

Reviewers Attempt Season-End Appraisal of 1956 Shakespearean Festival; Views on Good, Bad Points of Productions, Actors Told

An end-of-the-season Shakespearean festival review is produced with a lot of talk, arguing and soul-searching among Tribune reporters. Purpose of the "wind-up" article is to provide the festival's hundreds of southern Oregon fans with a resume story, and an attempt to be genuinely helpful to the actors, directors and the festival staff as a whole.

The reviewers have been on the "other side of the fence" all summer—they are the part of the audience which either finds the plays entertaining and worthwhile, or doesn't return.

As a whole the season has been a good one. True, the weather was uncooperative at times, and the usual bothersome problems arose, but these were minor.

Bringing the director, B. Iden Payne, to Ashland was an excellent step. Mr. Payne is both an outstanding director and authority on Shakespeare and for good measure he can act. His play, "Cymbeline" was a first-rate production and the actors with whom he worked counted themselves fortunate.

"Cymbeline" Fine
This reporter finds it hard to select a "best" play this year. Histories are more to our liking than the tragedies and comedies, and we saw "Richard III" twice. However, "Cymbeline" was a fine show, and we marveled at what costuming, staging and direction did for that rather silly play "Love's Labour's Lost."

"Titus" should be seen for no other reason: it was produced with skill and tact, but even so, we grew weary of the endless horror and bloodshed. In spite of the fact that it was produced only twice, it had some of the best acting of the season. Don Gunderson seemed almost better as Titus than he was in the stronger role of Richard. Bill Oyler outshone the entire company in his portrayal of the black-hearted Moor, and Nancy Pickhardt proved herself a fine pantomimist as Lavinia.

Endless arguments over why the festival directors persist in over-loading one actor, as if no one else were available, still go on. With such men as William Oyler, David O'Brien, Ted Van Griethuysen and Michael Kasdan in the company, was it a stark necessity to cast Don Gunderson in the three heavy roles of Richard, Titus and Iachimo? Gunderson did a valiant job, but considering that he quite frankly says his ambition is to direct and not to act, and that he also frankly admits he believes the theater's first, and possibly only function, is to entertain, it is no wonder that doubts arose as the season progressed.

Oyler's ability and versatility are unquestioned by his fellow actors and his audiences—why do the directors not agree? Van Griethuysen's talent seemed smothered by inadequate direction. O'Brien was not used as his talent deserved and Kasdan was given little opportunity to try himself in varied roles. The directors could answer, truthfully, that hindsight comes much easier than foresight.

Actresses Praised
This reporter has already gone on record as believing that Joan Kugell is one of the most talented actresses ever seen on the festival stage, and we give Irene Baird due credit for her fine work, although her diction is not what it should be.

As usual, time and space are exhausted before the writer has said his say. One must mention how Brad Curtis continues to improve as an actor, how Ruedi Vest, the "home town boy," should be given a chance to prove his talent and ditto Jack Swanson, how excellent was Gordon Wickstrom in "Love's Labour's Lost" and how Steve Pavlison, handicapped by illness and so earnest in his work, improved as the season progressed.

We will remember Dack Cavett as the reluctant murderer in "Richard" and as the sharp-tongued Lord in "Cymbeline." Angus Bowmer for his playing of Boyet after a mid-season switch in roles, Lindy Gordon for her portrayal of the queen and Lee Haring for his Pisanio in the same play. Too, there was James Parker, whose voice difficulties were forgotten when he did a fine piece of work as Biron and King Edward, and Eberle Thomas as Dumaine and Catsby.

We cannot close without the hope that Rosalyn Newport will continue to study and uncover the talent which did not quite come through in Juliet.

The highest praise is due Douglas Russell and his costume department for their superb costuming, and the technical and lighting crews responsible for the thousand and one details which are such a vital part of the whole production but which go virtually unnoticed by the average playgoers.—O.S.

Open Collars Enjoyed, Labourousness Disliked
Each night we returned to the Ashland theater we were

filled with the kind of relaxation that comes when we know there's nothing for us to do in the next three hours but sit and be entertained. There is no pressure involved in a Shakespearean play at Ashland. We don't have to pretend to like... or not like... anything. We can come in open collared shirts and open collared minds.

The pageantry... what we think of as pageantry is the concrete wall with its banners, the stained wooden stage, the velvet curtains, the singers in long velvet robes and ruffled collars, even the twenty-five cent tarts is enjoyable.

The theater itself is quite a production with its open air trust in the August weather. We like to walk on the grass. It's better than carpet.

The ladies at the ticket office have their good and bad nights just as the actors. Sometimes we come, step behind another who promptly moves off with his ticket, state our name, and are handed a smile and tickets in a pleasant stream of motion beautiful as a Henry Ford assembly line.

Other times we stand on one foot, then on the other, then on both, then on our rights, and by the time we reach the place where only bars separate us and the lady in the box office all our best antipathy is directed at the hot busy figures inside.

Shakespeare Elaborate
To return to the plays themselves, we must admit that every night we have gone to Shakespeare we have become disgusted in spots and thought one thing or another could have been done to make it a better play. Usually it's either leave out or shorten.

Shakespeare's plays are like his clothes, elaborate. If they are extremely skillfully done they can hold the interest of any audience for there is beauty in the elaborate as well as in the plain. But when the spark is gone, the words that are left become laborious.

About one-quarter way through a page-long speech we become lost, wonder how much of the play is left to go, why he couldn't have said this in a clearer manner, or not at all, and what it has to do with what's gone before.

We grant that after a little study, these passages are clever, have meaning, and can be translated in sense. But who can do this upon hearing it in the speedy though articulate speech a Shakespearean actor must use if the play is to be finished by a reasonable hour?

This kind of thing comes to the minds of most people who do not go to Shakespeare and who do not like Shakespeare. They are generally not highly educated, it is true. They see only surface enjoyment that comes from something funny or sad or intriguing that is well put and not boring. But even educated people can feel the seals grow hard when they have to rely too heavily on education and not enough on natural born entertainment.

Prodigious Writer
To argue that Shakespeare is "no good" because of wordiness is, of course, to argue from ignorance. In his overall picture, the Elizabethan writer was probably the most prodigious and prolific barrel of wit and wisdom ever created. From his works one would conclude that he virtually "ran" with literature and never stopped to review but only went pouring out more.

It is asking something of a modern day citizen to settle himself enthralled into a Shakespearean play as he can into a movie, television show, or magazine story. He is generally not of a mind to concentrate unless pulled by the neck. But the spark comes through in every play, often lasts almost all the night, and he can easily enjoy that much of Shakespeare. How much he will get out of it beyond that depends altogether on his own initiative.—D.R.

Shakespeare Would Say "Meaning Is Omitted"

If the immortal Bard had been in attendance at the festival this year in Ashland, he would have thought his Elizabethan works flattered rather than detracted, yet also thought some criticism justified. In criticism, the Bard may have added, "The words are always spoken, but often the meaning is omitted."

The only thing which prevents Shakespeare from becoming mere "soap opera in tails" is the poetic beauty and wit of his lines, animating his repetitive plots. And when the lines of a Shakespeare play are mumbled, mused or muffed there is nothing left to enjoy. Most offenders of this supposition played minor roles, but there were two that particularly caught the reviewer's attention. Player Preoccupied.

One actor who had supporting roles in several of the plays,

James Parker, as Lord Chamberlain in Cymbeline and Capulet in Romeo and Juliet most noticeably, often mumbled his words so that his speech was indistinct and mused. At times Parker seemed preoccupied with interpreting the character rather than conveying the meaning of the language he was speaking.

A more serious criticism can be made of the performance of Steve Pavlison as Posthumus in "Cymbeline." Not only did his words flow so fast as to be incoherent but also with excess fervor. In some scenes he augmented this with facial contortions that seemed strained and over-done, rendering his interpretation of the part, in some instances comic rather than dramatic. His clenching of the fist-scenes along with jerky movements gave his part an effeminate effect.

Scintillating, sparkling, vivacious, ebullent... most, most, most! adjectives and superlatives alike seem inadequate to this reviewer in praising "Love's Labour's Lost," his favorite of the five plays presented this year. If space allowed, this reviewer could not fly off on the rhetorical hooves of Pegasus fast enough to explain his elation with the showmanship of Gordon Wickstrom as Armado and Joan Kugell as Moth in that play.

Most memorable single performance was that of David O'Brien as the effervescent Mercutio in Romeo and Juliet. And the most memorable series of performances to this reviewer were those of William Oyler, particularly his versatility in portraying the sanguinary Aaron in "Titus" and the inane Cloten in "Cymbeline."

In passing judgement on the actresses, the only one who escapes this reviewer's objection is Joan Kugell. Though adequate, Nancy Pickhardt's voice is in times shrill, although her pantomime in "Titus" was impeccable; comments were heard that Rosalyn Newport's voice lacked important volume as Juliet, and Irene Baird has a noticeable sibilance.

Also deserving comment was B. Iden Payne as Friar Laurence in "Romeo and Juliet" whose immaculate performance seemed almost inappropriate.

This reviewer, who has just seen his first Shakespearean festival, will leave the criticizing of the technical side of the productions, such as directing, staging, lighting, etc., to those with more developed Shakespearean insights, but would like to register the comment that the sword-fighting, in particular, seemed energetically as well as convincingly staged. E.C.

"Cymbeline" Rated High By Visitors From East
After attending the five productions at the Shakespearean Festival this year and enjoying all of them, this reviewer was pleased to hear Eastern visitors comment that "Cymbeline" was the best Shakespearean production they had seen except for Maurice Evans' "Hamlet," viewed some years before in St. Louis.

While watching the performances one could not but help wonder how clothes were kept clean in Shakespeare's time—especially noting those worn in "Love's Labour's Lost," which were masterpieces of art in cloth. A modern dry cleaning plant in operation then would either have a large business or be completely swamped by the too many cumbersome garments.

Although some may complain of the "wordiness" of Shakespeare the plays are easier to follow if the script has been read before viewing the performance. During the reading one can easily learn the plot or basic story and then enjoy Shakespeare's "play on words" and characters during the production. Also this makes the action much easier to follow so the viewer will not become lost if a line or two are missed.

Reviewer New
New this year to the area, this reviewer made special point to attend all of the plays. By the fourth and fifth one finds one's self identifying the players by former roles and thus putting that player at a disadvantage. Naturally it would be impossible not to have characters repeated and then, if the program was not available in many cases it was impossible to tell. Who would have guessed Cloten in "Cymbeline" was Aaron in "Titus Andronicus"? Richard III was Titus Andronicus? Imogen in "Cymbeline" was Moth in "Love's Labour's Lost"? or Don Adriano de Armado of "Love's Labour's Lost" was Cornelius in "Cymbeline"?

Publicity Criticized
This reviewer feels the advanced publicity on "Titus" was too gory. Why not review the story, which wasn't widely known, or tell of the late evening and early morning hours spent in rehearsing by the already over-worked players? The splendid

acting that resulted in some of the roles represented many hours of hard work.

Certainly not recommended for children, "Titus" caused more thought and comment by those who saw it than any of the others. "I just don't know if I liked the play or not, but wasn't so-and-so excellent... just think how hard it would be to have Lavinia's part... and on and on.

The large amount of violence in this production seems to weaken the goriness and make it rather common to have another person beheaded, stabbed, or literally "thrown to the lions."

The wandering minstrel singers before the plays provided delightful entertainment for early playgoers. These songs were enjoyed by many in the audience and copies of the words would make a clever souvenir book.—P.H.

Miss Kugell Praised; Gunderson Criticized

As in past years, we have chosen the festival production of a lesser-known play as our favorite of the season. "Cymbeline" is our choice this year. Director B. Iden Payne lived up to his advance reputation as a superior director by presenting a well-integrated smoothly paced show.

His choice of cast was excellent: Joan Kugell as Imogen gave the most outstanding performance, but the other actors were not far behind in carrying the show at a high level of performance.

The outstanding achievement of the costume department came in the first "inner above" scene in "Cymbeline" with the use of many different shades of blue for costumes and hangings.

It is always difficult to choose the most outstanding actor and actress. We feel that Joan Kugell, in the roles of Imogen, Margaret and Moth, was the best actress. She is at home in any type of part, from that of an old woman to a young boy, as is shown by her roles this season. She has a freshness and vitality not shown by other actresses in the company.

O'Brien Praised
Among the newcomers among the men in the company, David O'Brien made the biggest impact on the audiences. His Mercutio was one of the few high points in a rather ordinary production of "Romeo and Juliet" and as Buckingham he was excellent.

Among festival veterans, William Oyler and Richard Graham are the nominees for our printer's ink and newspaper Oscar. Both are more versatile than most, and both gave exciting performances in "Titus Andronicus." These men do justice to any part, be it ever so small, and do not lack the experience and depth needed to carry a lead. It would have been most interesting to see a production of "Richard III" with Oyler as Richard and Graham as Buckingham.

Although the choice for some parts has not been great, we feel that the directors are approaching the sin of type-casting with Irene Baird and Mike Kasdan. Irene, who indeed is regal on stage, is in danger of being a perpetual queen. Mike has been cast in virtuous parts to the point where he seems to radiate virtue when he appears.

Sameness Criticized
After sitting through all four regularly scheduled plays more than once, we have come to the conclusion, with considerable regret, that we are disappointed in Don Gunderson as an actor. It is difficult to break through the spell woven by such an arresting voice, but once broken, there is a sameness to his acting. He does not put across a feeling of weight, in his Richard that should be there. Richard's deformity is exaggerated to the extent that it dominates the character. In all of his parts he lets the voice carry him. No voice, however magnificent, can put over a complete characterization to a discerning audience.

We feel that his best portrayal was that of Iachimo, with Titus ranked second. His reading of Richard's lines during the first part of the final performance of that play was much improved over earlier performances, but the strain of carrying three big parts on three successive nights began to tell before the final frustrated scream of "A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!"

Inexperience Shows
We do not usually presume to criticize a festival director, but we feel that Hal Todd's inexperience with Elizabethan staging showed up this season. "Romeo and Juliet" was not nearly as interesting and exciting as it should have been. True, this play is one of the "old warhorses," but the festival audience has been educated to expect something better than this year's production. Individual characterizations were too often merely conventional. We can scarcely remember the 1949 production of "Romeo and Juliet," but we do remember Eddy Barron's portrayal of Peter, the comic servant.

To borrow a phrase from Henry Hewes of the Saturday Re-

view, who was describing Nina Foch's Kate in the Stratford, Conn., production of "Taming of the Shrew," this year's production of "Romeo and Juliet" was on the whole "emotionally sterile."

We commend director Allen Fletcher for his production of "Love's Labour's Lost." Assisted by the costume department, he created a sparkling, ballet-like production of a play that is most difficult to read and understand.

Teen Twosome



Popular twosome for the teenage set; a school-time jumper with scooped neck, flare skirt—crisply tailored blouse. And for festive occasions, she'll wear the jumper alone—as a pretty party dress in lustrous taffeta!

Pattern 9307: teenage sizes 10, 12, 14, 16. Size 12 jumper takes 3 1/2 yards 39-inch fabric; blouse takes 1 1/2 yards 35-inch fabric. This easy-to-use pattern gives perfect fit. Complete, illustrated sew chart shows you every step. Send THIRTY-FIVE cents in coins for this pattern—add 5 cents for each pattern for 1st-class mailing. Send to Marian Martin, care of Medford Mail Tribune, Pattern Dept., 232 West 18th St., New York 11, N. Y. Print plainly NAME, ADDRESS, SIZE and STYLE NUMBER.

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This play is one which must be seen more than once to be appreciated, because of the artificial language, which is indeed the whole point of the play. After seeing three performances, the play is quite enjoyable, especially in the low comedy scenes.

Payne Surprises

We were pleasantly surprised at the performance given by Director Payne as Sir Nathaniel in "Love's Labour's Lost" after an unlooked-for shift in the cast during the second week of performances. He was genuinely funny, and his precise English diction is music to the ears.

For those who feel regretful that the festival has expanded far beyond its local beginnings, we would like to remind them of the three Rogue Valley musicians who sang before each performance. The quality of music produced by Arleta Knowles, Jerry Holloway and Lyman Pruitt is every bit as good as the quality of acting seen in this summer's festival.

We hope that director Windt, an Ashland resident himself, can continue in the future to use valley musicians, many of whom are talented and well trained. R.S.C.

Young Women Said Pioneers In Enterprise

New York — Fabrics designer Hope Skillman says these days the young American women are the pioneers in enterprise; the young men have turned conservative, more anxious for security than adventure in jobs. Miss Skillman, in a recent speech to a group of fashion school graduates in New York, said the big corporations were largely to blame because of the way they comb the campuses offering "the moon" to men about to graduate. "But these fabulous offers to the girls are few and far between," she said. "And it's a break for them... they're the ones who have to go out and do. If men want to throw us the ball, we have the girls to catch it."

Designer Edith Small of Los Angeles is a "chiffon for travel" addict. The tiny, blonde designer—whose business makes her a commuter among Los Angeles, New York and European capitals—said for travel she prefers the fabric for both cocktail and evening wear. "Takes up less space, weighs less—very important in air travel—and rarely needs pressing," she said. "And what fabric is more feminine!"

Television star Bess Myerson, who has designed a tall girls' dress collection for Natlynn, a New York manufacturer, says the problem of dress for tall girls has been overemphasized. Miss Myerson, a former Miss America who is five feet, 10 inches tall, said the only problem is one of proportion to the figure. "I don't believe styling has to be big for a big girl," Miss Myerson told United Press. "You don't need a big pocket and a big collar for a tall girl."

Look for more color underneath this fall. The Corset and Brassiere council says new colors in the foundation department include silver gray, café au lait, apricot, and red. White remains a favorite, but this fall there is a wide use of blue or pink embroidery on white.

Recipes for Yeast Rolls Published By Corvallis Specialist
Corvallis—Fresh, hot yeast biscuits always taste good and an easy way to stir a batch together is suggested in a new circular from Oregon State college.

Agnes Kolshorn, OSC extension nutritionist and author of the circular, says that the batter method is the quickest and easiest way to have soft rolls without kneading and shaping. Rolls are allowed to rise, stirred and spooned into muffin tins for baking.

Another convenient, time-saving way to make breads at home is the no-knead method. Rolls can be shaped ahead of time and stored in the refrigerator.

Miss Kolshorn explains differences between sweet and bread doughs and how to handle each in the circular.

Sweet dough usually has more sugar, yeast and fat in proportion to flour and liquid, she says. When baking butterscotch rolls or tea rings, she suggests lower temperatures to prevent syrup from burning on bottom of pans. Other helps are offered in the circular.

If rolls brown before they're cooked inside, spread them farther apart on the pan. The closer rolls are together, the longer it takes them to bake. Air circulation around the rolls allows for more even heat distribution for baking and browning. Rolls baked in muffin tins cook faster and at higher temperatures than those with extra room on the pan.

CALENDAR

Tuesday:
10 a.m. — Rogue Valley Navy Mothers club, home of Mrs. James Wicker, 809 Adams lane.
1 p.m. — Central Point Royal Neighbors, home of Mrs. A. Sukow, 19 South Amy, Central Point.
1:30 p.m. — Lady Elks, lodge dining room.
6:30 p.m. — Pythian Sisters, potluck dinner, Pythian bldg.
7 p.m. — Medford Parent's Home Extension unit, home of Mrs. Arthur Hertager, 824 Pennsylvania avenue.
7 p.m. — Nu Phi Mu sorority, home of Nancy Olsen, 344 North Central ave.
8 p.m. — Auxiliary of VFW, VFW hall.
Wednesday:
10:30 a.m. — Lake Creek Extension unit, home of Mrs. Ernest Burrell.
11 a.m. — Christian Women's Fellowship, First Christian church.
12:30 p.m. — Townsend Harmony Auxiliary club, Hawthorne park.
1 p.m. — Past Chiefs' club, Pythian Sisters, Mrs. Della Watkins, 19 Mistletoe.
1 p.m. — Gettogether club, Moose hall.
1:30 p.m. — Eagle Point Garden club, home of Mrs. Augusta Perry.
7:30 p.m. — Central Point Garden club, home of Dr. and Mrs. Bert Elliott, Jacksonville rd.
7:30 p.m. — Medford Bethel 14, Job's Daughter, Masonic temple.
8 p.m. — Amethyst Rebekah lodge, Gold Hill, IOOF Hall.
Thursday:
10:30 a.m. — Daughters of Nile, sewing, home of Mrs. E. Ron Rice 215 Saginaw dr.
12:30 p.m. — Medford Garden club, county courthouse.
2 p.m. — Gold Star Mothers, county courthouse auditorium.
6:30 p.m. — Adalee chapter, OES, covered dish dinner, Jacksonville Masonic hall.
Friday:
1 p.m. — Jolly Stitches club, home of Mrs. Homer Bringle, 100 South Orange st.
7:30 p.m. — Central Point Bethel 38, Job's Daughter installation, Masonic hall.
Saturday:
1 p.m. — Daughters of Nile, Ashland Masonic temple.
To remove brown tea stains, first soak the teapot and cups in lots of hot soap or detergent suds. Then gently rub over the stains with a suds-laden sponge and rinse with scalding water.

COD Nylon Delivery Service Operated by Detroit Dress Shop

Detroit — (UP) — A run in a stocking makes for a damsel in distress. In such case, Sol Mullin is a damsel's best friend.

Mullin, manager of a downtown Detroit dress shop, has pledged his store to deliver a pair of nylons, COD, within an hour to any girl in the downtown area who springs a run in the line of office duty. All a girl needs do is reach for the telephone and in a few minutes a sympathetic messenger arrives with a pair of stockings.

Mullin said the cost of running this rush service is pretty high. But he figures it's more than worth the expense in promoting good will. Grateful customers, once rescued, reciprocate by purchasing nylons by the boxful.

Mullin started his nylon service as a helpful gesture for one woman executive. Mrs. Diane Edgcomb found herself with a run and only minutes to go before a lunch with civic dignitaries, including the mayor. Mullin, who was to attend the same lunch, called his shop and had a pair of hose rushed over.

"Just call me anytime," said Mullin. And that's just about what Mrs. Edgcomb did. She suggested he offer the service to all his customers and she spread the word to her co-workers.

Now, waitresses, nurses, court reporters, city councilwomen—women in all fields call the shop owner.

Said one, "I don't know what we'd do without that man!"

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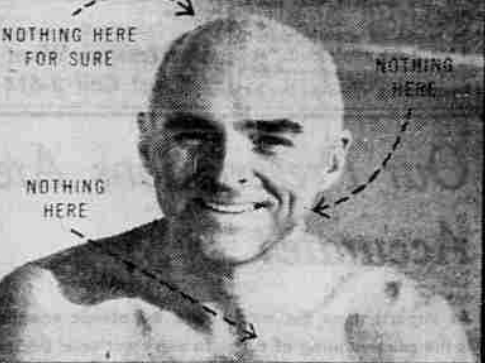
unequaled for its healing and beautifying properties

For over a hundred years women have known of the marvelous properties of Glycerine and Rosewater, unmatched for its softening, soothing and healing effects on the skin. Until recently, it was available only as a liquid. Now, through Trifle Laboratories' exclusive process, you may enjoy it as a smooth, pure white cream, delicately fragrant and easy to apply. Because it contains no oils, it can be absorbed directly into the skin, providing an excellent completely greaseless powder base.

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