

Madrid Players Display Polish

By MICHAEL KNAPP

Somewhere inbetween the hamlets of Madrid and Waddington there is a large field; and in the middle of this large field stands a large school — spanning new and ultra-modern; and in the middle of that large new school is an equally new and beautiful auditorium (with bucket seats yet!); and at the front of that beautiful auditorium stands a HUGE stage — one that must measure 300 feet across . . . and on that HUGE stage in that beautiful auditorium in the middle of that new school in the middle of a large field somewhere inbetween Madrid and Waddington, that creative art known as "Theatre" came to life last week end.

More and more is being written these days about the "rebirth" of theatre and the dramatic arts, especially on a "grass roots" level. Where once the Samuel Franch Company was threatened with a serious decline in the demand for its thousands of valuable royalted manuscripts, it is now apparent that "little theatre groups" — in whatever form they may take — are becoming more active than ever in all parts of our country. It would seem that the Adult Education Theatre Arts Group of the Madrid-Waddington Central School is an excellent example of this "rebirth."

The occasion of which I speak was this group's production of "The Night Is My Enemy" last Friday and Saturday nights. I would be less than candid if I said that I ventured into the St. Lawrence County "wilderness" expecting to find a totally polished production of a semi-professional nature; as a matter of fact, I wasn't sure what I would find; and I went (1) out of curiosity; and (2) because some of those involved in the production are friends of mine. So, to coin an old hackneyed phrase: "I came, I saw, I DEVoured!" And before the first act of this typical British chiller-comedy was over, adjectives were sprouting forth from my pen with their usual over-abundance!

Crowd Disappointing

In other words, the production of "The Night Is My Enemy" by the Madrid-Waddington Theatre Arts Group, proved to be one of the most enjoyable evenings of Theatre I have spent in quite some time. I would class the group's production of Fred Carmichael's suspense thriller one of skill, perception, marvelous characterization, and credible technical achievement. The only disappointing part of the endeavor was the fact that only about 120 persons viewed the performance in two nights . . . and there's no excuse for this kind of poor support!

I could start throwing "credits" out all over the place, but it was obvious that three people were basically responsible for what was seen last week end; Director Joan LaPage of Massena; assistant Director Betty Adams; and that wonderful woman who we working in theatre in this area couldn't do without, Mrs. Glenns (Flo) Conger, costume wardrobe mistress and, in this production, Stage Manager (?). Mr. LaPage and Miss Adams can take pride in their very fine job of whipping this difficult drama into shape; for giving it excellent timing and "rapport" between actors and audience; and for building it to a thrilling and meaningful climax with the careful blending of sensitive (not sacry) acting and intricate lighting and sound effects.

"The Night Is My Enemy" is the story of the thwarted mind of a once-successful British doctor who thinks "it is better to be dead than to be physically or mentally disabled for life." The setting is the typical British mansion-house in the country, and the central characters include Roane Shipperly (Phyllis Crosbie), the blind but attractive cousin of Hester and Dr. Ora Fontaine (Connie Cissell and John McQueeney). This family is surrounded by sinister "happenings", such as the cliff-murder of a widow neighbor lady, who walked with a pronounced limp; the later knife-murder of Tommy Biller, (Guy Conger), the mentally-retarded 19-year old son of the Fontaine's housekeeper and chauffeur (Georgia Moulton and Murray Fisher); and finally, the attempted strangling of blind Roane, by the pathetic "villan" of the piece. This comes at a time when Roane has just discovered she is really seeking "self-pity" for her blindness, and has fallen in love with London's youngest and most eligible Bachelor, Gerald Clayton (Gil Fox). I will not divulge the thrilling climax of the play in case there are those who may have occasion to see it.

Excellent Cast

Others in the cast, all of whom play a major role in the development of the climax, include Tessie the spunky and philosophical maid (June McQueeney); the haughty and typically British spinster neighbor, Augusta Garvey (Pat Landheer); and the Scotland Yard inspector (Earl Moulton).

The reason I have taken the space and trouble to mention all these characters and their relation to the plot is that the thing which amazed me most Saturday night, was the superb acting ability which these talented amateurs displayed. It must be remembered that these people have had little or no acting training or experience outside of that which they have gained as part of this Adult Education Course offered by Mr. LaPage at the Madrid School, and the fact that some of them appeared in the group's first production last year. And for all that, these people showed remarkable skill in not only portraying their subtle British roles with some very excellent accents indeed, but in capturing the real spirit of the production and the warmth and feeling which Mr. Carmichael has written into his fine play, which some groups might have missed completely in their attempt to over-emphasize the suspense element.

Individually, Gil Fox, with his deep rich radio voice, and his precise and exact manner of speech and movement, made an outstanding actor, and is one of the finest young actors this writer has seen in these parts in quite some time. He would do any theatre group proud. Mr. and Mrs. McQueeney of Waddington, (who I understand have been two of the biggest pushers of the fine group), both showed the tremendous time and effort they put forth in their parts of Tessie the Maid, whose wonderful cockney accent and excellent timing for comedy had the audience in stitches all evening; and John as the good Doctor, who rose to his heights in the difficult but excellently played third act. Phyllis Crosbie, in the lead part of blind Roane, did a creditable job indeed in a difficult role, and captured the sensitivity of her situation, which was of prime importance.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the superb jobs turned in by Pat Landheer as Augusta, in her gabby and flighty ways which added so greatly to the color of the production; and in the fine way in which young 16-year old Guy Conger handled his difficult role of Tommy, the awkward, strange acting, and yet extremely sensitive retarded teenager. His scene with Roane just before his death was one of the highlights of the evening. And as I said before, each and every actor on stage deserves credit for a job well done.

Technically Good

Technically, as with all British drama of this nature, "The Night Is My Enemy" was most difficult indeed, but Guy Conger, Earl Moulton, and Peter Lonshore did a fine job with the authentic-looking setting, and excellent light work to create the many varied moods of the production. And as usual, Flo Conger's genius with a needle and thread came to the front again in lavish and beautiful costumes, which have made her one of the foremost authorities on stage costuming and design among amateur theatre groups in New York State. I also know that the Madrid group would like me to give credit to the Potsdam Community Theatre for their help and assistance in the production in a very tangible way indeed, and also to the Massena Theatre (See Madrid Players, page 22)

FEATURES . . . and fun

COURIER FREEMAN, POTSDAM, N.Y., THURSDAY, APR. 23, 1964 13

Potsdam Thespians Plan Bard Comedy On May 1 & 2

Potsdam's contribution to the worldwide celebration of Shakespeare's 400th birthday — the Community Theater's production of "The Taming of the Shrew" — swings into high gear in the final two weeks of rehearsals. The production goes on the boards at the Civic Center Friday and Saturday, May 1 and 2, with a cast of dozens, original music, lutes and luteists, clowns, feasts, fasts and a brawl or two, "ruffs and cuffs and farthingales and things" — to express and communicate the vitality of one of history's liveliest periods, and one of the theater's hardest perennials.

Robert Holland, of the State University faculty of music, is directing the theatre group's production. Holland boasts a wide experience in opera and TV production prior to his stint at teaching. The "farthingales and things" in this setting of the play, Holland says, will evoke, not the 16th-17th-century heyday of Shakespeare's Globe Theater, but 18th-century Padua, where the action of the play is supposed to take place.

The early-high-renaissance decor takes shape under a small army of illusionists — Flo Conger, costumes; Margaret Weitzmann, sets; Lloyd Howe, lights; Helga Stuart, properties; Olive Moffett, hats; Vic Baker, set-building and stage manager.

The cast may well be the largest assembled for a Potsdam Community Theater production. In featured roles are Don Mandigo (Petruchio), Honey Rice (Katherina, the shrew), Judy Barkin (Bianca), Jim Ewan (Lucentio), Fiske Rawden (Tranio), Mike Berens (Baptista), Edward Kennedy (Grunio), Danny Simpson (Biondello), Richard Meeker (Vincenzo), Jim Waterson (Horatio), Zoya Bishop (The Widow), Ron Kern (Gremio), and James Liddle (The Pedant). Multiple roles are also held down by Jim Stidoh, Bob McKay, Guy Conger, Diane Kern and Juanita Scibetta who appear—and reappear — as just about everybody: a messenger, a tailor, a haberdasher, an officer, and a motley crew of servants.

Besides the scheduled two performances, the director and cast hope to offer a special matinee performance on Thursday for interested high-school students of Potsdam, Canton, Norwood — Norfolk, Winthrop, the Coltons, and Madrid — Waddington. Details will be announced in these schools as soon as final arrangements are completed.



RADIO NETWORK CHIEFS — Seen here are the officers of the Clarkson College Inter-College Radio Network. The Network includes: WTSC-FM, the FM station for Clarkson which can be heard throughout Potsdam; WNTC, the Clarkson-State University College closed-circuit radio station; and WCCI, the Clarkson Dormitory closed-circuit station. The officers of the Inter-College Network are: (left to right), front row: Al Dixon, president; Dave Brown, station manager of WTSC-FM; Dick Hall, station manager of WNTC; Colin Taylor, secretary; Pete Morse, technical director; and Bob Goodwin, business manager.

Cultural Calendar

- Potsdam**
- Thru Wed., Apr. 29 SPECIAL FILM, "Tom Jones" Academy Award Winner, Held Over Roxy Theatre
 - Thurs., Apr. 23 SPECIAL SHAKESPEAREAN BIRTHDAY PROGRAM Music, Poetry, Reading, Dramatic Reading State University College Theatre
 - Fri. & Sat., Apr. 24 & 25 MUSICAL, "The Music Man" Congdon Campus School Jr. High Operetta 8 p.m., Campus School Auditorium
 - Mon., Apr. 27 TRAVEL FILM, Uncensored picture on Russia, World Knowledge Film Series with Raphael Green 8:30 p.m., SUP College Theatre
 - Fri. & Sat., May 1 & 2 PLAY, "The Taming of the Shrew" by Shakespeare Potsdam Community Theatre Special Production Civic Center Auditorium, 8:15 p.m.

Hutchison Play To Be Staged

"A Peacetime Episode," an original play by Prof. Earl R. Hutchison, will be given its premiere production at the University of Wisconsin, Play Circle, May 13-14. Professor Hutchison, a member of the English department faculty at the State University Col-

ATI Chorus To Sing At NY World's Fair

Canton — The Cantoniens Chorus from the State University Agricultural and Technical Institute at Canton have been invited to sing at the New York State Pavilion at the New York World's Fair on May 30—Junior Citizens Memorial Day.

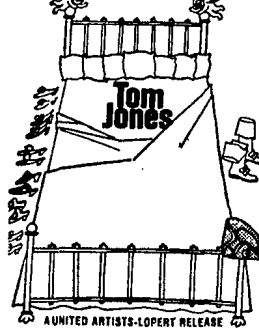
The group is under the direction of Mrs. Robert Mead and has sung several programs at various high schools

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"Tom Jones" will not be shown on Saturday or Sunday Matinee.

SATURDAY, APRIL 25 KIDDIE SHOW

DAVID LADD "The Ragtime" Little Rascals Cartoon Carnival

SUNDAY, APRIL 26 MATINEE ONLY Special Youth Show

ELVIS PRESLEY "ELVIS" IAN WALLIS "The Band" —Also— Cartoon Carnival

STARTING WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29 Gregory Peck & Tony Curtis Bobby Darrin "CAPTAIN NEWMAN" with Eddie Albert

Ingram With SLU World Fair Ensemble

Canton — The St. Lawrence University brass ensemble under direction of Prof. Richard S. Saylor will perform at the New York World's Fair on Saturday, May 9.

Officials of the New York State Pavilion have invited the 14-piece unit to participate in college and university day activities. On Friday, May 9, the ensemble will give a concert at Arlington Central School in Poughkeepsie.

The ensemble, one of several instrumental chamber groups at St. Lawrence, appears regularly in concert both on and off the campus. Their repertoire reflects a wide variety of musical tastes.

It is our belief that the playing of chamber music should be regarded as the most rewarding musical outlet for the talented liberal arts student," says Professor Saylor.

Member of the ensemble include: Verner Ingram, sophomore from Potsdam; James R. Swenson, freshman from Oak-

Frackenhohl Piece To Be Performed

Ten compositions by Dr. Arthur Frackenhohl of the Crane department of music faculty, The State University College at Potsdam, have been published. Four songs for children appear in the Prentice-Hall music series "Growing with Music" and four elementary piano solos have been (See Frackenhohl, page 22)

Travel Series Will Include Russian Film

An uncensored, non-political motion picture of Russia in color will be shown at 8:30 p.m. Monday, Apr. 27 in the theater at The State University College at Potsdam.

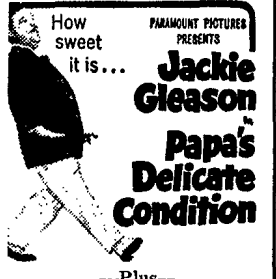
The film, prepared and presented by Raphael Green, is one of the few which shows Russian people at work — on collective farms, at markets, Kremlin leaders in Red Square, and cosmonauts at a press conference. Narrated by Green, the film will be the second in a series of World Knowledge films presented by the Potsdam chapter of the Student Education Association of New York State and will give intimate views of Russian agriculture, schools, markets, industry, churches, theater, sports and museums. The program is open to the public.

in St. Lawrence County and throughout the state. The Cantoniens will be accompanied by Mrs. Robert Mero of Potsdam.

MOONLIGHT Drive-in Theater

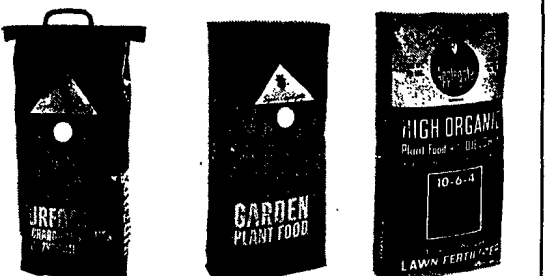
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