

Second Country Life Conference Planned

Prof. Willis Kerns, extension rural sociologist at the Pennsylvania State College, is a member of the program committee of the second annual Pennsylvania Country Life conference at Newton Hamilton, Huntingdon county, Aug. 23 to 26. Last year 100 members of Granges, churches, rural parent-teacher associations and similar organizations attended the meetings.

China will plant about ten per cent more land in cotton this year than last.

CATHAUM

SUMMER SCHEDULE Evenings at 7:00, 8:45 Complete Showing as late as 9:10 Matinees Saturday Only at 2:15

SATURDAY ONLY

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ADDED: "YOU CAME TO MY RESCUE"—A musical short with SHEP FIELDS AND ORCH. "MODERN INVENTIONS," a Silly Symphony Cartoon

MONDAY and TUESDAY NOTE: On account of the unusual length of this production there will be a revised schedule of shows: Special Matinee Monday only at 2:15 P.M. Evening Shows Both Days at 6:30 and 9:00.

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FOOTLIGHTS

(Editor's Note: The vast amount of controversy concerning the division of dramatic production of "The Swan" on Tuesday night has prompted the Collegian to present the views of two critics. One column is written by Margaret T. Riley, former women's editor of the Collegian, the other by Eleanor T. Waugh, at one time a student in dramatics).

This essay begins with a simple declarative sentence: "The Swan" was a grand show.

Molnar's play is fragile stuff, familiar romantic gossamer about the princess and the commoner, embroidered with the amusing match-making of a harassed royal mother, and the sympathetic counter-scheming of a monk, the princess' uncle. The fabric has to be stretched to make three acts but the strain is relieved by delightful dialogue and the director's recourse to sprightly stage business such as the Rockette-like precision routine of the lackeys and hussars in the banquet scene.

No doubt the presence of Hilda Spong, who came here to repeat the part she played in the New York production, keyed up the entire company. There was no faltering, no lapsing out of character; everyone fell into the proper pace and held it throughout the evening. Back stage noise was at a minimum, and though the curtains parted before a chattering audience the auditorium quickly became hushed. Laughter peppered the proper places. Applause greeted the second act set, one of two handsome backgrounds for rich costumes.

Such appreciative response must have been heartening to all concerned in what was patently a carefully prepared production in all departments. Whatever flaws developed in characterization were not disturbing enough to break down the uniform excellence of the performance as a whole.

Miss Spong as Beatrice—a *deus ex machina* with a touch of the sublimely ridiculous about her—led off with the dextrous performance we expected. No over-elaboration here, no unwarranted scene-stealing. Like a good trouper she was content that there be other good performances, too. And there were.

Mr. Mason played Father Hyacinth with a fine regard for the worldly-wise, compassionate nature of the monk who smoothed the rough edges of Beatrice's matrimonial maneuvers. Mary Merchant extracted all the grotesque comedy of Symphorosa, the whimpering tool of her sister. The Crittenden boys acted with an assurance that may be credited partly perhaps to their training in the Children's Theatre. As Beatrice's majordomo, Harry Reed with his pompous bewilderment elevated a good servant's part into the upper brackets of the cast.

Lucretia Kennedy, within the limitations of a skimpily written part, established a character worth amplification. Dominica is a shrewd foil for Beatrice. Fond of their diplomatic process, the two dowagers give the play a fine ironical humor, and with Hyacinth lend substance to bolster the young people's tenuous triangle.

Of the remaining three principals, the one whose work was equal to all the demands of his part was Bernstein as Professor Agi, victim of Beatrice's scheme to make Alexandra a king's wife. His dignified but spirited characterization of the love-stricken tutor was among the play's best performances, in spite of an occasional defection in the way of slouching and dialogue-chewing. Experience will obliterate these imperfections.

To give credence and dramatic satisfaction to the outcome of the affair, it seems essential that Albert, Alexandra's intended, should be interpreted from the beginning as a worthwhile young man of sensibility with only the usual royal predilection for poor jokes. Pennypacker, although he looked the part superbly, made Albert unappealing enough in his first scenes to spoil his ultimate exhibition of good taste and charm in the denouement.

Alexandra's is a puzzling and perilous part. She must be statuesque and girlish, cold and warm, all at once. Rebecca Rice was a "swan" beautiful to the eye, though her first act costume led the audience to think her a trained nurse, but the inner conflict in the character she scarcely suggested. That her deficiency did not seriously mar the play is probably due to Molnar's making Alexandra a title character who carries the play like a train—a heavily embroidered one whose weight is evenly shared by helping hands.

"The Swan" is a fittingly high point in the program of the division of

Albert, we can well afford to pay tribute for his versatility in character delineation. From the ridiculous to the sublime, he went from the ludicrous Caesar in "Androcles" to a self-centered, pampered son. His transition from a sulky and insulting character to the suave and gracious prince, who out of necessity apologized to the tutor, was most commendable. His way of centering all conversation about himself was well taken by the rest of the cast, who was provoked into short titters of amusement, punctuated by the realization that they were only catering to royalty.

Of Alexandra, played by Rebecca Rice, there is this to be said: she was essentially the sweet and meek child dominated by her mother. Her grace and pose were unmistakable and well adapted to her rank. But her voice had to "much of the school girl" quality, too much of the bantering light inflection. She was not quite convincing enough. Her aim seemed to be create a naive, vague person so swayed by her superiors and regal surroundings, that she never gave vent to her childish and sincere emotions and fidget, it was because she played the part as she felt it. Personally I was a bit disappointed in her interpretation. It lacked warmth and feeling; it was too cold to register an impression one way or the other; I neither loved nor hated her. She was the puppet torn between duty to her family and a sense of honor to the man she thought she loved. Yet I cannot truly criticize, for this is merely my impression.

Princess Maria Dominica, played by Lucretia Kennedy displayed perhaps the finest actual acting on the stage. It fell upon her to create a character much beyond her actual years, and as such she did a magnificent job. She was subtly susceptible to flattery; she played well the proud, never-thwarted woman, the mother of her famous son. She was led beautifully into acceptance of the tutor's strange behavior and though her role was comparatively small, she dominated her scenes. My only objection to her was the make-up job. As the mother of a fully grown son, she was younger than the Princess Beatrice who had two small sons and a daughter "twenty odd." Somehow it didn't "click." That, however, is no discredit to her fine performance.

Mary Merchant, as Symphorosa played with much success the demonstrative, now crying, now giggling sister of the Princess Beatrice. She registered well the reactions to her sister's quips and schemes and was always the willing party to any suggestion and final ultimatum, though first showing her amazement at the thought.

Harry Reed as Caesar, was a perfect Eric Blore type of servant. He was the first servant of the house and shared many of the secrets denied his superordinates. His almost tearful tones promoted many a laugh from the appreciative audience.

Last, but not least, the Crittenden boys deserve credit for their charming and most natural interpretations of the tutors proteges. Their memory for lines was remarkable.

Other members of the cast were colorful and convincing. Though many had no lines, their attitudes and actions lent excellent atmosphere. The parade of the hussars and lackeys to the dinner table was most effective. Nice foot work fellows! The R.O.T.C. is looking for you!

The simplicity and dignity of the stage settings was soft and restful—no glaring lights, no shrieking pictures, but a well executed, well furnished piece of arrangement. The futuristic design at right stage was my only Waterloo. What, and why was it? Comments from the audience, however, indicated absolute approval and

Two Plays Scheduled For 8 O'clock Tonight

Two plays by Arthur Schnitzler compose the bill of performances to be presented by the division of dramatics in the Little Theatre at 8 o'clock tonight.

One of the plays, "Literature," a brilliant comedy from the play cycle "Living House," has Frank Pennypacker, Charlotte Lord, and William Hughes, all veterans of Little Theatre work here, in the cast. The other play, "Christmas Shopping," will be enacted by Mason Whitmore and Izora Mangus.

The former play will be presented in a setting designed by Victoria Davis, the latter in one by Helen Schick. Both sets will be executed by the class in stagecraft.

The plays are directed by Prof. Darrel Larson, with the technical direction of Wilfred C. Washcoe, and will be open only to those persons with tickets, obtainable at the office of the division of dramatics in room 413, Old Main.

liking of the sets. So, to the rest of the stage crew—the prompters, costumers, property hands, technicians, and designers, we owe a vote of thanks. Your job is an outwardly obscure one, but thankless by no means. You are just as important back stage as the actors are out front. Without you there would be little to hope for to stir the imagination. And so, as Jimmy Fidler, the Hollywood reporter says, "The Swan" was undoubtedly a three bell production, made possible by its fine direction and its capable cast. Yes, it merited all the praise that it received. And so I end this eulogy for the stage fans who so heartily enjoy and realize a good performance when they see one.

"Playgoingly" and respectfully submitted, Eleanor T. Waugh.

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