

Anita Block

The
**CHANGING
WORLD**
in
PLAYS
and
THEATRE

This book was written for those who regard the theatre as a stimulating experience rather than as passing entertainment, and whose chief interest in plays lies in the significance of their content to the individual and to society.

THEODORE DEBS
TERRE HAUTE, IND.



April 25th., 1910.

Anita C. Block,
New York, N.Y.

My dear Comrade:-

The beautiful article from your pen in the Call in regard to the Columbia College meeting gave me very much satisfaction and I wish to thank you for it with all my heart. This is but a paltry return for a rich service but I wish you to know at least that I am not insensible to the spirit of fine comradeship which glows in your lines and not lacking in appreciation of your kind and generous expression. There is reward enough, and of the only kind really worth while, in your sweet and gracious tribute, for a whole life-time of service, and the only qualm I have is the sense of shame I feel in not being more worthy of it.

Your beautiful and appreciative words make the very little I have been able to do for woman seem almost contemptible in my eyes. But I hope yet to do that of which my heart is full to bursting and to strike the blow for woman's emancipation of which I have dreamed since my earliest boyhood and for which I have been preparing, I trust, all these years.

The woman question is to me not only a part of the labor question the very core of it and if I have any strength in fighting les of socialism it is because of my comprehension of the of the woman question and the consequent inspiration

CK
BOOKS



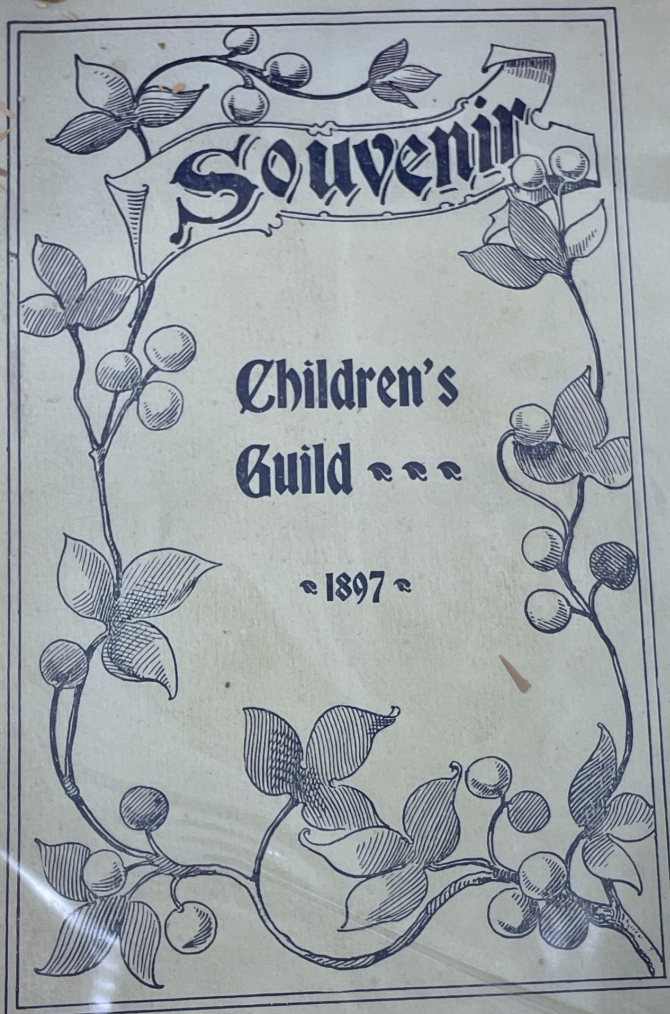
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LTURE

THE CHILDREN'S GUILD

1897

THE NEW YORK CALL—SUNDAY, APRIL 24, 1923.

Guity's "Beranger" Is a Feeble Play for the Ambitious Harvard Dramatic Club to Expand Its Talents On.

By ANITA BLOCK.

To those of us who remember from our college days the brave and appealing figure of Beranger, the writer of songs to whom the French Republic and the happiness and well-being of the oppressed French people mattered far more than his beloved "chansons," the biographical play by Sacha Guity, which he calls "Beranger," and which has just been given its first performance in America by the Harvard Dramatic Club, is, it must be repeated, a distinct disappointment; for it leaves one with the impression that Beranger was a comfortable person, leading a comparatively undisturbed and a comfortable life, performing extremely tedious acts of kindness, while his political activities consisted in clever verbal fencing with the Marquis de Talleyrand. Of his bad health, for example, and the extreme poverty of his young manhood, which left their imprint on him all his life, we get not a suggestion.

In the second act, beyond a doubt one of the very dreariest and stupidest acts we have ever suffered through, we watch him getting his things together for an immediate departure to prison, in the manner of one about to start for a watering place, and we get no suggestion that prison was a frequent experience for the singer whose "bugle calls of awakening" to the masses left the powers that be no choice but fine and incarcerating him. Indeed, he is presented to us here as an amiable gentleman, with no concern in the world but a love affair and persuading a neighbor to palm himself off as the son of his insufferably maudlin landlady, who takes up at least half of the long act telling you how for 40 years she has been looking for the baby that was taken away from her at birth. The only purpose in indicting this intolerable old woman on an audience is to acquaint you with the fact that loving kindness was one of Beranger's leading traits. But surely here Guity, the master technician, was not merely napping, but snoring, else how could he have chosen such a singularly inept example, when hundreds of actual and thrilling records of Beranger's kindness were available. Of such a famous example as his refusal to avail himself of the favor of Louis Philippe and accept anything for himself while taking advantage of the situation to demand a pension for the aged and poverty-stricken author of "The Marquis de L'Isle—of such incidents as this in the life of the revolutionist we get not an inkling.

Not one acquainted with the revolutionary author of "Le Vieux Drapeau" ("The Old Flag"), copies of which he himself distributed to the insurgent Paris street crowds, would get any idea of the real Beranger from the thin and insipid playlet concocted by Sacha Guity, who in "Pasteur" gave us such a thrilling and impressive biographical portrait of a man, the background of whose life was to Beranger's as gray is to scarlet. In "Pasteur" we actually hear the rebel scientist make his scathing attack on the organized medical profession entrenched in its archaic prejudices. But surely the veiled bright remarks that Beranger exchanges with Talleyrand give not a suggestion of the defiant "political," who, when ill and feeble in prison, refused to ask for a transfer to the hospital, saying, "When you have taken your stand against the government, it seems to me ridiculous to complain of what it makes you suffer, and most impolitic to furnish it with any occasion for generosity." Ah! There spoke the true revolutionist, of whom Guity gives us not even a glimmer.

And also in connection with his famous songs, delightfully as the first act shows their irresistibly infectious quality—how his "chansons" flew from mouth to mouth till all the people of France were singing them—yet we do not get anything of the depths of Beranger's convictions on art, on the purposes of art, and on the responsibilities

of the artist to the people. Here again we have the revolutionist, in whom the dictum of "art for art's sake" aroused nothing but anger, and who therefore insisted ever and over that the guiding principle must be art for the people's sake, for humanity's sake. He did not believe in the artist who has no sense of social responsibility and he protested against him. He believed that art should voice the aspirations and suffering of mankind rather than the petty individual emotions of the individual artist. Such was the real Beranger, the Beranger who is inextricably interwoven with the revolutionary history of France, to whom the pleasant person of Sacha Guity's play scarcely even bears a faint resemblance.

Of course for all this the sincere and ambitious students of the Harvard Dramatic Club are not responsible. They may be criticised for the selection of a weak and uninteresting play, but not for its content; certainly they presented it in a highly creditable manner. It is plain to see that they are animated by a very real love for the drama as well as for all the stagecraft that is connected with it, and that they take with thorough seriousness the work they are attempting to do. For it is not only the acting which interests them, as is the case in most college theatricals. It is the designing of the settings and costumes, the problems of lighting, in short, all that goes to make up that intricate whole, a modern theatrical production, to which they are giving thoughtful experimental study. Thus the stage director, the chief electrician, the property man, the designer of the settings, the planner of the lighting effects, as well as the translator of the play from the French, are all undergraduates. And together they have done a really excellent piece of work. The set of the first and last acts, showing the courtyard of a little inn near Paris, is one any professional might be proud of, with its charming arrangement of platform and stairs and unexpected little doors and balconies. The entire fresh and gay first act, too, with everybody spontaneously singing Beranger's songs is very adroitly handled. Astonishingly good, too, are those playing the leading parts—John Collier as Beranger, Dorothy Googins as the famous Lisette of the songs, and Conrad Salinger as Talleyrand. And while in some of the minor parts the always amusing amateur could not be concealed, others, notably that of the grisette of Maryalice Secoy and the innkeeper of Ethel Woodworth were well handled.

Altogether the ambitious venture of these collegians in translating and presenting for the first time in America a play of this calibre is a highly

UNION HELP?

SUNDAY, APRIL 24, 1923.

Shaw's Amusing Satire, "The Devil's Disciple," Is Delightfully Produced by the Theatre Guild.

By ANITA BLOCK.

Certainly a vote of thanks is due the Theatre Guild for affording the playgoer, through its present production of Bernard Shaw's "The Devil's Disciple," a backward glance, as it were, from the very latest Shaw of "Back to Methuselah" to the Shaw of 1897. And, indeed, if the truth must be told, this old play, in spite of its general slightness and un-Shavian form, contains more of the essence of the real Shaw, of the sardonic social iconoclast, than does his elaborate Bergsonian swan-song. Of course the perfect Shaw is the Shaw of "Candida," and "You Never Can Tell," and "Man and Superman." But "The Devil's Disciple" is their little brother, biting and amusing in its satire, and containing one or two scenes as good as anything the later Shaw was to achieve.

"The Devil's Disciple," it will be remembered, is laid in New England in the year 1777, at which time General Burgoyne was enjoying the pleasant little job of trying to save the American colonies for England. Richard Dudgeon, a young American, in a wildly Shavian revolt against the Puritans, for making of the ideals of Puritanism just about what Christians generally have made of the ideals of Christianity, has won for himself the hatred of his family and neighbors, and the title of "the Devil's Disciple," in return for his open espousal of the cause of the Devil as against the hypocritical and cruel God of the Puritans whom he sees worshipped around him. This is of course the typical God of the Pharisees, the God of the lawyer who cringes before property, of the horse dealer who cannot be trusted, of the drunkard who sings psalms on Sundays, and of the mother who is so rigidly moral and righteous that her home is filled not with the laughter of children, but with their tears. And so, when Dick Dudgeon, like a very much more important person before him, makes no secret of loathing the Pharisees and prefers the society of the unrespectable, the respectable shun him as the Devil's Disciple he proclaims himself to be.

Now it is just about the time in the course of the Revolution when things begin to look pretty uncomfortable for the British, and in order to frighten the rebels, King George's red coats are hanging a man in each town as a horrible example. None of his neighbors has any doubt, but it will be Dick Dudgeon who will hang in their town, and Anthony Anderson, the genial, shrewd, very this-worldly minister, who has married the lovely young Judith, and who is strangely unlike his Puritan flock, summons Dick to his house to warn him of his danger. And while Dick is there having tea alone with the minister's very uncomfortable wife—for the minister has been unexpectedly called away—the soldiers come to arrest, not him, but Anthony Anderson, the minister. Then Dick, true to Shavian form, proves himself a real man and Christian by silencing the distraught wife, refusing to deny that he is the minister, and going off with the soldiers to be hanged.

How it all comes right is, of course, the least important thing in a Shaw play, where the story, even when conveyed in such an absurdly melodramatic form as this, matters not at all, while the characters and the things the great social satirist makes them do and say matter a very great deal. Shaw is indeed the critic's despair unless one has the space to write an essay about each play, with ample quotations, for Shaw, like Shakespeare, must not only be read before going to the play, but read right over again afterward. In "The Devil's Disciple," as in the later plays, we get the accepted Phillistine and bourgeois values and standards stood on their heads, so that Shaw can

show us what a topsy-turvy, unreasonable muddle we are making of this, our life. And nowhere has Shaw created a more perfect character to give expression to this point of view than in General Burgoyne, who is as utterly unlike the accepted figure of a British general as his Caesar is unlike the belated paragon who used to bore us to exhaustion in Gaul and wherever else our textbooks took him. You will find as deliciously keen and amusing as the trial scene in which Dick is brought before General Burgoyne and the British military staff.

The Theatre Guild once more has every reason to be proud of its work, for this, its last production of the season, is a thoroughly excellent one. Indeed, it seemed to us that the cast was unusually satisfactory, and if we were to enumerate the list it would be only to shower praise on each individual player. It was fine to see Basil Sydney rescued from the neurotic Simonetta, late of the Provincetown, and expending his splendid self on the sturdy and interesting Dick Dudgeon. It was fine to see the lovely Lotus Robb rescued from the neurotic Johannes Kreisler and his temperamental and ever-threatening scenery, playing exquisitely a part worthy of her, that of the emotional and ultra-feminine Judith. And perhaps finest of all it was to see Roland Young rescued from the inane trivialities of a Broadway farce, playing with indescribable unctious the part of General Burgoyne, which it is difficult to believe Shaw did not write especially for him.

The Theatre Guild production of "The Devil's Disciple" is pure delight to those who not only love their Shaw, but want to see him intelligently and artistically interpreted on the stage.

By ANITA BLOCK.

There are, it must be recorded, various things the matter with the Producing Managers' Association's much heralded production at the 44th Street Theatre of Shakespeare's "As You Like It." The first thing that is the matter with it—for which its present sponsors are hardly to blame—is Shakespeare. Yes, Shakespeare. For it does seem to us high time to throw off this solemn thing but a deadly bore. In this it is like that other Shakespearean bore, "The Merchant of Venice," which insults your credulity with the same preposterously transparent disguises, the same uninteresting sub-plots constantly dragging you away from the main theme, the same allegedly comic characters, whom you could slay in the flesh of the actors playing them, without one moment's compunction. Indeed, had it not been for the soothing beauty of Lee Simonson's settings and the exquisite charm of Margalo Gillmore's "Celia," we really do not see how we could have endured the long agony of listening to the interminable stupidities uttered by Touchstone and the banished Duke and the Lord attending the banished Duke and Corin and Silvius and Phoebe and Audrey and William. Perhaps some day some one will have the courage to present "Impressions" of "As You Like It" after the manner of Mr. Rothafel's treatment at the Capitol of equally wearisome grand operas. Then we can imagine an audience enjoying the really fine moments of this Shakespearean comedy, instead of staggering out, weak and shaken, as they did on Monday night.

The next thing that was the matter with this particular production of "As You Like It" was Marjorie Rambeau's Rosalind. Incredible that this ample and perfectly corseted person, whose woodland costume fitted her more miraculously than ever glove fitted any hand, and whose elaborate diction went with the costume as though they had been ordered at the same place, should be Rosalind, one of the airiest, willowest, most adorably insouciant creatures ever sprung from a poet's fantasy. One wonders how, under the able direction of a man like Robert Milton, Miss Rambeau could not manage to learn that in order to play Shakespeare one does not permit the ordinary naturalness of human speech to suffer an utter change into something rich and strange and most distressing to listen to. Moreover, Miss Rambeau has constantly before her the complete and beautiful naturalness of Margalo Gillmore, whose understanding interpretation of the thankless part of Celia has lifted it out of the limbo of Norissas and Jessicas and other Celias and made of it a memorable portrait. And the Orlando of Ian Keith, whatever shortcomings it may have, is certainly a model of naturalness. To hear Miss Rambeau read her Shakespearean lines and then to hear the fresh naturalness with which Ian Keith answers them is a perfect lesson in how it shouldn't and should be done. As we watched Miss Rambeau's perfect 36—or is it, perhaps, 38?—disport itself, we had a fleeting vision of Katherine Cornell in her careless boy's togs of the tavern scene in "Will Shakespeare," leaping in body and spirit as a lambent flame. Of such stuff as this must a Rosalind be made if the artificiality of the situation is to be tintured with the saving grace of reality.

Other things that stand out on this morning after are the charm and intelligence of the Jacques of A. E. Anson and the extraordinariness of cast-

ing Ernest Lawford for Touchstone. It is always such a joy just to watch the ineffable grace of Mr. Anson's body that one almost resents being torn away to listen to his fine voice and intelligent acting. His Jacques, however, is well worth listening to, and one learns anew that nothing in the world can be quite so melancholy as laughter. But to see that tranquil English gentleman, Ernest Lawford, whom one associates with loose tweeds and tea in the drawing room, cavorting about as Touchstone, is, well, to say the least, incongruous.

And this brings us finally to the thing that stands out most in this production, namely, the thrillingly beautiful work of Lee Simonson. We are not among those who think that Mr. Simonson as a scenic artist can do no wrong. We have seen him do a number of things that struck us as very wrong and then again others that didn't strike us at all. But his stage settings for this production of "As You Like It" have a noble, imaginative beauty that holds one long after they have been physically removed. Each one in its separate way gives one a feeling of beyondness, of spaces leading out and on, that is, perhaps, too big a feeling to suggest in connection with this slight pastoral comedy. Even the scene before Oliver's house suggests it, with its broad expanse of sky visible over the wall, and its doors through which Orlando makes his escape. And when the marvelous tapestry curtain is lifted in the scene on the Duke's terrace, the whole world seems to stretch out before us. Finally in the use made of massive interlacing trees in the Forest of Arden, stretching back to lovely, green, sunlit spaces, we get miraculously that sense of security and freedom a forest affords.

Of course, this is not at all as it should be. One should not, the morning after a dramatic production, be a-thrill at scenery and costumes and color that have dwarfed all else. We fear Mr. Simonson has invested with too great a glory this little Elizabethan play, especially on an occasion where its one genuine jewel, the lovely figure of Rosalind, fails to shine. But out at Oskaloosa College or in the University of Wappinger Falls, for the edification of which we hear the American National Theatre project is intended, they will probably think it is all too wonderful for words.

"Sylvia" Might Be an Amusing Farce if It Didn't Attempt to Be Serious.

By ANITA BLOCK.

Beyond a doubt all kinds of interesting plays, serious and amusing, could be, and in fact should be written about this much talked of younger generation of ours. Rachel Crothers has made feeble attempts to do it, first in "Nice People" and later in "Mary the Third," with results too superficial and unsustained to be of any value. However, she need not worry that even her efforts will be overshadowed by the new play called "Sylvia," which has just opened at the Provincetown Theatre and which purports to be revelatory of the reprehensible quality of our present-day youth. This reprehensibleness, according to the author, Leighton Osmun, seems to consist in an "I-don't-give-a-damn" attitude toward everything, including the sacredness of marriage, which attitude appears to find its verbal expression in calling everybody, including one's 90-year-old grandfather, "old thing" or "old worm" either at the end or at the beginning of every sentence addressed to them. The number of times all the members of the cast were thus addressed by Sylvia, the volatile young heroine, who was supposed to typify the girl of today, is quite beyond computation and nearly reduced a long-suffering audience to hysteria.

Sylvia is a young miss blessed with a grandfather who will one day leave her \$2,000,000. She enters into a secret unsuccessful marriage with a young man who leaves to accompany Hoover to Russia, whence the report comes that he is dead. Whereupon Sylvia, now considering herself free to satisfy grandpa, who has been insisting on her getting married, enters into a marital arrangement with her grandfather's choice, who happens to be the lover of her best friend who has jilted him to marry money. After a year husband No. 1, not dead at all, turns up. Intolerable situation! Grandpa must be told everything, after all, and the problem, to judge by the final curtain, is apparently to be solved by Sylvia's getting rid of both her husbands and marrying No. 3, a sweet old worm, a mid-Victorian friend of her dead father's, who has been hanging around ever since the play began and secretly loving her and all the time been secretly loved by her. Such is the farcical material of a play which is hopelessly torn between the desire to be just plain farce, with amusing lines and preposterous situations, and to say something very profound and trenchant about the decadence and general godlessness of today's young men and especially young women.

There is one good thing about this production, which is that the acting is so bad as to bring home to you, with a sharp thrust, the full realization of the large number of plays, no better than this, that win praise and succeed on Broadway, because of the brilliant cast engaged to act in them. As we watched the amateurs struggling with this play at the Provincetown, we imagined it in the hands of such a cast as is presenting "You and I." How Lucile Watson and her associates would have made the dross glitter and sparkle! How they would have made semi-smart lines scintillate like epigrams! How they would have wrung the last bit of laughter out of every

impossible situation! And instead of a bored and weary audience, you would have had one stimulated and made tolerant by "laughs" and clever acting, and the next day you would have read in the papers that, of course, while "Such-and-such" could scarcely be called a good play, it is rendered delightful and well worth seeing on account of the brilliant acting of—and here would follow the magic names of a priceless payroll. "Sylvia," as blundered through, in the uncomfortable Provincetown Theatre, had no such luck, and will therefore have to suffer under the uncompromisingly harsh criticism which thousands of Broadway productions have been spared in the past and will unfortunately continue to be spared in the future.

"Nobody's Business" Is Not a Play—Merely a Determination to Score a Broadway Hit.

By ANITA BLOCK.

The most extraordinary thing about the play, "Nobody's Business" which came to the Klaw Theatre last night is that, according to the program, it took hold the other how awfully bad it is. But either Mr. Frank Mandel was too polite to tell Mr. Guy Bolton, or Mr. Bolton could not bring himself to break the news to Mr. Mandel. At any rate the result is a badly written and clumsily constructed piece of clap-trap, that never for a moment breathes either sincerity or reality. If the play has a central idea, we are unable to tell our readers whether it is that it is "nobody's business," what experiences a woman may choose to have, or whether it is that men are a pretty low lot and a woman many "bad" men there are imperilling a vivid clutches, or that no matter how waiting just around the corner. Perhaps it is all of them lumped together more or less sensationally in the hope that the mixed ingredients will rise like a successful cake and result in that coveted desideratum, a Broadway hit.

It all has to do with a foolish country girl from the West, who comes to New York to be an artist with two hundred dollars and the conviction that she will be able to succeed without the help of the inevitable male who asks his scarlet price. How she becomes involved with various males, her virtue being miraculously saved at the eleventh hour, so that at the end she may become the pure wife of the good man, who, (perfumed memory of Stillman!) must, because he is a high bank official, have, like Caesar, a wife above suspicion,—all this and much, much more of absurd and stogy character-drawing and consciously stogy character-drawing make up the rest of the concoction. Indeed characters are introduced as laugh-getters, who are fundamentally out of place, granted the type of heroine and her alleged problem, such as the highly colored lady from vaudeville, giving the audience the opportunity to enjoy the now classic Broadwayisms of the talented Josephine Drake, her grafting partner and ex-husband, and the pure burlesque figure of the heroine's highly moral beau from her home town. The result of all this is a theatrical hodge-podge, and not a play.

The vivid Francine Larrimore works hard and it is not her fault if the unreal heroine won't come to life at her touch. But the greatest shock of the evening was the portly and ample figure of Louis Bennisson, whom we had remembered as a lithe and gay cowboy, playing with extraordinary stiffness and affectation a wealthy Wall Street Don Juan. Frank Conroy's acting we wouldn't presume to criticize, as it was only at great intervals we gathered what he was talking about.

"Nobody's Business" is not a play; it is merely a determination to score a Broadway hit.

"The Swan" Is Molnar in a Vein of Original, Sparkling and Highly Amusing Satire.

By ANITA BLOCK.

It is not the Molnar of "Lillom," and surely not the Molnar of the ill-fated "Launzi," who last night charmed and amused and altogether captivated the audience at the Cort Theatre gathered to witness Mr. Charles Frohman's production of "The Swan." It is Molnar in dazzling holiday mood, making a distinguished and original contribution to the lighter moments of the theatre, and obviously himself having an enormously good time doing it. For poking fun at royalty, even in these increasingly kingless days, is still pretty good sport, and when it is done as delicately and as colorfully as Molnar does it, it becomes unusually fine sport.

For "The Swan" takes us through a dramatic episode that occurs in the castle of the Princess Beatrice one summer's day. The Princess is entertaining no less a personage than the Crown Prince of the realm, whom it is her life's ambition to win as a husband for her daughter Alexandra. The Prince, however, who is completely in the hands of the brilliant politician, his mother, dares not commit himself without her consent and the visit is all but over. So the Princess Beatrice, desperate lest her daughter lose a throne, decides on the time-honored device of bringing the Prince to the point, by arousing his jealousy. As she explains, there isn't time to secure a socially correct person, a Duke or a Count, so she is forced to use the tutor of her sons, a handsome and brilliant young professor of humble origin.

Thus the young man who has been treated exactly like a servant and who loves the haughty young Princess Alexandra as the unthinkable unattainable, is driven nearly mad when she herself invites him to the reception in the Prince's honor and devotes herself exclusively to him. Then of course the inevitable happens. Fanned by his flame, she, the proud swan, becomes stirred by the man, so stirred that she despises herself and confesses to him why she has been so kind. At this the poor boy goes quite wild, insults the Prince during the royal supper scene—a scene indescribably clever and amusing—and when the prince contemptuously dismisses him, tries to leap at him. Imagine the horror of the royal family at this juncture, when the Princess Alexandra flings herself on the tutor's breast to stop him, and meets his lips in a most unroyal kiss.

Of course with the morning sanity and law and order return. The young professor, shaken but again normal, takes his leave. And through the good offices of Alexandra's uncle, the wise and understanding Father Hyacinth, the Prince and his mother, who had been summoned by her son to ask for Alexandra's hand, accept a very idyllic version of the kissing episode. Nevertheless her future mother-in-law reads her a little homily about a swan very much resembling a goose when she leaves her own fair lake for the shore. And Alexandra listens humbly, for there is really nothing in the world she so much wants as to be a Queen.

This bare outline can unfortunately give the reader not even the remotest idea of the humor, satire and sparkle of character and situation, nor of the wealth of detail which gives the play its perfect atmosphere. We wish Molnar could see this American production, for undoubtedly the cast would afford him the keenest pleasure. No more perfect selection could have been made for the title role, the regal little princess, momentarily melted by passion into common clay, than Eva Le Gallienne, a dream of white loveliness to look at and to listen to. As her ambitious and unscrupulous mother,

Hilda Spong was capital. In her highly amusing scenes with inferiors and servants, she was every inch a princess of the blood. Basil Rathbone played with fine restraint and passion the lowly tutor whom his superiors cruelly used and bruised, and Philip Merivale created an inimitable portrait of a kindly and fat-headed Prince, whose most ordinary act of life takes on a supreme importance. Halliwell Hobbes plays with charming sympathy Father Hyacinth, who prevents his royal sister's unworthy scheme from terminating in tragedy. To mention the rest of the cast—George Walcott and Alan Willey as the tutor's young royal pupils, Alice John as Symphorosa, the royal maiden aunt, Ritchie Ling as Caesar, the major domo of the castle, and Alison Skipworth as the prince's mother and political manager—is to praise them.

"The Swan" is Molnar in a vein of original, sparkling and highly amusing satire.

Some Thoughts on "The Great God Brown"

By ANITA BLOCK

Far more interesting than Eugene O'Neill's symbolism is, it seems to me, the symbolism of Eugene O'Neill himself. For he stands today, in the field of drama, at any rate, as the symbol of America, struggling for a profounder understanding of life. Poor, crass, young America, who could produce a Toller, a Werfel, or a Shaw as little as it can produce a statesman, is sending up Eugene O'Neill, like the first, brave crocus in the spring, to consider the human scene and discover what it is all about. It just happened that I read, two days apart, Franz Werfel's "Bocksgesang" and O'Neill's "The Great God Brown." And in them lay all the immeasurable difference between the European, steeped in culture, with generations of "Weltanschauung" in his blood, and the American, so new to inner thought, so new to psychological and spiritual explorings, such an alien to his own soul. And so, far more significant than anything "The Great God Brown" may or may not be, is the fact that Eugene O'Neill is saying, "Come, my fellow-Americans, let us go down, deep down within ourselves and find out what are the real values of life; but above all let us find out what it is in ourselves that is keeping us from discovering those values." As an American, however—and it should never be forgotten that O'Neill is an American to his finger-tips—he is very new at psychological probing, and the result is that crudeness, that quality of something attempted and not yet accomplished that pervades his more recent work.

As for the much talked of masks, they seem to me quite the least important thing about this new play. What is important is O'Neill's recognition of the fact that conflicts of personality within the individual constitute genuine dramatic material and that the illuminating findings of psycho-analysis furnish a new point of departure for dramatic writing. In the light of the tragically vital problems presented by this play, the putting on and off of actual physical masks seems childish, and it certainly distracts the attention of the audience from lines that require close and constant attention. That good acting can convey these inner conflicts and changes of personality not only adequately, but supremely well, was proved by Katchaloff of the Moscow players in depicting the famous struggle between the conflicting personalities of Ivan Karamazov. How infinitely more moving and convincing was that magnificent portrayal of the conflicts raging in an individual than would have been the clapping on and off of a mechanical mask!

Moreover the use of masks cannot but lead to dangerous confusions. In "The Great God Brown" the father puts back her mask on the face of the fainting mother, so that her children may recognize the woman they know. How in the world can O'Neill explain this psychologically? How can one person put a mask on another? Surely the wearing of a mask must always be a subjective and can never be an objective act! And also later in the play the masks are used so that the ground of reality, on which a modern psychological drama must stand squarely, on both feet, if it is to have any value at all, is deserted forever.

Yet how can I pay greater tribute to Eugene O'Neill than to say that "The Great God Brown" makes thoughts about life, art, America, drama, love, parents, children, happiness, and other such small subjects come so thick and fast that I had better stop short right here and now. But I stop in the hope that I have conveyed at least one positive impression, namely, that a visit to this latest O'Neill play will prove an intensely stimulating and quickening experience.

THE THEATRE

"GOAT SONG" — A CHALLENGE TO US MODERNS

A Note on "The Great God Brown"

Old as man himself is man's conflict with himself, and the history of civilization is little more than the record of man's struggles to shake off animal lusts of one kind and another, and emerge at last erect in body and free in spirit. "Goat Song," the English version of Franz Werfel's highly imaginative and powerful drama, "Bocksgesang," just produced by The Theatre Guild, is one more offering on the altar of that seemingly eternal struggle. It seems singularly fitting too, that, in the post-war darkness enveloping us, this voice of young Germany should be raised, protesting that men can never become free and happy, individually and socially, so long as they remain the slaves of their passions and their possessions.

It is a strange and colorful tale, packed with symbolic meaning that "Goat Song" tells, and its Slavic setting in the year 1790 has no more to do with its inner meaning than that of "Androcles and the Lion" has to do with the Rome of the Caesars. The wealthy Gaspodar (Squire) Stevan Milic and his wife know neither peace nor joy, for during twenty-three years they have kept secret on their estate the presence of a monstrous son born to them, half goat, half human. And at once you get Werfel's indictment of the sexual animalism that pollutes men at their source. Husband and wife accuse each other of the blood taint responsible for such a monster, and the memory of Ibsen's "Ghosts" flashes across one's mind. But the beast of uncontrolled sexuality is not the only corrupter of the Squire's soul; the lust of acquisitiveness and possession is just as strong. And when his goat-son breaks loose and escapes at the very moment when the dis-inherited and expropriated of the neighborhood demand of the rich a bit of their waste lands as a means of life, his wild chagrin and fury at both blows, (so symbolically merged by Werfel), whips the flame of discontent into revolution.

Now the animal in man becomes unleashed on every side. A leader for the revolting masses appears in the form of the young student, Juvan, who has become just as degraded through the embitterment of poverty as Stevan has through wealth, and he cynically aids and abets the rabble in their worship of the escaped man-beast as the god of their revolt. Thus the revolution degenerates into pillage, rapine and orgy. Finally, in his animal desire for revenge on the rich, Juvan permits the sacrifice to the man-beast of Stanja, who loves the poor student, though she is the betrothed of Stevan's other son. In Stanja we see the rebel-soul of woman desperately defying the dictates of tradition and class.

The end of the fearful upheaval, as in Galsworthy's "Strife," finds nothing basically

changed. The revolt is crushed by the troops, but Stevan's property has been completely destroyed. However, his beast-son, too, has met his death, and strange and beautiful is the peace that is now Stevan's, freed at last from the obscene weight his passions and his possessions had put upon him. Only Stanja, the woman—soul, eternal victim of man's lowest self, must go on, doomed to beget and to perpetuate yet a while longer the beast-in-man that dies so hard.

Thus the play stands as a challenge to us moderns seeking the way to freedom, social and individual. Shall we ever find it so long as, singly and collectively, we suffer the beast in ourselves, so long as we can hear, however faintly, Bocksgesang sounding in the air?

Space forbids me to add more than a word about the surpassingly beautiful Theatre Guild production, with its superb cast, sympathetic direction and sensitive settings. "Goat Song" should be seen, but it should also be read, for every line is freighted with meaning for the social idealist.

If Franz Werfel's "Goat Song" offers an almost cosmic canvas, "The Great God Brown" establishes more firmly than ever Eugene O'Neill's position as a highly original and intrepid playwright. To me, however, the use of masks by the chief characters, to depict changes and conflicts in personality, to conceal or reveal the true self, while an exciting novelty, is the least important feature of this latest O'Neill play. What is important is O'Neill's understanding that such psychological conflicts and concealments and revelations constitute dramatic material of the first order. And these changes able actors could portray without the use of masks. Also why give a character only one mask? Why not several? Aren't most of us entire different beings to different people? For example, no woman ever is to her children exactly what she is to the rest of the world. No mother can be. Yet, in "The Great God Brown" one mask suffices for all her relations of life save that to her beloved husband. Clearly the O'Neill play stimulates and bristles with new problems. Which is reason enough why a trip to the Greenwich Village Theatre means an extraordinarily well spent evening.

ANITA BLOCK

The Jewish Community Center Record

Published Weekly by the
JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

Bergen and Belmont Avenues, Jersey City, N. J.

TELEPHONES: BERGEN 4200-4201

Sun. Eve., Nov. 24th

...LK ON THE THEATER AS A CRITICISM OF LIFE

Hirsch Auditorium. Anita Block, foreign play reader for the Theatre Guild, as the first attraction. Following the opening lecture will come five lectures prepared to present subjects on so diversified a nature that they will satisfy even the most discriminating of lecture goers. Tickets may be purchased at the rate of \$3. and \$2. for the entire season.

Anita Block has chosen the topic, "The Theatre As a Criticism of Life," as her talk for the evening. Anita Block is particularly capable of discussing this subject in as much as she is in constant intimate contact with the theatre both here and abroad. Also, her knowledge, outside the lectures on the theatre are really thought-provoking discussions of the most important problems of life. She will

ANITA BLOCK FIRST LYCEUM SPEAKER

Sunday evening, November 24th opens this year's Lyceum Series. Anita Block, foreign play reader of the Theatre Guild, will open the program when she talks on "The Theatre as a Criticism of Life". Anita Block is in constant intimate contact with the theatre both here and abroad. It is however with the larger aspects of the Theatre, as a reflection and an interpretation of life, that Anita Block is chiefly concerned. For her knowledge, outside the theatre, of psychology, sociology and economics, is so extensive that her lectures on the Theatre are really thought-provoking discussions of the most important problems of life. As a speaker she is brilliant, fascinating, inimitable, as well as unusually clear and lucid. Keen intellect, rare understanding and a vibrant, sympathetic personality makes Anita Block a rare delight to her audiences.

Speakers who will follow are: Horace M. Kallen, philosopher and psychologist; Victor F. Calverton, author, editor, and critic, who had such a noted success with his book, "Sex in Civilization," John Cowper Powys, brilliant novelist, poet and essayist, and others who will be announced later.

The Lyceum Committee has changed its policy this year in regard to prices of admission. The charge for each lecture will be 50c. for members and 75c. for non-members, thus making it possible for everyone who desires to attend these lectures and enjoy their cultural value, to do so at a minimum expenditure.

15th, promptly at 8:30. Brodie, chairman of the committee, will introduce Anita Block, the Theatre Guild, who will be the Forum gathering of "The Theatre as a Criticism of Life". Miss Anita Block has done for a number of years to editorial work and has spent several years as a lecturer and author of various publications. She has now been the play reader of the Theatre Guild and she gave two courses for the Community College of New York City, and the New York City Panhellenic Club.

Mr. Brodie urges that everyone to be in the "Y" at 10th Avenue in order to assure a seat, as many individuals for the lecture will be in the door.

SIXTH ANNUAL MEETING
of the
NEW YORK STATE
ASSOCIATION OF DEANS

HOTEL GRAMATAN
Bronxville, N. Y.

NOVEMBER 4-5, 1932

Dr. Mortimer Adler



Anita Block



Victor F. Calverton



Dr. Maurice Fishbein



Dr. Horace F. Kallen

"The Importance of Being Intellectual"

Sidney E. Friedman, Presiding

of New York. A trainer of young groping minds, he brings new lights on the value of intelligence.

Wednesday, January 21, 1931

ANITA BLOCK

"What Do We Want in the Theatre"

M. Lee Goldsmith, Presiding

Play Reader for the New York Theatre Guild, Anita Block is chiefly concerned with the larger aspects of the Theatre, as a reflector and an interpreter of life. A fascinating, inimitable, clear, lucid speaker.

Wednesday, February 18, 1931

VICTOR F. CALVERTON

"Sex in Civilization"

Sol Hurwitz, Presiding

Author of The Bankruptcy of Marriage, Sex Expression in Literature, the Newer Spirit—Editor of The Modern Quarterly and Sex in Civilization, literary editor—Book League of America—Calverton is a most provocative student, writer and lecturer.

Wednesday, March 18, 1931

DR. MAURICE FISHBEIN

"Fads and Quackeries"

Dr. Robt. Denison & Dr. Louis Goldman, Presiding

Editor of the Journal of the American Medical Association, he has probably done more to expose quackery, near-medicine and pseudo-science than any other American. Fearless and clear, both as a writer and as a speaker, his words have clarified the minds of thousands regarding medical practices and ideas.

Wednesday, April 15, 1931

DR. HORACE F. KALLEN

"Men Who Have Seen God"

Paul Goldblatt, Presiding

Professor of Philosophy and psychology—New School for Social Research, lecturer at many leading Universities, including Columbia, Wisconsin, Harvard and Princeton—Dr. Kallen brings us one of the keenest, pragmatic intellects of the day. Affable and genial on the lecture platform, his thoughts are incisive and clear.

A Short Musical Program

A short musical program will precede each lecture, beginning at 8:15 o'clock. Lectures start promptly at 8:30.

Only 300 seats available—sales close when all seats are sold. To be sure order your tickets NOW!

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Series Ticket - - \$5.00
Junior Series Ticket
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Kindly mail me _____ set (s) Lecture Course series tickets for 1930-31 season. My check for \$ _____ enclosed.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

Make checks payable to SAMUEL ABRAMS, Treasurer

Anita Block

■ Here's a treat! Anita Block comes the evening of January 24. She is Reader of Foreign Plays for the Theatre Guild, in constant intimate contact with the Theatre both here and abroad.

It is, however, with the larger aspects of the Theatre, as a reflection and an interpretation of life, that Anita Block is chiefly concerned. For her knowledge, outside the Theatre, of psychology, sociology and economics, is so extensive that her lectures on the Theatre are really thought-provoking discussions of the most important problems of life.

She has been highly recommended as a speaker who is brilliant, fascinating, inimitable, with a keen intellect, rare understanding and a vibrant, sympathetic personality that is a rare delight.

Mrs. Haldeman Finnie will introduce Miss Block.

Branson De Cou— Perennial Favorite

■ At first, years ago, we had one lecture and dream picture series by Branson De Cou; then two; last year it was six, with a seventh added by popular demand; this year we are announcing EIGHT entertainments—four matinees and four evenings, Tuesdays as announced on the back cover.

Last year the Activities Committee was a bit worried about disposing of as many tickets as six lectures required—that meant 3,000. But they went like lightning, and the auditorium was filled for six lectures in less than a fortnight after the announcement was made. So they don't worry any more, they only wonder how many extra entertainments we shall have to put on *this* year to fill the enormous demand.

The reasons for Mr. De Cou's popularity are manifold. Most people want to travel, and most people can't or don't. Mr. De Cou's beautiful pictures, his running commentary, his music that makes words unnecessary, blend into a fascinating whole which is the nearest thing to a trip that has so far been devised by any traveler with a camera.

Three of this year's entertainments have not been given before at the City Club. "Russia Today" is revised and enlarged since the last time it was given here, two years ago.



ANITA BLOCK
January 24—8:15 p. m.

Mr. De Cou has revisited Russia since that time, and "Russia Today" has been drawing big audiences in New York and the East.

Last year we chose three groups of pictures taken in America; this year we go farther afield to *Old Mexico*, *Magnificent Norway* and *Iceland*, *Venice and the Dolomites*, and to *Russia*.

Please see ticket information on the back cover and, we beg you, GET YOUR TICKETS EARLY!

Current Events

■ Preston W. Slosson's monthly current event talks are increasingly popular. As a professor of current

history, scholarly, traveled, Mr. Slosson has keen interpretive ability and a sharp humor that flashes now and then across his serious remarks.

The next current events meeting is in the auditorium at 2:30 p. m. January 30.

At the present writing, all tickets for the Slosson lectures have been given out; will those members who cannot attend please be good enough to phone the office, so that their tickets may be released for other members? It will be much appreciated both by the office and the members. It is hard to say no when people are anxious to attend.

Daily Worker, August 2, 1957

OSW

the Guild extended to Mr. Justice Block sincere congratulations. The members of the Guild Relations Court, as a member of the Chapter Board, and a member of the National Board of the Guild, has appointed S. John Block

THE CENTRAL

Russian Theater, Music, Art Form Woman's Club Program

"Russia's art is as great as her heroism," Anita Block, lecturer on the theater, told the Woman's Club yesterday, in a program sponsored by the Fine Arts Department. Marion Morrey Richter, pianist, was guest soloist.

The Soviet theater, Mrs. Block continued, is the richest and most varied in the world. Citing the Soviet theory that "art is a weapon," Mrs. Block described the state system of supporting the theater, opera and ballet, and pointed out that even in the midst of war, a portion of the Union's budget is allocated to the arts.

When the Russians were fighting on a 1,000-mile front, the speaker said, their morale was aided by troupes of performers who were scattered at frequent intervals along the line, entertainers including ballet dancers who appeared on trucks, arranged for the purpose.

A feature of Mrs. Block's talk was her description of theaters in different parts of Russia before the war: the tall, brick-glass edifice at Rostov, on the Don, housing a large auditorium, a smaller one, for plays, a hall for a symphony orchestra and smaller ones for chamber music. She also told of the Kharkov theater, and others which were demolished when the Nazis came.

Describing the varied national theaters which have their origin in the many autonomous Soviet Republics, Mrs. Block also told of the method by which young people wishing to become a part of the theater are permitted to become apprentices—to continue if they have talent, to seek careers elsewhere if they show none.

She also described the gypsy theater, the Moscow Art Theater, and its realism, the Children's Theater, in which leading actors and playwrights vie to serve, and the theaters at Yalta, recent scene of the Big Three Conference.

Mrs. Richter presented a cross-section of the works of modern Russian composers, beginning with Khatchaturian's Oriental-flavored Toccata in E Flat Minor.

and continuing with: Scriabin's Album Leaf, Op.45; Stravinsky's Etude, F sharp Major, Op. 7 No. 4; two Shostakovich Preludes from Op.34, and his polka from the Golden Age Ballet; Prokofiev's Prelude, C Major, Op.12 No. 7, and the same composer's "Devilish Inspiration" as an example of his grotesque percussive style.

She concluded on a traditional note by playing Nicolai Medtner's Nouvelle in G Major and Rachmaninoff's Prelude, G Flat Major.

Earlier in the day, at a joint Art and Music Section program, Mrs. Earl Christenson spoke on Russian music, illustrating her lecture with recordings. Mrs. Ugo Mochi spoke on Russian painting, using slides from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and there was 12:30 luncheon, with Mrs. Aston M. Tenney in charge.

Mrs. Jacob Riskus was in charge of tea later, with Mrs. Clarence Straatsma and Mrs. G. Lawson Ivie pouring. Mrs. Sim Joe Smith arranged the program.

Noting the title of a Sinclair novel and using it appropriately as a slogan, Mrs. Block emphatically declared, "As long as poisoned political characters can at themselves portrayed in 'It Can't Happen Here'." Mrs. Anita Block was introduced by Spencer S. Fishbaine, president of the Detroit English Club.

—MURTA LEDFORD.

that the Wagner Board is not a federal administrative agency is recipient of caustic criticism.

Soundly Condemned

called that back in 1886 the Commerce Commission was condemned by some for its inclusion into a single agency of the is of prosecutor, judge, jury executioner.

In 1914, a Senate committee it would have to call out the enforce the Federal Trade tion act. In 1935, the new commission was attacked as a dangerous interference with business—frightening capital, halting investment and hurting labor.

AUGUST 18, 1936.



can get that Mayor LaGuardia commendable display of wisdom S. John Block a member of the ter Revision Commission and upon him to help draft a code administration of the great metropolis in the world. As the himself put it at a victory banquet in honor of the Commission, he wanted S. John's point of view expressed

voice in almost every organization to which he belongs. Such is S. John Block ... the brilliant idealist. S. John was born in Cleveland, but has spent most of his life in New York. It was in this town that he met the now Anita Block, one of the critics of dramatic

Times Wide World Photo.

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commission, delivering the final draft to Michael J. Cruise as and S. John Block look on.

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Daily Worker, August 2, 1957

ANITA BLOCK HEADS GROUP TO DEFEND JENKINS COUPLE



Mrs. Jenkins and children: Christine, two and a half years, and Samuel, 18 months.

Mrs. Anita Block, widely known writer, lecturer, and prominent Socialist, has accepted the Honorary Chairmanship of the Committee to Defend Grady and Judy Jenkins, it was announced yesterday.

Mrs. Block described the persecution of the Jenkins

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1918 CONVENTION

OF THE

**SOCIALIST PARTY of
NEW YORK STATE**



Saturday, August 15, 1931

PERSONAL ITEMS OF COURTS GANG

**Trial of Legs Diamond Is
Voted a Flop—Still
Hunting Crater**

By Jack Melody

The Jack Diamond trial in the Federal court is a flop as far as gangster trials go. No color, no action, no fun and not as hell. The gang steamed for two days before Judge Hopkins would allow them to remove their coats. Wotta relief that was! Those covering the trial are: Harold Hamill, World-Tele; Julian Starr, Sun; Strunsky, Times; John O'Donnell, News; Harry Helm, Graphic; James Martindale, Post; Joe Driscoll, Tribune; Harold Kether, American; Joe Smith, Brooklyn Times; Dorothy Roe, Universal Service; Dixie Tighe, Brooklyn Standard Union; and Arthur Warner and Jeanette Smith, Journal.

Eddie Supreme Court Bellows, American, reported on his three-day vigil at the Edison home in Llewellyn Park, West Orange, last week. Eddie says those Jersey assignments would be all right if the mosquitoes would remain friendly. Some of them, he claims, were as big as eagles and seemed to resent the visiting newspapermen. The gang made their headquarters in the Edison garage, and when Bill Nyson, Times, wasn't teaching them contract bridge they were knocking off their forty winks among the Lincolns and the Fords. Others on the story were Dorothy Roe, Universal; Rob Parker, Journal; Frank Morris, Tribune—who, by the way, eats four pounds of candy daily, and it isn't news to Ripley, either—and Bob Cavanaugh, A. P.

Ed Surrogates Court Williams, Times, added another chapter to his book Aug. 1. It's a boy. Remember, Ed was writing a book on his wife's relatives?

Sam Surrogates Court Gardenhire, City News, was present before the meetings.

WOMEN DRAMATIC EDITORS JUST AREN'T, BECAUSE—

**Only One of the Sex in
This City, and She Won-
ders Why There Are
Not More of Her**

By Ann Silver

"To my best friend and severest critic—the little woman!"

The least, if you please, of grateful husbands and appreciative male friends to the critical capabilities of the female of the species. But the least, alas, is rarely heard by the public, except for press agent purposes. Most men are unwilling to credit the sound judgment and reasoning powers of women, particularly in newspaper offices. The woman can be reporter, feature

reviewing have shown critical ability of the first class. Every one knows how splendid Allison Smith was as a dramatic critic of The World. And there are others like her."

Too Strenuous, Say: Bide

Bide Dudley, dramatic editor and columnist for the World-Telegram, agreed partially, but took a novel slant on the situation. He would.

"Undoubtedly women have the mental equipment for such a job," Bide commented, "but I doubt if they can stand the physical strain. During the theatrical season we may have as many as eleven openings a week with as many reviews. It's usually 3 in the morning before the reviews are ready. That's too hard for a woman."

"Movies? Well, there are a lot of openings there, too, but then you can catch a movie in the afternoon. It doesn't mean staying out so late. I think women have been successful in landing as film critics because the industry is new. Only three or four years' previous knowledge is required, while in the theatre one must know what was what and who was who as far back as twenty-five years. And few women have been in the field as long as that."

"But movie reviewing is a harder grind," counters John Chapman, dramatic editor of the Daily News. "I give the women all the credit in the world for having succeeded so well as film critics. And I can't see why they wouldn't do just as well in drama. Of course, there is the

**Are Admittedly Good
Screen Critics; Haven't
That Something - or -
Other for Drama**

women—capable of reviewing judiciously either a film or play."

Wilella Waldorf, dramatic editor of the Post, and, incidentally, the only woman at present occupying such a position, views the situation calmly. "Women simply haven't got up to dramatic criticism yet," she believes. "It isn't so much a question of background or knowledge of dramatic history as the fact that the men got there first. It is lack of opportunity rather than aptitude. And, then, few women have made



Anita Block

writer, columnist—even film critic—but the revered, honored title of chief dramatic editor and critic is not for her in New York. What's



Wilella Waldorf

drama their goal, whereas male ambitions are notably bent in that direction."

Editors Chary of Comment

Leaving a no record arguments voted an at- a so-called if the Up- want to prove to him. performance his senior- and the public, he felt, professional Liberals to drives for he had been purposes. Duplessis party. Th among the tribute with of foldin- of pure have fightin- and he favored use second cou- and would pursue it, remem- that though the Liberals in the- isature were few in num-



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Justice Chase Cargrain in Superior

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THE COMMUNITY NEWS

THE COMMUNITY NEWS
The Community News is a weekly paper published by the Community Center of Montreal. It is a free paper and is distributed to all members of the center. It contains news of the center and of the community in general. It is a valuable source of information for all who are interested in the life of the community.

MOS

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Sorensen Hall, 1483 Drummond St.

Lyceum

Season
1930-1931



Young Men's & Young Women's Hebrew Assn
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