

A COMMUNITY PLAY-HOUSE BELONGS TO EVERYONE

By J. W. MORIN

TO understand the Community Playhouse of Pasadena, anyone, but especially one of our own community should apprehend and constantly remember that it is not merely a theatre, a place of amusement, or a place of intellectual or moral uplift, nor merely a vehicle for the great art of a great director or great amateur actors of great talent, but it is the sublime exhibition of a great and enlightened community expressing itself in one of many ways in which it may manifest itself. In other words, the thing should be understood primarily as a layman's theatre, of laymen, for the laymen and by the laymen. This great impersonal thing which we call the Community, has a certain vitality and feeling as a collective whole, quite similar to the individual instinct, which craves expression and is capable of infinite development, and the director, the stage crew and the staff employed in the Community Playhouse are not in any sense the Community Playhouse itself, but rather the theatre and the staff of the theatre are the mere instrumentalities through which our community expresses itself in this particularly responsive way.

Thus the most persuasive apostles of the Playhouse movement in Pasadena, (in which community by the way the movement is especially hopeful and significant), are not necessarily the director or the actors, leading or obscure, nor those persons who are widely read or technically informed in literature, but the greatest among them are those converts who may be merely those average typical people whose folk interest is normal and true.

When we take the apparently complicated local mechanism of the Pasadena Community Playhouse movement apart and analyze it, we find it in its first principle just a simple story for the regular folks, and concerned mainly with what the average person is thinking about.

In the very beginning of the institution of the movement in Pasadena, the leadership was fortunate in realizing in accordance with the foregoing suggestions, that they were engaged in the institution of a social movement, and if it was not a truly typical product of the community, it would be false in name as well as lacking in stability, because it was not well and truly founded. It was realized that the products of the institution that was to be, being in a sense a true symphony of many arts, and the realization of so much disinterested devotion to the abstract idea we call the community good, could not be brought to their final consummation, which is now recorded, unless there was in the movement an adherence first to social justice and secondly to standards of art. In other words, without a general consensus of support from the opinion and talents of the community, regardless of wealth or financial endowment—the movement would not live, as a true community institution for social advancement must contain within it at least two

grains of truth, it must be a typical product of the community, and it must be unique within the community. It must be a true family affair and a family divided against itself must fall.

Thus the incorporators of the movement in Pasadena were among themselves representatives of many interests and many tastes. They assumed not the proprietorship, but merely the leadership in fostering an idea, the ultimate development of which they could not clearly foresee at the time. They made little pretense at art or technique of the stage, but gravely conferred with the director as to what plays he should give, he paying all the bills for the first year, and merely by their approval and moral support, kept alive the tiny flicker of light of a true principle, to-wit, that the theatre they were headed for was a true people's theatre and that they were the mere custodians or representatives for the real owners and beneficiaries who were all the people of the community, and when the sense of personal proprietorship shall have come to each person in the community, one of the great ends of the Community Theatre movement in Pasadena shall have been attained.



S. S. HINDS IN THE "THIRD FLOOR BACK," AN EARLY PLAY

THE PLAYERS

THE Community Theater as an integral part of the home life of a community has grown intensely within the past ten years, and has developed because of public need. In most communities on this Western Coast a new play was not even anticipated, and even now the best things never come in their entirety from New York or Eastern centers. The most we can hope for is a second rate company with an occasional star. Several cities support their own stock companies, some quite good and others indifferently bad, but in those cases the box office decides the type of play produced.

In the Little Theater or Community Theater movement it is always a case of play interest rather than actor homage. In the legitimate theater this prevails to a degree now, but it is the very essence of community drama. The play must hold the attention of the audience, this it could not do unless it were well

presented, but the actors must always be subservient to the action of the play. This is easily understood as we realize that the community theaters have usually grown out of a group brought together by an interest in play reading and which is later held together and brought to function as a cast by a director, who continually enlarges the circle, thereby providing additional members on whom to call as the idea grows into the selection and production of a play.

The work of the community directors is naturally complicated, particularly in the selection of a play. They would like always to present something new, clever, and arresting, not too difficult to produce but with enough force to intrigue the separate abilities of each actor. But as untrammelled as they should be in their work, the box office must be consulted. In every community there are citizens who accept the theater as a means of relaxation, a mode of entertainment merely. They are willing to be taught a lesson if it be pleasantly taught, but they are a little wary of symbolism. When a play merely amuses, it has only accomplished half its purpose, it can be made to teach a precept without delivering a preaching.

Each director is ever mindful of and on the lookout for new members for the drama section, and usually keeps a card index of all possibilities, never forgetting if he has been told of latent talent in a man or woman. Miss Nina Moise, director of the Santa Barbara Community Players, never goes out on the street, in a store, cafe, or car, without watching for types. She contends everyone is fundamentally an actor, it may be a remnant of the childish love of "dressing up," but in most humans it is there. She notes the play of the features, the walk, the inflections of all voices and pigeonholes various people as a future possibility, and when the demand comes she seeks them out,—apparently picking her actors from the atmosphere, but where she has had them hanging for some time awaiting the call. After the selection, it is literally a welding of the mass together by the personality of the director, and as he is dynamic and vital, so they imbibe strength and vividness of portrayal, often surprising themselves by the force of the response.

Community directors in this way start with an absolutely untrained cast, people who have not had the least inclination or desire to act but who are willing to be convinced that they can do so, if they believe they are achieving part of a public service. When the cast is selected it is with the understanding that each individual knows that it means work, and that there can be no other thing of equal importance during the period of rehearsal—the play is not only the thing, it is the only thing. Rehearsals are held every day or evening, if not of all, then

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MRS. CLINTON CHURCHILL CLARKE, ALWAYS A FAVORITE IN THE CASTS OF THE PLAYHOUSE



MRS. SAMUEL S. HINDS, WHOSE APPEARANCE IN THE PASADENA COMMUNITY PLAYHOUSE IS LOOKED FORWARD TO WITH PLEASURE

For the Convenience of Architects of the A. I. A., the A. A. A. and New Arrivals

AMONG the many advantages arising from the drawing power of life in California is the fact that the attractions draw the rich and the poor, capital and labor, and the type of worker known as the craftsman, an artisan in his life work. We need no longer bewail the lack of men to whom a trade is a profession, men who take the same pride and care in filling a contract as an artist does in painting a portrait. We are not compelled now to put up with the workman who is willing to do a thing in any sort of way to get it done but have men who insist that every smallest detail must carry the hall-mark of perfection. We now have many dependable workers, builders and contractors and it is with the co-operation of these men that the building of the southland goes forward to the high mark attained.

Ranking high among the colorists is Einar Petersen, 4350 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles, who not only studied art in Paris but observed and worked on the continent before coming to America where he has risen to prominence as a mural decorator. So valued is his work that we find it evidenced in connection with some of the best loved buildings of the community, such as: Community Playhouse, Pasadena; University Club, Los Angeles; Friday Morning Club, Los Angeles; Feagans Jewelry Shop, Los Angeles; St. Paul's Cathedral, Los Angeles; Peter Young Market, Los Angeles, Neves Cafe, and numbers of others throughout the Southwest.

There was a time when the installation of a heating and ventilating plant was, to say the least, a gamble. The heating plant might turn out to be a ventilating one or vice versa, but now with the introduction of dependable men, men with an interest in their products, who understand every approved method in heating, ventilating and plumbing there can be no mistakes. Among the most dependable firms of this character is that of F. D. Reed Plumbing Co., 1362 Factory Place, Los Angeles, whose work can be found in many buildings in the Southwest. Among them are the Montebello High School, Taft Building, Hollywood, Pacific Motor Garage, Los Angeles, and the Edwards-Willey Bldg., Los Angeles.

From the earliest days of the history of architecture the eaves and cornices of buildings presented difficulties and it has only been in fairly recent times that sheet metal and tin have come to be pliable and usable materials in the hands of a skilled worker. Men who can supply the material and the skill are to be found in and with the Arcade Cornice Works, 721 E. 12th Street, Los Angeles, T. F. Bazzeni, manager, and their workmanship is shown in such buildings as the Frick Martin Bldg., Los Angeles; Taft Bldg., Hollywood; National City Bank Bldg., and Finance Bldg., 7th and Spring, Los Angeles; Lincoln High School, Los Angeles; Fremont High School, Los Angeles; and the Shrine Temple, Los Angeles.

TERRACE 0127

After the Play Is Over or Before
Place Telephone Order for
Refreshments

El Patio Tea Room

In the open foyer of the
Pasadena Community Playhouse
37 South El Molino Avenue

Lunch

Tea

Dinner

THE COMMUNITY PLAY HOUSE

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of separate groups, and during the last week previous to the production a rehearsal of the entire cast is held every day, with a technical and a full dress rehearsal the two nights preceding the play.

In these productions there are other willing hands and brains beside the director and cast: frequently there is a dramatic committee who, with the director, selects the plays; a producing committee that generally functions with the technical director, under whose supervision the scenery is designed, built and painted; a wardrobe committee through whose efforts the costumes are provided, and another set who supply the properties.

The vital point in all this is that all these people undertake this work for love of the drama, with a desire to see the theater grow and live, and they do it whole heartedly, making a real business of it and never present an amateurish performance. Occasionally there may be criticism of the plays presented, it is scarcely possible to please every member of a community, even the dramatization of the telephone directory might cause comment if misunderstood.



EMPHASIZING the community interest in the choice of plays the Southland Calendar publishes each month an announcement of coming plays being rehearsed during the month.

In addition we propose to publish opinions and discussions of the plays to be presented. Contributions will be welcomed if they are written in a constructive way and give real thought on the subject of life in its demonstration on the stage.

So far, the plays given in the new playhouse have been unusually fitted to show forth life as it is today and something in each play strikes a common chord in the life of the most indifferent listener.

If you think you would have interpreted the part differently, or if you feel that the play itself was untrue to life write your comment down, study its effect on future acting or playwriting, and if it seems to have in it a really helpful criticism, type it and send it to SOUTHLAND. In the next issue it will appear if space can possibly be found for it.



O'HARA LIVERMORE and ARTHUR BAKEN

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Interior Decoration

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IES—LAMPS—SHADES—PILLOWS—OBJECTS OF ART