

Trust News

Issued by the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust to Members of the Trust.

DECEMBER, 1965. Price 1/.

TRUST'S FIVE SHOWS FOR 1966 FESTIVAL

WITH the five major features it is to present as part of the official programme of the fourth Adelaide Festival, beginning on March 10, the Trust undertakes a greater range of rich theatrical contrast than at any previous festival.

● There is to be George Gershwin's "Porgy and Bess" which, racily and poignantly staged, is the Adam-and-Eve of the modern American musical of the "Oklahoma!" - "Carousel" - "South Pacific" - "Guys and Dolls" manner of brilliance, character and gusto. (See page 5.)

● There is to be the ingenious Peter Shaffer spectacle play of Peruvian conquest, "Royal Hunt of the Sun", which, in the age of Cinemascope, works through the conflict of ideologies between Spanish conquistador and Inca prince at many simultaneous levels of gripping interest—as plumed pageant for the eye, as straight adventure story, as inquiry into the relationship between man and God. (See page 2.)

● There are to be two new ballets—Robert Helpmann's "Elektra" and the

A Merry Christmas to You
and
Health, Happiness and Prosperity
in the
New Year
from

The Board — The Executive Director — Artists and Staff
of

The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust

Nureyev-reproduced "Raymonda" in the presentations of the Australian Ballet, freshly back in Australia with the elements of higher refinement, sophistication and maturity won by it on its unprecedented overseas tour of Britain, Europe and the United States. (See pages 6-7.)

● There is to be the first Australian tour by the renowned Athens Drama Company which, bred at world headquarters of the classic drama tradition,

will renew for Festival audiences the overwhelming power of the comic spirit in the "Lysistrata" of Aristophanes and of the compassionately tragic spirit in the "Iphigenia in Aulis" of Euripides. (See page 6.)

● There is also to be a return to Adelaide after many years of Peter Scriven's "The Tintookies", the Australian puppet show which, already tumultuously welcomed in several other States, has captured a place in Australian imagination and affection very much like the appeal which Kenneth Grahame's "Wind in the Willows" holds for Britons. Indeed, it has been said that Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck and Pluto do not mean more to Americans than Panjee Possum, Krumpy Koala and Wilpy Wombat are coming to mean for Australians.

75/- Ballet Book — Free!

The superlative gift volume on the life and art of Russia's greatest living ballerina, "Days with Ulanova", will be presented free to 80 Trust members who are each instrumental in signing up two new adult members for the Trust by February 15, 1966.

Eighty copies of this handsome book, one of the classics of ballet publishing in recent years, have been made available to the Trust for use as an incentive in membership expansion.

"Days with Ulanova", which has a retail value of 75/-, is beautifully bound and is printed on luxury paper. The text is in English, and it is profusely illustrated with photographs of the great ballerina at many different points of her career.

"Days with Ulanova" will be sent by return mail to the first

80 Trust members who each send to the Editor of "Trust News", 153 Dowling Street, Potts Point, N.S.W., applications for two new members accompanied by a remittance of £10 to cover the annual membership fees for the two newcomers.

The book is of such outstanding quality and distinction as a gift volume that many members may wish to make Christmas gifts of two memberships in order to acquire, absolutely without charge, this 75/- classic, itself a further answer to gift problems.

Gross Talk on Belly-Dancing

THE U.S.A. has always been far behind the rest of the western world in State subsidisation of the arts. But a bill to establish a National Foundation of the Arts and Humanities was recently before Congress. One speaker demanded provision in the bill for support to an art which he described as "the irregular jactitations and/or rhythmic contraction and co-ordinated relaxations of the serrati, obliques, and abdominis recti group of muscles, accompanied by rotatory undulations, tilts and turns timed with and attuned to the titillating and blended tones of synchronous woodwinds." The amendment was defeated, much to the disappointment of the mover, Senator Gross.

DECEMBER, 1965

THEATRE DOLDRUMS

THE perpetual changes in a nation's social climate, affecting what the public wants to find in theatre and also what theatre artists want to create for the stage, are emphasised in this issue by the discussion on contemporary trends in musical theatre by the Trust's Executive Director, Mr. Stefan Haag—but it is evident also, not only in the changing nature of musical theatre internationally, that the theatre at large is undergoing critical changes which may alter the directions in which it is henceforth to travel in Australia and elsewhere.

Symptoms of this general change have become increasingly marked in Australia throughout the current year, and it is increasingly a problem for theatrical managements to attempt to diagnose precisely the kind of social metabolism which gives rise to these symptoms.

For instance, during 1965, there have been in the nation's leading theatres many more of the small shows and one-man shows (at highish prices) than in any other year of recent memory. Is this one of the inevitables of commercial theatre economics? Is it a reflection of public veneration for the star individual rather than for the aggregated teamwork of many performers of perhaps less than star quality? Questions are, of course, easier than answers.

During 1965, again, the presentations of Australian theatres generally have had a very much smaller American content than in many of the previous years of the last generation. Is this also a result of economic pressures within the Australian theatre business, a reaction to sky-scraping costs which become prohibitive to the extent of stifling the showman's time-honoured urge to take reasonable commercial risks?

More sobering than either of these two "bearish" features in Australian theatre life during 1965 is the fact that more of the nation's major theatres have had periods of darkness than in probably any other year since the economic depression of the 1930's. Is this, once more, to be regarded as a symptom of the increasing difficulties of making ends meet in theatre?

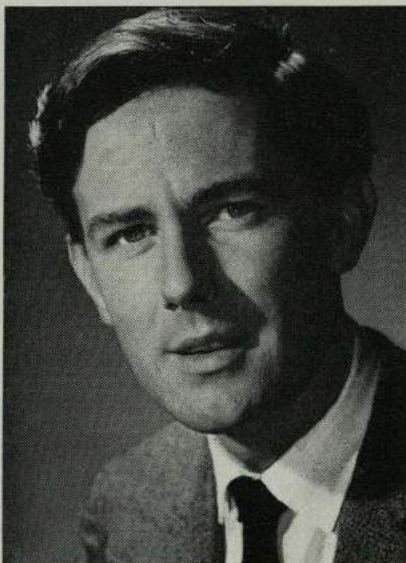
Nevertheless, it must be recorded, against these perhaps ominous signs, that the Trust's regional theatres, such as the Old Tote, the U.T.R.C. and the S.A.T.C., continue to perform with vitality and style to increasing audiences. Is there not occasion in this to ask whether one of the main reasons

John Tasker Producing "Royal Hunt"

WITH the Barossa Valley not so far away, and a period in his own career when he forsook the theatre to pick wine grapes near Vienna, it is understandable that "vintage" play is the phrase which leaps to John Tasker's mind when he talks of the drama which he is to produce for the Trust at the 1966 Adelaide Festival—Peter Shaffer's "The Royal Hunt of the Sun".

"It's a marvellous festival play," Tasker says. "It is brilliant as a visual spectacle. It is a great adventure story. And there is real depth in it..."

Even the most cursory survey of the plays which John Tasker has produced in Australia and abroad since he first came out of the New South Wales country town where he was born would leave no doubt that it is depth which primarily appeals to him in the works he undertakes.



John Tasker

During this year, for instance, his productions for the recently formed South Australian Theatre Company, which the Trust has established under John Tasker's artistic direction as the Adelaide counterpart of Sydney's Old Tote and Melbourne's U.T.R.C., have included two such thought-provoking problem plays as "Andorra" and "Inadmissible Evi-

for the introduction of the Trust's regional policy—the certainty that the public would respond to presentations in venues devoted to intimacy of presentation, to continuity of work and to friendly creature comforts—is now fully vindicated? Certainly on present evidence the answer is yes.

dence". In addition, "The Representative" is also under his care for Adelaide presentation.

His productions all over Australia since he first burst into prominence in Sydney have included no trace of the easy middle-of-the-road play-safe repertoire. Such plays as "The Good Woman of Setzuan", "Bartholomew Fair", "Oedipus Rex", and "The Member of the Wedding" have established his name in several Australian cities as a producer of courage and of high invention to match it.

John Tasker has been closely identified with the plays of Patrick White since this great Australian novelist made his first move to establish himself among Australians as a compelling voice of the theatre. Tasker's rapport with the style and spirit of the Patrick White plays has been evident through a whole series of memorable White productions—"The Ham Funeral", "The Season at Sarsaparilla", "Night on Bald Mountain".

The resounding critical success of these Patrick White performances has owed itself in no little measure to the particular stimulus which writing of thoughtful depth gives to John Tasker's talent.

Playwright Peter Shaffer's own comments on "The Royal Hunt of the Sun" affirm the depth of matters which occupied his mind as he wrote.

"What did I really want to write?" Shaffer asks in a programme note written for the National Theatre production of the play in Britain. "Basically, perhaps, about an encounter between European hope and Indian hopelessness; between Indian faith and European faithlessness. I saw the active iron of Spain against the passive feathers of Peru; the conflict of two immense and joyless powers. The Spaniard suspected joy as being unworthy of Christ. The Peruvian could hardly know it, since in his wholly organised world he was forbidden despair. The conquistadors defied personal will: the Incas shunned it..."

"To me, the greatest tragic factor in history is man's apparent need to mark the intensity of his reaction to life by joining a band; for a band, to give itself definition, must find a rival, or an enemy. The neurotic allegiances of Europe, the Churches and flags are the villains of 'The Royal Hunt'."

COMMONSENSE APPROACH TO OPERA

by
Stefan Haag

THIS article on the world-wide dilemma confronting artists of musical theatre is a survey of points made by Mr. Haag as Executive Director of the Trust in opening the 1965 Festival of Contemporary Opera in Hobart.

NOT now, but once upon a time Hobart was a focal point of Australian theatre culture, something of a pace-maker and example-setter in theatre for other Australian cities.

The reason why Hobart is not that now—and this is a fate it shares with many cities of the world, including of course the Australian mainland capitals—is to be found in the perpetual changes wrought and being wrought by history in community social patterns in general.

With these changes, there are also changes in the tastes of creative and interpretative artists and of audiences alike; changes in the emphasis we all place upon our cultural and entertainment needs in a world of constantly expanding education, of increasing personal and community tensions, of greater leisure. Perpetual change has also brought with it diminishing scope for the exercise of pioneer-type personal and creative initiatives in a social set-up which increasingly takes care of our problems for us and thus, subtly, denies us to some extent the joys and satisfactions of overcoming difficulties out of our own resource and imagination—denies us the opportunity to use faculties which are deeply implanted in the human drive of all of us so that they

can become sluggish and slack from disuse, if they do not altogether fall into the danger of becoming completely moribund. In other words, in the process of gaining easy leisure we run the risk of losing deep pleasure.

VIGOROUS and constant exercise of our faculties as of, say, our muscles is vital to the health of our society at large and it is particularly vital in the area of theatrical endeavour, not only in the temperaments and attitudes of creative artists of the theatre, but also in the temperaments and attitudes of audiences. I mention these matters not in reproach to Hobart, but to emphasise how the ever-shifting social climate begets changes in the status, the aspiration, the techniques and the forms of art work. Times change, affections change, mass needs change, society's hunger and energies change in character, and so, too, does the nutriment which will satisfy these hungers and excite these energies.

Perhaps no branch of the theatre illustrates these changes more radically than opera does, and probably none of the theatre arts experiences so great a difficulty in adapting itself convincingly and pertinently to a rapidly changing social environment. Most of us here will have heard increasingly over the last 20 or 30 years such comments from "the man in the street" as: "Opera is

no more than a museum to preserve dead marvels," "Opera symbolises the stratified aristocratic society smashed by two world wars," "Composers are now so brainy that all they manage to be is unintelligible" . . .

It would be foolish of us to suppose that the very great weight of critical comment from ordinary citizens is too loose to be taken seriously. It would be equally foolish to suppose that we, with our personal affections for opera in all categories, can impose our affections and our open-mindedness on a society which seems increasingly apathetic.

It is not enough to say: "The public must learn to surrender its apathy and ignorance for enthusiasm and knowledge, because we do . . ." Where public resistance to anything is unswervingly maintained in enormously great numbers, overseas as here, there is surely something seriously the matter with the thing which arouses this resistance—and we must face that there is something seriously the matter with opera, that opera has gone astray, that it has lost its once proud place in the life of the larger community. This must be so, for one of the essentials of viable opera, as of any other kind of theatre, is that it *shall be able to make communication* with a great number of people. It is the great mass of the people who tell us, if only in some cases by staying away, that opera does not communicate with them in this way.

GROUP TRAVEL PLAN

22 Pairs of Itching Feet

TWENTY-TWO Trust members have shown preliminary interest in the suggestion, advanced in the last issue of "Trust News", that a party of Trust members should be formed to undertake a tour of major European theatre centres in 1967 at the advantageous air fares available for group travel—that is, at a return-trip fare some £180 cheaper than the lowest air fare otherwise obtainable for the Sydney-London-Sydney round trip.

The essence of such a group travel arrangement is that the members of such a party, all being members of at least six months' standing within their particular organisation, shall travel together to London and then together again for the return flight to Australia. The group travellers are free to move as they please at all other times.

Members interested in overseas travel on this lucrative basis are invited to notify the editor of "Trust News" so that the certainty of enough interested members to form such a group-travel party will enable firm planning for 1967 to be undertaken.

Preliminary approaches are being made by the Trust to the managements of leading drama, opera and ballet theatres in Britain, Germany, Italy, Austria and France to ensure easy theatregoing facilities at attractive admission prices for all Trust travellers within such a group-travel scheme.

It is estimated, at this stage, that the period of travel will be three months . . . from approximately May to August, 1967.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT of this was given in a most signal form last year when 400 personalities in world opera—composers, producers, poets, playwrights, designers, conductors,—met at a special congress in Hamburg under the auspices of Unesco. This International Music Council Congress, as it was called, discussed the subject of "Contemporary Music Theatre" exhaustively. There is one point to emerge at the Congress which, perhaps above all others, I want to emphasise. Professor Mario Labroca, a famous Italian who has directed the major operatic theatres of Florence and Venice, expressed the view that there is great danger for opera in the widening gulf between composer and public. This gulf dates, on Labroca's estimate, from about 1914. As Labroca puts it, the taste of the general public has not changed radically in half a century.

continued on page 10

For the Tyro

PLAYS AND PLEASURE, by Frances Mackenzie. 22 pp. 7 illustrations. J. Garnet Miller Ltd., London.

AMATEURS are bound to be helped by this short common-sense volume from an author who has herself worked extensively with amateurs in the theatre and who is acutely aware of the common attitudes by which newcomers to the stage are inclined to obstruct their own best endeavours to succeed.

The author's advice is homely, sometimes Pollyanna-ish, as she discusses the nature of entertainment, the pleasure of leadership and producing in a drama group, how rehearsals can run with efficiency and team spirit.

BALLET IN AUSTRALIA, by Peggy Van Praagh. 32 pp. 42 illustrations. Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., Melbourne.
THEATRE, by Frank R. Harvey. 32 pp. 54 illustrations. Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., Melbourne.

DEPENDING heavily on excellent selections of photographs and drawings for their main appeal, these two attractively produced pamphlets represent the Longmans Green series of 14 brief publications on Australian artistic activity.

Aboriginal art, architecture, commercial art, painting, pottery and sculpture are among the other announced titles of the series, from which music is a conspicuous and surprising omission.

The 32-page pamphlets on ballet and theatre are intended to give a broad basic introduction to these arts in Australia, with the main emphasis on trends and achievements of the recent past. Simply as "introductions" they serve very well indeed, and many Australians, coming newly to these arts, will find them a useful stepping-stone to reading of a more comprehensive and penetrating kind.

—L.B.

BOOK REVIEWS

ABSURDISME

ABSURD DRAMA—"Amedee" (Ionesco), "Professor Taranne" (Adamov), "The Two Executioners" (Arrabal), "The Zoo Story" (Albee). 185 pp. Penguin Books.

PLAYS categorised under the label "Theatre of the Absurd" have won something of a reputation for wild meaninglessness among those more conventional theatre-goers who sometimes seek to blame in the plays what is in reality a rigidity in their own imaginative equipment.

Each of the authors represented in this volume has been a target for this kind of "wild meaninglessness" talk, and the welcome opportunity to read these plays confirms the conclusions reached by critic Martin Esslin in a 16-page introduction.

"Though often couched in the form of extravagant fantasies," says Esslin, "they are nevertheless essentially realistic in the sense that they never shirk the realities of the human mind with its despair, fear and loneliness in an alien and hostile universe . . . The realism of these plays is a psychological and inner realism; they explore the human subconscious in depth rather than trying to describe the outward appearance of human existence. . . ."

"It is true that basically the 'Theatre of the Absurd' attacks the comfortable certainties of religious or political orthodoxy. But the challenge behind this message is . . . to accept the human condition as it is, in all its mystery and absurdity, and to bear it with dignity, nobly, responsibly."

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"PORGY AND BESS" ON TOUR



GEORGE GERSHWIN, living, was a symbol of his time. Dead, he has become a legend.

Twenty-eight years after his death, his music still remains unequalled for its freshness, spontaneity and simple musicianship.

The Gershwin gift for expressing character and drama in terms of a universal appeal not only enabled him to become America's musical laureate in an age of seething and turbulent national growth, but it also enabled him to express the spirit of his own time in idioms that are for all time.

Gershwin's greatest success was undoubtedly his Negro folk opera "Porgy and Bess", a masterly blending of jazz music and operatic procedures.

Presented on its present Australian tour by the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust in association with Harry M. Miller and the New Zealand Opera Company, "Porgy and Bess" is an all-imported production. Its cast of 45 top-line singers has been drawn from the finest available Negro and Maori talent.

World-renowned Maori bass Inia te Wiata returns to Australia to sing the role of Porgy, and exciting Negro soprano discovery, Phyllis Bash, sings Bess.

In dynamic producer Ella Gerber, the touring company has the world's most-sought-after "Porgy and Bess" producer. Miss Gerber has directed eight productions of this Gershwin classic in the past 18 months, including the enormously successful New Zealand tour.

Of her Maori cast Miss Gerber says: "They have infused an entirely new element into 'Porgy and Bess'. The Maori people have a natural sense of giving which projects itself across the footlights. Each member of the company is an individual. No two are alike, and I try to get them to incorporate their personalities into their parts.

"The Maoris are quite different from the usual all-Negro casts I have worked with, but their version of Porgy is every bit as valid and somehow just a little more exciting."



Pictured on this page are:

Top right: "Bess, you is my woman now," sings Porgy (Inia te Wiata) to Bess (Phyllis Bash).

Top left: "I got plenty of nuttin," says Porgy to the Crabman (Ted Huriwai).

Lower right: The residents of Catfish Row jazz it up at their "Repent Ye, Saith the Lord" Lodge Picnic.

Athenians express 25 centuries of up-to-dateness

BUSH

THE two works to be staged by the Athens Drama Company at the Adelaide Festival and in other Australian capitals during 1966 will be the "Iphigenia in Aulis" of Euripides and the "Lysistrata" of Aristophanes . . . a tragedy of winsome tenderness and a high comedy of ribald protest against war.

Perhaps no other body of dramatic literature so completely enshrines the spirit of festival as the work of the ancient dramatists of Greece, for it was



COSTIS MICHAELIDES,
Director.

precisely to mark occasions of Athenian festival that the Greek immortals—Aeschylus and Sophocles along with Euripides and Aristophanes—created their master works 2,500 years ago.

For 25 centuries these men, through their genius for exploring eternal human problems in terms that are always modern, have stood as triumphant proof of the power of festival occasions to generate towering art-work from the spirit of man.

NEVER before has a Greek company been brought to Australia. Never before have Australians had opportunity to share in the nobility, compassion, cloudland laughter and taut excitement of dramatic artistry evolved within the exalted classical traditions of Athens from whence all drama of the western world has drawn its life.

These are traditions creating a style in which heart-seizing beauty of musical speech, rich meaningfulness of pose and gesture, and fluid grace in grouping and movement are all so deeply laced that audiences all over the world have come proudly, joyfully and easily within the circle of their meaning and radiance.

A stinging attack on superstition and cowardice, the "Iphigenia in Aulis" (the last play written by Euripides) is concerned with the luring of Agamemnon's daughter into the Greek camp on the pretext that she is to be married to the young hero, Achilles. But Iphigenia believing herself a bride, arrives among the Greeks to discover that her life is to be sacrificed upon the altar of the goddess Artemis.

"Lysistrata" is one of many comedies of Aristophanes in which an insistent demand for an end of war underlies the surface action. In "Lysistrata" the pacifist theme is taken up by warriors' wives who refuse all intercourse with their husbands until they agree to put an end to war. The battle of the wives with the old men who have been left behind to safeguard the city, the wives' vacillations when the husbands return, the exasperations of the men and the final victory of the women are the elements of the comedy.



SYDNEY soprano, Althea Bridges, an outstanding artist in many of the productions of the Elizabethan Trust Opera Company, recently won the Munich Vocal Competitions against rivals who came to Munich from all over Europe.

One outcome of Althea Bridges' success at Munich has been a steady stream of broadcast and concert engagements in Germany. Australians will remember her in recent Trust Opera seasons for her stylish and mischievous Dorabella in "Cosi fan Tutte" and for her classical personation of the woman who was lifelong torment to the poet Catullus, as represented by composer Carl Orff (also of Munich) in his "Catulli Carmina".

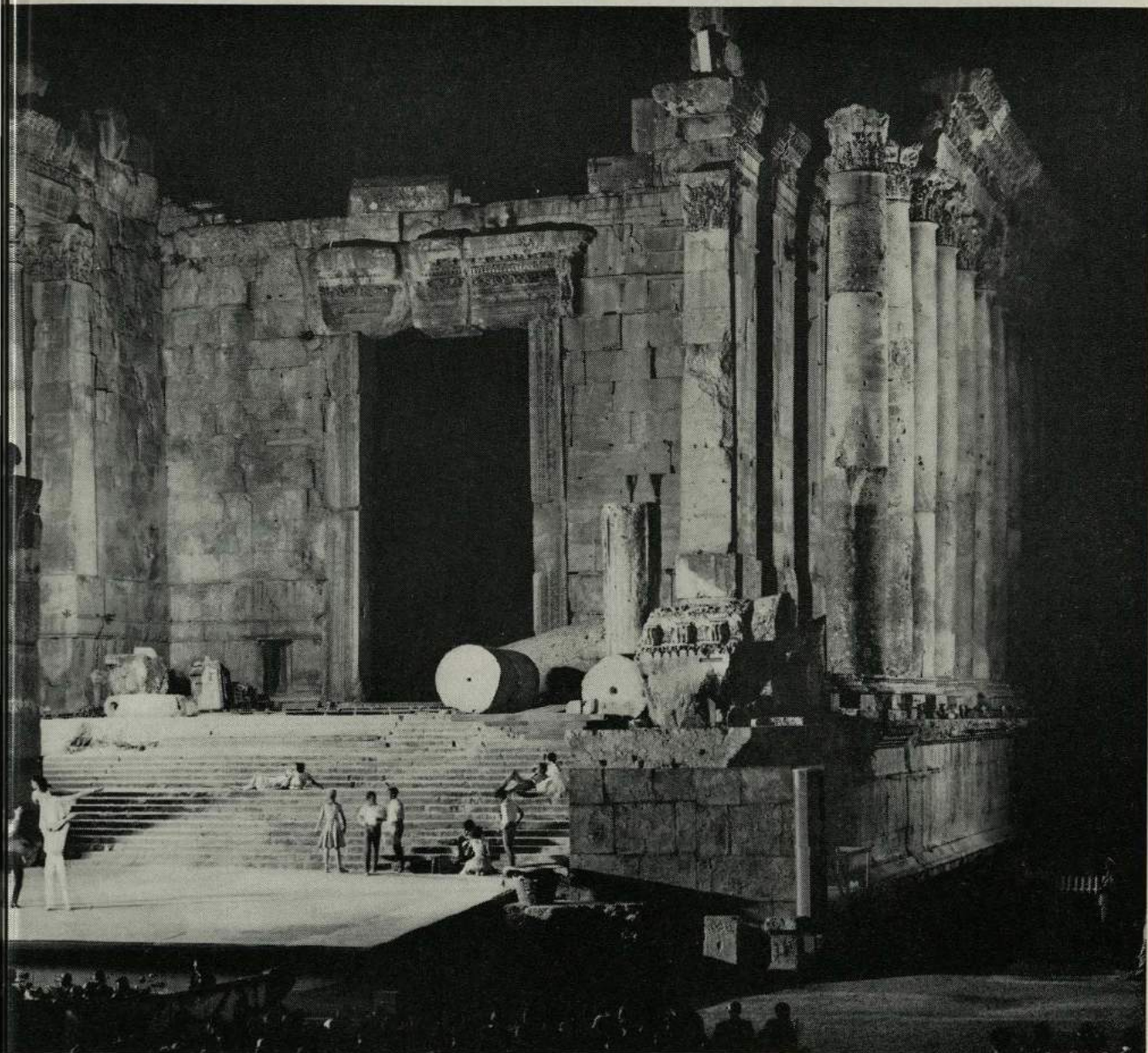


THE great temple of the C by the members of the A This performance, seen by a national tour.

On its return to Australia early in the New Year, the ballet company will begin its preparations for its 1966 tour of Australian capitals, beginning at the Adelaide Festival in March.

Among the ballets included in the 1966 repertoire are:

BEER-UP IN BACCHUS'S TEMPLE



of Wine, near Baalbeck, in Lebanon, becomes the scene of a beery bush picnic as danced by the Australian Ballet in a special adaptation of Robert Helpmann's lyre bird ballet, "The Display". The large audience, was among the first appearances of the Australian Ballet on its present inter-

● "Elektra" — Robert Helpmann's version of the Greek classic tragedy, with designs by Arthur Boyd.

● "Raymonda" — a complete re-creation by Rudolf Nureyev of the classic originally choreographed by Petipa at the end of the 19th century.

"Raymonda", in its new form, was given its U.K. premiere by the Australian

Ballet at Birmingham in November. Performances with Margot Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev as guest stars with the Australian company have also been given in recent weeks in Paris and Copenhagen. Further performances in Berlin, London, San Francisco and Los Angeles will follow, again with Fonteyn and Nureyev as guest stars.

Also premiered at Birmingham was a new production by Peggy Van Praagh of "Giselle", with decor and costumes designed by Australian artist, Kenneth Rowell. Alternating with the Fonteyn-Nureyev partnership in the leading roles of this "Giselle" on tour are the Kathleen Gorham-Garth Welch and Elaine Fifield-Bryan Lawrence pairings.

IN August, 1921, a well-known Australian poet was asked by the magazine "Fellowship" to write an article on drama in Australia. He was known to have very definite views on the topic; moreover, he had discussed these ideas with the famous Irish exponent of national theatre — William Butler Yeats. With thanks to officers of the Victorian Council of Adult Education, who have brought this ever-topical article to our notice, "Trust News" is happy to re-publish it and to seek Members' reactions to these Yeats-supported

THOUGHTS ON A NATIONAL DRAMA

WHEN, in 1906, I had the honour of meeting W. B. Yeats, almost the first words he said to me were: "Keep within your own borders!" This was by no means the advice I wished to hear at that time.

by **LOUIS ESSON**

I had a vague love of the bush, but I had no idea that cattlemen and bullock-drivers were suitable subjects for literature. I belonged to the decadent school, sighing for the studios of the Quartier Latin, where some of my friends were studying painting, and the cabarets and *cafés de nuit* of montmartre.

But I knew instinctively that Yeats was right. He believed in national art, national drama. "If you want to do anything," he said, "you must regard your own country as the centre of the universe."

HE thought we should take a small hall in Melbourne, find some enthusiastic amateurs for actors, with an old Shakesperian professional for a producer, and make a beginning as soon as possible. He suggested that some little comedies of country life should be written first, one-act plays in prose. Verse plays could follow later. He even referred to the native legends.

"There might be material there for poetic drama," he said, but soon added, "perhaps not. It is a different race." Finally he harmonized these ideas. "At least they could be used as a decorative background."

Yeats's programme was simple, and perfectly suited for our conditions. But nothing was done. In Melbourne the expression of our artistic activity takes a peculiarly original form. A meeting is called, and, no matter what the subject may be, the same people attend, the same chairman (his name may change, but it is always the same chairman) makes the same speech, that is equally suitable for a musical or metaphysical society, a welcome to a distinguished visitor, or the formation of a Dante Club or a Repertory Theatre.

Many meetings have been called in support of Australian Drama. Votes of thanks have been proposed and seconded by the same loyal band that proposes and seconds votes of thanks to everybody, but nobody seems to have thought that, if there were to be any Australian Drama, it might be advisable, at least as a matter of form, to find a few Australian plays.

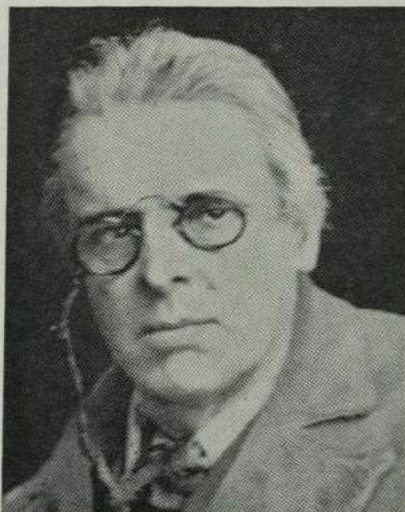
NO, the play was a matter of slight importance. Nobody thought of or desired anything so crude as a theatre that actually produced new plays. The pride and glory of the movement was the series of lectures it inspired.

As Vance Palmer somewhere remarks, everything in Melbourne comes to a head in a lecture.

Yeats laughed at this, and said he had belonged to a society that was endeavouring to found an English Literary Academy. The meetings were dull, nothing seemed to happen. But occasionally one of the members died. "That was our only activity," he added.

IN his study at Oxford, where he was living in 1921, Yeats confirmed the advice he had given me in 1906.

"Plays on national themes," he said, "(I don't mean popular plays), will help to build a nation; that is, will make the people of a country realize their national unity; while the other kind of play, so-called intellectual drama, abstract and cosmopolitan — the triangle play, for example — will shatter a nation."



W. B. Yeats

By national unity Yeats means a spiritual bond between all the people of a country, a sympathy that is almost telepathic, as in Ireland today. In illustration of his meaning he gave two picturesque examples: The Elizabethan merchants would compose songs and go into the streets to sing them before the apprentices, and in Venice, in the eighteenth century, the fine ladies — we can still see them dancing in Browning's

"Toccata" — would finish their ball outside on the pavement, conscious of the sympathy of the people.

Yeats added that in the very greatest periods, in ancient Egypt or Greece, all the works of art seemed to have been created by one man. It might be possible to distinguish between the works done when he was a young man, a middle-aged man, or an old man, but they were all the expression of the same spirit. And he made not only all the buildings, the statues . . . he made also all the pottery.

When I began to express some doubt of our being able to achieve originality after only a century's history, he replied at once: "You are a distinct nationality now. The people in Iceland became a distinct race, and created the sagas, in less time than you have been in Australia." He felt that our life was not wanting in character and interest. "We have our country life", he said, "and our legends, and you have your own life. Some day it will be looked back upon as romantic".

HE understood at once that many of our professors, editors and literary critics would be Imperialist and anti-national. "It is just the same in Ireland", he said. "We used to retort by showing that they couldn't write themselves. The colourless, lifeless English that they regard as correct is the worst style of all. We advised them to translate their bad English into living speech."

He mentioned the case of an Irish writer who was one of the greatest folk-loreists in the world. He wrote beautiful dialogue, but one of his critics objected to it on the ground that it was not Irish and not English. Unfortunately, this writer was weak enough to change his style, and then he wrote as badly as the critic himself.

But Yeats did not regard the opposition of conservative critics as serious. "They have to be killed off first," he said lightly.

When I suggested, as some excuse for poverty of style that the word "gully" had not the same association as "glen," or that the magpie was not as yet a poet's bird, like the nightingale, he was good enough to say simply: "I feel no lack of atmosphere." I have always looked on Yeats as the High Priest of Literature. He is a great critic, as well as

continued on page 9



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ESSON ON DRAMA

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a great poet, but his criticism is almost creative, like Coleridge's, and in any point of literary doctrine I should consult him in the same spirit as a student of the Middle Ages might have consulted Abelard or Aquinas on a difficult question of divinity.

Yeats said that in his early days he found himself opposed to the Ibsen generation. Now, after founding the Abbey, he has been influenced by the drama of Japan, and, always a seeker of the absolute, dreams of another creation, a theatre of art and poetry of fantasy — a Tragic Theatre.

BUT he thought we should found a national theatre somewhat on the model of the Abbey. Plays should always be produced first in their own country. A small audience, if enthusiastic, was better than a large, indifferent one. He knew the kind of difficulties that would arise, but quoted the opinion of W. G. Fay, the great actor, and producer of the first Abbey plays, that the theatre should be like a secret society, hidden away in the town, and made difficult to enter. The repertory theatre movement has done little or nothing anywhere to help national drama.

Christmas is coming; the birds are getting fat.
Please put a penny in the old man's hat.
If you haven't got a penny, if broke or bilked or bust,
Despair not, friend: You've always got the Trust!
Forsooth the living theatre is banquet served for ye,
Not bread alone, nor ale, nor partridge in a tree.

In the early days of the Abbey Miss Horniman wanted to produce, together with the local plays, some English and European masterpieces. Yeats said that he wavered on this question, but that Synge objected, and Irish drama, was saved. "A theatre like that," said Synge, "never creates anything."

This seems to be a true statement. I have nothing against the repertory theatre, and I can appreciate as well as most people the works of Ibsen, Chekhov and Shaw. But the Melbourne experiment never created anything new, not even in the style of acting and stage management. The University dramatic societies have never even thought of the possibility of doing anything except a second-hand Shaw or Galsworthy. And what has the Adelaide theatre created with all its impressive lists of plays? It has scarcely even one

little original sketch to its credit.

In a National theatre, not only would the plays be new, and in some relationship to the life of the country, but a new school of acting and production would arise naturally. And the acting ought to be better than it is at present, for there would be no bad models to imitate.

Yeats thought that there would be nothing wrong with a good work-a-day audience.

"Mechanics," he said, with his usual precision, "is not the enemy of poetry. The best audience I ever had was at an American College of Engineering. I saw the men working at the furnaces; they were all poets. No, it is the Abstract that is the enemy of poetry . . . the man of figures."

That was one of the lessons I brought down from Oxford.

Beware Avant-Gardism

It is something of a wry paradox in the English-speaking world that, while opera is increasingly sung in English to ensure richer and fuller understanding for English-speaking audiences, the newer composers of opera are often using musical idioms completely beyond the capacity of the audience to understand. Idioms which may be thought by the composers to be highly emotional have no emotional effect on these audiences because the audiences have no way or receiving the message which the composer thinks he is projecting. Communication breaks down at once; opera makes more enemies.

I am not writing here merely of audiences for whom the beginning and end of opera is "La donna e mobile" and "On with the motley." I refer to all those people, who can go along to a pleasurable degree with the sophistications of, say, Richard Strauss or the brilliances of the early Stravinsky ballets. Many of these people, alas, can find little point of contact between themselves and the operatic idioms employed in works like Berg's "Wozzeck" or Janacek's "Jenufa" or Egk's "Irish Legend." No point of contact. To the ordinary man who is open-minded enough to want to enjoy opera, the music of such operas is meaningless enough to make enjoyment impossible. Emotion is not communicated, *however much* the initiates may know that emotion is in the work and is being projected by it.

The European critic Hans Keller is perceptive on this triple-pronged matter of communication, understanding and pleasure:—"Art is simply a communication of something new and true that cannot be better expressed in any other way. If you are interested in the communication, and if there is any chance of your understanding it, you will obviously want to listen without having to be driven by a feeling of duty. If you are not interested in a particular work or composer, there is no earthly reason why you should make a moral issue out of your lack of contact, and so come to play an intellectual game instead of submitting to the basically emotional experience that is the 'sine qua non' of artistic understanding. . . . As for the pleasure we rightly expect to get out of a work of art, that is merely a function of understanding: as soon as a piece of music pleases us, we can be pretty sure that we have at least started to understand it."

Here, then, are two points which composers of opera in our time must never lose sight of—that *artistic understanding is the outcome of an emotional experience*; that where the audience does not have that emotional experience there will be neither understanding nor the pleasure of understanding.

At the Hamburg Congress, Professor Walter Felsenstein, the famous opera director from East Berlin, urged upon his hearers a type of operatic theatre which is human and *automatically understandable*. Professor Bordini of the Warsaw State Opera spoke out loudly against any tendency to over-intellectualise opera. He insisted that the presence of the emotional dimension of music implied certain very real limits on the intellectual content that any opera could successfully carry. It is his view (and I feel many of us will share it) that any measure of intellectual content in opera must of necessity be very much more limited than in drama. Vlado Habunek of the Zagreb Opera in Yugoslavia spoke of his concept of opera as ceremonious theatre with mass appeal. Jean Mercure from Paris said that the real problem of opera in the present world was the absence of sufficient transitional work to cover the gulf in public understanding between the popular operas of the "Carmen," "Rigoletto," "Pagliacci" kind on the one hand and advanced modern music theatre on the other.

ALL of those speakers at Hamburg—and others—urged that opera must be in terms which would enable it to make real contact with the great mass of the public. As one way of achieving this, English critic Arthur Jacobs suggested that opera might well adopt devices successfully used in the modern musicals, and Professor Carl Ebert agreed with him. We must learn to reach the wider public emotionally or we won't survive, or have reason for surviving.

Successful communication is quite as important for the *performers* in opera as for those of the audiences who wish to receive it; nothing is so likely to bring higher creative powers to work in operatic artists than the certain feeling that the work they perform is really striking responses from their audience, and this play of higher powers in performance itself enlarges the quality of the communication.

In commending these ideas to the consideration of composers of opera, I do not suggest for one moment that the composers should work only in idioms which the public has already shown its willingness to accept. That way there could be no development in opera, and it is worth emphasising in this connection that opera has many times reached a point of apparent finality in the 400 years of its history—and each time it has found a new and vital way through the work of some genius who, instead of slavishly working over old formulas, has created new ones. Monteverdi, for instance, and Lully, Gluck and Wagner.

In urging our composers not to strive too "eccentrically" to put themselves among the avant-garde, I would like to mention the opinion given by Luigi Dallapiccola at the Hamburg Congress that avant-gardism is itself no more than a transient phase. In opera the way of the way-out revolutionary is a desperately lonely one, and likely to remain so. The musicologist Paul Henry Lang, in his "Music in Western Civilisation," puts the matter this way: "The revolutionary, experimental artists are seldom the ones who lead us into the promised land; at the very border the leadership is assumed by the more deliberate and cautious, but also more powerful minds who, unwilling to discard the past, are yet capable of absorbing the present."

What I do suggest is that our composers of the modern world shall remember that communication is of the essence of their art, and there is no communication if their idioms are widely unintelligible. The whole of "Hamlet" tapped out in Morse code is understood as "Hamlet" by telegraphists; to those of us who do not know Morse it is just a string of noises that might just as well be any other string of noises, for all the meaning it communicates to us.

IN this context, let me say that I regard it as of the primary functions of music critics to assist in this process of communication, to help us to bridge the gulf between composer and audience regardless of whether the existence of such a gulf is largely the composer's fault, or the audience's fault, or the fault of the performers who themselves seek to bridge the gap. If much that is written about opera in this country is a true indication of attitudes, it is clear that the critics do not include this bridging function among their duties. Some of them, indeed, frequently denounce work which is acceptable with pleasure and understanding by the greater public and just as frequently align themselves with esoteric works of a kind that the greater public cannot hope to grasp. The insincerity and priggishness of these attitudes is often quite obvious from the shallowness and triviality of the writing.

The greater public is not disposed to reject as "implausible" the combining of words and music in dramatic action. The enormous legions of people who go to smash-hit musicals all over the world have no difficulty in accepting the sung word as part of stage story-telling. I am persuaded that the greater public not only is capable of accepting the so-called "artificiality" of sung drama in opera, but also needs it. I am also persuaded that the people who make up the greater public are all emotional enough to enjoy the heightened emotional power that music gives to words where they grasp and value both the words and the musical language.

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Words Versus Music

Indeed, I would like to go further and declare my own conviction that it is one of the deep inner necessities of human nature that music shall in some way colour and intensify the words on occasions of great importance to the human heart. The usage of music with words in religious ceremonies of many different creeds seems to confirm the point. Greek scholars tell us that the classic plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides were performed not with the inflections of ordinary speech, but with a type of musical diction which would perhaps correspond to what we understand by the words "parlando" and "sprechstimme." Even then this basic human need, for music with words in recounting the epic stories of the gods, goddesses and supermen of the Greek pantheon, was known and satisfied. Musical speech was an emulsion to ensure that the dosage of emotion in the words would not disappear in transit from performer to spectator.

IN Florence towards the end of the 16th century, verse plays about Greek heroes were one of the usual forms of courtly amusement. It was here, in 1597, that Jacopo Peri sought to intensify and elevate the power of the words in a verse drama about Daphne by writing music for the voices. From that day to this the whole history of opera has been a running contest for dominance between words and music. The pendulum has swung from one extreme to the other and back again several times. In later days the age-old contest for primacy between words and song has been further complicated, firstly, by the increasing role of the orchestra in opera, and later by the producer with his increasing technical aids. A point of perfect balance between words and song has been arrived at very rarely indeed in these 400 years. The French writer Boileau even went so far as to declare that, because music cannot narrate, there never had been and never would be a perfect opera.

The discussions at Hamburg showed that there is a tremendous diversity of opinion even now as to whether, where and how the emphasis of opera should lie in particular directions. There was equal diversity of opinion as to the type of drama in which opera should seek its subject matter. Luigi Dallapiccola, for instance, insisted on the utmost simplicity in librettos. Moreover, he declared that opera should concern itself with eternal, fundamental sentiments, always capable of new interpretations. Andre Boll, at Hamburg, insisted that the basic raw materials of every opera libretto should be precisely the three dominant themes of classical Greek tragedy—"Atropos" which is Death, "Polamos" which is war or conflict, and "Eros" which is love. There are very few of the great operas of the

standard repertoire in which these three classical elements are not combined.

Probably most of us accept the general idea that the theme in an operatic drama should be large and far-reaching, even in situations where the characters may be very much like ourselves without crowns on our heads—or without haloes in the same neighbourhood, for, after all, great themes of universal meaning are exhibited day by day in the traffic of everyday life—as such an opera as Menotti's "Consul" has shown us. What I most want from opera is consistency of style—consistency of style in the writing of the work, libretto and music, and also in presentation. Producer and cast have this as their first responsibility in performing any work. It is my opinion that consistency of style in a work is the factor which makes possible the communication of that work. Indeed, I feel this consistency of style is of more importance to audiences than the intrinsic worth of the operatic story given to them. I find this consistency of style in Mozart, Wagner, Puccini, even in such a masterpiece as Gershwin's "Porgy and Bess." It is where there is a mixture of styles (and many famous operas are hotch-potched in this way) that confusion can arise for performers and audiences alike, not to mention the producers!

ONE of the important developments in opera in this century is the fact that audiences demand that the operatic action shall be dramatically plausible, that the singers will look the part and have the gifts of characterisation and movement that are expected of artists of the ordinary theatre of the spoken word. The action must evolve with the fluency of a good play, not necessarily in a realistic way, but with a facility which a modern audience can accept. The old world of fat tenors announcing improbable passions and agonies amid scenery of the old-fashioned kind no longer has a place, except as a subject for skitting in the revue theatres. It is the task of the producer to ensure that these needs are satisfied, often to re-create the drama of opera in terms which render it meaningful and renewable to modern audiences.

An interesting point as to the ways in which the great public is steadily becoming harder to convince, when the acted arts are before them, is to be found in the present-day public's reactions to television screenings of old films which, in their day, were supported unquestionably as "masterpieces." One often hears these once "wonderful" films now spoken of as being corny, stuffy, stilted, artificial, phony. It is simply that the public taste has become more demanding.

In opera, a large share of the responsibility for ensuring that this demand is met, falls to the producer; it is no longer enough, as it once was in opera, for a producer merely to reproduce a set of traditional movements. He must re-create, and he must do this

without mere gimmickry or stunting. Above all, he must distil style—and the first and most difficult step is to know the right style, or, in some operas, to find it and then, of course, also find the ability to create it with his artists.

The famous Italian producer Zeffirelli was recently asked by an interviewer whether he would ever get around to producing Verdi or Puccini in a non-realistic style. "No, I don't think so," said Zeffirelli, "the music must be served in the way that the period demands. Behind any opera there is a whole world of feeling, a mood, a culture . . . With opera you cannot have a cabaletta in slacks. I am not against it in principle and it has been tried many times, but on the whole it is embarrassing. Verdi's 'Forza del Destino' was done by the very talented Pabst with gas masks and tanks, but it did not work."

When asked whether he thought it was possible to over-produce in opera, Zeffirelli went on to say: "People just aren't accustomed to production, and so everything you do they say is overdone. They have adjusted their eyes and brains to under-production and so whenever anything is 'evident' it seems to them aggressive."

POWERFUL minds who are unwilling to discard the past and yet capable of absorbing the present are as essential among the producers of opera in our modern world as they are among those who compose for the theatre. This is not to suggest that there is any place in opera for producers, however brilliant and original, who do not have an intimate knowledge and understanding of the scores of the operas which they seek to produce. Indeed, it was emphasised at Hamburg by Professor Carl Ebert, by the Finnish conductor Jussi Jalas and by Professor Miko of the Budapest State Opera that the ideal opera presentation is a trinity in operatic re-creation—a trinity including both the conducting and the stage designing. Jussi Jalas made the useful point that a conductor interested only in his own intentions was just as great a danger to opera as the producer without any understanding of the score.

Some management policies are at present exercising a somewhat sinister influence on opera overseas. The trend in such places as Covent Garden, the Metropolitan and the Vienna Opera is towards the presentation of seasons of opera on the "stagione" system with such stars as may be briefly available from time to time. The cause for this is simple. An attempt—and indeed successful in one aspect—to establish contact with new audiences. While the box office benefits, the 'art form' is betrayed.

This is a trend which has many dangers for opera, according to Rolf Liebermann, the intendant of the Hamburg State Opera. Liebermann's view is that an ensemble system of presentation is vital to the health and development of modern music theatre—that is, a system

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THEATRE CROSSWORD

THIS puzzle is printed for your amusement, but for a spice of competitive interest send in your completed diagram. If you do not wish to cut the page, your own freehand copy of the diagram will serve as well.

A fortnight after this issue of "Trust News" is distributed the mail will be opened and the first six correct entries opened will earn each successful entrant a pair of seats to the value of not more than £3 at a Trust show in their State capital city in the near future.

Entries must be in ink, without alterations, and the Editor's decision will be final. Endorse your envelope "Crossword", and send it to:

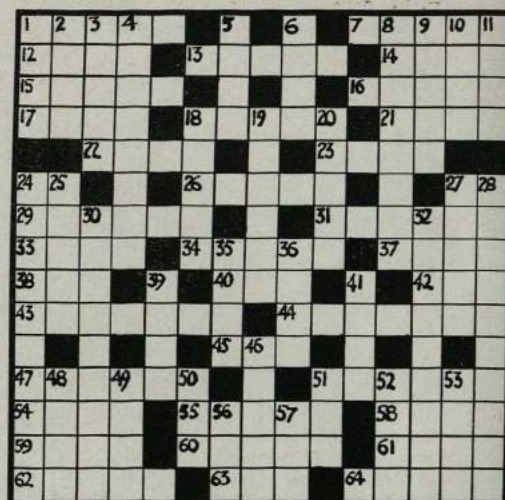
"Trust News", 153 Dowling Street, Potts Point, N.S.W.

ACROSS

1. It ain't necessarily so, according to this American bream.
7. Neckwear.
12. Bitter plant.
13. But this premier danseur noble is Australian.
14. Of the mouth or Jolson.
15. A flock of flaming matter.
16. Implement which brings Turiddu to his death in "Cavalleria."
17. Chilled heathens' egg producers.
18. City into which Petruchio comes to wive it weathily.
21. London gallery man not to be confused with a JCW director.
22. Remark which is intended to frighten off 17-across.
23. What Mimi does in the last act of "Boheme."
24. A microgroove disc.
26. Fast time to ring slow tempo.
27. The note which has Maria thinking of a female deer in "Sound of Music."
29. A former jester at Elsinore.
31. Unskilful shepherdess.
33. Shortly.
34. Who answers his own question about Virginia Woolf?
37. The London underground.
38. Frozen factor in the Bolshoi: "Cyrano." Si, si.
42. Capek play about robots.
43. Author of "Royal Hunt of the Sun."
44. Lost girl of "The Winter's Tale."
45. Cathedral city of the fen country.
47. Sarah drops out of the rehearsal.
51. The last Adelaide Festival had the play of him.
54. Border upon backward brass.
55. Make a bid at auction.
58. Icelandic saga beheads the doomed girl of "Pagliacci."
59. Theatre for the Trust's "Henry V."
60. Lamour.
61. Rise given in Brazilian money.
62. Tonina Dorati's father.
63. Optic.
64. They extend hospitality.

DOWN

1. A schoolgirl's crush.
2. A Grecian vase.
3. Horses of the colouring of that which, as he told his "mither," Edward killed.
4. Composer for whom 1-across is a leading character.
5. Leningrad is drained by this Carr-Glyn.
6. Unbleached linen cure must be arranged.
8. One of the "gifts" which Henry V sent to the Dauphin upon receiving the tennis balls.
9. Operatic show-pieces.
10. It runs on Kon-Tiki lines.
11. Become a fugitive.
18. A former U.S. President going on to a dance.
19. Blue water arranged by Benaud?
20. Mud for building.
24. Play to be performed by Athenians for the Trust during 1966.
25. Dog.
27. A personal first appearance.
28. Taken in hand during many a drinking song?
30. The sun is the object of it, but a former Trust Executive is no king (two words).
32. Author of a play in the Athenians' 1966 touring repertoire.
35. What does the tail unit supported by dancer Barry Kitcher remind you of? Y.E.P.S. organised for this spot.
39. From a king of old Mercia, contemporary of Charlemagne.
41. The all-wise woman of Wagner's "Ring."
46. Odets play which is waiting for this character.
48. A principal character in "Desire Under the Elms."
49. Name for a girl who throws 21-across into disorder.
50. Australian film actor named Taylor.
51. But recitativo secco ain't necessarily so.
52. Imperial subject of the opera written by Boito after "Mefistofele."
53. Run a newspaper.
56. Enemy.
57. Summer among the French.



CROSSWORD WINNERS

WINNERS of the crossword contest in the September, 1965, issue of "Trust News" are:

Miss K. Campbell, 7 Upper Spit Road, Mosman, N.S.W.

Dr. J. D. R. Wallman, 26 Grange Road, New Hindmarsh, S.A.

Miss Elva A. Jones, 60 Kimpton Street, Rockdale, N.S.W.

Miss Teresa M. Pitt, 20 Wills Street Kew, Vic.

Mrs. A. P. van Vliet, 1 Walsh Street, Noble Park, Vic.

Mrs. N. J. Secomb, 12 Somers Street, Bentleigh, Vic.

The above winners, by their success, become entitled to two seats (of a value not exceeding 30/- each) for a Trust presentation in their State capital cities. They will be contacted by Trust representatives to decide where and when they would like to enjoy their prizes.



COMMONSENSE OPERA—continued from page 11

in which works are presented by singers on long-term contracts and thus available the whole year round to work in a group. The other system, with seasons presented briefly with short visits by stars, is regarded by Liebermann as short-sighted and detrimental to the development of a creative policy. It is Liebermann's system of forming an ensemble to work as a unit over extended periods that we have favoured in Australia. This ensemble system can give our singers the opportunity to work within a team in such a way that the

qualities of ensemble work themselves enlarge the singer's own artistic potential. Singers are enabled to discover in themselves powers and responses which the other system could merely submerge.

AS to the singers, as individuals, much remains to be asked of them. Vlado Habunek of Yugoslavia told the Hamburg congress that the physical appearance of singers was now of very high importance, and he even went so far as to say that physical training should be made a major, compulsory

part of general operatic training. Professor Bardini of Warsaw committed himself to the view that these days the need was not so much for singers as for singing actors, a view supported by Professor Ebert who, along with John Brownlee, also emphasised the importance of full physical training for singers, as distinct from mere vocal training. This was seen as a means by which fine stage deportment might be permanently implanted in the artist's theatre work, with the additional artistic gains that the confidence, thus won, could ensure for him.