

Tallulah Bankhead Splendid in Quieter Parts of 'Rain'

But Overplays 'Hard Boiled' Side of Sadie

She's Both Better and Worse than Jeanne Eagels in Famous Role.

By Burns Mantle.

NEW YORK. — [Special.] — It was the general opinion that when Tallulah Bankhead swung her hips and her parasol into the revival of "Rain" the other night at the Music Box the 32-year-old Colton-Randolph classic took up practically where it left off eight years ago.

That would be after Jeanne Eagels had played it for four years and before fifty or more stock company leading women had each had a try at the part of Sadie Thompson. In other words, it is again being enthusiastically insisted that "Rain" is as vibrant a drama today as it ever was and that if a new play-going public is born every seven years there is no good reason why it should not achieve another local run of respectable proportions.

And so it may. As melodrama the play is deathless. So long as there is an interesting and no offense, ladies! strumpet minded actress to play the harlot and beat her curses against the black broadcloth vestments of the sadistic missionary who would prevent her from going straight, "Rain" will continue to be good, if not perfect, theater.

Sadie's Antics Highly Improbable.

Its situations are as false as fiction and as real as history. Imagine, if you can, the Pago-Pago entrance of a real Sadie Thompson—no, begin by imagining a real Sadie Thompson—a harlot out of Honolulu trying to escape from the life a San Francisco politician has helped her into by buying a passage to Samoa to prevent the authorities sending her back to California and a prison term for which she has been framed. She would, in all probability, have dressed herself as modestly as possible, kept pretty much to herself on board the Orduna, and done her best to be as like her fellow passengers as she possibly could be.

And yet, when the Sadie Thompson of the play arrives in Pago-Pago like an army with scarlet banners, flaunting her ancient profession brazenly and defiantly and daring the world to do what it darned well wants to about it, she is welcomed vociferously as a heroine of sound and realistic appeal.

Thereafter through the length of the play Sadie is the forced, artificial, and effective center of the picture and the action as well. Every time she barks a line the rest of the cast stand at attention. Whenever she scores off the Rev. Mr. Davidson and supporting players alike are as noisily happy as hoodlums at a dog fight. And when, in the end, she has brought the psalm singing son of the church to

'TRANSIENT LADY'

Frances Drake, one of the newer crop of stars, has a featured role in "Transient Lady." The film is on view at the Palace.



disgrace the evening is tremulous with the emotional stirrings of her conquest and the moral reactions inspired by her disgust. Such is and always will be the basic lure of the playhouse and the basic fascination with which its more robust plays and players turnish it.

La Bankhead Quite Terrible in Opening Scenes.

The question, naturally, concerns the claims of Miss Bankhead's supporters that she is a better Sadie Thompson than was the late Miss Eagels—or at least as good. The answer being that she is, and she isn't.

She is, I think, or was the first night, quite terrible through the opening scenes. Terrible in that

she is consciously acting a showy part and giving it everything the director will permit. She has adapted Horace Greeley's advice to the playhouse and gone west, young gal, gone west. She exaggerates the basic lure of the playhouse and the basic fascination with which its more robust plays and players turnish it.

But Tallulah's Conversion More Real Than Jeanne Eagels.

But when Miss Bankhead approaches the quieter scenes; when she slips out of scarlet into white; when she negotiates a fingertip hold on the promises of the religion the Rev. Mr. Davidson preaches as the representative of the Redeemer himself, then she is splendid in character.

You may have doubted, as I did, that Miss Eagels' Sadie Thompson was ever fooled by Davidson; her physical conquest of the fanatic might easily have been, as I believed it was that first night twelve years ago, a part of a subtle siren's campaign.

You never doubt Miss Bankhead's temporary conversion. She makes it real and moving. And she continues this grip of the character through the rest of the play. It is a telling contrast. Her reversion to type after Davidson has exploited his sin on the rocks below takes little if anything from it. And this is the reason for the showered superlatives with which her performance has been received.

Tallulah, the story goes, has always wanted to play Sadie. Wanted most awfully to play her in London. But Somerset Maugham, who wrote the "Miss Thompson" story from which the play was taken, sat in at one rehearsal and declared she was not the type. The piece ran but a few weeks in London, with another actress in the part, and Tallulah went on to become the darling of the stalls for the next ten years.

Herbert Ransome, a Shakespearean out of Walter Hampden's company, is doing well as Davidson, and Ethel Wilson is successful as his wife, Emma Wilcox is the only member of the original cast in the present company, and Emma, playing Joe Horn's wife, has not dined a day in twelve years. She used to fill the huge armchair. Now she fills the stage.

"Bitter Oleander" Sinks Into Oblivion. The "Rain" revival created more excitement than any other theatrical happening of the week. The Neighborhood playhouse's anniversary production of "Bitter Oleander," from

the Spanish of Frederico Lorca, did not turn out as well as hoped for. So far as this playgoer and most of his fellows are concerned it may be promptly returned to the Spanish. It did have an atmosphere and an impressive tragic trend for an act or more. The ladies wore black lace mantillas and exuded gloom. There was a young bride being married to a man she didn't love. There was a young husband leaving his wife and child to tell the bride he still loved her in spite of her threatened marriage to another.

These two finally, on the wedding night, ran away to a forest where, after an evening in the moonlight, they were chased by the resentful villagers. Both husband and lover were killed in the duel that followed. A colorful tragedy up to this point, but nothing to sustain it through a third act, and much in the third act to minimize the effect of what had gone before. Three good actresses engaged in it, Nance O'Neill, Eugenie Leontovich, and Effie Shannon.

There is a sort of "Green Pastures" in miniature in Andre Obey's "Noah," a story of the first great navigator told artlessly, as the story of Adam is told in the Connelly-Breadford opera, but with less skill in the matter of building and holding interest.

Chicago Playbills

CONTINUED:

"Sixteen," drama, with Shandiel Kallish; Blackstone theater; sec. and week.
Ina Claire in "Ode to Liberty," comedy; Grand Opera house; second week.
Abbey Theater company of Dublin in repertory of Irish plays; Harris theater; fifth and last week.
"Roberta," musical comedy; Erlanger theater; eighth and last week.
"The James Boys of Missouri," melodrama revival; Show Boat Dixiana, north branch at Diver sey parkway; fifth week.

COMING:

D'Oyly Carte Opera company, in Gilbert and Sullivan repertory; Erlanger theater; opens March 4.
"The First Legion," drama; Harris theater; opens March 4; auspices of American Theater society.
Monte Carlo Ballet Russe; Auditorium theater; March 8, 9, 10 (five performances).

WEEKLY CHANGES:
Palace theater: Vaudeville and cinema; Gene Raymond, headliner.
Chicago theater: Vaudeville and cinema; Olsen and Shutta, Raphael, headliners.

State-Lake theater: Vaudeville and cinema; Frank Libuse, headliner.
Oriental theater: Vaudeville and cinema; the late Texas Guinan's "Gang," Faith Bacon, headliners.

BURLESQUE:
Star and Garter theater, burlesque; Ada Leonard in "Fills and Thrills."

La Lehmann to Give First Recital Here

Noted Soprano of N. Y., Chicago Operas Will Sing Tomorrow Night.

By Edward Moore.

ONE of the uncommonly fine operatic singers of the present generation, Lotte Lehmann, is to give her first Chicago song recital at the Auditorium tomorrow night. She made her American debut with the Chicago Opera in 1929, when she joined the Metropolitan in 1933; she came back to sing with the Chicago Opera again last season.

But this does not tell how Lotte Lehmann, tell how, in fact, it would be difficult to find words to tell how she sang, how her voice is the warm sort of soprano that enlivens the text quite as much as the melody, how she has the sort of intelligence that gives the appearance of life to an operatic role instead of making it merely a vehicle of pleasant song.

One thing is true, however. What she did in opera indicates that she is ideally fitted to be a singer of lieder, which will make up her program tomorrow night. She will present a list that illustrates German song in both its lyric and its dramatic aspects. Of Brahms there will be "Von Bolger Liebe" and "Botschaft" of Schubert, "Ständchen" and "Der Erdbecker." There will be four Schumann numbers, including "Der Nussbaum" and "Ich Grolle Nicht." In the conclusion she will go in for Hugo Wolf and Richard Strauss, "Verborgeneheit" and "In Dem Schatten Meiner Locken" of the one, "Allerseelen" and "Zueignung" of the other.

Sharing the recital with her will be Georges Miquelle, first cellist of the Detroit Symphony orchestra. He made himself highly popular when the orchestra of which he is an important member played at the Ford Symphony gardens last summer.

Mme. Lehmann has been busy this season. She began early with the San Francisco Opera, later taking up operatic performances in Philadelphia and Chicago, and now giving a series of twenty-four recitals across the country. She made a tremendous hit with her lieder recital in New York a few days ago.

Among the important items of the future the organization known as the New York Opera Company would seem to crave an important rating. This company, sponsored by a group of prominent New Yorkers, including Mrs. Paul Cravath and Mrs. James Roosevelt, is coming to the Auditorium for two weeks beginning March 18. It promises a season of light opera such as the world of music has never seen, with casts different in type but not necessarily second in ability to those in serious opera and with standards of production comparable only to the larger institution.

Much is made of the title and it is held out that the performances will be similar to those of the Opéra-Comique in Paris, except that they will be done in English. Apparently the repertoire of the Paris Opéra-Comique is not to be drawn upon. There will be no "Germans" or "Maison" or "Lakmé." Instead there will be Offenbach's "La Vie Parisienne," another work by the same composer known to opera-goers as "The Tales of Hoffman," but here as "The Dancing Doll," and Johann Strauss' perennially attractive operetta, generally called "Fledermaus," but here "The Gay Deceiver."

One is of a new series of People's Civic concerts, to begin March 5 at the Jewish People's institute under the direction of Marcia Shupe and Bertha Ott, with the idea of spreading the spring.

Let no one think that the musical season is anywhere near an end. Quite apart from rumors of summer events, unofficial so far and therefore subject to discount, there is a fairly long list of definite promises for the spring.

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San Carlo Opera to Return April 29.

The English librettos, they say, are not translations but adaptations written in terms of 1935 theater. The changes go even to the titles. Only the gay old music will be retained. The rest, they insist, in book and performance and settings will be something entirely new.

The San Carlo Opera company will return a bit late, April 29, for a final week. Fortune Gallo, the company's impresario, says that this will inaugurate a policy of annual autumn and spring engagements at the Auditorium. He believes that it will have a double value: first, serving the musical interests of those who are absent from the city or unable to attend at one season or the other; second, bringing additional artists to the city in the spring who are not with the company in the autumn.

Wherefore the little Japanese soprano, Hizi Koyke, who was with the San Carlo company here in 1933; Sidney Rayner, tenor, here in the same engagement, and Lucille

SINGER OF GOLD COAST

Dorothy Page is prominent among the entertainers on the current cabaret program of the Gold Coast room in the Drake hotel. She is well known as a singer.

[Maurice Seymour Photo.]

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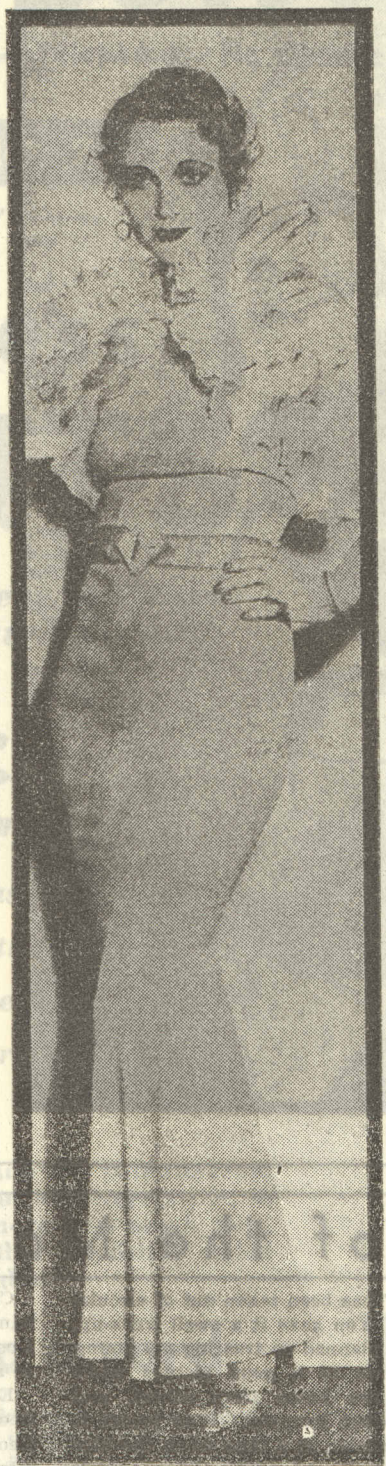
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Jesuit Drama to Be Staged Here

"THE FIRST LEGION," coming to the Harris theater on March 4, is announced as "a play about religion and not a religious play." The scene is the House of St. Gregory, a Jesuit home somewhere in America.

One of the priests grieves for the music he has given up for the order. A second has daydreams of a sacrifice of love. A third finds his faith shattered by a "miracle" accepted alike by priests, press, and parish, although known to him, through the secret of a physician's confession, as an utterly natural, rational cure. Nothing short of a real miracle can restore his faith. And this is exactly the dramatic device by which the playwright restores peace to the house.

The all-male cast includes Bert Lytell, Charles Coburn, William Ingersoll, Thomas Findlay, Leonard Lord, Dick Wallace, Howard Miller, Whitford Kane, Sydney Riggs, Harry Worth, and Carol Ashburn. The play had a long run in New York.

International.
Gilbert Miller, the producer who presents Ina Claire in "Ode to Liberty," is currently represented on Broadway, in association with Arthur Hopkins, by the hit, "Petrified Forest," starring Leslie Howard, and "Laburnum Grove," the English importation with Edmund Gwenn. Mr. Miller sailed recently to London to survey his two theaters in the British capital and seek new manuscripts.

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BEAUTY AND A COMMUNIST

Ina Claire, looking younger and gayer than ever, plays in "Ode to Liberty," at the Erlanger theater, a merry Parisienne who gets into a strange situation with a communist fugitive from justice. This drawing shows Miss Claire trying to civilize her rebellious visitor. (Drawing by Ben Cohen.)