



The inimitable Mitzi in the specially fitted automobile dressing-room she uses on tours

Road Star By Hugh Leamy

"Broadway isn't everything," Mitzi's manager said. She never forgot it. Her friends and admirers remote from New York have always had her loyalty. Perhaps that's why she's a Broadway headliner too

HER name is really Mizzi Hajos. It was the late Henry W. Savage who reasoned that as long as it was pronounced Mitzi it might as well be billed that way, and as long as only one half of one per cent of the American adult population could pronounce the Hajos properly, that part of it might as well be dropped entirely. Perhaps too—for he was a foresighted gentleman—he had in mind the future saving in electric-light bills when he plucked Mitzi from vaudeville almost 15 years ago.

Mitzi is just four feet ten inches in what I suppose you would call height. Though you wouldn't believe that if you saw her almost lost in the great double-high living-room of her duplex apartment home. She has the bluest eyes you ever saw in your life and an accent just as pronounced as ever you've heard it when she was before the footlights. An accent, by the way, no traces of which you're going to find beyond this point in this interview—and that's a promise.

She came here from Budapest when she was about 14. She came here to make Broadway, after a rigorous apprenticeship, first in special dramatic schools and later in the theaters of her native land. Well, she made Broadway,

all right. But in doing so she discovered a vaster, no less important region west of the Mazda Meadows.

"Broadway isn't everything, remember," Mr. Savage told her when first he took her under his managerial wing.

"And Broadway isn't everything, I remembered," she told me the other afternoon as we chatted in her apartment. She remembered it more keenly perhaps than any other player who has achieved stardom, for surely no one has been more loyal to the audiences of the fast-disappearing "road" houses. For the reason that she has toured from coast to coast herself with every production in which she has ever appeared on Broadway and with the original production as intact as possible; for the reason that in 5,000 performances she has missed only one, she has a stout and friendly following all over the land and is as well known—perhaps a little more so—outside New York as she is on Broadway.

An Eye for Business

I have never talked with an artiste—and any sophisticate who wants to go around cracking that Mitzi isn't an artiste gets a poke in the eye and his driver's license suspended for one year—I have never, I say, talked with an artiste who had a keener or more impersonal sense of loyalty to her public. Hers is more the attitude of a manufacturer of some article that is in measured demand.

"The customers want my stuff. It's my business and to my interest to give it to them and to give them the best I can." Thus the manufacturer. And thus Mitzi.

The lads whose rapid world is limited by the somewhat elastic boundaries of New York's white-light district will

raise their eyebrows and tell you, "Ah, but Mitzi's just for the family trade."

Well, they're not so darn' original, at that. That's just what Mr. Savage decided she was going to be 15 years ago. That's why he schooled her in the ways of the road—not that Broadway hasn't its share of the family trade, though they'd never admit it: neither Broadway nor the trade!

"Don't get the New York idea that only New York counts," Mr. Savage said. "More people have ruined their pocketbooks even while they made their Broadway reputations than ever lost money on coast-to-coast trips. Besides, if I'm going to put \$50,000 or more into a show, you're going to play it and play it till there isn't anything left to play."

So she started out in Sari and played it till there wasn't anything left to play. She was a peasant girl in that. People say there is a formula for all Mitzi plays. Mitzi says there isn't; her rôles have always been different.

"For instance," she says, "after Sari came Pom Pom, in which I played an actress. Then I was an immigrant acrobat in Head Over Heels, then a street urchin in The Magic Ring, and then more recently in The Madcap I was a movie extra."

Yes, but there is a formula, and people know it and that's what makes them stick. Migosh, look at the Alger books!

"I won't play any rôle in which I don't like the character I'm playing," said Mitzi. Which must be pretty tough nowadays when most of the important characters in the dramas seem to be peculiarly undesirable persons.

"So long as the character isn't not nice, I like to play anything they want me to play. Oh, I likes dat." (My goodness, there we go!)

It must be a relief to theatrical managers to handle a star as businesslike and unspoiled by temperament as Mitzi. During her long association with Mr. Savage they had only one quarrel—well, one serious quarrel. They were like father and daughter, this beloved producer and the youngster he had nursed along to stardom. He taught her showmanship and loyalty; much of which was trying but all of which was good for her, she admits. And when her father was killed during the war, Mr. Savage telegraphed her:

"Don't cry, Baby. You have me for a father."

The only serious argument that marked eleven seasons of association, until Mr. Savage virtually stopped producing and Mitzi went with the Shuberts, came about during the early days of Pom Pom.

They'd opened in Hartford, swung to Springfield, and were due for Boston the following Monday. That was to be the big opening night. When they hit Boston for Sunday rehearsals they found a most disappointing set for the third act. It was one that had been used in a previous Savage production.

Little Things that Count

"Mr. Savage was not stingy," Mitzi told me, "but he was—well, just a little bit careful. So he'd had what was once a library set made over into the set for an act that was supposed to be played in a boudoir. But it still looked like a library set: it never could look like anything but a library set. My, I was angry and disappointed, for, let me tell you, scenery is a very, very important part of any production, talent and music and everything else considered.

"Well, we rehearsed all day and were called back again for rehearsals in the evening. At the close of the afternoon I was so worked up that I walked off the stage and ran to my dressing-room and toppled over against the table and cried and cried and *cried*. They must have heard me on the stage.

"Anyway, Mr. Savage came down, and he took a great big bandanna handkerchief like he often wore around his neck during rehearsals, and he wiped away my tears, threatened to spank me and then promised me that everything would be all right. By that night, he assured me, the matter of the offending set would be straightened out. It was.

"When we got to the theater that evening he met me triumphantly. 'Your Uncle Dudley's fixed everything fine,' he told me. 'You needn't worry any more about that set for the third act. We're not going to have any third act.' I protested that it couldn't be done, but Mr. Savage was firm. He was always firm.

"So we opened Pom Pom with only two acts and played it for two years and a half. But" (and there was a gleam of satisfaction in those remarkable eyes) "after it closed Mr. Savage came to me and said: 'You were right, after all. If we'd kept the third act, we could have played it *five* years.'"

Mitzi was the first of her family to go on the stage. Her father held a government post in Budapest. She always showed a talent for theatricals and was dancing and reciting at charity affairs before she was ten. Then, as the talent persisted, she was enrolled in a national school of the theater.

"Going on the stage in Europe was not the casual affair that it is here," she said, "I got my foundation in two years that were devoted entirely to attending the training. We over there don't start in the chorus and work up as so many have done in America. At least at that time, we didn't. Of course, since the war it's changed a lot."

It was William Morris, the vaudeville booking (*Continued on page 50*)

Master of Sinister House

By E. Phillips Oppenheim



The Story Thus Far:

MARTIN HEWS, born a cripple, is an unscrupulous collector of art treasures. To aid him he has Isaacs, a famous art dealer; Donkin, a London gang leader; and Major Owston. He lives in a huge mansion on the Breezeley marshes with his niece, Beatrice Essiter.

Jim Donkin and Owston are engaged in hunting Joseph, master criminal, and Hews' greatest enemy, in the East End and West End, respectively. Donkin steals Joseph's girl, Rachel, and flees with her to Breezeley. Hews keeps the girl and Donkin leaves England.

Owston and Beatrice Essiter dine at Claridge's, before Lady Bonofar's reception, and at another table is a strange person who stares at Beatrice. Owston inquires his name and is told that he is Mr. X.

After the reception they go with Lady Bonofar's brother, Mr. Leo-

pold, to the Blue Skies night club. Owston, in the office of the club, is drugged and Beatrice abducted. The general belief is that Owston was drunk.

Owston realizes that Leopold is in league with Joseph but can prove nothing. He also knows, from an impudent note, that Joseph has taken Beatrice. Martin Hews, with cruel cunning, shows this letter to Rachel, and releases her.

Soon after, Owston, with Inspector Bloor of Scotland Yard, visits the office of the Blue Skies, but finds nothing helpful.

Returning to Owston's flat the two men are horrified to find Rachel bound to a chair with all her hair cut off and her legs mutilated. She, driven by jealousy, had threatened Joseph. She gives Joseph's address but when the police arrive the house is blown up by a bomb.

The next day Hews gives Owston instructions for purchasing a jade Buddha for half a million pounds.

XI

I FOUND a car waiting outside my rooms and Bloor, as nearly excited as I had ever seen him, in my easy-chair.

"Good evening, Major," he greeted me. "I had a few minutes to spare, and I thought I'd look in and tell you the news. We're for it tonight."

"The raid?"

He nodded.

"Information has been coming in fast and furious," he confided. "Let me tell you this first, though. We are out of one of our troubles. We got the Cheap-side burglars at luncheon time. A fair catch it was too."

"Good work!" I exclaimed heartily. "Whereabouts?"

"We got them in a restaurant down by Liverpool Street. No signs of a squeal from them, but one of our men caught Rogers—that's the ringleader of the three—trying to swallow a piece of paper. It was a note the waiter had just brought in. Evidently one of their places of call. Can't tell you what was in the note, but it means that things are moving. Then the men I planted down Shoreditch way have been sending messages up one by one. They are all agreed the gang's full strength is concentrated in a cramped radius of a few hundred yards."

"But what about Joseph?" I asked anxiously.

"It's no good waiting forever," Bloor pointed out. "When Joseph left Eldon Street he left the neighborhood altogether, and we haven't a line on him yet. All the same, if we can break the gang he'll never again be the man he was. Just cast your eye on this plan."

He spread it out upon the table, and I looked over his shoulder.

"It's a nasty district," he explained, "and the danger is that directly we're known to be there they'll slip away from the further houses and either get us on the flanks if they want to fight, or creep away one by one to the lodging houses by the river, which are the very devil to search. We'll have to take our chances. Here's the river, you see, and along there are the wharves. We've got the firm that owns the big yards to close their iron gates, so there's no getting past those, and we've a couple

I looked down for an instant on one of the most astonishing spectacles I had ever witnessed

of police boats patrolling the river. This row of houses here is called Tanner's Cottages, and in No. 3 we know that Clooney is hiding, the man who's wanted for that bank business. That will give us something to start on.

"WE SHALL open up there, looking for him, and down behind, in this corner, Patt Risewell was seen yesterday sneaking out after dark to the pub there. We want him pretty badly too. The road on the other side is Fellmonger's Lane—nearly the worst spot in London. We're going to comb that out, house by house, with picked men who are used to handling a gun. We could have stirred things up there before, but we decided to wait until we could make the big noise, and I'm glad we did. Getting the Cheap-side burglars has set our hands free. The chief doesn't mind so much now what we do."

"What time is the line-up?" I inquired.

"Not too early. I am sending my men down two or three at a time, all scattered around, and they are closing in as the clock strikes twelve. I don't want the slightest sign of anything unusual until then."

I drew a sigh of relief. By midnight, if all went well, I should probably be a free man.

"I'm in it, of course?" I asked.

Bloor appeared doubtful.

"You're a bit of a marked man, you know," he reminded me. "You made yourself very conspicuous and obnoxious to the gang down at Breezeley. Then, if by any chance Joseph gets to know of the fighting and comes down to help, he'll take jolly good care that you're put out of the way."

"If there was any chance of Joseph's being there," I told him savagely, "it would take all Scotland Yard to keep me away. I'll be frank with you, Bloor. I've got another job on first, but the moment that's over I'm for the East End. I know where to find you, and I hope I'll hear the guns popping when I come."

"You'll stick to me, then," he stipulated. "I don't want any of my fellows

to throw their lives away tonight, and I certainly don't want anything to happen to you. Besides the men I've told you about, I'm taking a hundred constables off the streets as special reserves. Frankly, I'd rather they closed in and made a siege of it. We can wait, whereas they can't. Of course, if they come out into the open, then it must be a fight. We're not afraid of that, but I hate to sacrifice good men for such scum."

"Bloor," I said, "this is a big show that you have taken on tonight."

"It was always going to be a big show that finished Joseph," he remarked grimly.

"I wonder! You'll think I'm a dun-derhead, I know, Bloor, and I dare say I am in many ways but I've got a queer feeling about this evening."

"Out with it," he begged. "I've rather a sympathy for presentiments."

"DON'T you think," I suggested, "that Joseph has made it a little too easy for you? Remember, he's never brought his whole gang together before. You've come across fragments of it in Kensington, fragments in Bermondsey, fragments in Camberwell, or at Tufnell

