

Festival Season Reviewed

In recent years, at the close of the Oregon Shakespearean Festival season, the Mail Tribune has made a habit of presenting a "year-end" roundup of reviews-impressions of the festival season-as a whole-by members of its staff who have attended the plays.

In doing so, these reviewers are entirely "on their own" and present their own ideas and reactions, some of which are in conflict with those of others.

In this way it is hoped to present a rounded and varied overview of the season past, both for the benefit of patrons of the festival, and for those taking part in festival activities.

The staff members contributing to this year's season-end review are Mrs. Olive Starcher, Miss Peggy Hutchinson, Eric Wentworth and Eric W. Allen Jr.

Highest Standards Of Eleven Seasons

The 1959 season of the Oregon Shakespearean Festival set the highest standards of any of the 11 which have been observed by this writer.

The new physical facilities, from the viewer's standpoint, are superb. The only jarring note (and this, really, is minor) lies in the stop-gap lighting towers, which are cantilevered out over the audience. But these are far, far better than the big wooden poles which, in years past, have blocked the view of a good portion of the audience.

The new seats are comfortable and well arranged. The acoustics are much improved, as is the visibility from the newly-raised tiers of seats in the rear. The new toilet facilities are most welcome, though still inadequate to meet the need.

The grounds have, miraculously, retained the glamor and charm of before. They are even enhanced by the colorful, gay booths. During the construction last spring, they gave little promise of the pleasant reality.

The stage house, massive and somehow stark in daylight, changes at night into the unobtrusive background for the action which it is designed to be. The fact that the action flows smoothly and with seeming effortlessness is a tribute, of course, to good direction, but it also shows that designer and architect knew what they were about.

Flag Missed

The same applies to the lighting, and the improving techniques of the men who handle them. From the trumpet's blast, signalling the spotlighted raising of the festival flag high above (a bit of romantic whimsy too many patrons miss), until the final lights-on, the lighting job is magnificent — imaginative, smoothly done, technically competent.

Despite the years of training, the months of work and preparation which these things entail, they are, of course, only details leading to the over-all effect; important details, but details nonetheless. The play's the thing.

This is not the place, nor is it the writer, to criticize William Shakespeare's ability as a playwright. But his plays have endured as monuments in world literature, and have served as the basis for more than 35,000 evenings of pure enjoyment this summer.

It is on the acting and the direction which a play depends for success or failure. Can the actors and directors, working in concert, so involve their audiences in the play that they are lost, for a few hours, to the world of the here-and-now? That is the acid test.

"King John" Cited

In this, generally, the 1959 festival was successful—most successful, in our opinion, in "King John." The play, involved and complex as are many of Shakespeare's, was alive from the first to last. Richard Rizzo, in his first directorial stint for the festival, showed a sure, skillful and subtle hand, all of which speak intelligence, sensitivity, broad knowledge, and an ability to get the most from his actors. (There is some disagreement among observers on this point; perhaps the play improved as the season progressed. These comments are based on its last performance.)

There are a few high points through the festival which stick in the mind. Our favorite: the ending of "Twelfth Night," with the clown, Feste, strolling, singing, away through the darkness and out of the theater, his voice gradually fading away.

Another was the scene in "Measure for Measure" between Angelo and Isabella. Another was the buffoonery of Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek in "Twelfth

Night." There were others. There was such a variety of roles and players this season that it is impossible to pick any one as outstanding; one must list several. At the risk of overlooking (or temporarily forgetting) a few, we choose these:

Marcuse as Belch and Rizzo as Aguecheek; Jackson as Feste and, even better, as Lucio; Hanson as Malvolio, Angelo and John; Oyler as Philip the Bastard; Randall as Constance; Vafiadis as Isabella; Waide as Cleopatra.

Technically, perhaps the costume is excellent. But from the layman-audience point of view it lacks, this year, the imaginative use of color symbolism and lavishness which have marked it in past seasons.

Deficiencies Slight

And one more sour note before we close—the absurd and embarrassing bit about two slight females hauling a heavy, wounded Antony up to a balcony to die.

But whatever deficiencies may have marred the season, they are slight indeed; this year, and pale to nothingness compared to the rich and varied feast of sights, sounds and emotions served up for memory's delectation.

The life which goes on on the stage is not real life, and in the case of costume dramas it is particularly difficult to give the audience a sense of participation in the unfolding situations. That, generally speaking, the plays this season succeeded in doing so, is a measure of the festival's growing maturity and excellence.—E.A.

Reviewer Suggests Earlier Curtain

As this reviewer completed seeing the season's productions of the Oregon Shakespearean association for the fourth straight year she wondered why the Festival doesn't try something that has caught on in the East.

The use of "early-curtain" one night a week or possible four times (once for each play) during the season.

Tried in Chicago and New York City, the early-curtain, not only for evening performances, but matinees as well, has proved to be highly successful.

As this employed reviewer drove back to Medford each evening following the play, she was glad that she didn't have to drive to Grants Pass to a motel as has been reported by some viewers.

The 8:30 p.m. curtain time makes it nearly midnight, or at least 11:30 p.m., by the time the majority of the theater patrons get to their homes. An early curtain at 7:30 p.m. or 8 p.m. would attract many persons who might attend but are early risers. This might also aid in ticket sales where week ends are apt to be more crowded than week days.

Theater Wonderful

It is wonderful to have the new theater, so long a dream, and now a reality. It is therefore, naturally of interest to read in the New York Times that the park commissioner has asked the city planning commission for \$250,000 for the construction of a permanent Shakespeare theater in Central Park. The theater would provide 2,500 to 3,000 seats.

One scene which bothered this viewer occurred in "Antony and Cleopatra" when Cleopatra, in her rage after hearing that Antony has remarried, chops away at one of the pillars of the theater with a knife. Although the pillar shows no ill after effects, some way to treat the new theater!

And speaking of the new theater, this near-sighted reviewer would appreciate seeing the edges of the steps along the aisles painted a contrasting color as a safety precaution.

This writer's vote for favorite this year goes to "King John" followed closely by "Measure for Measure." "Antony and Cleopatra" didn't strike this writer's fancy and "The Masque" seemed quite out of place with its Hollywood effects.—P.H.

Player Values

Banner Bearing

"You learn a tremendous lot carrying that banner." Thus did Miss Auril M. D. Smith, England's gift to the 1959 Oregon Shakespearean Festival, recently praise the infinite variety of repertory acting at the festival. Repetition cannot stale it.

For the actor or actress who wears a crown and speaks a thousand lines one night, mutely bearing a banner in another play the next night provides several rewarding advantages.

or tearing hair in the tragic toils of hero or heroine. Much, Miss Smith attests, can be learned from such observation at close range.

(Perhaps it would be a good thing for those who review plays to trade their literary lancets for an on-stage banner occasionally too.)

Another advantage is that the actors and actresses develop greater appreciation for small roles, not only when they are cast in them themselves but when, in bigger roles, they must direct their lines to messengers, attendants, soldiers — and banner-bearers.

Teamwork Developed

A third is that the acting company itself develops a sense of teamwork often sadly lacking when plays are simply showcases for two or three stars.

With these points in mind, we can describe the 1959 Shakespeare season at Ashland as a "banner year" but not a "star-spangled banner year."

We believe that the festival's practice, a matter to be sure of necessity as well as policy, of neither turning company members into stars or worse yet-importing "name" stars for certain roles, is one of its finest qualities.

We say this from the audience's viewpoint as well as from that of Miss Smith and the other members of the cast. For one thing, if you like a particular actor in an important role one night and then see him in a minor role another night—you may find consciously or unconsciously that you are more interested in that minor character and his or her function in the play.

Another point is that with the actors individually appearing in such a variety of roles, and with the important roles shared by such a variety of actors, the danger of too-familiar performers overshadowing the characters they portray has been generally avoided.

Roles Compared

Moreover, this gives the observer a far better appreciation of the individual actor's abilities. We had reservations about Theodore Marcuse as Antony, for example, but thought him extremely effective as Cardinal Pandolph in "King John." Philip Hanson did not strike our fancy as Angelo in "Measure for Measure" but in the title role of "King John" we found him outstanding.

Others — Paul Nagle Jackson, Mary Jo Randall and Robert Towers among them—could show their versatile talents through excellent performances in widely differing roles. Variety, the spice of life, is also the spice of acting — and the festival has been well seasoned in 1959. — E.W.

Reviewer Finds Season Exciting

Perhaps someone else should write this end-of-the-year review—someone who could be more objective. For in truth, the Oregon Shakespearean Festival is the high point of the year for this writer, and we find it difficult every September not to sound overenthusiastic, if not downright fatuous, in the traditional summary.

Come the day we are to attend a play, we find ourselves in a state of mild excitement. From the time we walk through Lithia park, never failing to look for the swans and ducks floating on the pond in the spray from the fountain, until we return to our car at the close of the play, it is a time of deep enjoyment. Sometimes the experience is dimmed by weariness, but the special sense of excitement is always there.

Perhaps this excitement comes from the fact that even though we may have seen this particular play several times before, we know that each performance will be different and that each time we will find new pleasure in some speech or in some bit of poetry. Perhaps some actor will delight us with a new piece of pantomime, or bring an additional shout of laughter from the audience with his delivery of a familiar bit of Shakespearean humor. Or perhaps it is because, as the seasons have gone by, the plays and their characters have become like good friends whose faces we are eager to see again.

"Measure" Best

For years we have been saying to all and sundry "we like the Shakespearean histories best, the tragedies next best, and the comedies least of all." But this year we find this not so, and cannot be sure why. The play which we went to see with the least anticipation, turned out to bring the most pleasure. This was "Measure for Measure."

The entire production had a smooth-as-silk gloss which captured our imagination in the first scene and carried us along to the very end without a single moment of lost interest.

Paul Nagle Jackson's in-

terpretation of Lucio was delightful and Margaret Vafiadis turned in a superb performance as Isabella. Under James Sandoe's skillful direction such solid actors as David O'Brien, Philip Hanson and Dion Chesse gave first rate performances. Anthony Ristoff's pantomime as "Froth" and the zestful playing of Robert Towers and Mary Jo Randall was "frothing for the cake."

Above everything else when watching a Shakespearean play we want to hear the lines—everything else is secondary. In "Measure" we lost not a word and it seemed as if the players delivered their lines without the hurry and rush which blurred the impact of other plays.

Although "King John" was responsible for the history play taking second place in our rating this season, some of the best acting was to be there. William Oyler's masterful playing of Philip the Bastard greatly enhanced the dramatic contrast of the play.

A sardonic, swaggering character is this actor's meat and drink.

Philip Hanson carried a very heavy load this season—one wonders if some talent is not slighted while other is overused—but this versatile man was equal to the task. Of all his roles, we liked his interpretation of Malvolio in "Twelfth Night" the best. He delineates this character in a fashion which we are sure would have pleased Shakespeare himself.

Play Too Long

As for "Antony and Cleopatra," we frankly wish Shakespeare had not made this play so long. Scholars and dramatic experts claim that the opening scene is one of the best—if not the best—in all the history of dramatic writing. We have seen several performances of this play and our reaction is always the same—everything which happens after Antony's death is an anti-climax. There is so much violence and drama early in the play that we become emotionally and physically exhausted and the last scenes lose their flavor.

However, this year's cast and direction were excellent. In Barbara Waide and Theodore Marcuse the Festival had mature, experienced players capable of giving the roles the depth of feeling and emotional fire needed. And Miss Waide's beauty of face and figure added lustre to the role.

One more comment—the next time the Oregon Festival produces this play we hope the director and technicians concentrate on a different method of hauling the dying Antony up on the balcony.

Pies Like Moms Come From Bakery

University Park, Pa. (UPI)—Either American families are eating more pies or modern day moms aren't spending as much time stewing in front of a baking oven.

A five-year study by the Agricultural Experiment Station finds that the use of commercially prepared pie is increasing.

The study indicates that two of every three city families now buy commercially prepared pie at some time during the year.

Other findings: —half of the pies purchased are cherry or apple. —high income families buy more pies than low income families. —homemakers employed outside the house buy more pies than unemployed homemakers.

All Wool — and ...

Washington (UPI)—The average life of a wool living room rug, 8 by 10 feet or larger, including wall-to-wall carpeting, is 14 years, reports the U.S. Department of Agriculture Institute of Home Economics.

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There must be some way of accomplishing this without having the audience break in to giggles and thereby ruin the scene.

Looking back on the season these we remember as bright spots. The vivid playing of Richard Rizzo and Marcuse as Sir Andrew Aguecheek and Sir Toby Belch; the consistent and truly fine acting of Robert Towers in diversified roles; the outstanding stage presence and dependable acting of Edward Grover; ditto for the big, blonde newcomer, Charles Whitman; George Vafiadis for his commanding figure on stage and his projection of his unusual voice; Angus Bowmer for his completely delightful bit as "a clown bearing figs" in "Antony."

May the season never come when Angus Bowmer is not on stage.—O.S.

Auxiliary Plans For Convention

Convention plans will be discussed at a meeting of the Women's auxiliary to the Jackson County Medical Society at 7 p.m. Wednesday, September 8, at the home of Mrs. Osmer T. Heyerman, 125 Winema way. Dessert will be served, with Mrs. Robert H. Riechers serving as co-hostess.

The annual meeting of the Oregon Medical society and auxiliary will be held in Medford later this month.

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Foreign Affairs Committee Head Prefers to Stay Home

By ROSE McKEE

Washington — The chairman of the House Foreign Affairs committee deals with those "far-away places" — glamorous places such as Paris, London, Saigon . . .

But to Rep. Thomas E. Morgan (D) Pa., none of the storied cities offers more enchantment than "Jakey's Gate."

That's the name of his spectacular, mountain-top home high above the Monongahela river outside Fredericktown in southwestern Pennsylvania. From the picture windows of his new, 100-foot long home, he can look out over the winding river, two village all but buried in trees and, in the distance, another mountain ridge.

The House leader on global issues understandably considers his home the finest spot in all the world. The only it is how it got its name. Morning he doesn't know about gan, a tall, husky man of 52, told the National Association of Home Builders:

"I've lived around there a long time. I used to go up and down the mountainside as a boy, hunting snakes. I was a great snake hunter. And I swam the river over and back many times. The mountain top was known as Jakey's Gate in those days but no one knew why."

Morgan acquired his 21-acre estate when the property was put up at a county tax sale some years ago. He had enough of the land cleared to build his home, which Mrs. Morgan designed.

It is somewhat shaped, with the long, unbroken side facing the river. Two wings extend outward on the opposite side, which looks to the driveway from Fredericktown about

lin, Medford Mail Tribune, Pattern Dept., 232 West 18th St., New York 11, N. Y. Print plainly N A M E, ADDRESS with SIZE and STYLE NUMBER.

three-fourths of a mile below. The house is of dark red Pennsylvania brick and gray stone, with a tile roof of antique green. On the river side, it is one-and-a-half stories, with a sunken living room, dining room, kitchen, and breakfast nook, all arranged to take advantage of the view.

One wing is a garage and the other has the master bedroom and the bedroom for the Morgans' daughter, Mary Ann, a college student. There is a recreation room and guest room in the basement. The house has two huge fireplaces and three furnaces — one to heat the section that has the basement, one for the other part of the house, and the third for the garage.

A big cement patio with an outdoor fireplace on the river side of the house is a favorite gathering place for the Morgans and their guests in summer.

"We go home just about every week-end," Morgan said. "There's nothing I like better in all the world than to go up and sit on the front lawn or patio and gaze over that wonderful scene. I don't make many speeches on Saturday night if I can avoid it and I get plenty of prompting from Mrs. Morgan to avoid it."

Asked if his mountain-top home might be the place where he will think out knotty foreign affairs problems, Morgan indicated he was not one to worry unduly. A physician and a surgeon, he said he thought his medical training has helped him in this respect.

Although he does no surgery while Congress is in session, he has patients who wait to see him on Saturdays.

Compared to many of his colleagues in Congress, the House Foreign Affairs chief has traveled little. Late in 1945, he went to Europe at his own expense to see the war damage. In 1951 he was a delegate to the World Health Conference in Geneva.

In his new chairmanship post, he expects to do more traveling. But it is unlikely he will ever find anything to outdo "Jakey's Gate" in his personal affections.

Church Officials To Visit in City

Two officials of the Re-Organized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints will be in Medford Tuesday to assist the local church in its organization from a mission to a branch.

Percy E. Farrow, Independence, Mo., apostle in charge of the northwest district, and Elder Robert Seeley, Eugene, district president, will help the local congregation at an organizational meeting Tuesday at 8 p.m. at the local church, Tenth and Ivy sts.

Medford's congregation as a mission has worked under the authoritative ministry of the district president. As a branch, it must have sufficient number in the active priesthood, as well as in the membership, to function independently while under the leadership of the district president, the church reported.

Election of a pastor and officers will be held at the Tuesday meeting.

For delicious, easy, hot hors d'oeuvres, spread rich biscuit dough thin in a square pan, and brush generously with melted butter. Sprinkle thickly with ripe olive wedges, then with plenty of grated American cheese. Bake until browned, and cut into small squares. Make lots — they go fast.

Small Change, Big Deal

Winooski, Vt. (UPI)—Jean Guy Gignac paid \$500 tuition to attend summer school at St. Michael's College in thriftily-collected nickels, dimes and quarters weighing 43 pounds.

Sauce vegetables the easy way with a can of cream soup such as mushroom, chicken or celery diluted with some sauteur wine. Add a little chili powder or chopped green chili for zippy flavor.

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