

DRAMA!

# COLLEGE TIMES

DRAMA!

State Teachers College, Lock Haven, Penna.

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## Concerning the Theatre

By HENRY PAUL SENBER

[Editor's Note: Mr. Senber is Stage Manager for the Edna Preston Players, Majestic Theater, Harrisburg. At the suggestion of Dr. Harry Weber, our Dean of Men, who met the manager while acting as a judge on the Annual Farm Show Dramatics Contests at Harrisburg, Mr. Senber kindly consented to write a feature for this issue.]

During the week of the Farm Show at Harrisburg, some half hundred participants in the rural dramatic contests were the guests of our manager, Mr. Coats, at a performance, and were invited backstage after the show.

I was surprised at the keen interest taken in the drama by persons who had not seen an adequate professional production in years. They seemed to be starving for the satisfying entertainment that only a theater with living actors can supply.

It was not many years ago that theatrical companies toured the highways and byways of America, but when short sighted managers began offering fifth rate material as "original Broadway casts" it is no wonder that even before the advent of the moving picture, theater interest on a national scale had started to decline.

When the movies did enter upon the scene, newspaper mention of theatrical performances seemed too often to be confined to the "Twenty Years Ago" column. Then came the talkies, with the added attraction of sound. A generation reared on moving picture entertainment, a generation entirely unfamiliar with the theater, found in the sound pictures something more desirable. It is my contention that the theater goes the talkies one better, and I hope the time is not far distant when all America will discover it.

### The Theater Now

While mechanical entertainment was sounding the death knell of the living theater in the nation at large, the competition produced by them has resulted in a more artistically healthy New York theater, as presented by groups like the Civic Repertory and Theater Guild and individuals such as Arthur Hopkins and Brock Pemberton.

In the smaller communities an occasional spark of interest has been fanned into life by the Little Theater movement. In many cases the Little Theater has risen to a high degree of excellence, but in all too numerous instances the spark of life was snuffed out for lack of competent leadership.

This, I believe, is an accurate portrayal of the conditions.

### The School and The Theater

Now as to what can be done about it.

I think the future of our national theater lies in the classroom, where

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MISS MABEL-LOUISE AREY

## Dramatics and the Teacher

By ROBERT A. BOLLINGER

The purpose, functions, and results of dramatics as an educational feature are many, but very few people have come to look upon dramatics as a direct asset to the teacher as he appears in the classroom. Educational authorities agree upon the fact that poise, bearing, and a professional attitude are important prerequisites of a good teacher, but a training course as such does not exist in any teacher training institution. Only participation in dramatics fills this need.

Speaking or acting before a group holds an absolute horror for a great number of people, particularly students. For a teacher it is a horror which must be overcome. In some instances it is as hard to appear before a group of children as before an adult group, because children are so candid and frank in their attitudes toward an actor. In this case I refer to the teacher as an actor. The teacher is essentially an actor because he must know his lines, which are the subject matter; his business, which is the method of presentation; and his audience, the class, in order to adjust himself to the situation.

Participation in any form of dramatic performance, whether it be one, two, or three-act plays, mere skits and sketches, or operettas, develops and trains directly along those all-important lines which give the teacher the necessary confidence in himself before the class. To make participation compulsory is possible perhaps, but not advisable, for the greatest benefit comes from enjoyment. Make the most of all opportunities that present themselves and get into—Dramatics.

## Reviewing the Amateur Play

On March 8, 1929, "Outward Bound," a three-act drama by Sutton Vane, dealing with the mysteries of life, death, and the hereafter, but avoiding the presentation of these things in any preachy religious aspect, was presented in the College auditorium. This was the Dramatic Club production for the year, somewhat delayed by the change in the directorship due to the marriage of Miss Alber and the arrival of Miss Arey.

In the following month, April 26, occurred the next dramatic offering which was "Enter Madame," a comedy of temperament and family life and the inevitable complications which must result from combining these two. This play, written by Gilde Varesis and Dolly Byrne, was the annual Senior production.

Coming as the opening event in the Commencement exercises of the year 1929 was the Junior play "Honor Bright." Well-written and amusing in its ridiculous situation, it thoroughly amused the Commencement crowds that were present.

Setting a high dramatic standard for the rest of the year, the Dramatic Club opened the season with A. A. Milne's delightful comedy "The Dover Road," on the evening of December 13, 1929. Slightly different in tone from "Outward Bound," the initial production for the previous year, "The Dover Road" presented equally difficult problems in characterization and situation which were well handled by a hard-working cast.

On February 28, 1930, the Senior play for the same year, "Friendly Enemies," by Samuel Shipmen and Aaron Huffman, carried the audience back to war-time heartache, occas-

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## Junior Dramatics

The Junior One-Act Play program is now in shape to be put into action, and proceedings will begin on Monday, March 2, 1931. The original idea has developed into a contest, with a prize offered for the winning cast and its director. The prize itself is not yet announced; neither are the judges.

All juniors wishing to participate in this work may see Miss Arey for try-outs at any of the following times next week:

Monday P. M.—1.15-5.30.  
 Tuesday A. M.—10.15-12.00  
 Tuesday P. M.—3.15-4.30  
 Wednesday P. M.—1.15-4.30  
 Thursday A. M.—10.15-12.00  
 Thursday P. M.—3.15-4.30  
 Saturday A. M.—10.00-12.00

Try-outs will be strictly individual and private, so that shy people need not fear observation. All you must do is read the list of character descriptions that follows, select one or more characters you would like to try, and think over how those people would walk, talk, look, and behave. No special preparation is necessary. Then meet Miss Arey in room 33 at any of the above times, and discuss the character with her. It is not difficult; anyone can do the few things required. There are parts for 24 people—12 men and 12 women—so everyone stands a fair chance. The list of characters follows:

### "Birthright"—an Irish tragedy

Bat Morrissey, an Irish farmer—a hard-faced man about 65, hard but just in his dealings, serious and pessimistic in his outlook on life.

Maura, his wife—about 10 years younger than her husband—a careworn face, and a refined temperament—makes a favorite of her older son, Hugh.

Dan Hegarty, a neighbor—a free, optimistic man, about 40.

Hugh, older son of Bat—about 25, lighthearted, free, loving sports and not caring much for work—playing on his mother's sympathies to get the best of everything.

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## The Sociology of Histrionics

By DR. HARRY F. WEBER,  
 Dean of Men.

Histrionic art is practically as old as mankind but Dramatics as an integral part of formal education is comparatively recent. In fact it is not universally received as yet. Locales of reception are usually in the form of extra-curricular activities often as phases of student initiative without faculty encouragement or advice. When Dramatics finds a place in a curriculum it is more frequently as an appendage of the English department. This is not necessarily a defect but often means that it must occupy a minor place with a subservient excuse for existence. Dramatic Educational leaders of national note, such as Hal-

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James Kell, Sebastian Grieco, Harold McIlvaine, Evelyn Bosworth, Lillian Lawhead.



Foster Augustine

Donald Rice

Dorothy Grubb

Albert Sundberg

Ted Robb

### Behind the Scenes

When Chinamen's wigs come off at embarrassing moments, when property pistols explode without warning, when some well-meaning but blunder actor skips a half-dozen pages of dialog, and calmly picks up the thread in the wrong place, upsetting all the other actors with him—these are times when the director of amateur plays must swallow the heart that has bounded into his mouth, and think fast to find an emergency stop-gap.

Everyone senses the glamour that surrounds the stage. It is what causes many a stage-struck boy or girl to go hunting for the fame that is there for very few; it is what causes mothers and fathers—especially fathers!—of growing-up sons and daughters to say melancholy-wise, "Yes, I always wanted to go on the stage," with a sigh for the lost glories that they have grown to believe might have been theirs.

Apparently belying their common ownership of such attraction, the professional stage and the amateur stage present a vast difference in their actual working problems. It is with the amateur play and its presentation that we are concerned, since it is here that our college interest lies. The student circulating daily through his classrooms, the auditorium, the gymnasium, and such common ground, cannot fail to sense that a tremendous pressure of preparation is going on, in the weeks that come before the night of a play. But as a rule, it is only those directly concerned with getting the play before the public who have any real idea of what goes

into the production.

To paraphrase a well-known advertising slogan, "Ask the guy who does it." His answer may or may not be enlightening, but it will be interesting. He will have countless little stories of "what happened when—" and will be delighted to find an audience.

With the choosing of a play, a cast, a group of committees, a production date, and a rehearsal schedule, the work of the director is a scant third completed, and the work of the committees and the cast not even begun. It is not the present intention to dwell upon the formal work of the director, the cast, and the various committees; that is more or less understood.

It is sufficient to say that the director must plan every detail for the entire production, before rehearsals start, that the cast must work hard and long and patiently to achieve the director's ideal, and the committees must advertise, sell tickets, gather properties and set the stage, and prepare for seating people, so that no thing needful is overlooked.

It is a common thing for a person not acquainted with the enormous tax of the work to say lightly, "Oh, well, you don't mind staying for rehearsals; you have fun, don't you?" There is no gainsaying the fact that a successful rehearsal does give those concerned a vitalsense of achievement and exhilaration; it is a pleasure to acknowledge this. But what the uninitiated person does not realize, and therefore ignores, is that rehearsing is a serious and gruelling business, equally for the members of the cast and for the director. No one who knows could possibly call it a circus,

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### Junior Dramatics

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Shane, a younger son—about 23, rather low-sized, but with a physique suggesting rough strength—somewhat hard, like his father.

"Nevertheless"—an imaginative comedy

The Boy—about 9 years old—a normal little boy (to be played by a girl.)

The Burglar—rough, strong, inclined to brutality, at first, but reforming in the end.

"The Man Upstairs"—a farce

Mr. Ruggles, a married man—about 25, kind and patient with his wife, but able to take his share in a fight.

Mrs. Ruggles—about 23, the usual apartment wife, helpless about cooking and housework, but very sweet.

Mr. Frisbie, "the man upstairs"—about 35, inclined to temper and rough ways—easily upset, but very positive.

Mrs. Frisbie—about 30—attractive, but jealous of her husband, and capable of making too quick decisions.

Nora, a typical comedy Irish servant-girl—ready to stand up for her rights—uses a brogue.

"The Teeth of the Gift Horse"—a comedy

Richard Butler, a vigorous young business man—about 25—good-looking, brisk, and kind-hearted.

Florence Butler, his wife—about the same age, pretty and artistic.

Marietta Williams, aunt to Dick—a gentle, gray-haired, sweet-faced, little woman, whose manner, of a by-gone generation, rather than any feebleness, makes her seem old.

Anne Fisher, friend of the Butlers—about the same age as Florence, capable and charming.

Devlin Blake, another friend of the Butlers—about 40—a cheerful, good-tempered business man, an enthusiastic art collector.

Katie, the Irish maid—about 25 or 30—has good intentions but causes unfortunate mix-ups—uses Irish brogue.

"The Bishop's Candlesticks"—a drama

(Adapted from "Les Miserables")

The Bishop—about 70—white-haired, gentle—good man, wise, and kind.

The Convict—about 45—a dangerous, desparate man, driven to extremities by prison, cruelty, and his escape from prison—rough and ragged.

Persome, the Bishop's sister, a widow—about 60—business-like and thrifty—is housekeeper for the Bishop, and tries to protect him against begging parishoners.

Marie, the maid-servant—about 25—active, bright, attractive.

Sergeant of Gendarmes—a typical French police sergeant, firm and obedient to duty.

"You'll hang for this," chortled the professor, "or rather, I should say, you'll be suspended."—Colo. Dodo.

The new mama dolls say, "Gimme."—U. of So. Calif. Wampus.

# COLLEGE TIMES

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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1931

## The Sociology of Histrionics

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lie Flanagan, Head of the Experimental Theatre of Vassar College, contend that Histrionics is important and valuable enough to exist in its own right. This is true and when sufficiently recognized will mean that any institution of learning that is attempting to be adequate will have a department of Dramatics.

Yet a full-fledged Histrionic Department does not imply that the other departments of learning could not participate in its benefits, thus more fully justifying the department. For instance the History, the Psychology, and several other departments as well as English can make use of dramatics to bring out the content and interest values of their respective fields. It is very recently that the Sociologist is beginning to appreciate the Histrionic arts. One southern university has a dramatics division in its Sociology Department. At first thought such a combination may appear ridiculous but it is far from being so.

### Social Value of Histrionics

The influence of the stage—legitimate and movie, amateur and professional—upon society is distinctly a social question. The sociologist does not need to stretch his imagination to discover social benefits growing out of dramatic participation. The student who takes a part in a play or pageant receives much in socialization such as cooperation, poise, social inter-relationship and inter-dependence, self-confidence in the presence of others, leadership and followership, and a host more. Characterization develops the ability to put one's self in



Edith Hewitt  
Kathleen Noll



Rose Schwer  
Kathleen Gorman



another's place which in turn enhances one's sympathies. The impersonation of a Chinaman will lead to international understanding if one cares to make that broad application. Histrionics not only influence society but also reflect it. The everyday aims, hopes, aspirations, loves, pains, cares, burdens, joys, problems and all are given the spotlight of attention and analysis. Thus society can better understand itself.

Doubtless the day will arrive when Sociology of Histrionics courses will be introduced in the curriculum either in the department of Sociology or of Dramatics. Such courses will justify themselves by studying the relationship of sociological principles and dramatic procedure.

## Concerning the Theater

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the minds of our future audiences are being moulded. Suppose for example, our own state, Pennsylvania, were to train a group of dramatic supervisors to teach the rudiments of theater production and develop an appreciation of the drama. These supervisors would thus put the drama in the school on the same basis as music and art, while stimulating both. Scholastic theater work could also be an invaluable aid to the study of English diction, literature, history, and kindred subjects, besides developing the personality of the participating individuals.

To absorb the talent trained in the school and to enrich the cultural life of the community, the dramatic supervisor should be the guiding hand of the local Little Theater.

What will happen remains to be seen—the possibilities are endless. Remember this: "Every little bit helps" and the joy of working for a noble cause is reward for the person who will put his shoulder to the wheel.

## Review of Plays

Among the many individuals who compose the audience which sees a play, the only ones who possess an opportunity for full and complete expression of their opinions and reactions with a detail other playgoers can scarcely hope to achieve in their vocal discussion of the merits and demerits of a stage production. In cold type they can put down their approbation or disapproval.

In order to learn just what is the state of mind in which the play reporter approaches the task of criticism and evaluation of the stage endeavors he goes to witness in a professional capacity, THE COLLEGE TIMES decided to interview the one nearest at hand, Miss Rebecca Gross, of the LOCK HAVEN EXPRESS.

Miss Gross discussed the reportorial treatment of the amateur play somewhat as follows:

"Primarily, my expectations in attending a student play are much the same as those of the general public—I'm looking for entertainment. A dramatic critic—using the term by courtesy!—is no different from anyone else in this respect, and what entertains everybody else will also entertain him. So the first requisite of a play is the ability to entertain, if it is to satisfy its audience, including the representative of the newspaper.

### Judging the Play

"Before coming to the actual business of writing a review, one must look at the presentation from three angles, and judge the play, the actors, and the performance as a whole. In the case of the first, one may consider whether the play is suitable for the particular school, cast, and audience. In other words, is the play well-chosen as to literary qualities, ability of the actors, and background of the expect-

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Robert Bollinger, George McMullen, Sara Wilson, Elizabeth Kell, Laura Smith.



## Behind the Scenes

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except at the high spots! And it is the high spots in this work, as in any other, that make the grind and the drudgery and the discouragement bearable.

There is a lighter side to the picture, however. There is the excitement of "the big night," the bustle, the rush, the importance. Picture the make-up room, with actor after actor issuing forth in all the glory of grease paint and transformation—a new personality put on with a changed countenance! It is being elevated to a higher, lighter plane, a thinner, brighter air. There is a feeling of "this is the life!" that gives the extra color to the smallest action.

Then the costuming! People running back and forth in various stages of experimental dress and undress. Bursting into the make-up room with "Do I put on the carrings the first time I go on?" or "Has anyone seen that letter I'm supposed to read just before the crash? I put it with my other things, and now I can't find it." The audience would be as much entertained by a glimpse back-stage in that breathless moment just before the first curtain, as it is by any of the play itself.

"Before the curtain goes up" strikes different casts in different ways. Sometimes a dead silence prevails. Everybody moves slowly or not at all, his eyes fixed on the floor, or focused on some faraway point, while he concentrates intensely on "getting into character." This type of behavior presents to the outsider a deceptive appearance of calm, even of indifference.

Its antithesis is the feverish activity which some times changes back-stage into a seething region vibrating so rapidly you can almost see it shake. Property committee, members of the cast, stage managers, tear around from one dressing-room to the other, trying to be in several places at once. An unrecognized somebody with radiating wrinkles and powdered hair dashes up to an imposing butler with sideburns and an impassive expression, panting, "Hook this collar for me! I can't make it stay fastened." Somebody catches a long-suffering, perspiring property mistress with, "Where did you put the smelling-salts? They're supposed to be on the piano in the first act."

But, wildly active or tensely still, whichever the particular cast may be, the magic moment arrives when the last note of music dies away, the whisper goes out, "Lights! Curtain!"—and the play is on!

### Coming!

Don't fail to see all of the following:

The Red Umbrella

February 27, 1931

Pepita

March 4, 1931

W. A. A. Stunt Night

March 10, 1931



"OUTWARD BOUND"

Dramatic Club Play

March 8, 1929



"THE DOVER ROAD"

Dramatic Club Play

December 13, 1929



"YOUR UNCLE DUDLEY"

Dramatic Club Play

November 13, 1930

## Review of Plays

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ed audience? This you see, concerns the director and his work.

"Next, the actors must be considered. Does each portray convincingly the kind of person he is intended to be? Does he walk, talk, look, think, like this person? Or does he show the audience himself, masquerading? Herein, I may say, lies one of the traps for the amateur actor—he may not always concentrate on his part sufficiently to stay in character all the time—his work may lack consistency.

"Discussing the third-mentioned factor—the performance as a whole—it is easy to see that many things contribute to its success or failure. The quality of the play, the cast chosen, the poise of their persons and memories, the stage setting, the properties and costumes, and, perhaps above all, the interpretation—all these are of immense importance; and all these, well-handled, make up the perfect whole of the evening's entertainment. The responsibility for the bulk of this combined work devolves pri-

marily, of course, upon the shoulders of the director; but each person concerned with the gathering of these materials, and the welding of them into a unit, has his own share in its success or failure. Not one can be dispensed with."

### Reviewer Must Be Merciful

In response to a question, Miss Gross said, "I believe that the reviewer of the amateur play should be merciful. By this I do not mean charitable. But he must realize what has been aimed at, and judge of its achievement in the light of the background, age, and abilities, of the actors, and the equipment available. He should be generous in his praise of what is well done. What about the faults? His treatment there should be, to a certain extent, that of indulgence. The less capable actor need not be condemned; if he is not roundly praised he probably will have insight enough to realize what causes the silence. Not much is gained by harsh published criticism of the amateur, who should not be judged by professional standards or subjected to the rigors of professional criticism." Asked for her views concerning the

## Reviewing the Amateur Play

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ioned by the divided allegiance of two Americanized fathers, both native Germans, and staunch friends.

Providing Commencement entertainment as usual, the Junior Class presented "Tons of Money," by Will Evans and Valentine, as its annual dramatic effort on May 23, 1930. This play was a somewhat different English farce which dealt with the difficulties a young husband and wife encountered in striving to preserve a fortune left as a legacy and at the same time live up to the rather exacting conditions of the will.

On November 13, 1930, again the Dramatic Club opened the season with its production, "Your Uncle Dudley," a three-act American comedy by Howard Lindsay and Bertrand Russell, a current best-seller on Broadway. The title role of the play became the center of what promised to be a serious family complication based upon a necessary five thousand dollars and the winning of a prize trip to Europe for vocal study both descending on Uncle Dudley's family at the same time and providing the problem of the play.

place of amateur dramatics in a community, Miss Gross continued, "It is important, I believe, as a source of attractive entertainment at a reasonable price. It provides, likewise, a useful and beneficial outlet to the human instinct and necessity for masquerading, and it responds to the universal demand for a larger life than it is given to any one person to live."

### Aim of College Dramatics

Miss Gross concluded her remarks with a comment embodying her idea of the aim of college dramatics—"It should prepare people to take a leading part in introducing dramatics into the communities they will serve. Also, it should—and does—provide a splendid opportunity for the development of the individual in poise, voice, personality, and related attributes, which results in his better preparation for professional and social life."

## Exchange Notes

A chemist analyzing the comparatively unknown element, woman, has described her as follows:

Element: Woman.

Occurrence: Found wherever man exists. Seldom in free state, with few exceptions, the combined state is to be preferred.

Physical Properties: All colors and sizes. Usually in disguised condition. Face covered with film of composite material. Balks at nothing and may freeze at any moment. However, melts when properly treated. Very bitter if not well used.

Chemical Properties: Very active, possesses great affinity for gold, silver, platinum and precious stones, violent reactions when left alone. Ability to absorb expensive food at any time. Sometimes yields to pressure. Turns green when placed beside a better looking specimen. Fresh variety has great magnetic attraction.

—The Indian Penn.

TOMMY HAWK.

(From the Juniatian)