooped to implore  
We've come to you on our knees,  
But never again while we are men  
Will you turn out our children to freeze.

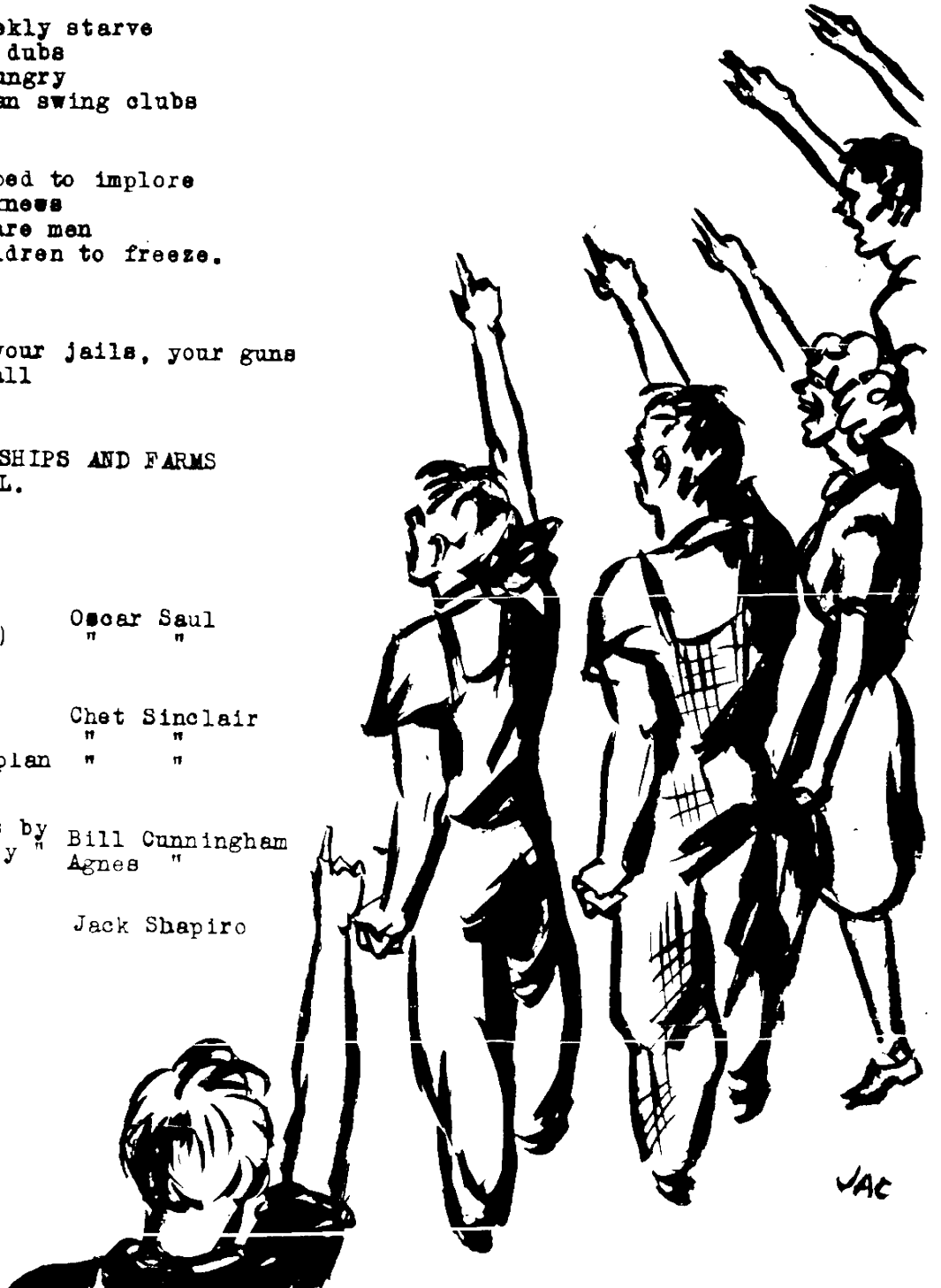
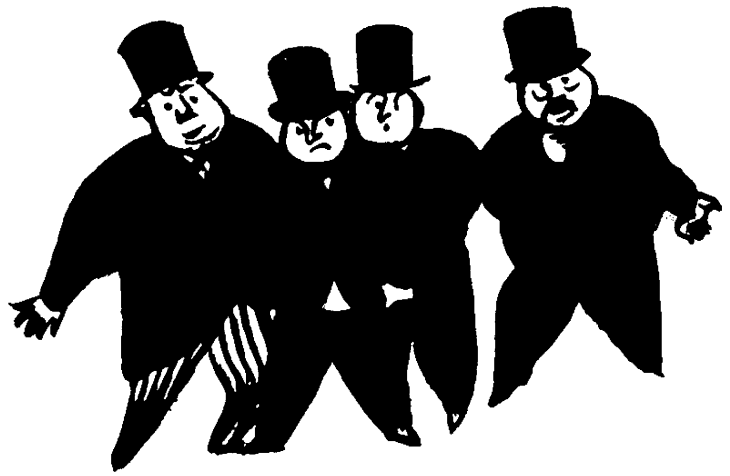
You think we'll always meekly starve  
You think we'll always be dubs  
But when our babies are hungry  
You'll find that we too can swing clubs

Always before, we've stooped to implore  
We've come to you on our knees  
But never again while we are men  
Will you turn out our children to freeze.

Your laws, your sheriffs, your jails, your guns  
No more can keep us in thrall

FOR WORKERS IN CITIES AND SHIPS AND FARMS  
TOGETHER WILL CRUSH YOU ALL.

Rogues Gallery	Oscar Saul
House of Industry(dialogue)	" "
"Dont you worry Mr. Johnny"	Chet Sinclair
3.2 the good old brew	" "
Old Man Roosevelt's got a plan	" "
Farmers Song	words by Bill Cunningham melody " Agnes "
Brain Trust	Jack Shapiro



# the international workers theatre olympiad

JOHN E. BONN

## 2. The Method of Evaluation.

The Olympiad took place at a significant moment in the history of the revolutionary theatre; at the completion of the first period - the period of struggle for its establishment, for clarification, and for recognition. The task of this period, to pose against the old bourgeois "art for art's sake" conception of theatre the idea and the reality of a new conscious, political, dynamic theatre, has been fulfilled. The revolutionary theatre of the world has become a fact that cannot be denied or ignored any more.

Organizationally and ideologically established, the revolutionary theatre faces its next, its real task: to take over its function in the revolution; to become the mouthpiece of a new thought, to join the vanguard of a new order of society.

The first, the militant period of the revolutionary theatre is completed, but the old organizational structure, the political outlook, the method of work, and the artistic form of the past period survived. There is a discrepancy between means and tasks, which has to be balanced by means of a thorough reorientation.

The revolutionary theatre is going through a period of transition from which we cannot expect creative achievements as much as theoretical endeavours, self-criticism, technical and artistic experiments.

The Olympiad necessarily had to reflect this state of transition with all its attendant phenomena. It therefore could not be an exhibition of mature and outstanding works of the new theatre art. It rather was a review of the forms in the new theatre, showing how far it understood the new problems and what methods it found toward their solution. The tasks of the Olympiad was not to set examples for the future work, but to serve as raw material for analysis and critical evaluation. The work of the Olympiad jury was planned and carried out according to this principle. The question of the best group, of "the winner" was not raised at all. The main objectives of the Jury were:

1. To give each individual group practical and theoretical advice for its future work, based on the performance at the Olympiad as well as on its other artistic, political and organizational activities.
2. To issue an exhaustive statement analysing the present situation of the International Revolutionary Theatre, and giving directions for its future development.

In order to realize the tremendous practical value of the Olympiad it is necessary to know how the jury functioned. The whole committee was subdivided in sections, which concentrated on from three to five groups each. To each group an individual member of the jury was assigned.

The first task was to get the most graphic and most complete picture of each group. Each group had to fill out questionnaires dealing with its history, social and political composition, political activities, organizational structure, repertoire, method of work, form of training, special problems, shortcomings, etc. Not only the groups, but also each individual member had a questionnaire to fill out giving information on his previous theatrical experience, political activities, on his work in the group, and on his opinion of the group.

During the Olympiad each group was in permanent contact with the jury-member assigned to it. Discussions on special problems of the group, as well as on general questions took place in group meetings and in interviews with individual members of the group. The result was that the jury-member was fully acquainted with his group when he saw their performance. Based on questionnaires, the various meetings with the group, and the performances, the jury-member wrote a detailed analysis and review, which after having been discussed and corrected together with the group, was presented to the full jury conference. In such a full conference which lasted about five hours, no more than one to two group reviews were taken up. Also representatives of the respective groups were invited to these discussions, which were carried with almost perfect thoroughness.

In the Jury-conference to which the respective group representatives were invited, the group reviews were read and discussed. No problem was dismissed before a satisfactory solution could be found for the group. No theoretical, technical, artistic or political question passed without being completely answered. If necessary, complicated problems were given over to specialists.

The method of work applied by the judging committee may seem slow and complicated, but it sure was thorough, reliable, and competent, to get the fullest and most practical results from the Olympiad - for each group, for each section, as well as for the whole revolutionary theatre movement.

The League of Workers Theatres of the U. S. A. missed the opportunity to have a group in the Olympiad, which represented the average level of the revolutionary theatre movement of this country, a group which could have benefitted from the cooperative critical work with the judging committee, and which could have brought back the results of the Olympiad in form of immediate organizational and artistic creative work.

Thus we could have drawn our lessons from the achievements, and shortcomings of the International Revolutionary Theatre as represented at the Olympiad, in a more efficient and more productive way, than from a review of the groups and their performances (which will follow in the next issue of the "New Theatre").

# THEATRE OF ACTION

## (COAST TO COAST)

### NEW YORK

Theatre of the Workers School: The group is preparing the Soviet farce "Dr. Krupps, Specialist" which has been entirely rewritten. "Pennies, Nickels, Dimes" will be revived and revised for the "Daily Worker" Campaign. A new play on the N. R. A. is being written collectively by the play-writing committee. We need more members for acting, directing, play-writing and music. Everybody who wants to participate in or learn these activities is invited to join the group. Rehearsals: Mondays, 8:45 P. M. in the Workers School, 35 E. 12th Street.

Prolet Buehne: On Saturday, August 12th, the Prolet-Buehne arranged an affair called "Soviet Theatre Night", at the German Workers Club. The evening was a success. Besides the report of Com. J. E. Bonn on the International Theatre Olympiad and the Soviet Theatre, a sketch "Dr. Krupps, Specialist" and two new Soviet Songs were performed by the group. A novelty was the "Udarnik Song", done with movements, red flags and hammers. The purpose of the evening was not only to give a picture of the Theatre in the Soviet Union but also to bring to the audience the future plans and tasks of the Prolet-Buehne, and to invite everybody to support the group in carrying out these tasks laid down by the All-Eastern Conference of Workers Theatres. The Prolet-Buehne is now planning to organize a dance course and a music group. The necessary steps have already been undertaken.

American Youth Federation: The Dram Group is at present not rehearsing for any particular play but is carrying on a study course on the History of the Drama", and which will take from four to six weeks. Before this study course, the group produced a play, written by one of their members, called "The Greatest President that ever Lived". "Scottsboro" was given before our own organization, and also on the street, outside of our headquarters on 122 Second Avenue, and in a church in Harlem. Plans for the fall include the production of plays of vital economic importance, also considering scenes from Ernest Toller's "Men and Masses" and "We, the People." Short stories will be dramatized. A list of plays to be produced in the coming season will be printed and sent to the L. O. W. T.

Dram Section of Bronx Workers Club is preparing itself for the fall season. Our choice is an Anti-Hitler play, which deals with the burning of the books on May 10th. Of course, this subject is narrow, but we couldn't get a play which embraces all the phases of fascism. The name of

play is "Culture ala Hitler". It has been endorsed by the "Leagueart". - - -

The New York Section of the LOWT has been functioning successfully since its reorganization in June. We have contacted approximately 60 groups including 2 professional theatres, - The Theatre Collective and Theatre Union. We successfully mobilized the groups for the Eastern Conference with the result - 20 groups and 45 delegates present. In carrying out the program laid down at the Eastern Conference, the New York Section Executive Committee has adopted the slogan "Onward Towards An Artistic Revolutionary Theatre." To follow this slogan we have issued a semi-monthly mimeographed bulletin called "Theatre Front" the first issue of which had a circulation of approximately 250 copies. Our second issue in preparation now is double its original size. We have also organized a service department which secures bookings for the groups, and lastly we are preparing a huge theatre festival for October 1st. This affair will take place probably at the New School for Social Research. The festival will be known throughout New York City as "The Theatre of Action On Parade."

The section council meets every month and the section executive meets twice a month. All groups in New York are urged to send their delegates to the next section council meeting where something of great importance to all the groups will be discussed.

### PHILADELPHIA

John Reed Dram Group: This group has started a training class, to which are invited members of other Phila. dramatic groups. This class covers training in voice, diction and pantomime. There will also be instruction in direction and stage technique. A recitation group has been organized. Performances have been given practically every week during the summer months at picnics. A group performed at the W. I. R. camp in Lumberville, Pa. on July 2nd, where they built their own scenery, installed a curtain, and gave a creditable performance of "Conversations in a Telephone Booth" and "United Front." "The Sell-Out" was performed at a picnic on July 23, by United Workers Organizations of Philadelphia. On the occasion of the Anti-War Night held by the John Reed Club, the Dram Group supplied the piece-de-resistance, a dynamic version of theatre-of-action in the form of a mass recitation called "War-Dogs", by I. Shappin. This production was repeated along with another play and some poems, at a picnic for the benefit of the Armenian revolutionary press, held in Fox Chase on Aug. 27th. All energies of the dram group and the rest of the club are now bending toward contributing to the program of the 14th Anniversary celebration of the Communist Party, to be held here on Sept. 8th. A lecture about the "International Workers Theatre Olympiad in Moscow", and the "Theatre in the Soviet Union" will be arranged for the beginning of October. Comrade Bonn who represented the League of Workers Theatres of the U.S.A. at the International Olympiad, will give the lecture and lead the discussion.

# DANCE

## WORKERS DANCE LEAGUE AND NEW THEATRE

A growing need for a printed organ devoted to dance art, alive to the social life of the masses, comes to realization with the inclusion of the Dance Supplement as part of the NEW THEATRE. Both here and abroad dance publications fill their pages with discussions, reviews and news of the "modern" dance world, composed for the most part of primitivists, mystics, pessimists, exoticists, geometric gymnasts and poseurs. In these days of heightened social consciousness, big strikes, widespread unemployment, world economic conferences ending in deadlock, the United States turning towards fascism with the introduction of the NRA, and drilling armies a daily street scene in European countries - - where does the "modern" dance stand in such a world?

Let us see what has been presented on current dance programs - "Bacchanale", "Satan's Lil Lamp", "Farandole", "Water Study", "Piccoli Soldati", "Gymnopaedia", "Impressions of a Bull Ring", and others of similar nature. It is obvious that these dances are pitifully lacking in social themes. Their aesthetic is the expression of the sophisticated, the upper class who look upon the use of social themes in dance as inartistic, coarse, and unnecessary. Dance critics are preoccupied with technique. Theme or content is rarely mentioned. "Sheer Movement" we are told should be our aim. The thousand who witnessed the smooth performance of dancers at the Lewisohn Stadium in New York this summer were perhaps pleased with the "sheer movement" but the trivial and often ridiculous themes left them unmoved, and with a feeling that they waited for a message, alive and sharp, which never came.

At the same time when bourgeois dancers are concentrating on being "arty" and original, groups of younger artists, repelled by the stagnation of theory and practice in this "modern" dance, have formed groups for the purpose of expressing feelings and ideas common to all, determined to do something to better the present woeful condition of the masses. It was with this aim in mind that the Workers Dance League, was organized 9 months ago. So strong was the idea of using the dance as a means of expressing social ideas, that in this short space of time, the League has 17 N. Y. C. groups with groups in other cities asking for membership. The bourgeois dance, like the bourgeois society, is decaying and a dance arising from the life and struggles of the workers is growing.

The Dance Festival given by the Workers Dance League in New York on June 15th at the New School

for Social Research to an overpacked house was a landmark in the history of the dance. For the first time 12 groups competed presenting social themes. Although the dancers technically were immature and often imitative, the content was strikingly new. Here were such themes as "Hunger", "Charity" (a satire) "Awake", "Unemployment", "Miners Dance", "War Trilogy", "Workers Dance Song". Between the audience and the dancers was a communal enthusiasm. One did not hear such comments as "It's very interesting but I can't understand it." These dancers were at once understood by the onlookers. It was apparent after the performance that the dance of the future is an art that must come from the collective spirit of the masses.

In this period of tremendous historical importance, we call upon all dancers to watch the march of events and make the dance a means of social protest, a revolutionary expression of the workers. Acclaimed artists in other mediums are with us, Gorky, Barbusse, Rölland, and Americans like Dreiser, Anderson, Sinclair, and thousands of members of the John Reed Clubs throughout the United States. We greet the first appearance of the Dance Supplement of the NEW THEATRE magazine as another stride forward towards building a workers dance art.

### WHAT DIRECTION SHALL THE NEGRO DANCE TAKE? THE FIRST OF A SERIES OF W.D.L. OPEN FORUMS

#### PROGRAM:

HEMSLEY WINFIELD & GROUP - "Red Laquer & Jade"  
(to Basil Ruysdale's narration over the radio  
by special arrangement with station WOR)

BLACK AND WHITE - Workers Dance League Dance

#### MAIN SPEAKERS:

Hemsley Winfield and Augusta Savage  
(of "Emperor Jones") (prominent Negro Sculptress)

SUNDAY 5:30 p.m. October 1st  
YWCA Harlem - 138th St. btw. Lenox & Seventh Ave.

Admission 25¢ - 15¢ to W.D.L. members

#### ANNOUNCING \*\*\*\*\*

A Teachers' Conference to decide methods of teaching and organizational steps to be used in WDL groups, will be held on September 30th, Saturday, at the New Dance Group Studio, at 2:30 P.M. All teachers are asked to attend. Write for credential blank to:

PREPARATIONS COMMITTEE, WDL, 12 East 17th Street

# The tasks of the Revolutionary Dance

Nell Anyon

To clarify the tasks of the revolutionary dance today it is necessary for us to understand the position of the modern bourgeois dance. Let us confine this discussion to the dance as we know it today in the studio and on the concert stage.

The well known dancers today are a direct product of the post-war period and the decline of capitalism. What is it their dances express? Are their themes in any way connected with the turmoil that is life today? Examine some of their dances: "La Valse", "Dytharambio", "Gymnopaedia", "Monotony Whirl", "Wood-block" and all the allegros, andantes and scherzos. Are these more than an empty presentation of some technical achievement? Dancers today are vying for prestige in creating striking and original dance patterns.

Take another category of modern dances, "Primitive Mysteries", "Shakers", and Mary Wigman's group dance "Der Weg" (The Way). Is it that we have exhausted all current material as a source of inspiration for the dance that we must go back to the primitive, mystic, and puritanical peoples for our theme? With capitalist society hanging by a thread surely we have a great deal to dance about that directly concerns us today.

The dance of today is on its way to purdition because it has made no contact with life, because it deals with trivial subjects, with abstract dance interpretations of rhythmic patterns or musical compositions. It has been swept into the private studios of individual dancers to express their intense personal moods. The dance of today is declining because it is steeped in commercial careerism and opportunism. In this period of crisis, it is only another way for young dancers to earn a living. It has become the property of Broadway managers who care nothing for the real dance interest that has awakened in thousands of young people, but who will buy the 'Best Seller'. An owner of such a best seller has recently characterized the current Broadway attitude towards dancers in these bitter words:

"Today I am famous because I can turn a somersault in the air. Tomorrow someone will show a double somersault and I will be thrown on the trash heap."

The dance has degenerated into a commercial enterprise to amuse the public, and the dancer must necessarily work on those things which big producers teach the public to like. Thus the gradual elimination of the art of the dance.

All history has shown that the dance reaches its peak simultaneously with the highest point in the development of the state. The decline of the art of the dance has also coincided with the decline of the state. Records show that the dance at its height was an instrument of education and culture and its source of inspiration and thematic material had its roots in the existing state.

Today the dance makes no conscious effort to express the conditions created by a disintegrating social system. American dancers consider their art as above their actual lives. Thus we have dances of "the life of the bee" and none of the lives of working men. Their dances are neither optimistic nor pessimistic; they do not express a conscious social view point. However, this conscious avoiding of the subject in itself indicates a passive adherence to bourgeois society.

There is one salvation for the dance today. Dancers must look to the future, to the eventual destruction of capitalism, to the building of a new society for their source of inspiration. Our way lies in the direction of collective mass activity, of seeing the dance as a vital part of all revolutionary Theatre Arts. It is necessary, therefore, to consider the dance in a much broader sense. The essence of revolutionary drama is the expression of ideas and emotions arising from the struggle of the working class. It deals with the vital factor of life and activity among masses of workers in relation to their social existence. This demands an all embracing theatre technique. The content of our class struggle plays, with all the tension of class conflicts, with all the surging emotions of an awakened social consciousness, with the call for revolutionary action, is of necessity too overwhelming to stop at the spoken word. At such times when words become inadequate the proper conviction can be carried only through the medium of dance movement. It is a particular task of revolutionary dancers to reawaken the dance as a part of all dramatic expression. Dance movement must not be confined to carefully developed compositions, but must become an important part of every dramatic speech. The significance of all spoken words must be emphasized with gesture. Above all, in the revolutionary theatre it is important to develop dance movement in connection with rhythmic mass recitation of revolutionary slogans. This will result not only in making the revolutionary theatre a more potent educator, but it will also lead to the development of a dance that will be a true dramatic expression of the creative working class.

# A reply from the new dance group

GRACE WYLIE

As revolutionary artists there are certain definite things we look for in a critique of our work by a revolutionary critic that should distinguish it from that of a bourgeois critic. The bourgeois reviewers look for the "different", the "exotic", the "great technician". Our view is towards a statement of the intent and purpose, the achievement of this, how we failed or succeeded, and suggestions for further work. Most important, we look for an attitude conducive to further work and an appreciation of the struggles we have had and which are before us.

To use his own words, did Prentis' review accomplish this? In his first paragraph Prentis represents certain aims and principles for the New Dance Group, which he develops in the following way:

"These ideas must be simply stated, the symbols must be obvious, the movements direct and slightly exaggerated, the sound and color functional to the extreme. All mysticism, all mood for mood's sake must be done away with. Did the New Dance Group Recital accomplish this?"

We can easily see that these are merely methods and limitations found in the dance and certainly are not aims, goals, or principles.

On the question of "conducive to further work"... The most discouraging thing for any group is to see a carefully planned program (which developed from the various phases in our present day situation to a recognition of the War Danger as the final outcome) described with "They gave us an assortment of "awakenings"....."parasites", jingoisms, gas attacks, aerial raids, charity, folk dances...."

As to suggestions, Prentis in complaining of our work, presents the choice between the modern bourgeois (which he claims is our greatest influence) and the primitive communal dance. He says we should "hark back to the primitive communal dance for intent and purpose." We assume he is referring to their social basis - war dances and harvest dances in which the whole tribe participated because these two things affected the whole tribe. Very good. But in what way does our intent differ from theirs? Is the class struggle not a social basis, the desire to inspire others to participate in this struggle, not a social basis? The obvious comparison with modern bourgeois dance should be, what is intent and purpose. This Prentis omitted. He only spoke of their technique. The New Dance Group has nothing in common with the intent of modern bour-

geois dancers who are involved in mysticism, escapism, who dance of witches, vague wanderings into the cosmic spaces (Der Weg of the Wigan group) Dhytharambics, but do we completely discard their technique and suddenly build our own? We derive whatever is of value to us from the dance as it stands and reject the rest. If the bourgeois dance has anything of value to give us, we use it. Historically this is the process by which all the arts develop. This is the meaning of dialectics in art.

Now we can proceed with a positive statement of what our aims actually are and how much we have accomplished towards realizing them. Since the Hecksher Theatre Recital and our two studio forum-recitals in June, we have made considerable progress in concretizing our aims. As for the Hecksher Theatre affair, we had a few important aims in mind. The first was to bring the revolutionary dance before a semi-professional (dance) audience and by this means to attract new technically developed members from them. The second was to prove the artistic integrity of a dance that expresses concretely the different phases of the class struggle with a revolutionary significance.

As to the first aim, we can claim a measure of success proven by an increase in registration of trained dancers and teachers attracted by the recital. When we consider our accomplishments in line with the second aim, there are certain criticisms to be made. Most of the faults had their origin in two basic shortcomings. These were, namely, a poor use of our trained dancers and amateur beginners, and the lack of complete understanding of the content and background of the compositions among the dancers themselves. Therefore a mystic atmosphere in such a dance as "Awake", which was not mysticism as Prentis suggests but ideological confusion. Another shortcoming had to do with the attempt to put on a recital without sufficient work, resulting in an unfinished performance.

Definite steps have already been taken to remedy the first and last mistake. As to the question of educating our dancers to a clear understanding of what they are dancing about - this involves a realization that we can only derive strength and direction from our experiences, with our roots deep down and bedded in the class struggle. We must recruit from the working class to add to our strength. Finally, we must remember that we are not bystanders, but participants in the class struggle and only as such can we accomplish any goals as revolutionary dancers.

# From Our Correspondence

## Philadelphia

"How can you lead impromptu mass dancing?...As for my dancing I have done three new things - a duet with a black and white comrade, the cycle of the Russian Revolution, and a pantomime to the "Song of Wrath" ("End, end, end, their rule"), with an epilogue which shows how to begin a new world. What in dancing has been happening in other working class camps? I am waiting anxiously for suggestions.."

- Yours for a workers' dance, -

"Although the studio problem still remains, we are very conscientious and there is no flightiness."

"Of course we are meeting regularly at a dinky local center with splintered floors and a broken piano. This should not really matter if we had spirit and genius. As for the spirit - it is not lacking but for the genius --- that is another matter. We are thinking of putting penny and penny together and get some outside skill. We have a list of some 20 people who have expressed desire to join. We have a nucleus of steady, determined girls who can never fail us. Of the others, sometimes 3 or 4 drop in. At any rate Philadelphia must have a class-conscious workers dance group and if she must have it, she will...."

## Chicago

"In response to your July Workers Theatre magazine article, we are writing to you to help us organize a group. Please send us information, material, and advice."

## Boston

"We are working on a Tom Mooney Dance which is extremely simple, but if we do it well, it will prove effective."

"It pleased us to hear that the N. Y. dance groups sometimes think of us. It encourages us when we see the enthusiasm displayed in your work. When any of the comrades has an idea for a dance she writes it out and presents it to the secretary who in turn files it. When we have our meetings the dances are decided upon for use. Could you send us a copy of the new dance magazine. We would like to become subscribers. Any information or advice we can get would be valuable. We think we would be interested in the folk dances and satires since all our own dances are of the most serious nature."

"I have succeeded in starting a youth dance group. They are dear kids, about 13 and 14 years old. They insist upon calling themselves the John Reed Juniors. I hope you will be able to guide me as

I am most anxious to do this to the best of my ability. I am really anxious to express our ideas and struggles in the dance. I'm also starting work in Lawrence in about 3 weeks."

"By the way we have three new men in our group. We thought of giving dancing lessons once a week to any one who wants them (that is in a class).. for 10¢ a lesson. People seem impressed and willing so we may raise some money and get some new members for our performing group."

Delegates to the Dance Contest:

"I want to tell you that I was very inspired and also ashamed after seeing the wonderful work the dance groups are doing in New York. I told as best I could to the group all I learned from watching and listening especially at the council and we have all resolved to work harder and with more purpose hereafter. I feel that my instructing the group will be better because of my trip to New York."

## NEWS AND NOTES

### General Membership of the WDL Selects a New Executive Committee

After the Dance Contest held by the WDL at the New School for Social Research, the league found itself with new important tasks. Groups in other cities were asking for help in organizing dance activities, requests for performers kept coming in, from proletarian camps, from unions on strike, and city clubs, while the mail box was flooded with requests

Up to that time the WDL was controlled by a secretariat, consisting of organizer, educational director, and secretary. This secretariat was vaguely responsible to the membership. By the end of June, two of its members left the city, leaving the work to the organizer and a new recruit as her assistant. This "Provisional Secretariat" soon found that it could not possibly take care of all the affairs demanding attention. It also realized that the league, on the road to uncontrollable bureaucracy, was in need of reorganization.

At a mass membership meeting held Aug. 4, 1933 the following were chosen as the executive committee; Nell Anyon, provisional national secretary; Grace Wylie, organizer; Helen Edel, membership secretary; Hy Glickman, Dance Service Bureau; Irving Lansky, educational director; Mignon Verne, dance editor of New Theatre. Work has already been started in several important directions.

DANCE SUPPLEMENT asks for criticisms and suggestions from all interested in building a vital Workers Dance Art. Send all communications to M. Verne, Workers Dance League, 42 East 17th St.

# F I L M

## film conference in maria baker

At the International Workers Theatre Olympiad in Moscow in May, 1933, a cinema conference was held May 30th to May 31st. The conference was organized by the Cinema Buro of the IURT (International Union of the Revolutionary Theatre). Besides the delegates of the Workers Theatre Olympiad, outstanding writers, directors and artists took part in the conference.

Leon Moussinac opened the conference. He stressed the importance of organizing a revolutionary film movement in the capitalist countries. Com. Bela Balazs reported on the political propaganda in the bourgeois film. He showed how the film in Germany prepared systematically for fascism. He showed that even a film like "Mother Krause" is dangerous as it shows the conditions of the workers in such a state that the only way out is suicide. Bourgeois and social democratic pictures do not always divert from the class struggle. On the contrary very often they point to it (like "Mother Krause") but in such a way that their position seems a helpless one that cannot be avoided. The film organization should give lectures on bourgeois motion pictures in a theoretical and dialectical manner, not simply disposing of them with the phrase that they divert from the class struggle. On the contrary, they do more than that, - each film has a certain definite propaganda effect and as such should be dealt with more thoroughly.

Com. Rodenberg spoke on the importance of the small stripe film and its history. This type of film is very useful for the revolutionary film movement, since it can be shown in any hall, before any organization. It is also more economical than the large size film and is within the reach of workers' organizations. Soviet pictures can be recopied for small stripe films and then be shown to an audience who otherwise would never see them. A workers' weekly could be built up and shown without being censored. (closed meetings and affairs). The revolutionary film organization should produce its own films with the aid of the Workers Theatre. A good example of this was shown by a French educational picture (Pomme de Terre) "The Potato", showing the exploitation of the worker. He plants and cultivates the soil and when the goods come

back to him he has to pay a high price for them. In that picture the acting was done by a French theatre-of-action. Here is a task for the workers theatre groups to work in close contact with the film league. The workers theatres can utilize the film in their plays, showing actual facts and scenes instead of explaining them in speeches.

The delegates to the cinema conference told about the revolutionary film activities in their respective countries. With a few exceptions (France, Japan, England and America) there were hardly any revolutionary film activities in those countries. Drawing the conclusion from this shortcoming, it was decided that the theatre section of the IURT in each country was to be held responsible for the building up of a revolutionary film movement. In those countries where such a film league is already in existence, one member was elected to establish a closer contact with the Cinema Buro of the IURT.

At the conference, a report was also given on the Soviet film on its artistic, political and technical development. The Soviet film has developed its own revolutionary style, the film montage, which is used not as in capitalist countries to link some events together but to show and to explain the inner and social relationship between men and production. The Soviet film is a powerful weapon in the building of Socialism. It is a means of educating the people. Technically the Soviet Union is not dependent anymore on imports from other countries but has its own film industry.

In the general discussion on future tasks and better cooperation between the film sections and the Cinema Buro of IURT, several suggestions were adopted. Each section is to report regularly on the bourgeois film and collect all the material they can get, film reviews, film laws, etc. The Cinema Buro in turn will collect all this material in book form and distribute it among the different sections. This interchange of material will give us a better knowledge of the bourgeois film, its technique, its means, its ideology. For, the better we know our enemy, the better we can fight him. To broaden the field, the revolutionary film league must get in contact with existing small stripe film organizations, study their aims, their publications,



their technique, and drawing sympathetic members of these organizations into our movement. The film league must get in touch with workers in the film industry, with film producers who are sympathetic.

The conference closed with the unanimous adoption of the resolution to broaden and strengthen the revolutionary film movement as a powerful weapon in the class struggle.

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## *Minute Movie Reviews*

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DAVID PLATT

**HEROES FOR SALE:** Most demagogic of recent films. Broadlines are not so bad; workers are unemployed because of laziness and introduction of improved machinery by heartless bosses.

**POWER AND GLORY:** Featuring Narratage-new screen Marvel say Producers. Alas nothing but the old flashback discovered by Griffith 20 years ago. Neither power nor glory in the film.

**MORNING GLORY:** Katherine Hepburn the whole show as a stage-struck actress who makes good against heavy odds. Otherwise dull and uninteresting film about theatre.

**STRANGE CASE OF TOM MOONEY:** A remarkable document of the Mooney frame-up. Tom Mooney makes stirring and unforgettable appeal in behalf of his innocence.

**LAUGHING AT LIFE:** Glorification of gun-running. A ridiculously distorted version of the recent South American imperialist wars. Puppet rulers are peace-loving humanitarians; the masses are mobs; the army, merciful; the revolutionary leaders, gangsters, according to this film. Yankee jingoism at the most.

**COLLEGE HUMOR:** Football, fraternity initiations, sorority affairs, classes in crooning by Bing Crosby make up the college curriculum. Also proving that colleges are breeding grounds for fascist ideas. A humorless movie.

**CONQUERORS OF THE NIGHT:** Recent Soviet film of heroism in the Arctic. Badly mounted but excellently photographed and containing two or three sequences of great power.

**PICTURE-SNATCHER:** A reformed gangster becomes a newspaper reporter for tableid and uses hold-up tactics in getting compromising pictures for his boss. Jimmie Cagney is the picture snatcher who wins the daughter of the cop who sent him up for the stretch that reformed him. Fast comedy.

**MAYOR OF HELL:** Jimmie Cagney transforms a juvenile reform school overnite from a painful hell to an utopia. Of course he doesn't do it alone, the Blond helps him. Has been hailed as the American "Road to Life", but it is neither the right road nor true to life. Amusing.

**REUNION IN VIENNA:** Exiled nobility trying to recapture past glory in Vienna. But failing, go back to their cabs and bootblacking. John Barrymore is the ex-archduke cabby, who tries to enliven the party with his royal arrogance. Dull.

**GIRL IN 419:** Gangland invades the hospitals. The most interesting thing in the film is when the ganster asks the hospital head whether he has seen the wonderful Louis Lozowick print at the Art Gallery.

**PRIVATE DETECTIVE 62:** An "honest" detective in the U. S. Diplomatic Service gets in trouble with the authorities over some stolen enemy war secrets and is canned to save the face of the government; then he hires himself out to a crooked agency to prove his versatility until the govt. calls him back to continue his honest spying.

**VOLTAIRE:** The Callas case presented with the necessary maximum of sex appeal. George Arliss and his twitching eyebrow don't help matters much. Badly photographed and bad any way you look at it.

**THIS DAY AND AGE:** A dangerous movie appealing to the Youth of America to organize into fascist troupes to wipe out the enemies of "law and order". Effectively directed by Cecile DeMille. The New Deal is on!

**MOONLIGHT AND PRETZELS:** Another musical comedy, directed by Karl Freund, expert cameraman. The moon is papier-mache and the pretzels half-baked. A few good camera effects, bad songs, pretty girls, and the standard musical comedy plot.

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## NEW THEATRE NEWS

International Theatre, which has been appearing as the bulletin of the Organizational Committee of the International Workers Theatre Olympiad, is being reorganized to become the central organ of the International Union of the Revolutionary Theatre. It will appear regularly once a month in four editions--English, French, German and Russian. It will include theoretical material on artistic problems, articles on individual theatre artists, as well as news and review of the theatre from all corners of the world. The first English issue is expected in New York in the latter part of September. Order yours now.

NEW THEATRE has received a pamphlet "The American Theatre--What can be Done?", by Virgil Geddes. It is announced as the first of a series called the Brookfield, Connecticut. The price is 25 cents a copy in the U. S. A. and 35 cents elsewhere. The pamphlet will be reviewed in our next issue.

Shifting Scenes is not with us this issue because Agitprop is on his vacation (doctor's orders). Before leaving A. declared he would still have the last laugh--coming back Shiftinginger than ever in the October issue.

*What are you doing  
NEW YEARS!*

SEE BACK PAGE

# THEATRE OF ACTION

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## CALIFORNIA

Rebel Players, Los Angeles: This group is one of the very few that believe in selling NEW THEATRE magazine regularly and what is more also sending in the money for sold copies, - About their activities, the group writes us: "Regarding Rebel Players activities for the summer: On July 28, the Rebel Players repeated its program of one act plays for the benefit of the millinery strikers affiliated with the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union. These workers have been on strike for six weeks and it has been a most historic struggle of the workers in this city. On July 29th, at a cultural evening given by the Youth Branches of the International Workers Order, our Blue Blouse Troup presented "Art is a Weapon" and a recitation; On July 30, our Blue Blouses performed at an Anti-Fascist Picnic given by local German Workers organizations; On August 1, we presented "Hands Off" at an Anti-War meeting in Santa Monica, a nearby city. For the first time in about 3 years a radical out-door meeting was held at the City Plaza of Los Angeles, on August 1, Anti-War Day. With the advent of a new mayor in the city, there has been a temporary halt to the infamous Los Angeles "Red Squad". The workers are not fooling themselves about the "liberal" tendencies of the new mayor, however, and realize that they will have freedom of speech and assemblage only as long as they struggle and demand it. At this Anti-War meeting on Aug. 1, there were about 3000 workers, It would have been an excellent opportunity for Rebel Players to reach a mass audience with their plays, but they failed to take advantage of the opportunity. The arrangements committee failed to request the Rebel Players to prepare a play, and the Rebel Players failed to prepare itself. After the meeting was over, everybody began to say "Why didn't the Rebel Players perform?", etc. With a little bit of foresight on the part of the Rebel Players, this excellent opportunity would have been taken advantage of. This error will be corrected immediately. We have a few bookings scheduled for August and September. We are going to prepare the "Sell-Out" for presentation. We are beginning to realize the many opportunities for the development of a greater workers theatre in this city. The temporary diminution of the Red Squad activities will permit more and greater meetings at which we can present the problem of the workers in dramatic form and wake greater masses of workers to action. The development of Fascism in America should be answered by greater activity by the vanguard of the workers as should the growing war danger.

## GROUP THEATRE

The following are the plays which The Group Theatre hopes to present this year:

Crisis by Sidney Kingsley, a play about "man in medicine." With a hospital background, the play deals with the conflict between personal "happiness" and the serious pursuit of medicine as a science.

Gallery Gods by Richard Duchinsky, adapted by Henrietta Malkiel and John Heussman. The title of this play will be changed to approximate more closely its German original Komparsarie (Supernumeraries). This is a picture of the commercial theatre, stressing the defeat of human dignity involved in the conditions of the contemporary theatre especially as it affects the artistic and economic life of the small part actors.

The Pure in Heart by John Howard Lawson is this author's swan-song of the jazz-and-rack-steer age. It is a kind of wonder-story mirroring the false glamour of cosmopolitan civilization whose final reality and emblem are embodied in the criminal.

Fortune Heights by John Dos Passos is a stylized folk-play reflecting the break-up of American small business.

Gold Eagle Guy by Melvin Levy is a portrait of an American capitalist in his heyday.

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The Theatre Collective (section of the Workers Laboratory Theatre) is all set for what promises to be a memorable season in the revolutionary theatre.

A recent discussion of our last season's activities stressed very strongly the importance of certain steps which would lead us along the path of developing as a strong, creative theatre. The most important of these are the organization of a permanent acting company and an artistic council whose function it would be to lead the artistic work of the theatre and to draw in available forces from the outside who can help us in the way of guidance.

Our first production will be "Dirt Farmer" by Paul Peters, a play dealing with the farmers' struggles.

Two more productions will be chosen from the following:

"1931"-by Paul and Claire Sifton in an entirely new production.

"Joy Street"-by Zarkhi. A soviet play dealing with the labor government in England. Recently produced in the Theatre of the Revolution, Moscow.

"My Friend"- by Pogodin. A new soviet play dealing with Socialist construction in the Soviet Union, recently produced in the Theatre of the Revolution, Mos.

A Revolutionary Musical Review at present in preparation.

Playwrights are invited to submit manuscripts. The above production list is not yet final.

A complete prospectus of our coming activities and our subscription drive will be released shortly.

# mail-box

## TORONTO

Dear Comrade:

We are in receipt of your letter of July 10th. We just got it yesterday so that accounts for our delay in answering.

I might say in connection with the workers' theatre page in *MASS*, these reports were taken from various letters from groups that asked for plays and when we asked them for information we got very little. No doubt these groups are functioning, but we are not in very close touch with them and for that reason know very little of their activities. Building a workers' theatre movement is a very difficult thing in Canada and the groups that get plays from us do not think it necessary to report to us periodically on their activities. This page was to act as a stimulus for the groups to report, but I might say that to date we have not received very many reports. For the most part these groups are not workers theatre groups directly. They are mostly part of some other organization and as I said before, do not see the significance of coordinating this work and reporting to one body of their activities. We are, in the near future, sending out a questionnaire to all contacts that we have and when we have this information, we will be able to report on something.

Recently we went on a tour and were very successful, not in finances, but in propaganda value for the building of a workers' theatre movement in Canada. We covered about 8 places and in each place we received a hearty ovation from the workers. We are preparing a full report of this tour at the present time and will send it on to you as soon as it is done.

We will write you and send you anything that we have that might be of interest to you in the very near future. Also reports of the tour and also of the activities in general of the Workers' theatre groups here in Canada.

Hoping that you will write to us soon, we remain,

Comradely yours,  
Workers' Theatre Group  
Toronto, Canada.

## SAN FRANCISCO

Dear Comrades:

With the successful presentation of our Musical Revue "The Blunders and Follies of 1933" we are now turning our attention exclusively to the development of Blue Blouse troupes, who will be able to give short plays at every one of the street meetings held in San Francisco.

At present we have two troupes composed of three members each. Instead of performing their little playlets on the back of a truck, our troupes give their presentations upon a small platform.

This platform was devised by our Technical Committee under the direction and assisted by the suggestions of the Executive Committee. It has an area of six by four feet and an elevation of fifteen inches.

Each Workers Center in the city is entrusted with one of these platforms, and wherever street meetings are held in that part of town the group meets at the center, carries the platform to the appointed corner and, at the proper moment, give its play.

At the various affairs given by the Workers Centers, our organization generally presents a longer play or else two short Blue Blouse plays. Formerly our organization was considerably handicapped by inadequate facilities for the staging of these plays. But these handicaps have been very successfully overcome by our Technical Committee. Portable curtains, portable footlights, switchboard and spots are now carried along to the centers where they assist materially in creating the atmosphere proper to a theatrical production.

Our Technical difficulties having been solved, our most serious problem is an acute shortage of Blue Blouse plays. We need BLUE BLOUSE PLAYS. If you can send us any do so At once and we will be keenly appreciative of the courtesy.

As to your requests for copies of the Revolutionary Circus and the Revolutionary Revue, they will be sent just as soon as they are put into shape by our playwright committee. The first is just about ready to go off but the second will require a little time.

In passing it gives us very great pleasure to inform you that "The Blunders and Follies of 1933" was a signal success from every point of view--musical, dramatic, comic and revolutionary. On second thought only one aspect of the entire affair fell below expectation. We are alluding to the financial outcome. We broke even. It is a consolation to reflect that it might have been worse. We have not however given up hope of realizing some pecuniary gain from this exceptionally fine creation. Our present plans call for the raising of enough money by subscriptions to have our book, lyrics and music printed in pamphlet form. This pamphlet will be sold all over the country and the profits accruing therefrom will go to swell our coffers.

The request has been made twice for one of your WORKERS THEATRE MANUALS and both times ignored. Why is this?

Our librarian would be singularly pleased to receive from you a list of magazines, books, etc. which would go properly into the library of a WORKERS THEATRE organization. Kindly quote prices and send along whatever is distributed free of cost.

Comradely yours,  
Correspondence Sec't.

Editors Note: The request for a Workers Theatre Manual has not been ignored. The fact is that there is no such Manual as yet. However, the National Executive Committee has gotten busy immediately and started working on one. Soon after this issue of the Magazine, the Manual will also be ready and can be had from the National Office.

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