

BEFORE THE CURTAIN IS UP

'Dulcy' and 'Spice' Are Week's New Shows—'Hairy Ape' Is Good and Bad

THE variety of theatres will be augmented here next week by the opening of two more of the legitimate houses, one with a revue, the other with comedy of modern American life.

"Spice of 1922" is the revue which will open the doors of the Forrest Theatre. On the present occasion it will have a cast headed by Valaska Suratt, Georgie Price and Nan Halperin.

The Broad Street Theatre, opening two weeks earlier than last year, will present "Dulcy," the George Kaufman-Marc Connelly comedy, with Lynn Fontanne in the leading role.

The four houses which opened last Monday will continue with the same attractions.

It is usually much fairer to judge a batch of modern plays in a comparative manner than to measure them all by the same standard.

"Hairy Ape" is a standard. For an example of poor aim, there is no execution. Eugene O'Neill in his "Hairy Ape" essayed greater things than the authors of the other plays which are now here.

Just what has Mr. O'Neill accomplished in this "comedy of ancient and modern life"? It would seem that the play, as produced, is a patchwork of good and evil, sometimes the evil can be cast up to the author, sometimes to the necessary limitations of the stage production.

To read "The Hairy Ape" is to be impressed by the vivid speeches of some of the stokers in their concluding of the first scene, to be also impressed by the thumb nail characterizations the author made of them, to be even more impressed by the efforts of Mr. O'Neill to sum up in a few words what they stand for—these unouth, drinking, cursing children of the modern sea.

In the book, the stage directions to the first scene contain the following description: "The room is crowded with men, shouting, cursing, laughing, singing a confused, incoherent uproar swelling into a sort of yawn, a meaning—the bewildered, furious, baffled defiance of a beast in a cage."

Now examining this as put upon the stage at the Lyric, we find the "incoherent uproar" possessing not one whit of unity or meaning, in fact, sounding for the world like the back of a chair and spasmodic murmuring of the crowd in an amateur production of "Julius Caesar." Nor is there any semblance at any time, to the baffled defiance of a beast.

It's all very well to say that when a great theme is being given presentation, the staging should sink into relative unimportance, but the fact remains that the "great" theme here strikes home to the minds of the beholders when the material form of its production is absurd. In the case of "The Hairy Ape," just as it was with "The Emperor Jones," the fault should lie with Mr. Hopkins, who put the play upon the boards, not with Robert Edmond Jones and Cleon Throckmorton, who designed the set, but directly with the author for attempting to have translated in terms of the drama process, which the stage cannot handle.

In the case mentioned above, the actual choice of minor actors, by the director, was not perfect, but even had they been perfect, the scene could not have conveyed the author's meaning.

We pass over such wholly mechanical adjuncts as the absence of any goal in the stokehold scene, the peculiar construction of Mr. Jones' set which Miss Throckmorton's smokestacks in the deck scene, the lack of interest in having the gorilla emerge from his cage in the finale, but the matter of the Fifth Avenue puppets is beyond forgiveness.

Soberly, the "Hairy Ape" is a play that takes care of its "Dance of the Wooden Soldiers" without having a similar occurrence introduced in all seriousness in a sense drama.

The finer parts of the O'Neill playwork should not be neglected. The play can only retrospect of "Paddy's" in the first scene, in which, like Conrad, he betrays the passing of the sailing ship, followed by "Yank's" equally picturesque simile in defense of modern steel and smoke and engines—these are bits to be remembered. So is the author's well-written and well-planned headquarter, which either excites the gallery element, so, even more, is "Yank's" soliloquy when he comes out and asks "Where do I get out of all this?"

"Yank" is no fine character to be lost in the crucible of "The Hairy Ape." Instead of protesting against the society to which he "doesn't belong," this hairy, obese stoker should point a bit to the right, and then, and then wouldn't it be to fashion a play strong enough to carry him. There'd be many who would join that result.

Now, the case of "The Charlatan" is entirely different. This play, as having been gorgeously treated by every one. Surely, here is an author, here is a play, here is a company which presented "The Charlatan" for the first time here last year. In that play there were, here last year, characters well acted in "The Charlatan" there is hardly one that is not. In addition to Fred Tilden, really he looks a bit like a stunner and younger John Drew), who so well catches the spirit of the magician, there are a half-dozen other neatly turned portraits, including the Master of the House, the doctor's wife and William Podmore, the tiny Indian servant. And even the blustering, typically stage-like district attorney is given reality by Furred Ford.

STARS OF THE STAGE COMING HERE NEXT WEEK

Advertisement for the upcoming week's shows, featuring portraits and names of stars like Lynn Fontanne, Richard Carle, and others.

Shows That Are Coming to Philadelphia Soon

Calendar of upcoming theatrical shows with dates and titles.

Such thrillers realized that the new play has been going long. Then we will see a picture play in which every single actor has a part to play in the story. This time, he will stand and shock all the audience by having this man found guilty of the crime. The only trouble will be that there will be a small percentage of theatre-goers who, unless you are a case, one, I should say, right away.

Rollcall Shows Old Comedians Posing

Advertisement for B.F. Keith's theatre, listing various shows and performers.

PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA

Advertisement for the Philadelphia Orchestra, listing conductor Leopold Stokowski and concert dates.

Theatrical Billboard for the Coming Week

NEW ATTRACTIONS: BROAD—"Dulcy," comedy by George F. Kaufman, with Lynn Fontanne and James Gleason. "Dulcy" is a comedy about a young wife who innocently is always causing trouble.

WALNUT—"The Charlatan," latest mystery melodrama, with a flavoring of magic for good measure. Fred Tilden is the featured player in a big cast.

LYRIC—"The Hairy Ape," latest Eugene O'Neill play, with Lynn Fontanne and George Price.

BROADWAY—"The Blue Kitten," comedy with music, with Richard Carle and others.

WALNUT—"The Blue Kitten," comedy with music, with Richard Carle and others.

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PHILADELPHIA'S LEADING THEATRES, DIRECTION LEE & J. J. SHUBERT

Advertisement for Lyric theatre, featuring "The Hairy Ape" and "The Blue Kitten".

Advertisement for Eugene O'Neill's "The Hairy Ape".

Advertisement for "Marjoline" musical comedy.

Advertisement for "The Blue Kitten" musical comedy.

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