

## STAGE WATCH

# 'ANGRY MEN' TO OPEN FONDA THEATER

By SYLVIE DRAKE,  
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The leasing and renovation of the Pix Theater on Hollywood Boulevard by the Nederlanders and Michael Forman is one more development in the expansion of Nederlander-operated theaters in this town. Fine and dandy, if only so many of them didn't stay dark for such long stretches of time.

This one, however, won't—at least not now. The Plumstead Theatre Society, spearheaded by executive vice president Martha Scott, has accepted a Nederlander offer to option the theater.

Perhaps the fact that it has been renamed the Henry Fonda did the trick. Fonda was one of the founders of Plumstead, appearing in many of its productions.

In any case, this new theater is good news. After a gala dedication in early January, Plumstead will launch the Fonda with Reginald Rose's two-act stage version of "Twelve Angry Men." Said Scott:

"It was one of Henry's favorites. He co-produced the film—his only venture as a producer. This is the version Reginald did in England, not the one you see all the time in the States. And the people who want to do it are former members (of the cast) of the film."

Ed Sherin, who directed Plumstead's "Time of Your Life" in 1972, will stage the four-week run. Ernest Thompson's "Answers," a trio of one-acts, connected by a theme of loneliness, follows.

"The second play (in the trio) is one Hank wanted to do," Scott interjected. "It's a precursor to 'On Golden Pond.' We may get Burgess Meredith to do it . . ."

But first things first.

At the moment, Scott is raising the \$350,000 needed for both productions, with the Nederlanders contributing a variety of in-kind services. Scott feels "it's a very fair arrangement," and fund raising is going well. According to the Ned-



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*Martha Scott heads fund-raising program for new theater.*

erlandens' Stan Seiden, restoration of the 58-year-old, 863-seat house that was created as a legitimate theater (and made into a movie house in 1945) is under way.

"There's just no question about it being like the Booth (Theatre on Broadway)," Scott enthused. "It's got 90 seats more than the Booth and is within 100 seats of being the Hartford. It has a pit, wonderful dressing rooms and offices. In the research I've been doing I discovered that John Barrymore turned over the first spade full of dirt at ground-breaking ceremonies for this theater in 1926!"

Leasing arrangements with Plumstead are in eight-week increments, but, Seiden added quickly, "As long as they want to stay, we're happy to have them."

Understandably. Is the restoration of the Pix (nee the Carter DeHaven Music Box) a substitution for the three-theater complex (two 550-seat theaters and one 1,500-seater) that the Nederlanders want to build on Hollywood Boulevard? Not a chance. Seiden confirmed Tuesday that those plans are moving right along—at least on paper.

We know the Nederlanders move in mysterious ways, but, in an age of diminishing product, how do they propose to keep all those

theaters lit?

Replied Seiden: "We'll have to meet producers like Martha Scott."

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Switching subjects only slightly, the Los Angeles Civic Light Opera (read the Nederlanders) is offering subscribers three shows for 1985 from a field of eight titles: "The Tap Dance Kid," "My One and Only," "South Pacific," "Sweet Charity," "Naughty Marietta," "The Red Mill," "The Student Prince" and "The Merry Widow."

Only two of these are current on Broadway ("Tap Dance" and "My One and Only"), two would be Broadway revivals ("South Pacific" and "Sweet Charity") and four would have to be exhumed before they could be revived.

"My guess," Seiden said, "is we'll do one revival. We hope the other two will be the New York options."

So do we. The Nederlanders have had their troubles filling their Civic Light Opera slots in the past, but this is ridiculous—or do they merely want to go back to the original meaning of *light opera*?