



THE CINEPTIC

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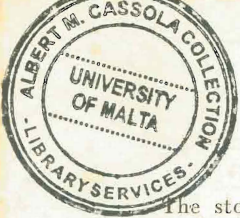
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LA PREDESTINATA





RADIO PLAYS —

The story has no originality, it brings to one's mind the Barclays Bank hold up methods and no sufficient reason is given why the robbers wanted such a partner as "IS-SIEHEB" who was there because the author wanted to weave around him a plot, but with what justification?

The production left much to be desired. Victor Apap of course was the star of the evening and little Cecilia Apap as Victorin was really good and convincing as also was Maria Apap. The rest were not as good as one would have expected for a first prize winner. Paul Portelli as *Dumink*, Lino DeBono as *il-Tabib*, Ronnie Doublet as *l-ispettur* were not characters, while Paul Bugeja should have been left out altogether. Joe Fenech as *il-principal* could have been better had he not preached so much, but of course after so many impersonifications of a saintly Pope, Joe Fenech could not fail to be a very benign and saintly principal. All in all we congratulate Victor Apap and wish him further successes.

Out of the blue comes now a mere "Honourable Mention" LIL HINN MILL-BIZA by F. Ebejer: a

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first class play in a first class production which has kept the listeners tense to the very last moment, undoubtedly so far no better play had been heard in these last few months and one is kept wondering how four examiners could have failed to grasp the beauty, originality and captivating interest of this story, which ought to have been a prize winner if not the prize winner.

Father Born, may be, appreciated this play as much as myself for as "ANTON" he has given us the best which one could expect, a finer character has never been portrayed so admirably and we congratulate Father Born with sincere enthusiasm. Francis Ebejer the author, as *Man* was also very, very good, so was Violet Overend and so were Joe Soler, Anglu Vella and Carmen Carbonaro. I am sure that Rediffusion listeners were very much pleased with this excellent production and the Malta Drama League exultant because its dictators maintain that in many radio play writers they have seen that confidence in the Panel was much shaken by the results of this first Rediffusion Drama Contest.

STUPENDOUS STAGE SHOWS

By ALBERT M. CASSOLA, F.I.L.

The Dublin Gate Theatre Company opened their series of performances at the Radio City Opera House with Shakespeare's best comedy, "The Merchant of Venice".

Hilton Edwards as Shylock dominated the scene with his craftsmanship and ideas every time he appeared on the stage. He has a rich voice which he can modulate effectively, and his expression of the face is always thoroughly significant. He was repeatedly and enthusiastically applauded at the end of the play for his masterly portrayal of the malevolent Jew. Maureen Toal displayed perfect diction in the rather affected character of Portia. Patrick Bedford as Bassanio was very good and Liam Gaffney (Antonio) was almost faultless. Micheal MacLiammoir's short part as the Prince of Arragon was delightfully played and earned him a warm applause. All the other actors were good, but among these Finola O'Shannon (Nerissa), Derk Kinnane (Graziano) and Milo O'Shea (Launcelot Gobbo) deserve particular mention. Good costumes, impressionistic settings and effective lighting helped in a great measure to capture the place and period of the play. Good grouping, perfect timing and excellent recitation were the secret of the splendid success.

Of course, one cannot imagine how Portia and Nerissa are not recognised by their respective husbands in the famous Court scene, even though Portia dons the robe of a lawyer and Nerissa that of a clerk. But that is not the producer's fault. The only blemishes of the performance may have been the invariable rash entrances and exits of the *dramatis personae* and the rigid movements of most of them.

"The Picture of Dorian Gray," adapted for the stage by M. Mac Liammoir from Oscar Wilde's novel, was also of a very high standard. But sometimes the dialogue is rather too long and the characters are sometimes brought together for the sole purpose of showing off the wit of the author. Still more realistic settings would have made a greater impression upon the audience.

Mac Liammoir as Lord Henry was undoubtedly a most finished artist while Patrick McLarnon was good in the difficult part of Dorian Gray and succeeded in evoking a thrilling atmosphere that was well sustained also by Liam Gaffney (Basil Hallward), the inevitable butler and other actors. Eithne Dunne (Ivy), Maureen Toal (Ada) and especially Finola O'Shannon (Sybil) were adequate in their roles. The audience, much more numerous than on the opening night, sat, for the most part, in silent admiration but repeatedly clapped their hands at the end of every act.

One other good thing of the Company's producers is that they leave no gaps in the scenery and settings through which people in boxes and stalls can see the prompters, or the actors waiting for their cues, to the detriment of all stage illusion. Such devices were very well used in Jean Anouilh's "The Lark", adapted by Christopher Fry. The important events of Joan of Arc's life were in fact presented in a way as to suggest the various scenes for the different episodes. But the unorthodox manner in which the story is told by the characters themselves and the suggestive scenes and settings require a dose of imagination from the spectators. The acts are somewhat long and, occasionally monotonous.

Eithne Dunne as Joan of Arc scored a huge personal success while Milo O'Shea as the Dauphin proved himself a consummate actor. Hilton Edwards (Cauchon) and Micheal Mac Liammoir (Beauchamp) very ably portrayed the characters they represented; Liam Gaffney (The Inquisitor), Michael Plaister (The Promoter) and the others were all good.

Another play by the same French author of "The Lark", in the translated version of the same English poet, was "Ring Round The Moon," in which M. Mac Liammoir brilliantly played the double role of the twins Hugo and Frederic. Truly, in a few instances Mac Liammoir seemed to overdo the difficult part of the man about town, but otherwise he grati-

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STUPENDOUS STAGE SHOWS

fied the expectations of the select audience with his sterling histrionic qualities. His brother actors all knew the trick of the trade, from Milo O'Shea, the typical crumpling butler, to Patrick Bedford (Patrice Bombelles). The latter, however, could certainly devise a less clownish tango. Finola O'Shannon as Isabelle, the ballet dancer, acted with ease and grace while Marjorie Hawtrey as Madame Desmermortes portrayed the part of the aunt superbly, with force and humour. The settings and the costumes were very pleasing, the lighting perfect.

The competence of acting was again evident in Anton Tchekov's "The Seagull". In this comedy the characters are capable of standing on their own feet and are so alive that they keep the spectator's interest and make the comedy a masterpiece. And that is more so when such characters as Tregorin, Arkadin and Tryepi are interpreted by a Mac Liammoir, a Marjorie Hawtrey and Patrick Bedford respectively. Mac Liammoir was the star again that night but all the cast played their part with spirit. Who but an artist of Mac Liammoir's level could effectively speak that very long speech beginning "What is there particularly fine in it?" in Act II? Words are the raw commodity of plays, but they can easily be the cause of verbal indigestion. Even Tchekov may seem boring (sometimes he actually is) unless he finds such good actors as those of the Dublin Gate Company. The symbolic scenery was not effective enough.

George B. Shaw's "The Man of Destiny" kept the

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attention of the audience alert and the talented artists gave no chance of boredom. It is a play with excellent technique and constant surprise. From the loss of the despatches and the Lieutenant's attitude to the discovery of the Strange Lady, from that to the duel between this Lady and Napoleon, to the question of Napoleon's honour, to the command concerning the despatches, to the revealing of the Lady, to the argument about the English, and so to the unexpected close, the players gave of their best. Eithne Dunne (The Strange Lady) confirmed her polished qualities as an artiste. Patrick Bedford (Napoleon Bonaparte) did full justice to his part. The two other characters also played with animation.

On the same night Sophocles's "Oedipus, the King" was a proof that Greek tragedies are still good theatre to a modern audience, though it may be difficult to accept as true tragedy a story in which a man is not master of his fate but a plaything of the irrevocable whims of the gods. Still, W. B. Yeats's version, like the Italian one produced some years ago by Annibale Ninchi's Company at the Orpheum Theatre, was rather heavy going. Yet a cultured audience can naturally appreciate a story of primitive people who praised the gods' powers and man's weakness. After "The Merchant of Venice", the public were eager to see Hilton Edwards again as protagonist, but they were disappointed. The name part was played by M. Mac Liammoir with verve while Marjorie Hawtrey interpreted the part of Jocasta well. Reginald Jarman interpreted the blind man very efficaciously.

CHARACTERS THAT FORM THE DUBLIN GATE

The first member of the company I had the pleasure of meeting was Micheal Mac Liammoir. From the first moment of our encounter I came to realise that I was facing a man possessing a keen sense of humour as well as a versatile mind. Later I discovered that besides English and his native tongue Irish, he is conversant as well with French, Italian and Spanish. And, I understand, that he has learned a few Maltese words, as well.

Another imposing personality is Edward Hilton. A giant of a man to see at close range. Frankly, I can now state that I felt terrified to approach him. Not that I am afraid of men or mice, but I had an inward inhibition that he was all tempers, generally the brand of many good producers. I was happy to find out that this man-mountain was the contrary. When I asked for help he was willing to give his best, whilst he was all patience and understanding whenever I discussed with him any of my problems.

At the backstage, quietly, pensively on a trunk sat Eithne Dunne, making no efforts to appear either impressive or dominating. She smiled naively, her gaze seemed to roam gently into space. I must confess I wondered how on earth it was possible that she was going to impress a theatre-starved audience with her performances. Yet she did, and she really did it well. A few days later, I braced up myself to one of the biggest surprises in my life. The reticent figure I saw backstage sprang up as a vivacious and forceful Joan of Arc and the bold sharp tom-boy playing the spy in "Man of Destiny".

From behind the wings I was watching Maureen Teel coaching a young Maltese extra, in carriage, as

page to Morocco. In this task she utilised the same tact and understanding requested by Portia, and which so many of us had seen her portray on the stage. A smile, a small pat, a word of encouragement and hey presto, the young girl came out with her stage lesson well, patience did it.

By the way, did you notice that spirited young actress Finola O'Shea? It seems to me that her motto in life is "never a dull moment". She really lives up to it; hardly can I recall a conversation, even for a slight break between scenes, without her popping up with some of her jokes. "Calling me names again! That's terrible!" was her remark when she came to know that local theatregoers were calling her "Irish Eyes". Another time when I was discussing with Patrick MacHarmon the captain for his cartoon, she bolted in and said: "Yes, you've got it right. He is a friend, but quite lovable, you know."

Patrick MacHarmon if you remember well, was the young man who gave us such a realistic performance as Dorian Gray. He has a striking personality and up to a short time ago was taking up law as a career. Finally, he decided that the call of the stage was more to his liking. He gave up his studies and took up acting.

Another actor, named after the Irish patron Saint, was Patrick Bedford. Pat is an alert, quick young man who with perseverance and hard work is making his way to the top. The lad has got acting in his heart. He takes his parts seriously and continually keeping abreast with the march of different aspects and stages of stagecraft. His approach to the stage is an intelligent one. We dragged on a conversation