



PHOTOPLAY
DANCING

AMUSEMENT SECTION

THEATRES
and MUSIC

PHILADELPHIA, SATURDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 4, 1915

FRAZEE FOR A FARCE SCHOOL

Prominent Manager Sees Need
of Developing Young
Writers

H. H. Frazee, who has produced "A Pair of Sixes," "A Full House" and other successful farces, claims that, although there are hundreds of very good actors in America, the experts are not sufficient in number to go around. Mr. Frazee has held back the production of two farces this season for no other reason than the fact that he has been unable to secure a competent cast for either piece. One of them is by Edward Peple, author of "A Pair of Sixes," and the other is a farce by Clara Lipman and Sam Shipman.



H. H. FRAZEE.

Mr. Frazee was in Philadelphia the other evening, looking at "A Full House" at the Adelphi Theatre, and then declared his intention of establishing a school in New York in which young actors are to be trained in the requirements of farce. Among Mr. Frazee's remarks were:

"It is harder to properly cast a modern farce in New York today than it is to secure players for a Greek tragedy. You can get dramatic leading men by the hundred; you can secure character comedians in unlimited numbers; there are thousands of 'heavies' and as many people to play heroines and grand dames; but there is a woeful lack of actors who can play farce as it should be played.

Farce Hardest Drama

"Farce, to my mind, is the most difficult branch of the drama. Comedy, drama and tragedy portray the probable; farce portrays the possible. The plausibility of the average comedy helps the actor, for he has only to act his part in a natural manner. Farce, on the other hand, consists of improbable situations, and the actor must play it in such a fashion that the auditor will not question the possibility of the events or the plausibility of the plot. To accomplish this end the player in farce must possess the quality of smoothness, the degree of unctious and the tremendous speed that will disarm critical analysis of the subject-matter and leave only a recollection of the pleasure afforded by the laughter provoked.

"Farce has such special requirements," continued Mr. Frazee, "that in France and Germany, where it has been elevated to its highest plane, it has long had its special school of actors who appear in no other kind of play. These players receive special training for the playing of farce, and the skill of these players may account for the fact that so many big farcical successes in Paris and Berlin result in failures when presented in New York.

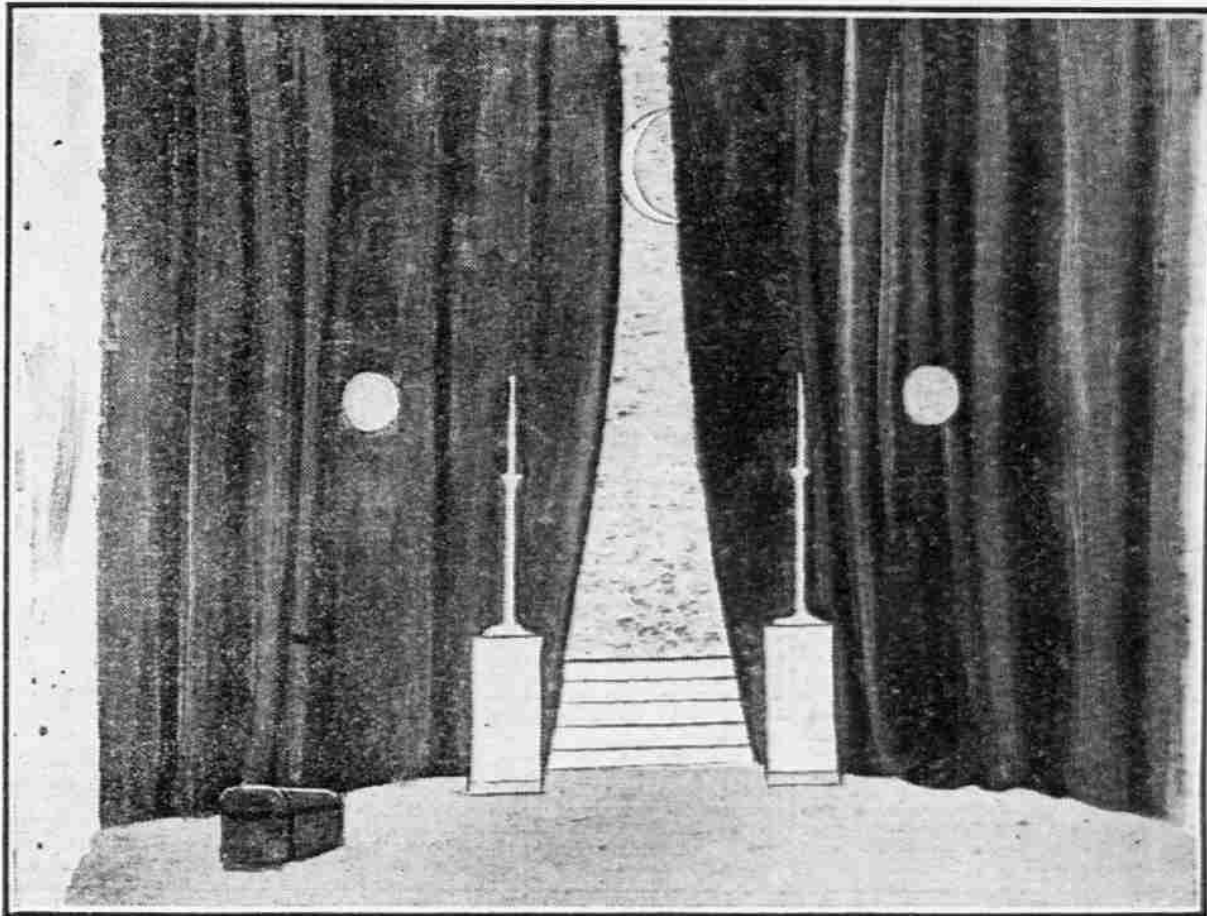
Gillette Best Farceur

"William Gillette is the foremost farceur in America today, because of his knowledge of the value of repose. Speed and repose, the two extremes of dramatic tempo, are what make the successful farceur. I make it an object to place under contract all the clever farceurs I come in contact with, as it is my intention to confine myself almost entirely to the production of farces in the future; there is such a fertile field for this sort of play in America. I believe that May Volke, Herbert Corbell and George Parsons, now appearing in 'A Full House,' may be classed among the cleverest farceurs we have.

"Speed in farce does not mean rushing about the stage, up and down stairs, and slamming doors. It means the tempo in which the piece is played. Cues must be taken upon the instant, if not by the actual line, by a look or movement that will arrest the attention of the audience and keep it from serious thought. The audience must be interested every second.

"In a few weeks I will be ready to announce my plans for a school for farce. I have consulted with several authorities on this subject, and will have the cooperation of other managers who have experienced the same difficulty in securing the proper actors for plays of this type."

PHILADELPHIA TAKES TO SCENIC REFORM



One of the very beautiful designs which a Philadelphia artist, W. H. K. Yarrow, prepared for the Stage Society's current ballet, "The King of the Black Isle." The above is the black-curtained hall of the Palace of Tears.

What I Have Learned in Photoplay Studios

By WILLIAM FAVERSHAM

I haven't acted for the pictures yet; I have only posed for them. What we would call acting in the theatre, we consider tremendous exaggeration for the screen. I find myself trying not to act! The camera exaggerates your every movement to such an extent that if you pantomimed on the screen as you did in the regular theatre there would be so much action that your arms would look like a series of windmills!

And yet I say, most emphatically, that in order to play big parts on the screen you certainly need a great knowledge of the legitimate theatre. All I have said before this merely goes to show that you want to modify your theatre work.

Where the knowledge of the theatre strikes me as being most necessary in motion pictures is in the way of direction. I think a thorough knowledge of the stage, an artistic sense, and a knowledge of "periods," correct costuming, etc., is essential, because the director has got to correct mistakes made by the actors and the working force, just the same as the legitimate stage manager.

The assertion may seem to be too sweeping, but I believe that motion pictures will stand still until some one comes along who will take scenes on the screen which will give the actor and actress a chance for more acting, and will also let the audience get the story in its head, and keep the sequence clear.

The tendency now is to take scenes for the screen averaging from 5 to 15 seconds. The cinematograph was never meant to do that. It was meant to represent real life, and all the best pictures I have ever seen are pictures where there have been scenes acted on the screen which took anywhere from 3 to 5 minutes. They will finally come to this again, and the man who first does it will elevate motion pictures to a much higher grade artistically. The present mode of running scenes for a few seconds and jumping about from one scene to another is puzzling to an audience.

I have sat in motion picture houses and heard people say they were bored to death because they couldn't follow the story; it jumped about so much. I have also seen people get up and leave for that very reason, and express themselves to that effect as they were going out.

TEACHING THE COLLEGE MAN HOW TO MOVIE

Columbia University Opens a Course in Scenario
Writing to Parallel Harvard's Instruction
in the Drama

"ONCE upon a time," as the stories of our childhood began, and that time was not so long ago, a new course was started at Harvard University, its purpose to teach the technique of the drama. What the course has done is a matter of common knowledge. From it have come such men as Edward Sheldon, who has given to the stage really significant works like "The Nigger," "The Highroad," in which Mrs. Fluke starred; "The Song of Songs," an adaptation from Luedemann, and "The Boss," a political play of real value. Sheldon got his foundation to work on from the course on drama, and it developed the natural worth of the man. "Common Clay," the sensation of this season in New York, in which Jane Cowl and John Mason are starring, was the Harvard prize play of last year. Truly, this course has had a real influence on our stage.

Now we find a movement of this same kind developing in the new offspring of drama, the photoplay. Columbia University has built up a course which parallels for the photoplay the Harvard characteristic course, with its purposes the same in relation to the screen art as Harvard to the stage.

This matter came to the attention of a high official in one of our great photoplay companies, with the result that a most remarkable offer was made to the student body of Columbia.

The Lasky Company of the Paramount Picture Corporation made the following offer to Columbia:

"That the student who, in the judgment of William C. DeMille, has written the best original five-part scenario during the term will receive, all expenses paid, a

trip from New York to the Lasky studios at Hollywood, Cal., and return.

"If the winning photoplay is sufficiently practical for production it will be produced by the Lasky Company with one or more stars and equitable compensation will be made to the author.

"During the visit of the winning student at the studio William C. DeMille will extend to him every opportunity for additional study in a practical environment."

The result was a keener interest in, and building up of, the course in photoplay technique. The Columbia course is thus described in the university catalogues: "Photoplay writing, lectures and conferences." The class meets on Thursday afternoon in the Journalism building, from 2:15 to 4:25 o'clock. Prof. Victor O. Fresman, who is a doctor of philosophy, has charge of the course, and lectures at that hour. Also he meets the students individually for discussions of their work in what are called conferences. The course lasts a half year, and it counts three hours toward a degree.

In a circular the aims are expressed as follows: "This course aims to equip the student with a knowledge of the new dramatic possibilities as well as mechanical limitations of the photoplay; the specific demands of the producer; the tastes of the typical audience as conditioned by time and place of performance, and the technique of scenario writing. Each student is expected to confer regularly with the instructor for criticism of scenarios. The course includes a visit to a studio."

It remains to be seen whether the screen art limitations of lack of words to express emotion is capable of receiving a real uplift, such as the stage received from the Harvard course in the technique of the drama. At least, the matter is one of intense interest to any who follow the screen work carefully, and tends to show the trend of the time toward the artistic and truly worthwhile things in photoplays.