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 “L. SIEHEL” who was there because the author wanted to weave around him a plot, but with what application?

The production left much to be desired. Victor Anap 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 Damink, Lino DeBono as ti-Tahib, Ronnie Doublett as l-ispettur were not characters, while Paul Bugeja should have been left out altogether. Joe Fenech as il-principale could have been better had he not preached so much, but of course after so many impersonifications of a saintly Pope, Joe Fenech could 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

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 difficult role of Portia. Patrick Bedford as Bassanio was very good and Liam Gaffney (Basil Hallward), the poet, was “Ring Round The Moon,” in which M. Mac Liammoir brilliantly played the double role of the Inquisitor and the Inquisitor (l’ivry), Maureen Toal (Ada) and especially Finola McLaughlin (Othello) as the heroine. The audience, much more numerous than on the opening night, sat, for the most part, in silent admiration and enthusiastically applauded 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 Michael Mac Liammoir (Beauchamp) very ably portrayed the characters they represented; Liam Gaffney (The Inquisitor), Michael Piastra (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 gratified the audience.

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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-mounted 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,

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 veritable 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.

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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 crooking bulter, to Patrick Bedford (Patrice Bonhelles). The latter, however, could certainly devise a less clownish tawny. Finola O'Shannon as Isabelle, the ballet dancer, acted with ease and grace while Marjorie Hawtrey as Madame Desmermortes portrayed the part of the want 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 Treegorin, Arkadin and Tryepil 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. But what an artist of Mac Liammoir's level could effectually 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 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 Sophoole'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 Ninci'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 Edward Hilton again as protagonist, but they were disappointed. The same part was played by M. Mac Liammoir with verve while Marjorie Hawtrey interpreted the part of Jessica well. Reginald Jarman interpreted the blind man very efficaciously.

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