



THE CINEPOLITIC

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Foto: Vase



PLAYS PLEASANT AT RADIO CITY

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

THANKS to the Impresa Baldacchino, stage lovers had the good fortune to see La Nuova Compagnia dello Spettacolo Giallo which gave a high standard of performances at the Radio City Opera House during the first fortnight of February.

Guglielmo Giannini's "Il nemico" ("The Enemy") and Alessandro De Stefani's "Trappola per i topi" ("Rat Trap") were proof enough that the supporting cast is worthy of the refined artistry of the principal factors.

"Il nemico" is a thriller with murders galore but with no mounting tension while "Trappola per i topi", though less complicated and better constructed, falls flat at the end.

"Signore in ritiro" ("Ladies in Retirement") by Edward Percy and Reginald Denham again proved a successful essay in characterisation but did not satisfy the taste of the exacting audience.

The first really good play was "La tredicesima sedia" ("The Thirteenth Chair") by Bayard Veiller, another thriller in which Edward Wales determines to find out the murderer of his friend. He believes to be on the track of the murderer and that he may force a confession. So a séance is arranged and Mme La Grange is brought in to preside. But at the psychological moment, in utter darkness, Wales groans out that he is dying, and when the lights go up he is stretched out dead, stabbed in the back. A police inspector suspects Helen, Mme La Grange's daughter, and thinks that both murders were committed by the same person. Mme La Grange defends her daughter but is given ten minutes to prove Helen's innocence. She gathers the original members of the séance around her, throws herself into a sham trance, discovers the killer's knife, hitherto missing, and, assuming the voice of the murdered Wales, extorts the confession of the real assassin.

Cesarina Gheraldi and Leonardo Severini were at their best, however, in Jean De Hartog's "Letto matrimoniale" ("The Fourposter"). With only two characters, the author very ingeniously portrays the life of a husband and wife from the pealing of their wedding bells to the toll of their respective deaths. Cesarina Gheraldi, whom we had already admired at the Royal Opera House before the war, once again showed she is a most finished actress and skilfully used her transitions, from pouting to smiling, from raving to enduring. In the part of the husband, Leonardo Severini had a very high tone of acting and his manners, in the different stages and ages of married life, were extremely pleasing.

Paolo Giacometti's "La morte civile" ("The Man Who Returned"), in spite of the actors' competent interpretation, hardly pleases an intelligent audience as the play has long become obsolete. "John," by Ezio D'Errico, consists of two short unconvincing acts and a redeeming finale.

"La maschera di Ming Thao" ("Ming Thao's Mask") by Werther Bellodi was another thriller in which an oriental woman, with vengeance as her motive, commits a series of murders and, when caught red-handed, does hara-kiri.

"Il pipistrello" ("The Bat") by Mary Roberts Rinehart and Avery Hopwoods was, with "The Thirteenth Chair," one of the best thrillers, produced in a way to keep the tension uninterrupted and played at a breathless pace as, in truth, all the previous thrillers were played. The plot, which is worthy of note, deals with a secret room which is said to have been constructed in the villa which Miss Cornelia Van Gorder has rented from the nephew of a deceased and absconding banker. Brooks, a cashier at the bank, is determined to find out that secret, and

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to that end he engages himself as gardener to the new tenant. Also engaged to Miss Van Gorder is a detective, Anderson, and it is his job to fathom the mystery of the nocturnal sounds which worry everyone. He is a terribly earnest detective and proceeds with grim determination, putting questions to all the unfortunate people with whom he is brought into contact, and purposely contriving to convict one and all of his victims of the crime of robbery and murder. Circumstantial evidence points to this one, then to that, until the last act. The room is in darkness, and everyone is on tip-toe of expectation and apprehension. The "Bat" is expected. Then a dark figure appears at the window, creeps cautiously in and makes for the secret chamber. He is seized, and the electric light is turned on. The "Bat" stands revealed.

The Company gave also a good rendering of Enzo Girone's "La pazza di Chatillon" ("The Mad Woman of Chatillon"), another pleasant *giallo* with an interesting plot.

But Severini and Gheraldi showed their mettle when they played the parts of Romeo and Bice in Luigi Pirandello's dramatic play "Non si sa come". Based on the theme of jealousy, the play has however the unmistakable imprint of the Sicilian playwright. Romeo's conscience has been separated from his life, and now tends incessantly to imprison the life within fixed and precise boundaries; hence the fundamental dualism of many of Pirandello's plays and of "Non si sa come" in which queer and unexplainable things happen to the characters, and particularly to Romeo. Nobody knows the way and the whereof of such events; and man cannot hold them away just as nobody can hold away a dream. Severini's looks, actions and tone were all that a fastidious critic could desire. Gheraldi's countenance was most expressive and Marisa Quattrini, very ably partnered by Marco Mariani, got right into the skin of her difficult part. Enrico De Melis was also forceful.

THE MOLE IN THE PROFILE

In A. M. Cassola's Profile, published in January, we stated that he wrote two Italian one-act plays when actually he wrote three. It was further stated that he won a prize or high commendation in every competition he took part in. That holds good even now, after the recent Radio Competition result, as the only play he submitted was, along with another one by a different author, disqualified owing to some phrases which might prove objectionable locally. The number of plays competing practically was 64, as Cassola's and the other author's censured plays could not be considered.

B.I. CONCERTS

Sir,

The only grumble which many old members of the British Institute had to utter in last Saturday's Concert at the Radio City was the absence on the programme of a work by a Maltese Composer.

The person who was responsible for the programme should not forget that in the past, both Maestro Nani and Maestro Bellizzi did this most successfully.
OLD MEMBER.

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