

Behind the News

Forces at Work In American Theatre

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It is a paradox that in most countries, usually smaller than ours, the theatre is relatively decentralized, while in the United States, one city dominates the theatre scene. A sequence of circumstances, however, bodes well in our country for more widespread development of theatre, bringing fine theatre to many.

The various summer theatres, particularly those in the East where most are located, undoubtedly had something to do with the westward development. Summer theatres are quick operations in festive surroundings which take advantage of the off-season in New York for employment of professional actors and directors.

'Straw Hat' Trends

In the early days on the straw hat or citronella circuit, popular tried and true plays which could be prepared quickly were offered. More recently music tents have become popular; stars are touring in package shows in which sets and supporting roles are provided by the various theatres, and happily, new plays are now being given a pre-New York hearing.

The Broadway theatre itself is indirectly responsible for the rise of the lively and vigorous Off-Broadway movement. In terms of unpretentiousness, Off-Broadway theatres are closer to their summer theatre cousins. In terms of content and types of plays, they have gradually assumed a leadership in developing new playwrights, actors and directors.

Off-Broadway Contributions

The Off-Broadway theatre movement represents a trend against the high cost of Broadway productions, against the nerve-wracking demand for hits and against the limited opportunity for actors, directors and designers in the relatively few major Broadway theatres. Probably its most important contribution has been the development of first rate playwrights, whether they are new or established writers, whose works could not have had a hearing in the commer-

cial framework of the Broadway stage.

Another and simultaneous force at work in the land is the theatre in colleges and universities. The growth of the theatre programs in these institutions has mushroomed into a large network in approximately 500 colleges and universities. It is here that the best facilities in the country can be found, the finest technical resources are available and the greatest variety of plays is presented.

Regional and community theatres in Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Dallas, Houston, San Francisco and Washington are increasingly influential on the American theatre scene. Amateur productions in high schools, colleges and community theatres amount to more than 150,000 productions per year as estimated by one play broker.

In addition to the established programs in colleges and universities, there are signs of the merging of professional and educational interests. Princeton University and the University of Minnesota will have an affiliation with the new Tyrone Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis.

Penn State Developments

Penn State has combined professional and educational theatre for five summers and hopes to use guest artists who work with students during the fall-winter-spring session in the future. Many schools use a guest or two in a few major productions every year, though not on a regular basis.

Forces and counter forces are at work, and while the long range significance of all this hectic activity is hard to interpret, inevitably the economic strangulation on Broadway, the increase in physical facilities across the country, the importance of educational theatre and increased audience demands and interests will bring a need for greater cooperation of trained professional and student artists. In turn, this growth and expansion is likely to have profound consequences on the character and content of the theatre of the future in America and abroad.

Post-Gazette Explores 'Dispute'

A news article on a "potentially damaging argument over academic power" which is "matching faculty against administration" at the University appeared in the June 29 issue of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.

The article by staff writer Herbert G. Stein said that the argument's dimensions are not yet clear.

"At the moment," Stein wrote, "the center of the dispute is the head of the physics department," John A. Sauer, who resigned effective July 1 as department head. President Eric A. Walker accepted the resignation of Sauer, who will remain at the University as a professor of physics.

SAUER'S SUPPORTERS among the faculty and graduate students are protesting in petitions to the administration, newspapers and legislators that he was "fired for fighting too hard with those over him for those under him," the article said.

These people insist, the report continues, that "this argument is

symbolic of an administration that has failed to prevent trouble, in the physics department and also trouble elsewhere, for example in the loss of accreditation of Penn State's journalism and architecture departments."

The article outlined various campus interpretations of these academic problems. Discussing the physics department, the article quoted Walker:

"We have had a dean and a department head who have been acting like a pair of angry cats." Walker referred to Ferdinand

G. Brickwedde, dean of the College of Chemistry and Physics, who said the argument was over "whether the dean has the right to review recommendations of the department head and make any modifications, no matter how rare and how slight."

WALKER WAS quoted earlier as saying:

"It is characteristic of college faculties that they do sound off. But I don't like people to argue to the point where they hurt the University."

Drought--

(Continued from page three)
the local area, but some areas have reported considerably more. More than seven inches of rain fell last month in Philadelphia, but much of the land in the northern and western suburbs is parched dry.

Little or no steady rain is likely here during the next four or five days, but showers are possible today and again Sunday.

Temperatures should remain warm. It will become somewhat drier tomorrow, but increasing humidity is forecast for the weekend.

A high of 88 is forecast for today, and a high of 84 is seen for tomorrow.

John Milton used 8,000 different words in his poem "Paradise Lost."

New College Diner

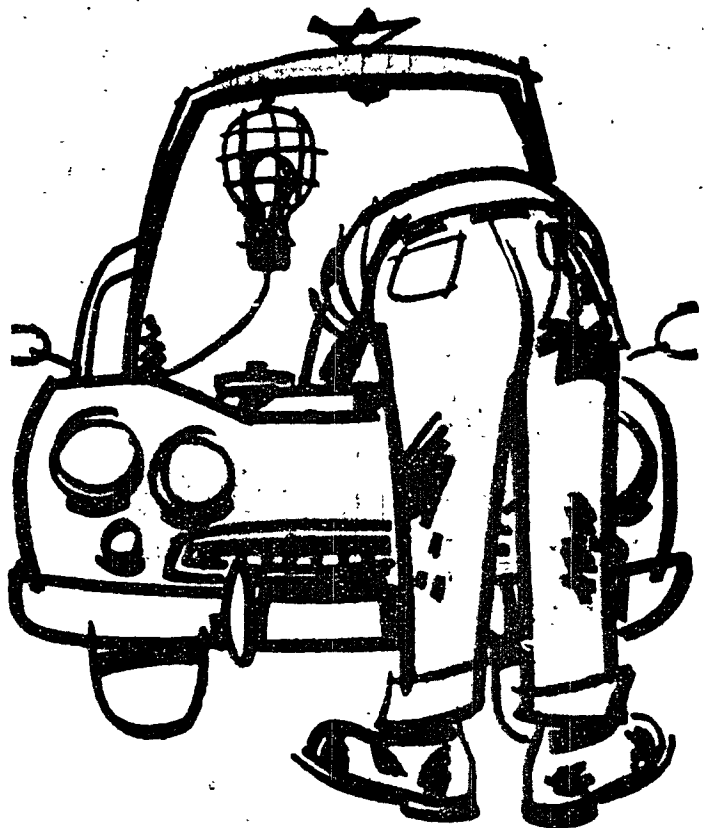
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