

Drama Has a Lively Flurry Here

Four Yuletide Premieres for Chicago Stage

Holidays Bring Flurry of New Shows; Dennis King in Comedy.

By Charles Collins.

A LIVELY flurry of new shows comes sweeping into Chicago with the advent of the Christmas holidays. This is a traditional occurrence, but for several years it has been a diminishing phenomenon of the theatrical season. The premieres on the Yuletide calendar for 1934, however, mark a quickening of activity. There will be four events to challenge the attention of playgoers and reviewers—a condition which justifies a certain degree of optimism about the future of the Chicago stage.

An advance survey of these novelties in theatrical entertainment is in order. Here are the jottings that will guide my playhouse pilgrimages this week:

Dennis King—An actor with a legend for popularity in Chicago and with a past that covers both opera and the romantic drama. His engagement in "Richard of Bordeaux" was one of the high points in Chicago's last theatrical season. Mr. King will bring to the Harris theater on Christmas eve a new play called "Petticoat Fever"—a comedy said to combine the elements of romantic adventure, wit, and love affairs.

New Role for Dennis King.

The star has the role of a radio operator in a remote station on the barren coast of Labrador, where a group of travelers is stormbound. The title suggests that woman trouble breaks loose in the group, with Mr. King as its focus. The presence in the company of two attractive leading women, Ona Munson and Doris Dalton, heightens my suspicions. The history of "Petticoat Fever" is thus far limited to a recent and successful engagement in Philadelphia. The author is Mark Reed.

"Stevedore"—A drama whose opening in the Selwyn theater Christmas eve will mark the debut of a new play producing organization called the Drama Union, patterned after the Theater Union of New York. This group or movement will specialize in "the drama of social importance," which apparently means themes of proletarian protest and radical rhetoric.

This play deals with Negro dock laborers in New Orleans and a minor race riot. It was written by Paul Peters and George Sklar; it had a run of 26 weeks last season in New York, where its melodramatic scenes were regarded as highly effective; and most of its players are experienced Negro professionals. The cast is practically the same as that of the New York run; this, in fact, is the original Theater Union company and production, sponsored by the new born Drama Union.

"King Lear"—By Globe Players.

"King Lear"—A new production by the Old Globe players of A Century of Progress, to mark the opening of an engagement at the Studebaker theater on Christmas night. This version of the classic tragedy will run for an hour and a half, with Carl Benton Reid in the title role. It will be followed by "As You Like It," these two plays will form the evening program through the week. Daily matinee performances will consist of Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus" and "The Taming of the Shrew."

Monte Carlo Ballet Russe—The most brilliant company of dancers in the world today begins a week of repertory in the Auditorium theater next Wednesday. For further details see the music editor's column on another page of this section.

Showboat Dixiana—This Theban barge, to be found in the north branch at Diversely parkway, will add "Bertha, the Beautiful Sewing Machine Girl" to the sentimentalities of the season next Wednesday night.

Furthermore, the prospects for theatrical amusement in Chicago after the first of the year are distinctly encouraging. The tide in the



DENNIS KING AND COMPANY



Dennis King brings a new play, called "Petticoat Fever," to the Harris theater to enliven Chicago's Christmas holidays. Above, his leading woman, Ona Munson; center, the star himself; below, the handsome Doris Dalton. (Photos by Murray Kornman and Alfredo Valenzia)

CHICAGO PLAYBILLS

| OPENING: | CONTINUED: |
|---|--|
| Dennis King in "Petticoat Fever," comedy; Harris theater; opens tomorrow night. | "Ah Wilderness," with George M. Cohan; Theater Guild production; Briarcliff theater; third week. |
| "Stevedore," drama; Selwyn theater; opens tomorrow night. | "Romances," drama, with Eugenie Leontovich; Blackstone theater; fifth week. |
| Old Globe Theater company in plays by Shakespeare; Studebaker theater; opens Tuesday night; "King Lear" and others. | "Bertha, the Beautiful Sewing Machine Girl," melodrama revival; Show Boat Dixiana, north branch at Diversely parkway; opens Dec. 24. |
| Monte Carlo Ballet Russe, in repertory; Auditorium theater; opens Dec. 26 for one week. | "As Thousands Cheer," revue; Grand Opera house; reopens Dec. 28; seventh week. |
| WEEKLY CHANGES: | COMINGS: |
| Palace theater: Vaudeville and cinema; Milton Berle, headliner. | "Roberta," musical comedy; Erlanger theater; opens Jan. 6. |
| Chicago theater: Vaudeville and cinema; Christmas revue. | Abbey Theater company of Dublin, in repertory; Harris theater; opens Jan. 28. |
| State-Lake theater: Vaudeville and cinema; Joe Laurie's revue, headliner. | Eva La Gallienne in "L'Aiglon," and other plays; Grand Opera house; opens Feb. 4. |
| Star and Garter theater: Burlesque; Ada Leonard in "Christmas Polkas." | |

depression of the legitimate theater has turned, according to present omens, and the New York impresarios are beginning to send companies on tour again.

"Roberta," notable musical comedy hit on Broadway last year, is scheduled to open at the Erlanger theater Jan. 6, following "Ah Wilderness." [This is the show that contains the popular song, "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes."] The Abbey Theater company of Dublin will bring its repertory of Irish plays, including several new items, to the Harris theater for an engagement that will begin Jan. 28. Eva La Gallienne will arrive at the Grand Opera house Feb. 4 in "L'Aiglon" and other plays.

Other theatrical possibilities of the winter are the D'Oyly Carte Opera company, in a repertory of the works

of Gilbert and Sullivan; "Dods-worth," long-run New York hit, with its original company, and "The Great Waltz," an elaborate musical show which has been flourishing in the huge Rockefeller Center theater.

The Christmas blooming of new productions on the New York stage this week recalls the pre-depression era. The list of premieres, not including two reopenings, runs to 15 titles. To equal this number you will have to turn back to the Christmas of 1928.

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Ferde Grofe's Band at Drake; Cabaret Shows

FERDE GROFE, composer and arranger of scores who has been one of the leading figures in the establishment of jazz music on an artistic basis, will bring his dance orchestra to the Drake hotel next Saturday night. For many years he was pianist and arranger for Paul Whiteman, and he has made important contributions to the library of orchestra jazz. His orchestration of Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" is famous. Grofe's dance band has played engagements in many first class hotel dining rooms.

Elaborate plans have been made for New Year's eve parties in the cafes and cabarets. Some of the downtown hotels have arranged for special floor space in their ballrooms for the celebration, which promises to be the most spirited since 1930.

Cherniavsky, the orchestra leader famous for his musical eccentricities, will add color to the holiday spirit that will pervade the Joseph Urban room tomorrow night with a "Christmas Eve in Moscow" celebration. During his two years at the Chicago theater he has proven himself not only a musician but a showman. By adding a classic touch to popular dance rhythms he produces a new tempo which he calls "symphio-synopation." He has a 13 piece band. The floor show includes the Townsends, a dance team, and Robert Royce, singer. On Christmas eve Leonie Mayer and Lester Hayes will offer Russian dances, and a Russian revue will be featured.

Paul Oscar, former producer of stage shows for the Paramount-Public chain of theaters, will take charge of the cabaret program at Chez Paree on Dec. 27. He will form a new ballet, and is preparing special dancing numbers, called "Flamenco," "Cosmopolitan Scene," "Black and Rose," and "Two Moods."

The Hersey Twins, Edyth and Billy, a dancing team, have been added to the cabaret program at the Blackhawk restaurant, where Kay Kyser is band leader and master of the revels.

The Christmas eve party in the Marine dining room of the Edgewater Beach hotel will have the St. Peter's church choir as its feature. These fifty singers in vestments, carrying lighted candles, will be accompanied by James Kozak's orchestra in a repertory of Christmas carols and anthems.

Bob Ripa, of the Empire room's new "Holiday Revue," which was launched last Thursday night, is regarded a new genius in juggling antics. He is 4 years, 13 years old. Other entertainers are De Bone, from Maxine's of Paris; Harris, Claire, and Shannon, dancing trio; Tommy Martin, sleight-of-hand man; Roy Cropper, operetta tenor; and Ted Weems' band.

Old London Inn, a sequel to the Cheshire Cheese Inn of the English Village at A Century of Progress, has been opened at 744 Rush street. Same management, same cuisine, with elaborations; and some

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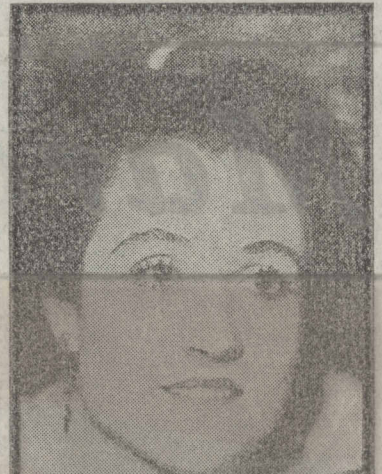
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PLAYS CLASSIC HEROINES

Irene Tedrow is one of the leading actresses of the Old Globe company, formerly of A Century of Progress. This famous organization has ended its stay at McKiver's theater as an adjunct to the cinema, and will begin a run at the Studebaker on Christmas night, giving programs of two plays matinee and night.

(U. A. Atwell Photo.)

of the Merle England pageanters and nummers as official greeters.

The New Year's eve celebration in the Walnut room of the Bismarck hotel will include an expanded floor show. Bliss, Lewis, and Ash, soft shoe dancers, and the McNamee Sisters, singers and dancers, are among the recent additions to the troupe.

The Floridian room in the St. Clair hotel provides the atmosphere of a winter seaside resort in the subtropics. Jimmie Bell's band plays for dancing.

The French Casino's new revue, which gives Johann Strauss III, his American debut, has been received as a worthy successor to the "Folies Bergeres." It blends the atmosphere of Parisian and Viennese night life, and contains as many performers as a first class Broadway revue. The program has more humor than its predecessor, and Robbins, a comedian from the Ambassadors music hall of Paris, is a notable contributor to its mirth.

This a brilliant spectacle of the super-cabaret type. The revue is now divided into three sections.

Good Actor

PERRIE WATKINS is making his first Chicago appearance in "Romance" at the Blackstone since he played here with William Courtney in "Dangerous People." He appeared recently in New York in Elmer Rice's "We, the People," and in "Mad Hopes," with Violet Kemble-Cooper. Previous Broadway engagements included "The Acquittal," with Crystal Heston, and "Meet the Wife," with Mary Boland. Last spring and summer he appeared as leading man with the Henderson Play Festival company in Milwaukee and Ann Arbor. He played opposite Mary Pickford on her recent vaudeville tour in "The Church Mouse," but not in Chicago.

Chicago Dancer.

Margaret Saye, a Chicago dancer, has entered the cast of "As Thousands Cheer" at the Grand Opera house.

SHOW BOAT DIXIANA—In showboat Dixiana, from Sleeping Beauty by Ichaikovsky; Boutique Fantasque (new), Fantastic Toy Shop; Beau Danube.

THURSDAY EVE—Fire Bird (new), Union Pacific, and Sylphides.

FRIDAY MATINEE, Dec. 28—Aurora's Wedding, Scandals of Beau Danube.

FRIDAY EVE, Dec. 28—Aurora's Wedding, Fire Bird, Prince Igor.

SATURDAY MATINEE, Dec. 29—Contes Russes (new), Boutique Fantasque, Prince Igor.

SATURDAY EVE, Dec. 29—Aurora's Wedding, Union Pacific, Beau Danube.

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