

O'Neill Play Chosen To Advance Repertory



STRANGE INTERLUDE—A revival of Eugene O'Neill's 1928 Pulitzer Prize-winning play will be the initial production by the newly formed Actors Studio Theater. In photo at left, Helen Westly, seated, and Lynn Fontanne, are shown in scene from the original production of the play, and in the right photo, Betty Field, seated, and Geraldine Page are shown in comparable pose from the new production. (UPI)

By JACK GAVER
UPI Drama Editor

New York — (UPI) — The little man with the graying fringe of defeated hair and the big influence contemplated the prospect of repertory theater.

"In the modern American theater at the professional level—and it's the only place in the world where this is true—repertory has been about as respectable as a dirty word. Every time it turns up, it gets sued for non-sport."

"We have the financial backing to give us a chance, we have the talent in depth and we have the dedication, the determination," summed up Lee Strasberg, of the much-publicized "method school" of acting at the actors studio.

"We will put a strong fight to establish repertory theater on a firm basis and make it endure."

Choose O'Neill

March 11 the Actors Studio Theater, new producing arm of the professional school, presented as its first offering a revival of Eugene O'Neill's 1928 Pulitzer prize-winning dinner-intermission play, "Strange Interlude."

It will be the first, it is hoped, of a continuing string of frequent productions of new and old American and

foreign plays, modern and classic, designed to be ready for reactivation at any time—repertory, by an organization that has first call on many of the top theater talents of the day.

Important as this venture is in itself, it gains strength from the fact that it will be followed within about six months by a second repertory project that also will be sufficiently well-heeled to weather any early difficulties and that will have the equally dedicated support of some equally top talents in the theater.

Lincoln Repertory

That is the Lincoln Repertory company, stage arm of the ambitious Lincoln Center of the Arts. Its two producing directors are Robert Whitehead, Broadway producer of stature, and Eliza Kazan, stage and movie directing genius who only recently severed his official ties with the Actors Studio, which he helped found in 1947.

Kennedy Says Economy Hinges on Tax Cuts

Washington — (UPI) — President Kennedy said Wednesday the American economy could turn downward if Congress gives the "wrong answer" to his proposals to cut taxes and increase the federal budget and national debt.

He called upon businessmen and others who are opposed to his economic program to "accept the facts of life of our economy" and help meet problems of this decade caused by a lagging economic growth, increased labor market and automation.

"I would agree," Strasberg said, "that the success of these two projects — the success of even one might do it — will alter the complexion of the American theater for its permanent good."

"This would give us a truly continuing American theater where our writers and actors could be assured of continuous representation that would not depend upon getting unanimous rave notices from the critics or an initial rush to the box office by the customers. Success in New York could foster substantial, professional repertory everywhere."

Not the End

Strasberg hastened to point out that this won't mean the end of the traditional Broadway commercial producer, who has to make a buck.

"It would be our loss if it did," he explained. "A couple of repertory companies can't possibly discover or use all of the acting and writing talent that comes along. We will complement, supplement each other."

"If we are successful as a long-range project, we can hope to be an influence in raising the standards of so-called Broadway production when it comes to serious drama. And I don't think any able Broadway producer would object to that."

"There are some right now with plays that they admire, that should be produced, yet which are too much of a risk in the present economic setup in the theater. It is possible that we can help in getting these and other such works of the future before the public in a cooperative manner."

"Strange Interlude," with a cast headed by such studio stars as Geraldine Page, Pat Hingle, Ben Gazzara and William Prince, will be kept at the Hudson theater, a temporary home for Actors Studio Theater, for three to four months. There will be a summer production hiatus, then resumption in September, probably with actress June Havoc's "Marathon."

"The point is," Strasberg said, "that 'Strange Interlude' and 'Marathon' and those that follow will not vanish after their initial presentations. We can bring them back for a few weeks or a few months as we desire, with the original casts or with new casts."

"We also expect to work simultaneously in-I hate to use the term—an off-Broadway house. Let's just say in a small theater where we can experiment with something unusual that obviously is not going to have a general appeal but which we want to see on a stage."

Use Own Writers

Why "Strange Interlude" to start?

"We had to begin with an O'Neill," Strasberg explained, "with something by the country's greatest playwright. While we expect to do many plays representative of all countries, we are essentially an American theater and we want to anchor it with our own writers."

"Actually, we were not supposed to have begun production until next fall. But our director for this first play, Jose Quintero of the Circle in the Square, who has been very close to Mrs. O'Neill by reason of the excellent productions he has done of several of her husband's plays in recent years, suddenly advised us that 'Strange Interlude' could be available to us right now. Maybe not a little later."

"So, we had the actors, the money and the inclination, and at last we are a producing organization."



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MEDFORD TRIBUNE

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Small Worlds Around Us

By LYNN M. WATKINS

(Register and Tribune Syndicate, 1963)

Cage Bars Probably To Protect Animals From You

"Dangerous wild animals" are mostly myths, creatures of over-active imaginations. We thrill deliciously at the trite expression. The "untamed and blood-thirsty jungle beast" sends shivers of apprehension up and down our spines.

We read of "wolf packs" hunting down some poor luckless human without realizing that there is more fiction than fact in the story. We refuse to admit that the wild beast is ready to attack or is "blood thirsty" only because someone has wounded it, attacked its mate or threatened its offspring.

We visit a zoo or circus and thrill at the sight of the caged animal without realizing that the cage is serving a double purpose: it keeps the wild beast from running away and protects it from you.

Dual Purpose

In most cases the "stone walls and iron bars" make a prison that protects both ways, but strangely, the animal is usually in more danger from the people than the people are from the animal. Funny that this should be so, but any attendant at the zoo will tell you that the animals have to be protected from the people. For some unknown reason, many folks try to tease or even injure a caged animal. Asked why, they often say, "Just to see what it will do."

Read any story of our pioneer ancestors in their struggle for survival in a new land and sooner or later you run across the passage where the poor man "had to protect himself against wild beasts." When we read such ridiculous fiction and later visit a zoo, some of us may have the idea we are getting even with the captive by poking it with a stick just to show "who's boss" or to punish it for what we might stupidly think its far distant ancestors did to some innocent pioneer.

Most of us want to be dominant. We get some morbid satisfaction, or we inflate our ego or our vanity, by subduing a lesser creature or by killing it. It makes us feel brave and strong; we are the protectors of our weaker brothers. In a few of us it actually takes the form of sadism.

We hear so much about "man's conquest over nature, his battle for survival against the forces of the wild" that it becomes sickening to any intelligent person who realizes that this "dangerous wild animal" business is terribly over-rated.

Turtle Attack

The daily press carried a recent story about a woman who called the police "because a dangerous turtle threatened to attack her in her own back yard."

This woman was actually frightened half to death. She had been trying to beat the terrible thing to death with a long stick when the police arrived. The poor blundering turtle was crawling across her yard when she saw it from her kitchen window. She grabbed a stick and went into the yard.

Here again, on a silly, stupid scale, was an example of "man against beast." The confused turtle, blinded by the blows, moved toward the woman instead of the other way. This, the woman claimed, constituted "a vicious attack." The turtle weighed four pounds, the woman weighed 180 and the turtle really had the lesser vicious temper.

Most animals, wild or otherwise, are inherently friendly. They want to be left alone, and if they are they never are "dangerous beasts."

This dangerous wild animal business is the figment of over-imaginings, ignorance and human selfishness. The animal in the cage looks docile, merely because it is depending on the bars of the cage to keep YOU away.

Commitment for Sexually Dangerous Persons Questioned

Salem — (UPI) — Three psychiatrists testified here that it would be difficult to identify "sexually dangerous" persons and there would be a margin for error.

If such persons could be weeded out and committed, the doctors said, it would cost several hundred thousand dollars just to try to treat them.

In spite of the unknowns, the psychiatrists agreed that an effort to learn how to treat the sexually dangerous would be worthwhile.

Dr. Dean Brooks, superintendent of the Oregon State Hospital, Dr. J. H. Treleven, administrator of the State Mental Health Division, and Dr. George Saslow, head of the psychiatry department of the University of Oregon Medical School, testified before the House Judiciary Committee.

Commitment Proposed

They discussed a bill providing for civil commitment of sexually dangerous persons — one of a package of five bills before the committee aimed at sex offenders. The other four deal with court procedures.

The commitment bill provides for a court hearing. Commitment would be based mainly on the findings of two psychiatrists.

The definition in the bill includes "propensities to commit any kind of sex act which physically threatens harm to a child of the age of 12 or under." There would not have to be any previous offense.

"I would have an awfully difficult time," said Dr. Brooks. "I would have to go by rule of thumb."

Long Study Needed

"In most cases of mental illness you can see... hear something peculiar," Dr. Tre-

leven said. "The sexually dangerous person... only looks peculiar if you follow his behavior over a long period."

"Taking away liberty... warrants a thorough and complete investigation."

He suggested temporary commitment for study.

The two doctors agreed, however, it would be of value to try to treat the sexually dangerous "if we take every precaution to see that we put the finger on the right man."

Dr. Treleven estimated that a "bare minimum... no frills" program of treatment would cost \$265,000 for 30 men. Dr. Brooks estimated \$200,000 for 40. He said the State Hospital now has 90-100 patients per doctor.

Unsure of Treatment

"We don't know how to treat these people yet, but I think it's high time we try," Dr. Brooks said.

He said a sound program should include research, both on the patients and in their communities.

Dr. Treleven said custodial facilities would be needed for the untreatable.

Committee Chairman Berkeley Lent (D-Portland) questioned several aspects of the bill. He asked whether motorists who work out their aggressions on the highways couldn't be isolated and treated in a fashion similar to that proposed for the sexually dangerous.

"I think that would be as possible if not more possible than this," Treleven replied.

Rep. James Redden (D-Medford) also questioned commitment. During a discussion of treatment, he remarked, "what a lot of us are concerned about is how that person got there."

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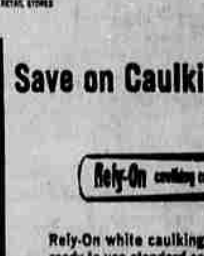
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