

New Theatre

DRAMA • FILM • DANCE

"U.S. Puts 150 Idle
Actors to Work"

In This Issue:

John Wexley
Hiram Motherwell
Liston M. Oak
Glenn Hughes
Franchot Tone
Mordecai Gorelik
Robert Gessner
V. I. Pudovkin

A Chorus Girl's Job

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NEW THEATRE

VOL. III

NO. 4

1934

THE initial official anti-semitic and anti-Communist film, S. A. Mann Brand (Storm Trooper Brand), is now in this country. The American distributor, Bavaria Film Distributors, 489 Fifth Avenue, New York City is trying hard to get it booked in New York. It has played sporadically in several cities throughout the United States, and Bavaria Film Distributors claim that the film will soon have a Broadway release.

We quote from the review that appeared in *Variety*: "It is unspeakably naive with all the Nazi characters snow white angles and all the others, Communists and Jews, blacker than the devil. . . The whole thing being a series of incidents loose-

ly knitted together and leading up to the triumphant climax of Hitler's grip for power. There are also several crowd scenes with the Nazi war-cry—Juda Verrecke—Perish Jewry, sounding from the screen. . . ."

The Film and Photo League of New York has begun to mass its forces for vigorous protest. On Tuesday, February 13th there was a demonstration led by the Film and Photo League. We urge all cultural and anti-fascist groups and individuals throughout the country to bombard the offices of the Bavaria Film Dist., 489 Fifth Avenue, New York, with letters and telegrams demanding that they withdraw the film from the American market and send it back to Hitler's Germany.

funds must go to the workers in the theatre. This can only be effected by the united action of the theatre workers. **NEW THEATRE** will support every effort in this direction.

AN historic event in the history of the American theatre takes place next month in Chicago—the second National Theatre Festival of the League of Workers Theatres of the U.S.A. Some fifteen of the best workers theatres from all parts of the country will meet in a dramatic competition lasting three evenings. Mornings and afternoons will be devoted to a conference on the various phases of revolutionary theatre activity, attended by delegates from at least sixty workers theatre groups. There will be a careful evaluation of the progress made since the first National Festival held two years ago in New York. A clear and broad program for the year ahead will be worked out. The tremendous preparatory work for the National Theatre Festival is described elsewhere in this issue. Next month's cry will be: "On to Chicago."

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A tale to arouse the indignation of every theatre worker is told in Kay Sharpe's story of the first CWA theatre project, published in this issue. Not only was the project pitifully inadequate, but was carried out with all the elements of favoritism and lack of consideration for the actors whom it was supposed to benefit.

Now all sorts of new CWA projects are being pressed by various interested parties, particularly by some of the big producers. Naturally, the managers are out to see that funds appropriated pass in large measure into their hands. The owners of theatrical real estate do likewise. It remains for the theatre workers—actors, stagehands, musicians, scenic artists, dramatists, directors, press agents, and others—to see to it that the avowed purpose of the CWA projects—the creation of employment—is really attained. The great bulk of the

THE series of replies in this issue bring to a conclusion the questionnaire survey on Prospects for the American Theatre, undertaken by New Theatre. The replies, all made last summer, would no doubt be modified by some of the writers, were they to be written today. Some are obviously slight and superficial; others are carefully thought out. But in general they furnish, as they were intended to, an accurate cross-section of American theatre opinion today. As such they deserve careful analysis in the light of the facts today—analysis which New Theatre will soon present in its pages.

THE Canadian government's ban on the production of *Eight Men Speak*, done by the Workers Theatre of the Toronto Progressive Arts Club, continues in force. The League of Workers Theatres of the U.S.A. last month asked all theatre groups, cultural or other organizations, as well as individuals, to send protests, to pass resolutions of protest at all their performances and meetings, to demand the rescinding of the ban. No word has come as to such action from any group or individual. Send your protests to Attorney General W. H. Price, Queen's Park, Toronto, Canada. Send word of your actions to the League. What happens at one time in Canada is likely to happen soon in this country. A blow against the police censorship in Canada is a blow against such censorship in the United States.

THE courageous uphill battle of the Theatre Union to make their production of the

NEW THEATRE

Organ of the League of Workers Theatres of the U.S.A. (Section of the International Union of the Revolutionary Theatre), Workers Dance League, and National Film and Photo League.

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anti-war play, *Peace on Earth*, a success was won in the face of a terrific barrage laid down by the general run of bourgeois critics, liberal no less than conservative, who found the bitter social truth of the play too harsh for their tender vision. They could not see the drama for the truth.

With all its weaknesses of dramaturgy and production, *Peace on Earth* is yet a stirring dramatic experience for anyone who is alive to the realities about him. Thrilling moments abound, and the last act, which includes a dramatic compound of all the major elements of war-time hysteria, would have had the critics gushing about brilliant technique, creative experiment, and the like, if only its theme were "harmless."

Well, the Theatre Union, with the aid of more socially minded theatre folk and laymen, and with the indispensable support of workers' organizations, has turned the trick. Before it closes this play by George Sklar and Albert Maltz will have brought its dramatic message of struggle against imperialist war to more than a hundred thousand workers, students, intellectuals and professional people, representing diverse shades of political opinion, shades which are likewise reflected in the composition of the Executive Board of the Theatre Union.

As a footnote, it should be remarked that the success of the Theatre Union, with all that it signifies of the maturing of the elements making for a revolutionary professional theatre, was largely made possible by the work of the countless amateur workers theatres which have sprung up in the last few years under the guidance of the League of Workers Theatres of the U.S.A. These revolutionary theatres of the masses were the main factor in making thousands of workers

theatre-conscious and many theatre workers socially conscious. And it is these workers theatres, now undertaking a serious study of the artistic no less than the political phases of the theatre, that foreshadow the revolutionary mass theatre, the great American theatre of the future.

EVERY friend of NEW THEATRE will want to help in the drive inaugurated this month for a modest Sustaining Fund to carry the unsubsidized NEW THEATRE through its first critical months in print and through the lean summer period. Every theatre, dance and film-and-photo group will want to do its part. So will our host of individual friends. The amount needed is comparatively small. Every contribution, whatever its size, counts. A Sustaining Fund of two hundred and fifty dollars will remove our financial worries until the September season gives us a fresh start. And we shall thus be able to concentrate on making NEW THEATRE better and bigger. We count on your ready response.

The Dramatic Group of the Office Workers Union, organized in January, has already presented *Biography*, by A. B. Magil, at a Union entertainment. They are now working on a one-act play based on *The Case*, by the Theatre of the Workers School. Members as well as people not yet members of the Union, are in the group, which is directed by Boonio.

CORRECTION

Through a technical error the article on the Mass Dance in the Soviet Union published in the February issue omitted the last few words and the name of the author. It should have been credited to S. M. Abrahams.

"U. S. Puts 150 Idle Actors to Work"

The First CWA Theatre Project

MONDAY morning, January 15, the New York Times announced that the government was casting unemployed New York City actors for production sponsored by the Board of Education. By ten o'clock, the office (lent by Actors' Equity to the Civil Works Service officials) was crowded with unemployed actors and actresses. They were told that all parts in the twelve plays to be produced were cast. "But the production plans were just announced this morning," cried one anxious actor. "Isn't there going to be any competition?"

Miss Margaret Smith, who is in charge of the wholesale production scheme for the government, stepped forward. She lamented that Mr. Zolotow of the Times had publicized the plans *too soon*. (A statement later repeated from the CWA publicity office), "I've worked with the actors for many years," she said, "and you know I've always tried to do my best for you. I've been working day and night for the past three days to put over the plan. We were given the O.K. to start, on Friday (January 12th), with the orders that the actors who are cast, receive salary slips on Monday. In that time I had to find 12 clean one-set plays suitable for school children, directors and actors. So you see," she smiled, "there was no time to consider all the thousands of actors who need work so badly. But we hope there will be a chance for you all. Won't you register your names, and cooperate with us?"

Further investigation at the home base and other sources reveals incongruities behind this paternalistic project.

The Civil Works Service,

which employs the actors, is financed by a \$200,000,000 grant from the Federal Relief Emergency Act. It is purely a relief organization and does not fall under NRA regulations, though it acts as an employment agency. The teachers, doctors, economists and artists whom it employs, are paid as relief wards, not as professionals.

The actors' project is the latest and probably last inspiration of a government already burdened with imposing initials and obligations to the war machine. Several minds, including Mrs. Sabin's, contributed to its formation, according to the CWA publicity department. In three days, twelve good clean plays, and directors from the Lamb's Club aristocracy were cropped; and a "carefully selected group of 150 idle actors" (N. Y. World-Telegram, Jan. 24) were placed on the \$28,000 payroll. Only salaries are allowed from this grant; no carfare, props, costumes or scenery are provided.

Miss Smith is proud of the speed with which her staff obeyed orders. (The promptness with which this relief measure was applied is a record for a government which took five years to recognize the need in this field.) In its ardor for "reconstruction" education, the government is clamping down on the hard facts of life. The youthful audiences at CCNY, De Witt Clinton, Henry Street Settlement, and Museum of Natural History (some of the institutions already booked) will see *Pigs*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *She Stoops to Conquer*, etc. The New York population is enlightened by press releases on the enthusiasm of the actors, the splendid cooperation of some of the directors who give

their services free, the Stage Relief Fund which is helping with costumes, the Century Play Company which waived royalties on the plays.

BUT—5,500 "idle" actors want to know why the solution of their problem was limited to a three-day rush, the judgment of one executive, and only \$28,000. The more discerning are curious about how, with other technicalities, 150 actors could have been "carefully selected," as to type, ability and need in so short a time. They hint at "favoritism" and "inner circles."

Joseph Mitchell of the World Telegram staff reports that "Miss Smith made it clear that the actors were not required to be members or even to hold 'excuse cards' of the Actors' Equity." The official explanation given for this "leniency" is, that the measure, being purely "relief," falls below Equity's NRA minimum of \$25 for Junior members and \$40 for Senior members. The actors and actresses (many worth \$100 a week and over) who are working in the government employ have asked that their names be omitted from the program. They fear that their market value will drop to the published CWA figures of \$25 a week.

It is a significant contradiction that Equity, while denying its official connection with the government project because of its violation of the Equity contract, is lending office space and other facilities for the project. Equity, by its silence, is assisting the government in its wage-cutting policy. The violation can be rationalized into a blessing, two actors succored for the price of one, under the camouflage of "relief." The same

tendency can be traced in other industries, where other A.F.L. unions are conveniently avoiding the implications of the so-called "relief" wages.

The CWA publicity department, to this writing, has successfully suppressed the latest development in the theatre project. A week after rehearsals started, rumors spread in CWS offices of salary cuts for the actors. On January 26th the actors were officially informed that the following wage-scale would operate after that date:

Actors receiving
\$35.00 to be reduced to \$26.92
\$25.77 to be reduced to \$20.00
\$25.00 to be reduced to \$19.23

As soon as these cuts were announced, the entire cast of *She Stoops To Conquer*, one of the plays in rehearsal, threatened to walk out; and Fuller Melish, well-known actor, and lead in the government's production of *Jonesy*, announced that he was leaving the cast (presumably for another engagement). CWS officials in CWS offices were ordered to keep all information concerning cuts and casts secret. Equity is not committing itself by any comment on or action in the situation.

WHATEVER the "moral effects" and "economic advantages" of the actors' project will be, cannot be answered in this article either. It can be predicted, however, that the present tendency toward "kick-backs" and crooked handling of minimum wages in current productions, as noted by *Equity* magazine in its January 1934 issue, will be further stimulated by the government's example. Whatever money, if any, the 150 actors can save from their recently reduced salaries, after carfare and other "incidentals" have been deducted, will keep them a few more weeks from starvation. In the meantime there has been no provision made for the 5,000 and more

needy actors who remain "unrelieved." Most important of all, the actors' union, Equity, has classed the government's wage-cutting system, under the "Act of God" clause, which brooks no interference.

Whatever the success will be of those actors who threatened to strike in a government production, their action was spontaneous and independent of Equity. They have set an important precedent in united action for their profession which is now badly in need of a drive in defense of the theatre workers.

—KAY SHARPE

EDITOR'S NOTE: Every actor or other theatre worker is invited to do as the writer of the above article has done,—send in accounts of his or her experiences with relief projects, CWA projects, dinner clubs, relief funds, etc., also, to report any attempts to hold them up for a "kick-back" of part of their salaries for the "privilege" of securing employment, etc. By publicizing the various types of good and bad practices, a real service will be performed.

Theatre workers have been among the hardest hit of all people in the last few years, and have received less consideration from federal and local governments than employees in most other professions.

Thinking members of the profession say that the time has come for the actor and all other theatre workers to make known that they too demand adequate employment at adequate salaries. A number of theatre workers have communicated with *NEW THEATRE* their ideas for adequate theatre projects, financed by government funds and administered under the supervision of the people most concerned—the theatre workers themselves. *NEW THEATRE* will gladly furnish information on these projects to interested theatre workers.

VOICE OF THE AUDIENCE

ON TOBACCO ROAD

WE talked it over for two days. He said Tobacco Road was a bad play. I said it must be a good play,—it made me feel so bad. I mean, first I was stunned. Then I had a misery in the chest, on the left side, remembering the death of Ada and a bright wing of golden hair flying toward Augusta. . . . Then I defended it as "art." Here, I contended, is the simple horror of Greek tragedy. You see Jeeter's family foredoomed as were the family of Oedipus Rex. God has let Jeeter and Ada, tenants on Tobacco Road, have seventeen children and then removed His financial support. "Stealing," the Lord tells Jeeter through the mouth of a self-anointed woman preacher, "is one of the worst things a man can do," and then proceeds to dangle a bag of turnips before the eyes of the starving. Yet Jeeter and Ada, together with the half-wit son and the hare-lip daughter remaining still at home, are not to be allowed even slow death in their ancestral shanty. The absentee landlord returns, with the banker who has foreclosed the mortgage, and pronounces final doom. They must pay rent or go.

But Jeeter clings to the soil like an old, deep-rooted tree. It's all he knows, the red-brown dusty soil that pillows lust, draggles beauty, drinks the blood of the dying, that would grow a crop, if he only had some seed. . . . And behold, the way out, ancient as a Roman road. They or at least Ada, has a bright-haired child who is as a swan among mud-turtles. She has run, wild with fear, back to her mother's arms, refusing to live with the lout who bought her. To get the rent that will save his land Jeeter tries to

Sound and the Future of the Cinema

SOUND is not merely a mechanical device whereby a director can make the image appear more natural. On the contrary, it should be used to uncover and heighten the significant fact in a scene. For example: the director who, after taking a shot of a moving car, records the sound of the engine is not exploiting the potentialities of sound at all. He has not realized that the image and the sound strip should each have a separate rhythm, that they should be connected by the interplay of action.

Let us suppose that you suddenly hear a cry for help. You only see the window; then you look out, and at first you see nothing but the moving traffic. But you do not hear the sound natural to these cars and buses. Instead you still hear only the cry which first startled you.

At last you find with your eyes where the sound comes from; there is a crowd, and somebody is lifting the injured man, who is now silent. But, as you watch the man, you become aware of the passing traffic,

and in the midst of this noise there gradually emerges the piercing signal of the ambulance.

At this moment your attention is caught by the clothes of the injured man; the dress is like that of your brother, who, you now remember is due to come to you at 2 o'clock. In the appalling uncertainty of the thought that the injured man, who may be dying, is perhaps your brother, all sound ceases, and for you there is only total silence. Can it be 2 o'clock? You look at the clock and at the same time you hear it ticking. This is the first synchronized moment since you first heard the cry.

THIS example shows you that there are always two rhythms. The rhythmic course of the objective world and the tempo and rhythm with which man observes this world. The world has a rhythm of its own, which is whole in itself; but man only receives partial impressions of this world through his eyes and ears, and to a lesser extent through his very

skin. The tempo of its impressions vary with the rise and fall of his emotions, while the objective world he perceives continues in an unchanged rhythm.

Let me take as a further example a demonstration in the second part of *Deserter*. My sound here is purely musical, but I maintain that music must never become the accompaniment in a sound film. It must retain its own spirit.

In the second part of *Deserter* the image is at first the broad streets of a Western capital; the suave police direct the progress of luxurious cars; everything is decorous—the ebb and flow of established life. The character of this opening is quietness until the calm surface is broken by the approach of a workers demonstration. As they advance their hopes rise. Then we are distracted by the preparation of the police with horses and cars: their intervention is imminent; their horses, with champing hoofs, advance to break the ranks of the demonstrators, who resist with all their force, and the fighting rages fiercest round the workers' flag.

It is a battle with all the strength marshalled upon the side of the police. Sometimes they quell the spirit of the demonstrators; then the tide turns, and the demonstrators are on the crest of the wave. Finally the police triumph: the welter of fighting dies down, and we return to the cool decorum of the scene's opening. There is no more fight in the workers. Suddenly, unexpectedly, a police inspector sees the workers' flag hoisted anew, and a crowd marshalled on the horizon.

THE course of the image twists and curves as the emotion within the action rises and falls. Now if we used music as

deliver the child up to be raped, but Ada, dying, run over by her own son, with a final effort saves her daughter.

Yes indeed, a piece of art, a painting whose dull brown and awful reds are pointed by a flash of bright flight. But at the end of the second day, I too agreed it wasn't a good play, not for us anyhow. We being satisfied neither with "art for art's sake" nor with representations of the sex act such as dogs perform.

Here someone said, I didn't see the play but I read the book. There is one fine scene, the best one,—a strike scene. How was that handled in the play? Strike scene? In Tobacco Road?

There wasn't the slightest hint of one, and there you are.

This is today, and we're networked with newspapers, radios and class-conscious workers. Into the deepest gloom, the furthest pigsty of ignorance, a crack of light, a whisper of revolt may be legitimately injected by the playwright—but, but, my mistake. Almost forgot where Tobacco Road is running. Almost forgot we're on Broadway. Of course one doesn't turn to the left under the circumstances. Can't hardly keep the show open as it is, in spite of "frank sexual revelations." but with a strike scene,—Gawd, it wouldn'ta even opened. — D. VIVIEN

an accompaniment to this image we should open with a quiet melody, fitting the spirit of the slowly directed traffic. As the demonstration appeared the music would change into a march, and when we see the police preparations, the music would have to take on a feeling of danger, but this would only give the superficial aspects of the scene.

I therefore suggested to the composer, Shaporin, that he should compose some music in which the dominating, emotional theme would be courage and a certainty of ultimate victory.

Thus when the scene opens peacefully, the music is militant; when the demonstration appears the music carries the spectator emotionally into the ranks of the demonstrators with the batoning of them by the police; and the audience feels the rousing of the workers and is encircled by their emotions; the audience itself is emotionally receptive to the kicks and blows.

As the workers lose ground to the police, the insistent victory of the music grows, and even when the workers are defeated and disbanded, the music is vitalized by a spirit of victorious exaltation. When the workers hoist the flag at the end, the music reaches its climax, and then and only then, is there one accord in music and image.

Now that I have finished Deserter, I am sure that the sound film is potentially the art of the future. It is not an orchestral creation centering round music, nor yet the theatre, where man is the dominating factor. Neither is it akin to opera, but it is a synthesis of all and every element—the oral, the visual, the philosophical. It is where we can translate the world in all its shades and shadows into a new art which has succeeded and will supersede all the older arts. For it is the supreme medium in which we can express today and tomorrow.

— V. I. PUDOVKIN

MONTAGE

A New Form for the Revolutionary Theatre

Montage: (Fr. noun, m.): mounting; setting up.

IN the elementary sense anything that is the sum of all its parts is montage: an automobile, a completed jigsaw puzzle, a house of cards; in the jargon of the cinema montage came to mean the process of putting together the separate "sequences," the assembling of the picture. In the early days the assembling of the picture followed a simple chronological or narrative scheme, and even today in Hollywood picture-montage follows for the most part a stereotyped narrative pattern, the result of concentration on elements harmful to film form: on "stars," on type-stories and type situations.

Eisenstein

HARRY Alan Potamkin notes that in Eisenstein's approach the dialectic forms are the *intent*, expressed as *structure* and conveyed as *idea*, with the *mass* being the "accumulant" or focus of social movement. In *Principles of Film Form* (1929), Eisenstein develops his theories, basing them on the philosophy of dialectical materialism and carrying them to the point of practical canons of film creation. It would be impossible to outline the *Principles* here, but it is desirable and necessary to give an exposition of certain sections which are of immense importance to workers' theatres since the application of the principles therein will result in (1) a clear expression of dialectics in art, and (2) the overcoming of the spacial limitations of the stage.

For Eisenstein art is always conflict. "The task of art is the bringing to light of the conflicts

of the existing by the awakening of conflicts in the observer. It is the emotional forging of a correct intellectual concept by the dynamic collision of the contrasted passions." In itself, art is the resolution of a conflict between *organic form*, (the passive existence-principle, or Nature), and *rational logic*, (the active production-principle, or Industry). And the collision of these principles yields "the dialectic of Art-form." Finally, art is always conflict in accordance with its own methodology; this postulate leads to the formulation of the principles of film form.

The methodological nucleus of Eisenstein-montage is the special assembling (juxtaposition) of two elements to produce a third that is new and still contains the significances of the basic two: the creation of a *gestalt* or pattern in which *the whole is more than the sum of its parts*, in which two dimensions coming into conflict produce a third. Eisenstein illustrates this principle with Japanese hieroglyphics, "where two independent ideographical signs ("shots") placed in juxtaposition explode to a new concept:

eye plus ear: to weep

door plus ear: to eavesdrop
knife plus heart: sorrow."

In these "depictive shots" two sense impressions percepts brought into conflict create idea (concept), a significance transcending the plane of its origin; and in the film medium, this dialectic conceptualism (conflict) formulates itself as follows: (1) the dialectics of the Title (or in talking pictures, voice or sound), (2) versus the spacial projection, (on the screen), the interior conflict of

the "shot," (3) causing the explosion to the new concept. "The eye follows the direction of an element" (sound or screen, temporal or spacial, "receives an impression which then collides with that derived from following the direction of a second element," (screen or sound, spacial or temporal).

This is the principle of *Visual Counterpoint*, the form of conflict between optical and acoustical impressions, the high point of development of montage that began as simple "putting together."

Its Value To Workers' Theatres

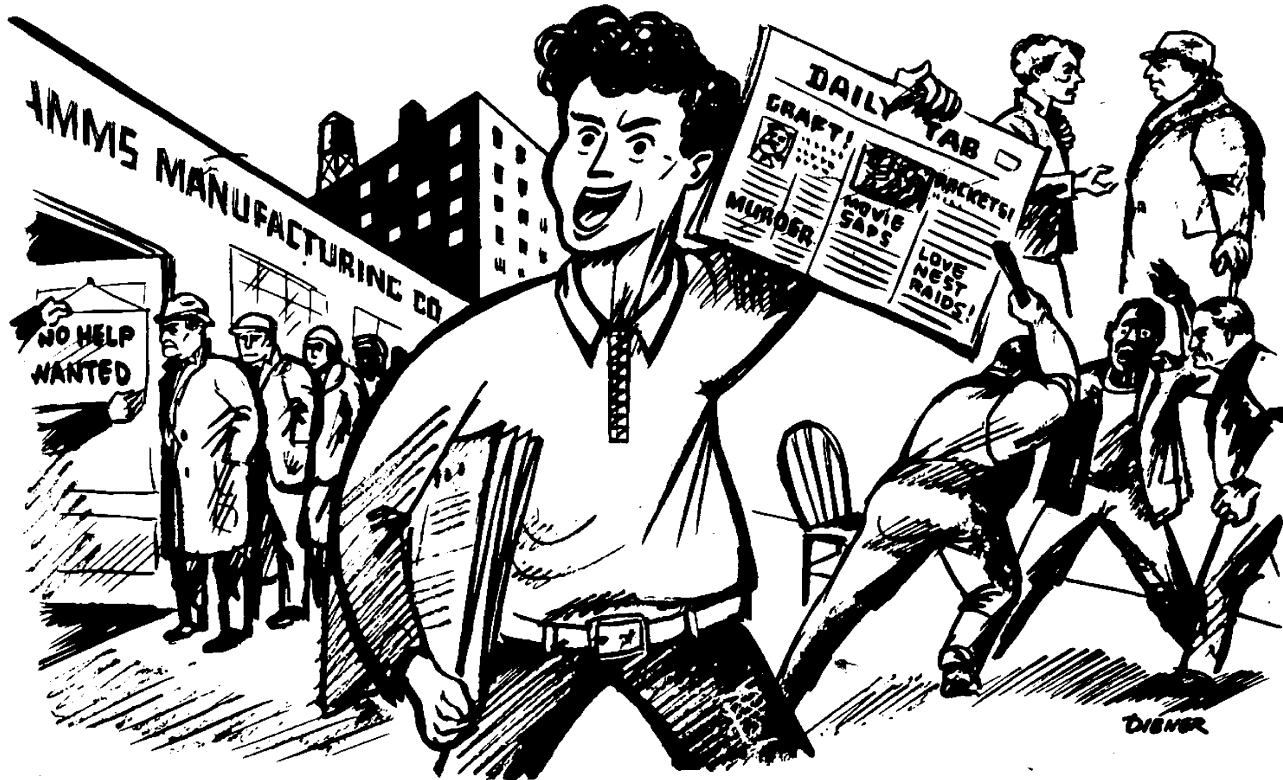
THE principles indicate the manner of treatment of the contradictions implicit in the social flux; since the art-method issues from the philosophic foundation of revolutionary action, dialectical materialism, it is specifically qualified to facilitate the expression of conflicts in art. Primarily formulated for the film, it opens a new field to the revolutionary theatre because of its pertinence

and power as a revolutionary weapon. It changes the static unities of time, place, and character; it discards the trappings of a "realism" which is bulky without being penetrating, which makes simple existence alone its *raison d'etre*. In place of wish-fulfillment forms which distort reality ("organic forms") are substituted dynamic concepts based on recognizable percepts, concepts which build through conflicts to new planes and dimensions: in the final analysis to the widest and richest comprehension of life.

The experiments of the Workers Laboratory Theatre illumine the problems found in approaching montage-method in the revolutionary theatre. The first experiment was *Newsboy*, a short play made up of diverse material culled from the Siftons' 1931, a poem by V. J. Jerome, and suggestions from the Jooss Ballets. In place of a narrative sequence is a building of images, a series of dramatic wrenches that cover the field of contradictions in the bourgeois

press. The spacial (visual) element of the montage-method prevails over the temporal (auditory), and the dialectics are expressed more in the content than in the structure, although there is considerable dramatic power notwithstanding; yet *Newsboy* is not perfect as *Visual Counterpoint*, nor was it intended to be. It was a first step, an experiment growing out of the dictates of the subject material, following no specific method or theory, yet expressing in crude form the dialectic conflicts which find their most effective medium in *Visual Counterpoint*. The method of *Newsboy* unmistakably approaches the method of *Visual Counterpoint*, and it will be interesting to note the next production of Saxe, director of *Newsboy*; it is called *Scottsboro* and is composed of bits from *The Green Pastures*, *Scottsboro Limited*, the court records of the cases, and original material.

PERHAPS the most pressing problem after basic principles have been grasped is the problem of transition from



IMPRESSIONS OF NEWSBOY

Staged by Workers Laboratory Theatre

episode to episode; in addition to having its own mood and rhythm each episode must be related to that which precedes and follows. The vitality of Visual Counterpoint is such that the conventional inhibitions of space, time, and character identity, of the stage as a room with the fourth wall omitted, may be ignored. Transitions group themselves into the following divisions (which by no means exhaust the possibilities):

1. Echoing of mood: recitative in the dark, unique sound effects, music, etc.

2. Contrasts of mood: application of the concept of Interval, (see Principles of Film Form); change of mood and tempo for dramatic-ironic effect, etc., the specific medium of transition being the black-out, the stage equivalent of the cinema fade-out.

3. Abstraction of the whole: the use of parts of bodies, bits of dialogue, restraint and repression of various kinds toward the attainment of suggestion.

An example of the last-named is found in Newsboy. After kicking away the girl who tries to snatch the dime he has just panhandled, the unemployed worker clutches the coin and whispers, "That's my dime. That's my dime!" As if in reply come agonized whispers from offstage: "That's my dime. My dime. That's my dime!" Outstretched arms and seeking fingers reach out to him; he backs up in fright. "No," he whispers hysterically, "that's my dime, my dime!" But the arms and fingers follow him, mirrored in a green spotlight closing in on him on both sides. Finally they engulf him and build to a pyramid. When the newsboy appears at the top of it, shouting his inanities (Babe Ruth's home runs, Marlene Dietrich's legs) he is greeted by the bitter laughter of the suffering masses.

There is a tremendous potential drive in Eisenstein-montage transposed to the theatre. Other workers' theatres should follow the Workers Laboratory in experimenting until the proper adjustments are made. The advantages are tremendous—a mobility of expression of revolutionary content, a complete break with the technical encumbrance of "realistic" drops and sets, and the attainment of a

form, which will be the most complete medium of revolutionary drama. Gone will be the static factors of drama, and in place of them will be a method reflecting revolutionary themes so efficiently that it becomes more than expert technique: it inspires. Without inspiration, there is no great art, without great art there can be no effective propaganda.

— PETER MARTIN

A Chorus Girl's Job

Editor's Note: This is an unsolicited statement from a rank and file theatre worker. The young woman who wrote it asked that she remain anonymous, for obvious reasons. She was a concert dancer for several years. We submit her story exactly as she wrote it. We welcome further comment from other theatre workers.

RECENTLY I was forced to look for work as a chorus girl. After knocking around for two months, I finally found a job with Fanchon and Marco, one of the biggest theatrical outfits in the country.

I had been told that Fanchon and Marco were interviewing girls for their line-up. The interview was given back-stage in the rehearsal hall of the old Roxy Theater. I found seated around the room, some dressed, some undressed, about a hundred girls of every type and description. With them, I waited for more than an hour and a half. At last a callous looking woman entered, glanced about, and said, "All right, girls. Let's have a line-up!"

Shifting nervously, the girls rose and took their places on the floor. The woman then asked each girl in her turn to do high kicks, various difficult acrobatic steps, some tap-dancing, and some toe dancing. Several were cut out by this test, others were eliminated because of irregularities in appearance,

such as, shortness, tallness, overweight, and general lack of "attractive" appearance. The twelve who remained were curtly told to come back in two hours for rehearsal. We were in darkness as to pay and details of the work we were to receive.

SUCH treatment shocked me and aroused my indignation. But some of the other girls, smiling bitterly, assured me, "this is not the worst in this game. Wait till you get kicked out after two weeks of rehearsal, simply because the boss's girl friend needs a job. That's what happened to me yesterday. Then you'll have something to cry about."

Later we rehearsed for three hours. From that time on we rehearsed on the average of six hours a day during a period of two weeks. Three or four girls were eliminated and replaced after they had rehearsed for a week or more. Of course they received no pay for their trouble. Some were borrowing carfare and lunch money.

One day we were told that the line-up was to leave for Richmond, Virginia, where, we were told, we would have steady work. Naturally this meant a job through the busy winter season. Most of the girls were borrowing heavily far before they received their first week's salary, as yet unknown. The

pending NRA code was given as the excuse for the delay in stating the amount of our salaries. Our first check turned out to be thirty dollars per week. With the signing of the NRA code the minimum has now become thirty-five dollars per week.

Necessary expenses for theatrical articles absorbed five dollars from our weekly pay. In Richmond, we lived three days, causing a waste of our expense money, before we went on the stage. I found these incidents annoying, to say the least, but I was still unaware of how exhausting, physically and mentally, the work of a chorus girl really is.

DOWN at the theater at nine in the morning, we rehearsed our next week's dances and routine, until one P.M. Given only half an hour to eat and rest, we had to be back at the theater where we had another half hour to put on a complete theatrical make-up, and dress in readiness for a strenuous five minute "routine." After this number, we went upstairs to our rooms for a thirty-five minute wait while the other acts were run off.

After this we would close the program with another intricate "routine", as strenuous as the first.

With the end of this first performance, we were again called to the rehearsal hall for more rehearsing until a half hour before the next performance. This required another freshening of our make-up for the next show. To eat dinner we took off our make-up and in half an hour we were rushing back to put on make-up in preparation for the last show which ended at 10:30 P.M. Exhausted, we took off our last make-up and dragged ourselves home to bed, to rise next morning for another round of rehearsals and shows. Imagine this routine if you can, five days a week, with an added late show on Saturday, and special rehearsal on Sunday extending over at least four hours. Then you can picture the life of a chorus girl, when she is lucky enough to have landed a job!

NOT only is it strenuous physical work, but it is a strain as well for us to memorize those silly "routines" which are taught by count, and which are always being changed.

There is no time at all for self-development, no time for cultural or social activities. Out of this terrible grind, some emerge nervous and high strung, others callous and indifferent.

After two weeks of this, our booker, the harsh woman whom we had met at our first interviews, came to look us over and decided that we were not working hard enough. She added twenty-four high kicks without music at the end of our show. Try this after each meal and note results. This theatrical effect had to be done three times a day, and four times on Saturday. However, a week later we were rewarded for our good work and acceptance of this additional twenty-four kicks by receiving one final kick back to New York.

In this way we actually received three weeks' wages for five weeks' work, counting the two weeks rehearsal.

While to all appearances we were well paid, we were really getting only eighteen dollars a week.

Obviously there is a real need for some sort of chorus girl union, a union that will help us in our struggle for higher wages and human working conditions.

A Letter from the Editors

To the members of the League of Workers Theatre, Workers Dance League, and National Film and Photo League.

DEAR FRIENDS:

THE following is an excerpt from a letter from Alice Evans, active in the Chicago workers theatres.

"We have found that the magazine sells very quickly with workers audiences. Lately we have been taking five copies with us whenever we went out to present a play. The member who announces the play says a few words about the magazine, shows it to the audience, then gives it to another member

to take through the crowds, selling it. We always come away without magazines. I would recommend this method to other groups."

It is not enough to order magazines for the members of the groups only. True, they must read it to make effective the leadership it is attempting to provide, but as important is to get it into the hands of outsiders, workers in the decadent bourgeois theatre who are looking for a vital theatre with which to align themselves, groups in the community houses who are disgruntled with the shallow fare they have been

fed and would be eager to join or learn from a workers theatre if they knew about it, and workers and farmers, anxious for a culture that expresses their viewpoint and to which they can lend their whole hearted support.

• Every booking is an opportunity to take root in new soil.

Every group should assign a member to prepare a very brief talk on the magazine. Before the performance or immediately after, the talk should be given. The booking should be concluded with every member of the troupe going into the audience, selling individual magazines and getting yearly subscriptions. —THE EDITORS

National Theatre Festival

Preparations Near the Final Stage

THE FIRST COMPETITION

"COMRADES," he said, "the decision is a death blow to the agitprop play." He had caught me by the arm and was venting his displeasure against what he sincerely felt was an unfair decision. And he was not alone in his contention. Everywhere, the decision of the judges, giving the three prizes to three realistic plays, was being thrashed out, the hubub simmering, a reaction to the quiescence of eight hours of watching the performers. I had been there for ten hours I was tired and wanted to go home. "Comrade," I said, "the question will come up again all over the country and the delegates each group sends will bring it with them to Chicago. Suppose we thrash it out there." And with the kaleidoscope of thirteen plays spinning in my head I said good night and rushed out.

This was at the Hinsdale Workers Club in Brooklyn, where the Jewish speaking theatre groups, recently organized in the L.O.W.T. through the national office of the Federation of Jewish Clubs, held their competitions to select three groups for New York's language competitions on Feb. 24th. Of the eighteen groups scheduled to appear thirteen had come. They were enough to permit the making of a few generalizations.

The improvement has been tremendous. Repertory, acting, directing, all stand far ahead of the efforts of last year's competitions. In some groups, notably the Brownsville Youth Section, which won first prize with a Jewish version of *Ilt* and Petrov's *Where Is A Foreigner*

to be Found, there is a surety of acting technique bordering on the professional. The stage presence of the actors here, and in *Agents*, performed by the Coney Island dram group (second prize) and in *The Fated One*, performed by the East New York dram group (third prize), was characterized by a poise and ease, a forcefulness of carriage and movement that were exhilarating promises of progress. The groups were in various stages of development, but in every one there was the consistent manifestation of having attained a great degree of artistic and political maturity.

It is not possible to analyse each group individually. It is only possible to note the general trends. The groups are moving away from the agitprop and towards the realistic play. Actors once amateurish have matured, directors show more comprehensive knowledge of their tasks. Failings—and there are still many—are the still too limited appeal, the tendency to take things for granted, the stating of propositions without forging in the audience an intellectual concept through emotional crises.

The Jewish Clubs struck the first note in the National Festival preparations. As the reports of other competitions come in, a complete picture will be available and the basis for a thorough analysis established. Until then we may take that note as having struck the key.

ORGANIZATIONALLY, the Festival preparations have taken a splendid turn in the State of New Jersey. The section has been officially organized into the League of Workers Theatres and will send

a group to compete in the Chicago Finals. Their section competition at which the Theatre of Action of the Workers Laboratory Theatre, N. Y., will be guest performers, will be held on Wednesday, March 7, at 8 P.M., at the Public School of Fine and Industrial Arts, 536 High St., Newark, N. J. Plainfield's Jack London dram group the Jack London and John Reed dram groups of Newark, the Jewish Workers dram sections of Newark and New Brunswick and others will compete. This is the section's first affair. Newark and the vicinity should pack the house.

Chicago announces that the semi-finals in which eleven English and foreign-language groups will compete, will take place on the afternoon and evening of March 24, at the People's Auditorium, 2457 W. Chicago Ave.

New York, until now far in the rear, has come up with a resurgence of strength and interest. Jewish, English and foreign-language competitions will be concluded by the end of February. The section finals will be held at the Fifth Ave. Theatre, 28th St. and Broadway, on March 10. An outgrowth of New York's Festival activity is the establishment of a training class in acting and directing to be conducted by Cheryl Crawford of the Group Theatre.

The Canadian Workers Theatre have been invited to the National Festival, where the Progressive Arts Club of Toronto is already scheduled to present its dramatic group as guest performers.

THE Pacific Coast, which has led the National Festival activity all the way, an-

nounces the organization of three new sections of the League of Workers Theatres,—Portland, Ore., Seattle, and San Francisco. To raise funds for their section festival, Los Angeles groups are giving individual performances, and an International Cabaret during Pan-

Pacific (International Theatre) Week. In this the New Dance Group of Los Angeles will also participate.

All groups and individuals, members or non-members of the League of Workers Theatres, desiring information on the Na-

tional Workers Theatre Festival should write to Ann Howe, 42 E. 12th St., New York. On the Pacific Coast, write to V. Cutler, 2702 Brooklyn Ave., Los Angeles, Cal.; in the Middle West, to Ardys Belisch, 1729 Thorndale Ave., Chicago, Ill. — OSCAR SAUL

Prospects For The American Theatre

1

Do you believe that the American theatre will recover from its present decline? Why?

JOHN WEXLEY

Yes. Because there are already distinct indications of a more meaningful theatre. By meaningful I have in mind plays that have a social implication.

HIRAM MOTHERWELL

Yes. The theatre is a permanent need of the human race.

LISTON M. OAK

Not permanently, because the social system upon which it is based—capitalism—is on the decline and all bourgeois art is decadent, or becoming so.

GLENN HUGHES

Yes. Because there are a large number of persons who enjoy plays but can't at present afford them. Also because the majority of persons enjoy personal contact with the actors.

FRANCHOT TONE

Yes. Theatre is one of man's natural aesthetic activities. It has survived fire, flood, religious edict, and it will survive even poor taste.

MORDECAI GORELIK

No. The American theatre in all forms—except the theatres of the revolutionary working class—is part of the system of capitalist economy and culture which is now in its historical period of decline.

2

Should the Theatre

A—Be an "escape" from life?

B—Reflect contemporary social conflicts?

C—Should it exclude class struggle from its themes?

JOHN WEXLEY

A—No.

B—Yes.

C—No. Class struggle is one of the most vital conflicts that can be dramatically reproduced in the theatre.

HIRAM MOTHERWELL

Whether it "should" or not, it will serve the emotional needs of the public. No theme should be excluded.

LISTON M. OAK

A—No.

B—Yes.

C—Nothing affords more interesting dramatic material than the class struggle. Only by reflecting social conflicts can the theatre have strength and vitality.

GLENN HUGHES

A—Of course it should.

B—Yes, of course.

C—No, though it is hard to write good plays on this theme for they are generally spoiled by prejudice. Galsworthy succeeded.

FRANCHOT TONE

A—No.

B—Yes.

C—Only when the class struggle is not dramatic material. If an audience is part of a class struggle the theatre cannot help reflecting it. On the other hand, class struggle as a theme cannot be forced on an audience which feels nothing about it.

MORDECAI GORELIK

Psychologically all art is a comment on life; at the same time all art is an "escape" from life to the extent that it creates artificial patterns out of the onrush of existence. But when art abandons content and occupies itself only with form, it becomes specifically an opiate, and while often continuing to make gains in technique, decays vitally. A vital theatre does not limit itself to experiments in technique. A vital theatre builds itself upon the most important dramatic conflicts of its era. The tremendous drama of the class struggle is the natural subject-matter of a living theatre of today.

3

Which outlook upon life offers the greatest creative stimulation for the dramatist of today?

A—Conservative?

B—Fascist?

C—Liberal?

D—Revolutionary?

JOHN WEXLEY

Revolutionary.

HIRAM MOTHERWELL

Whichever one offers the greatest adventure-plus-security to the spirit of the age. I don't think the political categories have much emotional meaning to the American audience yet.

LISTON M. OAK

Revolutionary. Only revolutionary themes and ideas are worth the attention of a playwright who is alive to the currents of contemporary life and who has the intelligence to know that we have entered upon a period of wars and revolutions,—and the courage to say so.

GLENN HUGHES

All these attitudes offer stimulus to the dramatist. It is impossible to say which offers the greatest. That depends on the playwright himself. The one offering the least, I should think, would be the Fascist.

FRANCHOT TONE

Revolutionary—but generally too much stimulus to allow real creation apart from dogmatism.

MORDECAI GORELIK

The present time is a crucial one for the ideology of dramatists and other creative workers in the theatre. Some will find their limits within the viewpoints of conservatism, fascism and liberalism. Others will take the difficult step across to the revolutionary viewpoint. Such a step is no guarantee of artistic development, but it is a guarantee of artistic stimulation, which may, in fact, be so great as to be detrimental to some workers—detrimental if their old false values are destroyed and they have not the strength or the clarity to conceive the new values. For dramatists of great ability the revolutionary path is the natural way of development.

4

A—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?

JOHN WEXLEY

A—For a better theatre, decidedly.

B—This is a question which involves rather a lengthy reply. To be brief; no, they cannot.

HIRAM MOTHERWELL

A—Better.

B—Certainly.

LISTON M. OAK

A—All 3 plays are evidence of a trend to the left which is making for a better theatre. But none are really good revolutionary plays.

B—Usually not—there might be one exception in a thousand.

GLENN HUGHES

A—Making for a healthy social theatre, though that is only one kind of theatre and not necessarily the most important.

B—How do I know? There is only one way to answer this and that is to try them.

FRANCHOT TONE

A—Neither. I don't believe they were any more emotionally honest than a 4th of July Pageant.

B—No.

MORDECAI GORELIK

A—These plays, unclear and even poorly constructed, nevertheless foreshadow a live theatre which will be an awakening from the drugged sleep of Broadway, Hollywood, and the "art" theatres.

B—Not at least at the present time, if we may judge by the fate of these three plays. The expense of Broadway productions is very great, and revolutionized audiences are unable to afford the necessary price of admission. For the time being, Broadway theatre-goers who are still prosperous enough to buy tickets, are apathetic to plays of revolt. It is not inconceivable, however, that a superb revolutionary play would find enough general audience to pay for itself.

5

A—Is there need for a workers theatre in America—a theatre consciously reflecting the viewpoint of the revolutionary working class?

B—Have you seen a 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?

JOHN WEXLEY

A—Yes.

B—Yes.

C—Yes.

HIRAM MOTHERWELL

A—There is a need for new vigor from all directions.

B—No.

C—By all means.

LISTON M. OAK

A—Certainly?

B—Yes.

C—Yes. But the workers theatre needs to learn as did the Soviet Workers Theatres (TRAM) that propaganda must be art.

GLENN HUGHES

A—I doubt it. It would end miserably with a repertoire of half-baked propaganda plays.

B—Yes. I have seen them produce Ibsen, etc.

C—It might make some contributions, though its approach would be apt to be too biased.

FRANCHOT TONE

A—No.

B—Yes.

C—That depends entirely on whether they are workers or theatrical people.

MORDECAI GORELIK

A—Unquestionably. The content and ideals of the dominant American theatre are alien to the viewpoint of the revolutionary workers, and at best contribute nothing to the rising culture of these workers except potential technique. Generally speaking, the dominant theatre serves to stultify and hinder the

free development of revolutionary culture. This theatre ignores almost completely the real problems of the exploited worker.

B—Yes.

C—Yes. The American workers theatre, still crude and amateurish, has extraordinary vigor, great potential talent, a devoted and critical audience, and is able to expand at a time when the industry of the bourgeois theatre is rapidly shutting down.

6

A—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?

JOHN WEXLEY

A—To its new ideas. To the awakened desire of the ignorant (formerly) masses for culture. And perhaps most important, to the theatre's ability to express clearly the problems and theories of their present civilization.

B—Yes.

C—Ideas of production. Methods of gaining and holding audiences and organizations within the theatre. Above all, we can learn that entertainment whether it be comedy, farce or drama, can be successfully combined with intelligent problems.

HIRAM MOTHERWELL

A—Mostly to the vitality of the Soviet social adventure but also to an old and high tradition of theatre.

B—Certainly. But "advance" is not along one line only. Whether you are advancing depends on where you want to go.

C—Devoted application to the art and science of the theatre. The content of an art can't be imported. It must grow in its own soil.

LISTON M. OAK

A—To the fact that (1) the workers are in power there; (2) the Soviet theatre reflect the immense vitality and the creative potentialities of the proletariat.

B—Yes.

C—That the theatre must deal with social problems from a revolutionary viewpoint and reflect the struggles that are changing the world.

GLENN HUGHES

A—To the desperation of the people and the evangelism of the government.

B—An interesting phase, though perhaps not an advance. In fact I think it might be proved that it is little more than a revival of mediaeval miracle plays, with the machine in place of the altar.

C—Search me. The Soviet playwrights have not invented any new form, and their themes are certainly local, so what should we learn? We learned more from Chekhov, and something from Gorky.

FRANCHOT TONE

A—An emotionally unified audience with a real interest in the themes presented.

B—Where there is such an audience the theatre cannot but advance.

C—Lessons in acting, direction and decorating.

MORDECAI GORELIK

A—Generally considered, the vitality of the Soviet theatre is part of the vitality of the Soviet economy and culture, which historically replaces the outworn capitalist economy and culture. In particular the Soviet theatre concerns itself with the great problems of the Soviet regime, and economically is able to expand because the economy of the U.S.S.R. is stable and continuously expanding, whereas the theatres of the capitalist countries, in an unstable, contracting economy, are curtail-

ing activities more and more.

B—Yes. The themes of the Soviet drama are more significant, and they are presented with an enormous fertility of ideas in playwrighting, direction, acting and stagecraft. Since the socialist culture is an expanding, and not a contracting one, it puts a premium on new and revolutionary ideas rather than well-worn "sure-fire" methods; at the same time it puts no premium on anarchistic excrescences and fads.

C—The most obvious lesson that the American theatre has to learn from the theatre of the Soviet is that the further development of the American theatre can take place only under the auspices of a revolutionary culture, in which the theatre must take part, both before and after the period of actual military revolution.

THE PLAYWRIGHTS COMPETITION

THE League of Workers Theatres playwrights competition has been officially concluded with the selection of the three best short plays "suitable for the workers theatre."

The first prize (Voice of Revolt, a ten volume set of historical revolutionary speeches) was won by D. Vivien with Station NRA. The second, (Voices of October) by Mara Tartar's play on the hunger march, We March On. And the third (a joint subscription to New Theatre and International Theatre) by Irwin Shappin's play of the Paris Commune, Titans of Paris. Comrade, by Alice Pier and Burt Baer, and Recruit, by M. Leon, were accorded honorable mention. (All these plays are now available through the L.O.W.T. repertory service.—Ed.). It is significant to note that the playwrights, like the actors and directors, reflect the growing maturity of the workers theatre movement.

Massacre in Hollywood

The author of the novel about the American Indian today tells how his story reached the screen.

I offer my experiences as a propagandist, better termed a revolutionary artist, merely as an example of attempts to express revolutionary material in and out of the bourgeois form. When I first returned from living with the Indians (I went in search of folklore) I desired to expose a system of exploitation thrust before my eyes. We Americans have a naive faith in the power of the written word—just tell the people that something is wrong and they'll go out and fix it. My first book in 1931, *Massacre*, a political-sociological study, failed "to fix it." I, as a revolutionary artist, failed in my strike demonstration. Why? Upon an analysis of the people I was trying to reach I discovered that my medium was unpopular. I had demonstrated on a side street when all the people were busy on the main thoroughfare. Few Americans, I observed, read exposition. More read fiction.

THE test of a good propagandist is whether he can compel an audience, not in the slightest interested in what he's got to say, to listen and listen contrary to its inclinations, and when he is through, agree with him and move to action. How then does a revolutionary artist go about pulling uninterested ears in his direction? By first calling the attention of those ears through familiar sounds, and a familiar sound to the ear of a petty bourgeois is still today familiar to the ear of an American working man. In *Broken Arrow* I attempted first to get the reader emotionally involved with the Indians as human characters, so that what-

ever befell them as victims of an exploiting system would also emotionally befall the reader.

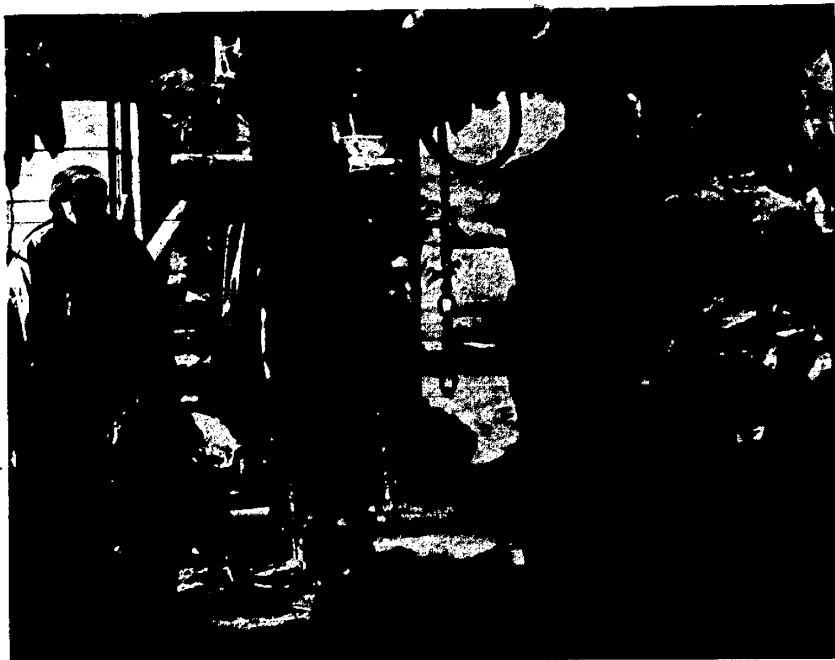
Broken Arrow, like *Massacre*, failed to interest the public. Was the medium again at fault? Maybe I was for not making it a cheap love story and draw the readers of *True Story*, but even propagandists are sometimes artists.

I have discovered (not new, of course) that America does not read. What is substituted for the book in America? How do the lower middle class and working class of America get their impressions of the profit-system? What art-propaganda is moulding and directing their belief and action? Twenty million of the population go to the movies every day; what is equal to more than the entire population goes once a week. This is the audience of America.

I wrote an original story for Warner Bros., basing it on the facts in *Massacre*. Needless to say the story I wrote is not on the screen in its entirety. How did Hollywood pervert the in-

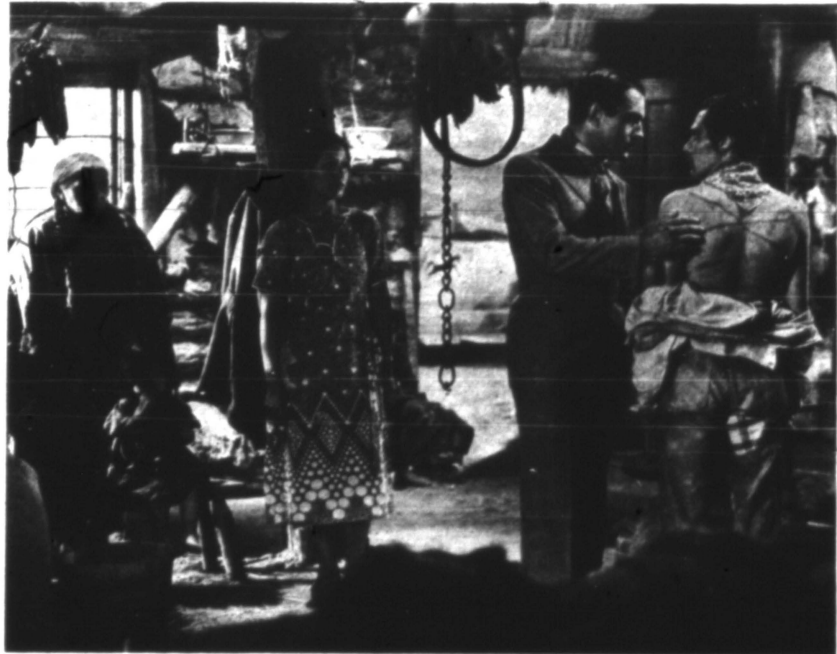
tent of my revolutionary material into a bourgeois form that dissipated its animus? To be specific: When the suppressed and exploited Indians, aroused by their injustices, converge secretly on the white man's town to take the law into their own hands, they burn down the white man's symbol of justice, the court house, and batter their way into a jail to free a prisoner. This was the climax of my story: an oppressed people revolting. How did Hollywood pervert my intent? They put the hero on the shoulders of the mob, which has just chased all the deputies out of town, and he told them to be good boys and go home to the reservation where they belonged.

HOLLYWOOD also thought that my attempts to pull the ears (and eyes) of the movie audience in the direction of the Indian were not sufficiently bourgeois. They added a rape motif, brake-screaming pursuits, a scarred maiden, a torture chamber, the hero shot by the villain, and a sunset



MASSACRE

First National Pictures



MASSACRE

First National Pictures

ending over the Grand Canyon with the heroine in the hero's arms while war chiefs on white horses ride thundering in the background. They made it melodrama, thinking that such would be the picture's only entertainment; whereas, the most genuine emotional excitement that is derived from its screening is in its revolutionary portions. This "lulu of a western" did get some revolutionary salt across with the Hollywood sugar.

The largest lump of salt to be digested in *Massacre* is its Marxist elements. It is one of the first of America's movies to point directly to the economic motives in the background driving monied groups of water power, oil, cattle and timber interests to exploit a minority race. Along with its clap-trap melodrama are attacks against economic and racial oppression. One scene, for instance, shows the hand-picked Indian judges of the Federal agent docilely obeying the white man in his legal theft and imprisonment of an Indian. The picture laughs with contempt at the Government official who cries "Bolshevik!" at its hero for his fight to expose the exploiters. Missionaries are exposed in their attempts to force Christianity down the Indians' throats. The daily life of the Indians, their cabins and interiors and clothes are all technically authentic and the camera seldom hesitates to pick up these details.

However, the picture is directed into a bourgeois channel—"the happy ending." Mine was an unhappy ending, a truthful ending, because realism is on the side of the revolution. But I had no control over the form I was working in. Which raises the important question: How far can a bourgeois form be filled with revolutionary intent?

No movies are produced solely

The Dance

The New Dance Group

An Analysis

IN analysing a revolutionary dance group, the three main points to be considered are; production, education, and organization in their relation to one another as part of the growth of the group. How has the New Dance Group approached these objectives? What has the group achieved? How can we learn from its mistakes?

The N.D.G. goes into the category of a mass organization with the purpose of: 1) performing before workers, students, and the regular dance concert audience; 2) performing for the purpose of educating and stimulating the audience to significant aspects of the class struggle; 3) training performing troupes to undertake this task; 4) training the individuals who are to make up these performing troupes; 5) themselves becoming a part of the class struggle through practical and theoretical education.

This is a comprehensive aim for any revolutionary dance group. There are certain historical developments which have brought the group to these

aims, have clarified them, and these aims in turn have been the stimulation for development and discussion of other aims—namely, the revolutionary dance itself.

A brief history of the N.D.G. to explain this development: organized by six professional dancers, it based its goals on the achievements of the six as soloists and together in group work with the idea of collective creative work—each an artist to contribute to the creation and in this way to enrich the result. Collective production needed collective organization and leadership. This was done. They were to work towards the revolutionary dance as a weapon in the class struggle.

In their work they soon found the necessity for the use of masses of people to carry forward the ideas of the revolutionary dance. Membership was opened to all interested and in a short time the N.D.G. literally had hundreds of workers and students in their organization. Hundreds came and with them almost a hundred varied interests—some in the dance, some in the revolutionary dance, some in performing, some in

ly by the author. Manuscripts of authors are published pretty much as they are written, or are not published at all. In fiction and poetry the author can create his own form, which is what I attempted to do in *Upsurge*. But the movie-producers own the form, and the writer is compelled to work under their cooperate. Consequently some revolutionary scenes can be slipped in, but on the whole the revolutionary artist is confined. We revolutionary artists today must use all means offered

to us, but knowing that the apparatus of the bourgeoisie can be used only to a limited extent.

HOLLYWOOD owns and feeds the movie audience, and all revolutionary artists aiming to undermine the ideological structure of the middle class and consolidate the working class must, in order to be at this time effectively heard, consider seriously the question of working through Hollywood.

— ROBERT GESSNER

exercise, some in recreation, reducing, etc.

The problem of harnessing these forces, weeding the good from the bad and developing a broad base upon which to build towards their goal, had to be met. The first mistake was a loose organizational structure with no basis among the membership and no firm leadership. The second mistake was the lack of proper unification of the educational work, dance and ideology. The third mistake was the attitude of the N.D.G. towards the relative position of the professional and amateur members.

The N.D.G. vaguely understood these mistakes, but until this year had no working plan to correct them. Their present plan of work and organization is one which has grown from the group itself, not a super structure placed on the group, and is one which is building a firm leadership and is intelligently unifying the problems of dance and ideology. A dance leader must be a political leader and a political leader must be at least sympathetic with the dance. Political discussion is based on the theme or dance upon which the group is working. (at present they are working on the Negro and Southern workers problem. Each production section is working on a different aspect.)

As to the relations of the amateurs to the professionals: the group's first conception was complete isolation. This naturally caused a lack of interest and poor collective work. The next conception was directly opposite—complete amalgamation resulting in muddy unsatisfactory work. The present position is the more logical and productive. The professional members perform together with the further task of developing new trained dancers from among the younger members. Each member is educated to the goal of

becoming a trained dancer in an active performing troupe.

The problem of form and style for the New Dance Group compositions is something yet to be solved. The group has a healthy attitude towards the performance problem, namely, willingness to perform anywhere, at any time, with dances suitable to the occasion. They have no preconceived notion dance is but an open mind towards learning and developing, using every technical means available. Unless definite steps are taken to clarify their ideas on this subject among themselves and unify their dance forces, a looseness of style and form instead of a richness will be the result.

The main points that can be learned from the N.D.G. are, clarification of aims and goals, knowledge of the forces which make up the group, an organ-

izational structure which is built along with the group, a unification of dance and ideological development, and the dialectical clarification of form and style for the particular group.

The New Dance Group is looking towards a full-time paid professional group that can perform during the day and during the week, not only week-ends. One that could tour outside of New York City and spread the revolutionary dance on a broader front. This can only be achieved with proper planning and with a mass basis. They must contact many sympathizers to support such a group. They must develop new leaders in all phases of their work, performance, organization, education, etc. If the New Dance Group achieves this, and it should, an example will be set for all groups. For a broadening of the movement must be the result.

What to Dance About

MORE and more frequently, what to dance about figures largely in discussions among members of Workers Dance Groups. Portraying the social and economic make-up of the world, as it is and as we should like it to be, gives us a large, many-faceted field for subject matter. Variations and combinations of socio-economic subjects produce a perhaps infinite field for such workers groups. If the proletarian dancers think they can hold (and mold) their large and fast-increasing public by remaining within this field, then the problem is solved.

But are we sure we can do this? Not so very, if little bits of conversation and a word overheard here and there indicate anything. To be sure, the class struggle must be the point of main focus as long as classes remain. Not to do this would be to take the bourgeois cul-

tural back-track. But our dancers must take note of several facts: that our audiences are not entirely workers, but include more and more of the wavering petty bourgeois element as the latter is forced our way by the deepening crisis and as our art improves; that even the proletarian members of our audiences require not only inspiration for the carrying on of the class struggle, but also diversion and entertainment; that certain timeless, classless subjects, e.g. nature, love and others, influence us inescapably and may be utilized to good advantage in the enrichment of our art.

A nature dance in a program may be just the nectar that a fluttering, bourgeois butterfly may require to induce him to alight. Once his interest is aroused, the class struggle part of the program will easily penetrate the cracked shell of his abstractness. The class-conscious

worker, perhaps tired after a hard day's toil, or harassed by the worries of unemployment, does not desire to be reminded of his plight all the time, but would like to be bolstered by a wild, gay dance occasionally.

All of us are affected more or less by beauty, love, and the manifestations of nature. Man cannot glimpse the sea but that a desire leaps up within him to either swim in it or float upon it in a boat. The sea is replete with movements and rhythms. It is always dancing itself. It is a rich dance subject, but is only one among many nature subjects full of strength and not at all foreign

to the revolutionary temperament.

Nor need we fear that the proper amount of gayety and humour will detract from our revolutionary strength of purpose. "Beware! ye gods and masters, of rebels who laugh and sing."

— EZRA FREEMAN A. B.
(Able Bodied Seaman)
Member of the New
Dance Group.

Comment

At the present time our dance must be filled with revolutionary fervor, a courageous ex-

pression of our staunch rebel faith, an appeal to the mass mind and emotions, to revolutionary pressure.

When the greatest battle of all has been fought and won, when oppression and exploitation shall have become history, then we shall dance of the sea and the stars. Then we can idolize these beauties of nature without fear of distracting the public mind from the social and economic ills that must be fought. We cannot recognize any subject or theme as being classless and timeless, but recognize what ideas and emotions are directed by the ruling class of each epoch. — DANCE ED.

Brief Dance Reviews

ELSA FINDLAY DANCERS.— Washington Irving High School. The interesting choreographical patterns and striking costumes are what most impresses an observer of this group. So effective are these two factors that they succeed, at times, in diverting one's attention from the mediocre quality of the dancing itself.

The program was long and varied, yet of the fourteen numbers presented, five warranted attention. These are Dance of the Yemenites, Satire, Hebridean Suite, and the two numbers from the Planets Suite, Mars, Giver of War, and Venus, Giver of Peace. These last two were ambitious efforts on a large scale and because of the design, appropriateness of music, costume and lighting, were impressive—hence all the more dangerous in their propagation of false ideas. The treatment of War was inadequate, merely reflecting the surface manifestations, yet nowhere indicating an understanding of the basic causes making for war. The dance on Peace,

similarly reflected the "peace on earth, good will to men" mood of a Salvation Army meeting.

Dance of the Yemenites and Satire were pleasant and amusing. Hebridean Suite was a simple and artistic presentation of a work movement.

MARTHA KRUEGER, in a dance program of theatre pieces, Town Hall.—The heading "dance program of theatre pieces" is most convenient. It enables one to excuse whatever is not good dance on the ground that it is theatre and vice versa.

Otherwise there is little to be said concerning this latest importation from Vienna. Frankly, we feel that she could be more successful in Hollywood, or even in some high toned Broadway revue. The half empty were ample indication of her miscast medium of the concert stage. Miss Krueger is highly house and the meagre applause attractive—physically—and can perform in a pleasing manner dances which range from sheer acrobatics (Grotteske) to pleasant bits about toy queens and

even realistic pieces like *Danse de Tennis*.

Yet, it is because the adjective "pleasant" defines the ultimate of Miss Krueger's art that she will probably never be of any real significance in the dance. — BEN WOLF

News and Notes

OF THE W.D.L.

NEEDLE TRADES.—One of the members of the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union dance group who went to Washington as a delegate in the recent investigation on the indictment against the NTWIU, on returning, reported the results to the dance group. This will undoubtedly add to the wealth of dance material the group is gathering, material that springs directly from the lives and circumstances of young needle trades workers today.

The group has already completed two sections of their dance drama, *Workers At Home—Morning*, and *The Boss At Home—Morning*, and parts of the third section are on the way. They have also added one more folk dance to their repertoire.

Stage In Review

OFFICE WORKERS.—The Office Workers group who have recently moved to 1947 Broadway, continue to meet once a week. They have already established a small nucleus of regularly attending members, and are planning, as soon as possible to meet twice a week to afford adequate attention to the members who are developing in their work.

ESTHONIAN WORKERS DANCE GROUP.—Recently gave its first performance at an ILD concert. They have also been invited to dance for Esthonian Workers groups in Philadelphia and Boston.

NEW DANCE GROUP.—Has moved to larger headquarters. Classes are now in full swing at 22 West 17th St.

NEW DUNCAN DANCERS.—Are now concentrating on the composition of a new dance which has for its theme the historical incident of the Veteran's Bonus March of July, 1932. This episode was selected as having been a landmark in the class struggle in America. It clearly revealed the class nature of "American Democracy."

REBEL DANCE GROUP OF NEWARK.—Has arranged a program of very stimulating activity for the next few months. This program includes a series of lectures on the dance (with the aid of the WDL), a dance recital in about three months, for which several new dances are being prepared. Also, a class in technique and theory to supplement each class weekly.

A NEW GROUP.—The dance group of the Jack London Club of Elizabeth, New Jersey, has been recently organized, and is now being led by Fanya Chochem. It is a very enthusiastic group, made up of office workers, teachers and one shop-worker.

FALSE DREAMS FAREWELL

THE author of False Dreams Farewell might have written a powerful play had he been able and willing to sense where the true drama of his theme lay. The drama leaps at you

A giant transatlantic liner with a full load of passengers, each dreaming of some long-desired happiness now attainable, sails on its first and last trip, doomed because the president of the line insists that the unprepared vessel be driven too fast. A speed record, he insists to the captain, must be established—a desperate measure to advance the line's fallen value in the stock market.

A good artist, given the courage, would have realized and reproduced the socially significant elements as those that deepen otherwise superficial melodramatic action into powerful tragic drama. A good revolutionary artist would have conceived and presented a social drama reflecting and indicting in images of fire one of the rotten aspects of present day capitalism.

But Hugh Stange's play becomes merely a series of minor plots, most of them hackneyed, one amusing, and one powerful. Most of the characters are stereotypes, first-class passengers only, false creations living in a world of too much material success.

Arne Lundborg's settings for the many scenes were always interesting, if not always successful. A tendency to keep fairly literal prevailed over a tendency towards stylization, although the broad design of the theme called for consistent stylization to infuse each of the numerous scenes with the spirit of the larger tragedy impending.

As for the directing, had the director (Frank Merlin) rushed in where the playwright feared to tread, had he built the production around the tragedy's social aspects, had he made the knowledge of the doom and the social cause of the doom an active force influencing all the characters throughout the greater part of the play, had he cut out all irrelevant characters and incidents and made other characters more real, then the inherent power of the theme might, poor as the play itself was, have resulted in an impressive and vital production. — BEN BLAKE

HOTEL ALIMONY. A comedy by A. W. Pezet. Staged by the author. Settings by P. Dodd

Ackerman.

HOTEL Alimony is the story of the proceedings of a separation, alimony and divorce.

The petty racketeering that goes on in the alimony jail, called alimony club, called for treatment having real punch, but didn't get it. It would have proved timely in the face of the Welfare Island disclosures. There is the racketeer who gets himself sent to the alimony jail so that he might supervise the card games and the sale of his liquor. The warden gets his rack off, the men receive their girls in the engineer's room. But of course it is also done in good spirit, no harm meant.

Nancy Evans plays well as the extortioner wife; and Robert Emmett Keane is one of the best drunks around town.

The emphasis of the play is on the big, bad gold-digger wife. The real issue, the degenerate divorce laws of capitalism in decay, served for the most part as a butt for wisecracks.

— JENNIE HELD

THE JOYOUS SEASON

PHILIP Barry is a playwright in the full maturity of his technical powers. Yet his latest play, *The Joyous Season*, ranks among his feeblest. The reason: It is impossible for even a modest intelligence to take seriously the naive conception of Catholic faith around which the play is built—a faith that in an inexplicable way can solve all problems and cure all evils. The rankest superstitions and hocus-pocus are presented straightforwardly as the profound beliefs of the central character. The young Mother Superior, (played sweetly and not quite convincingly by Lillian Gish), has Saint Soandso whom she calls on in minor problems, and Saint Jude in more serious problems, and presto! the problems are solved. Once, when something goes wrong, she tosses a glance heavenward and remarks petulantly, like a spoiled child, "I wonder what's the matter with Them up There!"

A dramatist can create well only with understanding of what is true and what is false. If the *Joyous Season* was Philip Barry's unsuccessful effort to conceive a reformed faith, the very failure may prove to have been a healthy purging. But if it was really a retreat to Rome and mysticism, it will have marked the fatal beclouding of a gifted and sensitive mind.

— BEN BLAKE

THE WIND AND THE RAIN, by Merton Hodge at the Ritz Theater. Staged by Walter Hart.

THIS play, pitched in a minor key, quietly written, competently acted, is one of the finest things to come before the Broadway boards in a long time. The scene is laid in an Edinburgh, Scotland lodging house for medical students and, though the entire play is played against one set—the common study room of the students—one gets a more genuine feeling of a medical background than one receives from sitting through *Men In White*, where operating tables, nurses in uniform and technical medico language is slung around.

The theme deals with the arrival and the five-year stay of a sensitive young medical student away from home for the first time. There are no dramatic curtains, no wild scenes, and yet the quiet drama of the piece is genuinely moving. The play is British to the bone without being slick-English or Bloomsbury. And when the final curtain falls, we get that rare feeling which sometimes penetrates into the commercial theatre—the sense of time, the flowing forward of the five-year stay in the lodging house, with all characters of the cast pretty fully realized.

— ALBERT HALPER

THE Theatre Collective, which has been completely reorganized, has opened headquarters at 52 West 15th St., and is now actively at work on a new play, *Marion Models, Inc.*, by Olga Shapiro, under the direction of John E. Bonn.

An important innovation in the Theatre Collective will be a Studio for the complete training of actors, stage designers and directors for the stationary

revolutionary theatre. The Studio will also serve as a training school for Theatre of Action groups.

The director in charge of the Studio will be Virginia Farmer. The faculty of the Studio will include Morris Carnovsky, Cheryl Crawford, Lewis Leverett, John E. Bonn and others.

John Bovingdon will be in charge of the dance group which has just been formed in the Theatre Collective.

News & Notes

of the L.O.W.T.

THIS is the start of our Red List and Black List. From now on, groups failing to send in reports, dues, plays and other material will be made known to all others.

To date we have on our Red List the following groups:

Paid up in dues: Workers Theatre of San Francisco, New Theatre of Tri-Cities, Blue Blouses of Chicago, John Reed Dram Group of Detroit, and the following N. Y. groups: Ukrainian Dram Circle, Arterf, Prolet-Buehne, Theatre of the Workers School, New Experimental Theatre, and Theatre of Action of the Workers Laboratory Theatre.

The Black List includes all other Chicago groups, Los Angeles groups, Cleveland groups, Detroit, Boston, and others. There are still too many on this list to name them all.

New York.—The Workers Laboratory Theatre, Theatre of Action, is presenting a gala theatre evening on March 24th, at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, 28th St. and Broadway. The program will include Intervention, Station NRA, Scottsboro, Newsboy. . . . The Theatre of the Workers School has been performing out of town.

The Prolet-Buehne selected Pennies, Nickels, Dimes as their play in the foreign language competitions on Feb. 24.

The Dram Group of the Harlem Progressive Youth Club has written several plays and is performing regularly. The Harlem New Experimental Theatre has affiliated with the League of Workers Theatres. Another newcomer to the L.O.W.T. is the Esperanto Players.

Boston.—The John Reed Club dram group boasts seven performances in nine days (is

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this a record?), three of them
outside Boston, in Chelsea,
Lawrence and Norwood.

Chicago.—The Workers Cultural Federation combined with the L.O.W.T. to present a mass pageant in Chicago's Coliseum. The Coliseum and its audience of twelve thousand, gathered to hear Clarence Hathaway, editor of the Daily Worker, at the Lenin Memorial celebration, was transformed into a Theatre of Action, with every member of the audience in the cast. The Workers Theatre of Chicago scheduled a production of *Marching Feet* Feb. 23, 24, 25, at Hull House Theatre. The play, an indictment of imperialism, was written by Howard Mann. . . . Mandolin, Ballet, Dramatic, and Singing sections of the Ukrainian Dramatic Club, section of United Ukrainian Toilers, are answering the enthusiasm which greeted their performance of several operettas with still another, *Natalka Poltavka*. . . . The Finnish Workers Theatre, founded September, 1933, has already presented *Factory Life*, *Days of the Cat*, *Brigades of the Woods*, and a four-act play on the Detroit auto strike. . . . The Workers Laboratory Theatre now begins its second three-months term in acting technique and playwrighting.

Newark.—The John Reed Dram Group is rehearsing *Women's Might* and a play written by the director of the group. . . . The Jack London Dram Group has produced 3 plays, and is working on a new one now. The group feels very strongly the necessity of developing artistically, and is conducting classes at their headquarters, at 230 Court St. New members are welcome.

Bloomfield and Orange.—The John Reed Dram Group, only recently organized, has already given four performances.

The group consisting of 8-10 members, has no headquarters as yet, and meets in private homes.

Plainfield.—The Jack London Dram Group of this city has been in existence for one year and now has 15 members. Performances have been given in Plainfield and also out-of-town.

New Brunswick.—The Jewish Workers Club Dram Section, started in 1928, is performing regularly. The Hungarian Workers Dram Group, although not represented at the New Jersey State Conference on January 28, sent a letter expressing their eagerness to cooperate with the new section and to join the League of Workers Theatres.

Touring the Pacific Coast, completing preparations for the National Festival, B. Lynn of Los Angeles, organized sections in San Francisco, Portland, Ore., and Seattle. Individual groups were organized and are already in rehearsal,—in Portland two Young Communist League Dramatic groups each with about ten members. The Icor Forum of Seattle and the Finnish Youth Club have promised to start dram sections, the Finnish group choosing *Lenin Calls* as its first project. Although none of the recently organized sections will be able to perform at the National Festival, they are expected to send delegates. . . . For the National Festival competition, the Rebel Players of Los Angeles intend to present *Broadway 1933*. On March 7, they will open at the Orange Grove Theatre, where they will present a full length Soviet comedy, *Squaring the Circle*, by Kataev, for ten days. The section competitions will be held at the same theatre, March 17 and 18.

Where the Grass Is Green....

The theatre, dance and film confront a world of chaos and crisis, revolution and reconstruction; the tidal waves of a new order. Broadway and Hollywood, twin ostriches may bury their heads in the sand, but their evasions, their narcotics, their attempts to maintain the status quo pale before the significant vitality of revolutionary art. Ideas sprout in the theatre arts, not in barren soil, but where the grass is green!

IN APRIL ISSUE

HOLLYWOOD OR LENIN HILLS

The late Harry Alan Potamkin's last piece of writing, now published for the first time.

BROADWAY 1934

Harold Edgar reviews the season to date Reviews, Comment, News-Notes, Film and Dance Analyses, etc.

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