

By GEORGE H. BELL
Mail Tribune Staff Writer

At 8:40 o'clock last Friday night, the lights in the Ashland Shakespearean theater dimmed down, there was a blare of recorded trumpets, and some 30 to 40 people, gathered to watch the technical rehearsal of "Merry Wives of Windsor," abruptly stopped talking and settled back in their seats.

Director Ed Brubaker, with a girl sitting near him ready to record his notes as the play progressed, stationed himself on the aisle near the center of the theater.

Next to him, wearing an earphone headset so he could talk with the lighting technicians in the blockhouse at the rear of the theater, was Richard Hay, the festival's veteran technical designer director.

Producing Director Angus L. Bowmer, founder of the festival, sat alone a few rows away.

For Special Purpose

It was dusk and the air was still warm. The small group of spectators, all in the theater for a specific purpose, since visitors are banned during tech run-throughs, wore light clothing but most of them had heavy wraps with them.

At 8:45 o'clock, the stage was suddenly bathed in light as Justice Shallow, Sir Hugh Evans and Slender, uncostumed, came on to begin the performance of the familiar comedy.

"Sir Hugh, persuade me not; I will make a Star-chamber matter of it; if he were twenty Sir John Falstaffs he shall not abuse Robert Shallow, esquire."

For the next three hours—until 11:54 o'clock—the play, for the most part, went very smoothly, testimony that everyone connected with it had worked hard and had developed well.

Interrupts Flow

Not, actually, until the final scenes did Director Brubaker begin to interrupt the flow of the action to work out minor problems, changing the blocking a bit here, delaying an entrance there, and making a few adjustments in the stage lighting.

A few minutes after the play began, Brubaker suddenly threw his head back and laughed out loud at some line that had just been delivered on the stage. The bulk of the audience, apparently still struggling to grasp the situation, didn't join him. A director's eyes and ears, vastly more familiar with the play than any one else, always pick up nuances that others miss.

Whispered Conference

Hugh Evans, who, naturally, plays Sir Hugh Evans in the play, came off the stage about 9 o'clock carrying his sword. He sat down next to Hay and Brubaker, and the three held a whispered conference. Throughout the night, Evans, as lighting designer for the festival, hustled out to help every time he was not in a scene.



MAKING UP—Actor Robert Benson is shown here making up for his role as Falstaff in "The Merry Wives of Windsor" which will open the Shakespearean Festival season Wednesday night at Ashland's Elizabethan theater. (Classic Photo)



REHEARSING—Director Rod Alexander, left, with Stanley Elberson, center, as the King of Navarre, and James Smith as Longaville, rehearse a brief scene from the Festival's "Love's Labour's Lost." (Classic Photo)

At 9:10 o'clock, a comic bit on the stage involving a boy in a closet tickled the audience and the first general laugh was heard. There had been funny lines and actions earlier, but it had taken them a while to warm up.

A few minutes later, a young actor tripped on his sword and nearly fell as he exited. Brubaker was audible.

(Falstaff: "No quips now, Pistol. Indeed I am in the waist two yards about; but I am not about no waste; I do mean to make love to Ford's wife...")

No more than three scenes had been enacted before the

nighth air, chilled by nearby Ashland creek, began to make itself felt. People started to pull on sweaters and coats.

It was a clear night and the stars came out early. The Big Dipper balanced itself neatly on the flag standard at the top of the theater.

At 9:45 o'clock, Daniel Hoppe, playing the excitable Frenchman, Dr. Caius, came on for a scene, spotted a book that some actor had inadvertently left on one of the stage benches, and without dropping a line, picked up the book and tossed it off stage.

As 10 o'clock neared, Hay twisted around in his seat and studied the banks of lights on the huge steel booms to the right and left of the stage. He yawned and put on a pullover sweater.

Brubaker stood up, struggled into a black raincoat, walked a few steps up the aisle, turned around, walked back and sat down again.

Some of the audience, by now, sat huddled in blankets they had wrapped around them like shawls.

A scene in the inner below gave the audience its first look at two new stage innovations this season: a stairway from the inner above down to the main stage, and a sliding platform in the inner below. Both operated smoothly and Brubaker in his blocking had utilized them in interesting ways.

At 10:20 o'clock, the curtains in the inner below parted, exposing Robert Benson

Burglary Reported At Yreka Creamery

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The burglary occurred between 9 p.m. Wednesday and 3:20 a.m. Thursday, officers were told.

Entrance to the building was gained by breaking a back window and breaking the office door. Police stated that three persons had apparently participated in the theft; and that someone ate considerable ice cream while apparently waiting for arrival of the pickup truck, which was used in taking away the safe.

shop in San Francisco, is a huge man, and his Falstaff promises, a couple weeks before opening night, to be one of the finest ever seen on the Ashland stage.

Wanted To Hear Lines

At 10:25 o'clock, Brubaker jumped and fairly ran to the rear of the theater, apparently to see if he could hear the lines of a small boy who was called upon to conjugate a Latin verb in a scene on stage. After the scene was over, Brubaker returned smiling to his seat and sat down next to Hay.

(Ford: "So say I too, sir—Come hither, Mistress Ford: Mistress Ford, the honest woman, the modest wife, the virtuous creature, that hath the jealous fool to her husband—I suspect without cause, mistress, do I?")

At 10:35 o'clock, just after Richard Graham, playing Ford, had delivered the above line, Brubaker interrupted the play for the first time.

"Let's break it just a minute," he called to the actors on stage.

On Stage Too Late

One of the stage props—a huge wicker basket in which Falstaff was "hidden" during an earlier scene—had been brought on stage too late to justify Ford's line, "Set down the basket, villain."

Brubaker asked Graham if he could "wait just a count" before making his entrance. Graham replied that he could.

"Ready?" Graham called from the wing.

"Yep," Brubaker replied, and the action resumed.

A short time later, at 10:44 o'clock, Brubaker stopped the action again.

"Girls," he called out, "let's take that up-the-stairs business again."

Giving Instruction

He jumped up on stage and the actresses talked the blocking over. They both nodded at what he said to them, and a few minutes later he returned to his seat.

Meantime, Hay was giving

instruction to the technicians in the blockhouse about resetting the lights. After a short wait, the play resumed.

A young man brought two cups of hot coffee into the theater and handed them to Brubaker and Hay.

At 11:01 o'clock, a group of about 15 actors who will be disguised as "fairies" in order to frighten Falstaff in the play, trooped across the stage.

Something about it didn't please Brubaker, and he called out, "Let's go through that sequence again."

At 11:15 o'clock, he broke in once more: "Hold it, we've got to run through that again." This time something about the lights disturbed him.

Interrupts Action

During the next 30 or 40 minutes, until the play was over, the director interrupted the action several times. Once or twice the action progressed only a few lines between stops, but the actors retained their humor. There were no displays of temperament.

At 11:52 o'clock, Evans left his seat with Hay and Brubaker and vaulted up on stage to take part in the final scene.

(Ford: "If it be so—Sir John, to Master Brook you yet shall hold your word; for he, tonight, shall lie with Mistress Ford.")

Audience Applauds

With delivery of the final line at 11:54 o'clock, the play ended and the audience broke into applause. The house lights came up. Bowmer was grinning as he clapped his hands.

The applause continued as the cast went through the fast-paced curtain call.

Brubaker called them all on stage and announced rehearsal call for the next morning on a few special scenes.

It was just short of midnight when he waived his hand at them in dismissal and called, "Goodnight!"

PET TALK

By M. I. L.

A NEED FOR MERCY

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing." Edmund Burke.

Newspapers, national magazines, T.V. and radio commentators, officers of the General Federation of Women's clubs and hundreds of humane societies have swung into support of legislation to protect laboratory animals. More congressmen have committed themselves to vote for any effective bill that may go to Congress for a vote. The Humane society of the U.S. has intensified its work of telling the American public why the use of animals in research experiments should be limited and controlled. With six bills pending in Congress and public hearings on the conditions under which animals are being used in research there is hope that a bill may be passed this year.

Hundreds of millions of animals are experimented upon each year in the United States and vast numbers are subjected to pain and fear without limit. The suffering inflicted on the helpless animals is prolonged and intense. They are completely without protection from those who argue that the end justifies the means, regardless of the amount of suffering the means may inflict.

The abuse of animals in present-day science is the worst, by far, of all the many cruelties to animals, exceeding all others in the intensity of misery systematically inflicted in staggering numbers of animal victims.

As a moral issue, this abuse of animals in research demands attention and action. Research, in its abuse of animals has sought to place itself above and beyond the restraints of the moral law and has sought a dispensation from the penal laws of the land.

A layman may be prosecuted for burning a dog. A researcher not only is free to burn an animal with a soldering iron, boiling water or any means he may devise; he may also keep the animal alive for days or week without any pain-relieving care. The law demands punishment of the layman for his atrocity. The researcher, however, is likely to be rewarded with generous grants of the taxpayer's money—your money—to continue burning animals, as well as many other useless atrocities perpetrated on them.

Please write to our senators and representatives in Congress asking them to support an effective bill.

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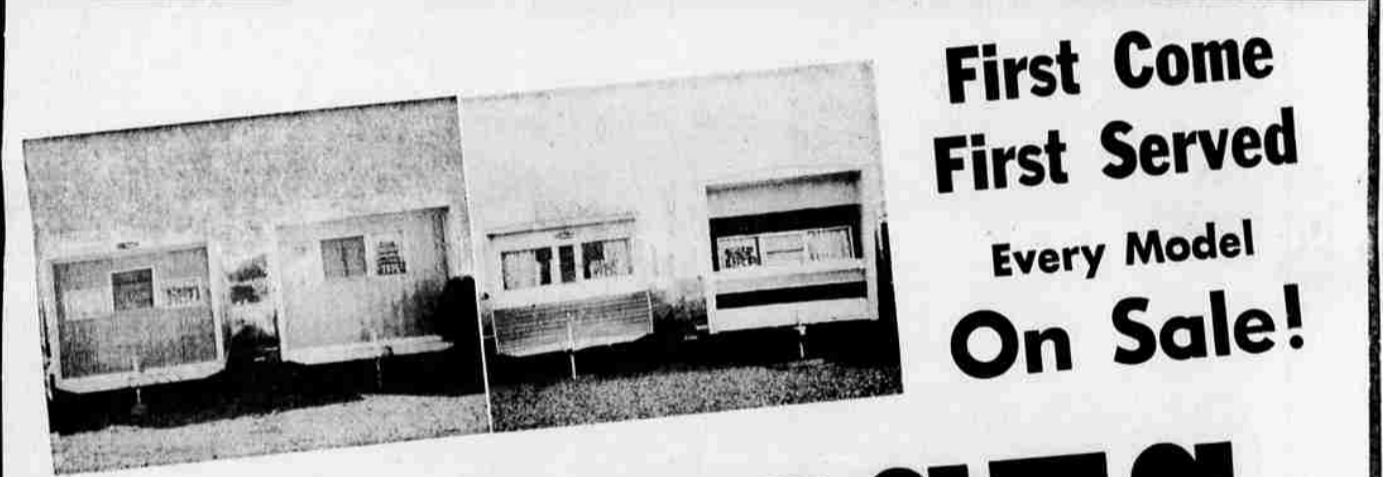
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