

# Masterpiece of Stagecraft by Max Reinhardt

Festival Production of Classic Play Stimulates Drama in Chicago.

By Charles Collins.

MAX REINHARDT'S staging of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," which is approaching the end of its stay at the Auditorium theater, has been a much needed stimulus to the Chicago stage. While we are under its spell we may believe that we are having an important dramatic season. It refreshes the fountains of hope and sweeps us out of the backwash of theatrical provincialism.

The fact that this superb spectacle came to us from California interests me keenly. For generations Chicago has been looking toward New York as the source of our playing supply, but now the city finds itself no longer able to count upon the fecundity and zeal of the Broadway impresarios. For a complexity of reasons, which have been discussed so often that the subject is worn threadbare, Broadway has let us down painfully and, perhaps, permanently. If Chicago is to have a theatrical life, and if our playgoers are not to perish in the jungle of cinema shows, we must either create it for ourselves—a job at which we seem to be disgracefully inept—or find it outside of the New York system, which has sold its life on "the road" for a mess of film rights.

California as Rescuer of Stage.

I cannot wait for Chicago to become a "producing center." That, apparently, is a matter requiring many lifetimes of patience. Therefore I observe with enthusiasm this manifestation of energy that comes from California, and rejoice over the fact that the west coast is not completely obsessed by the motion picture industry.

I also hope that reports of the crowds which have been pouring into the Auditorium theater for the last ten nights to witness this magnificent show are spreading an epidemic of jaundice among the Broadway producers. And if the New York Theater Guild takes to hitting its fingernails furiously so much the better.

Max Reinhardt is giving us a Shakespearean production on the festival scale such as has attracted swarms of tourists every summer to his activities in Salzburg, in the Austrian Tyrol. It is in direct contrast to the miniature Shakespeare with which the Old Globe players have won our affection. It employs all the theater arts—scene design, dancing, pantomime, a certain degree of pageantry, and orchestral music—in addition to the direct acting of the characters; and it blends these elements into a beautiful ensemble with perfect unity of effect.

Drama Returns to Magnificence.

As a festival play the performance moves at a leisurely pace, seeking for every legitimate embellishment of Shakespeare's fantastic tale. It is a full bodied show, giving the complete text, and also the entire score of Mendelssohn's enchanting incidental music, which comes to its climax in the great wedding march that has summoned millions of couples to the matrimonial altar.

When compared with this ample poetic entertainment, the typical skimp play from Broadway, opening at 8:45 and closing at 10:45, dealing with a small group of humdrum folks, seems like a sandwich beside a banquet. In his "Midsummer Night's Dream" Reinhardt restores the drama to its old status of magnificence. He also opens wide the gateways of the imagination.

I have seen a better Shakespearean acting than this performance contains, but I have never seen a finer Shakespearean production. The visual appeal in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" is all-important, and Reinhardt has given the play its perfect environment. His brilliant stage direction.



## DESIGNS HER OWN BALLET

Ruth Page, brilliant soloist of the danc and ballet director of the Chicago Grand Opera company, will present a ballet program at the Civic Opera house on Friday night as one of the opera company's special nights. Choreographer and designer of the four members of the program, she will be the principal dancer in three of them.

## NEW IN CHICAGO TOMORROW

EDWARD SHELDON, author of "Romance," which Playgoers, Inc., is presenting in the Blackstone theater with Eugene Leontovich in the leading role, wrote five successful plays before he was twenty-seven years old. The fifth was "Romance," which turned out to be an international hit.

Sheldon was born in Chicago and lived here up to the time he enrolled at Harvard. At the university, he took a course in dramatic literature and playwriting from Prof. George Pierce Baker. During his senior year he saw an advertisement of a New York play broker, and he sent her a

manuscript he had written as part of his class work. It was "Salvation Nell," and it reached Broadway with Mrs. Fiske in the leading role. In his next play, "The Nigger," he dealt with the southern Negro problem. His third venture, "The Boss," dealt with civic politics. In "The High Road," he developed a woman's character from girlhood to middle life. "Romance," his fifth play, telling a romantic love story, brought stardom to Doris Keane in 1913.

Miss Leontovich's company includes Pierre Watkins, Isabel Baring, Phil Huston, Tyrone Power Jr., Ludmilla Toretzka, and others. The premiere will take place tomorrow night.

rection has placed the world of Oberon and Titania before your eyes and made it no trouble at all for you to believe in fairies.

Reinhardt's American Future.

After the Chicago engagement the company will transplant the preserved oak and pine trees of its enchanted grove to other cities—Milwaukee, St. Louis, etc.—to complete its demonstration that "the road" has not abandoned the classic drama. Eventually it will end its travels in the Rockefeller Center theater, New York, as a successor to "The Great Waltz." Reinhardt's American career, so happily begun with "A Midsummer Night's Dream," will have new chapters before many months have passed. He now has a contract with the Warner Brothers for motion picture work, but he has no idea of becoming absorbed into the cinema trade. He is already planning for another large scale production, which may be staged this spring or reserved for next summer's California festival. This will be a drama on biblical themes by Franz Werfel, eminent in central Europe and already known in this country through the Theater Guild's staging of his "Goat Song." The play has an elaborate score by Kurt Weill and calls for simultaneous acting on four or five stage levels.

Lunt-Fontanne.

Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne will begin rehearsals for Noel Coward's "Point Valaine" this week. The play will open Christmas night in Boston.

## Tragic Love of Emily Dickinson Is Theme of Play

"Brittle Heaven" Shows Helen Hunt Jackson's Husband as Her Woer.

By Burns Mantle.

NEW YORK.—[Special.]—Nobody knows, though a good many have wasted time wondering, how those who have gone on spend their time in heaven. Every body has come to accept hell as a place of definite regimentation, but heavenly diversions are less certain.

Has Emily Dickinson, poet, for instance, been concerned about the fairly persistent efforts of playwrights and others to chart explanations of her earthly love life? Has she brought the subject up for discussion in meetings of the society for reunited lovers? Or has she simply let the matter pass?

A few years ago Susan Glaspell, taking the Dickinson legend in hand, wrote "Alison's House" and won a Pulitzer prize with it as drama, though she left the matter of Miss Dickinson's love life still obscure.

This week we have a drama called "Brittle Heaven" in which Vincent York and Frederick J. Pohl, working with a biographical novel by Josephine Pollitt (Mrs. Pohl), called "Emily Dickinson," seek to show that the

poet's true love was the husband of her best friend, and he, the Maj. Edward Hunt, who married the lady afterward known as Helen Hunt Jackson, author of mother's favorite love story, "Ramona."

Civil War Prevented Poet from Eloping.

It is the contention of interested parties that Miss Dickinson could not have eloped as many beautiful love poems as she wrote to imaginary lovers only. One group insists that she was deeply enamored of a minister of the gospel, Dr. Charles Wadsworth of Philadelphia. Another insists that she really had several love affairs more or less hidden from prying New England neighbors.

The Pollitt-Pohl-York trio offers evidence that it was Maj. Hunt who caused the Dickinson heart to beat; that he fell in love with her by reading her letters to his wife; that Helen Hunt became extremely jealous; that Emily thereupon declared she was prepared to sacrifice everything for a future with Maj. Hunt, and might have done so if the major had not been killed during a civil war assignment before the happy solution of the triangle could be attained.

Dorothy Gish is playing the Emily Dickinson role in "Brittle Heaven," presenting the poet in her early twenties and making her a gentle,

witty, saddened, attractive lady who speaks a little stiltedly, frequently in lines lifted from the Dickinson poems. This puts both the Gish girls to work on Broadway, as Lillian is playing a young harlot in "Within the Gates."

Albert Van Deker, the handsome young man you may recall as the count in "Grand Hotel," is the Maj. Hunt, and Edith Atwater the Helen. It is a pleasant little drama, but it makes this particular Dickinson love affair fairly commonplace and unimportant.

Which, as said, makes me wonder just what the late Miss Dickinson may be thinking of it, if anything. Wondering about Emily, too, reminds me of an old heaven story that some one revived last week. This one concerns a quarrel between St. Peter and Satan over certain breaks in the wall separating their domains. Several lost souls had escaped into heaven and St. Peter was irritated. The breaks, said he, would have to be fixed and Satan had better see to it. Satan only laughed.

"In that case I shall be compelled to sue you!" firmly announced St. Peter.

"Sue me?" roared Satan. "Sue me? And where would you get a lawyer?"

Irish Players Open with "Plough and the Stars."

The Irish came on Monday, and hav-

ing a manager with a sense of news values they began their season with Sean O'Casey's "The Plough and the Stars."

O'Casey, as you know, has been much in the local prints the last several weeks. His "Within the Gates," which some liked and some found obscure and unsatisfying, stands, by his own confession, as the type of drama to which his disgust with his own realistic plays has driven him.

O'Casey, whose early success was based on a firm foundation of realism, now finds the realistic play the hilliest sort of play the theater has to offer. He would dedicate the theater to a drama of symbols entirely. "There can never be any actuality on a stage," says O'Casey, "except an actuality that is unnecessary and utterly out of place. An actor representing a cavalier may come on the stage mounted on a real horse, but the horse will always look ridiculous. . . . The closer we approach to real life the further we move away from the drama. There is a deeper life than the life we see and hear with the open ear and the open eye, and this is the life important and the life everlasting."

Which has a fine ring of idealism as well as a good bit of common sense in reasoning. But the public that has been brought up in a theater devoted to narrative plays and nurtured on realism is still fairly mystified by the O'Casey application of symbols.

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TODAY . . . Box office opens 10 A. M.  
Last Sunday Matinee and Evening Performance of  
**MAX REINHARDT'S**  
world famous spectacle  
**"A Midsummer Night's Dream"**  
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Leading Tenor, Metropolitan Opera  
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Second Event, Monday Night Made Series—  
POSTPONED FROM FRIDAY, NOV. 23, TO MON. EVE., DEC. 3

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Box Office Open  
**TOMORROW**  
1000 tickets \$2.00, \$1.10, \$1.65, \$2.20, \$2.75  
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presenting among the greatest international artists  
**LA ARGENTINA**  
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**DORIS HUMPHREY**  
**CHARLES WEIDMAN**  
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EVE'S (EXCEPT SUN.) 55¢-\$1.10-\$1.65-\$2.20  
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CHICAGO'S GREATEST OPERA SEASON

Mon., Nov. 26—LOHENGRIN with Maria Jeriza, LaMance, Schiffoer, Barone and Jagel. Weber conducts.

Tues., Nov. 27—CARMEN with Hilda Burck, Coe, Gladys, Stange, Maxwell, Ada Paggi and Duncan. Van Grove conducts.

Wed., Nov. 28—SALOME with Jeriza, Sharnova, Jagel and Rayer. Van Grove conducts. FOLLAGE with Lucia Diano, Pans-Gassner, Morrell, Purcell and Cavadore. Kopp conducts.

Sat. Mat., Dec. 1—MADAME BUTTERFLY with Lucia Diano, Pans-Gassner, Morrell and Bentonielli. Papi conducts.

Evening—AIDA with LaMance, Burke, Jagel and Morrell. Weber conducts.

Mon., Dec. 3—SALOME with Jeriza, Jagel, Rayer and Sharnova. Van Grove conducts.

Tues., Dec. 4—MARTHA with Edith Mason, May Barrow (debut), Bentonielli and Rayer. Papi conducts.

Wed., Dec. 5—NORMA—Special Bellini Centenary, with Della Banti (American debut), Gladys, Stange and Gudi. Papi conducts.

Fri., Dec. 7—ALL BALLET, conducted by Ruth Page.

Sat., Mat., Dec. 8—JANNHAUSER with Lucie Lohm, Joe Gladys, Schiffoer, Althouse, Belarsky, Weber conducts.

Evening—LA BOHEME with Jean Tennyson (debut), Chant, Paggi and Morrell. Papi conducts.

(CAST AND ORCHESTRA CHANGES)

NOV. 30—SPECIAL ALL-BALLET PROGRAM  
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Seats 85c to \$2.20, tax incl., box office now

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**CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA** Frederick Stock  
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SOLOISTS THIS WEEK:  
TUESDAY THUR. EVE  
AT 2:15 FRI. AFTERN.  
Benno Moiseiwitsch Mae Doelling Schmidt  
All-Rachmaninoff Program-Aria (Vocal) Concerto in G Major, Op. 26, E Minor; Concerto for Piano No. 3, D Minor.  
"TOP" CONCERT SAT. EVE. (2:30 to 8:00)

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The Lovely Star of Opera—Concert—Cinema—Radio  
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Mat. Today 2:15—3:50-5:00-5:15  
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