

of a unit set for Ernst Toller's revolutionary play of 1919, *Masses and Man*. The set has a starkness quite suitable to the play and is designed with economy of line and material. It consists of three platforms which are shifted in relation to one another to form six scenes of widely varying mood and character. W. Craig Smith won third prize with a set for *R.U.R.*, which depended in design on a background of huge steel girders and a pattern of steel-framed windows. Sets for O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* were among the most effective. But unfortunately it was not shown whether the structure that served for several of the sets would be adequate for the remainder of them.

All in all, the models this year were better than ever before and seemed to show more understanding of the practical problems of play production. Most of them are such that the average little theater could adapt them to its requirements with little cost.

The judges were Harry Wagstaffe Gribble, Frank Benesch, and Lee Simonson. Mr. Simonson designed the sets for *Masses and Man* when it was produced by the Theatre Guild in 1924.

J. W. TILDEN.

Federal Theatre Interprets Lincoln

PRELUDE TO GLORY, the Federal Theatre Project's play about the youth of Abraham Lincoln, comes along at this particular moment as an impressive argument for the passage of the Coffee Arts Bill, which among other things would put the Project on a permanent non-relief basis. We need more plays like *Prelude to Glory*, which wouldn't have the chance of a snowball in hell on Broadway, because it's neither fancy nor grandiose, and sticks straightforwardly to its subject, and the actors who play in it prove that they have the right to secure job tenure and to go on pleasing audiences as they are doing at this moment at the Maxine Elliott Theatre.

E. P. Conkle's play shows the young Lincoln's first steps away from the sluggish life of adversity-racked farmers to the country store in New Salem, where he began to read law, and where he fell in love with Ann Rutledge. It is Mr. Conkle's whim that Ann first stirred in Lincoln a knowledge of his capacities and the longing for a broader field of endeavor, and that when she died, stricken by the fever, his newly born ambition wilted; only the thought of her disappointment in him kept him from creeping back to his old home, defeated, and set him instead on the road to Springfield to practice law.

Actually, despite the reality of Lincoln's love for Ann and its tragic climax, Mr. Conkle has taken considerable liberties; Lincoln was already in the state legislature of Illinois when he and Ann became engaged. His ambition had stirred of its own power and needed no coaxing and scolding to be roused. By obscuring the determination which impelled him from his earliest days, Mr. Conkle has to a cer-

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tain extent depreciated the character. With this reservation we can accept his portrait as an honest and touching one, which, thanks to the performance of Stephen Courtleigh, sustains a play that is hardly more than a chronicle by the force of a great personality. Mr. Courtleigh does an extraordinary job in reincarnating it. After the first few startled moments we settle back to admit that this *was* Lincoln—his awkwardness, his humility, his gentleness, his humor, and vigor, as they must have been. Even the resemblance (and it cannot be entirely a make-up job) is striking, and goes beyond physical attributes of pose and gesture and facial expression to the creation of a spiritual quality, a personality, which is acting in the true sense of the term. Stephen Courtleigh takes a high place along with the half a dozen other talented players who have been uncovered by the Federal Theatre. He is ably supported by an excellent ensemble performance. Particularly good are the mass scenes—the Forum Club debate, the election meeting at the blacksmith's shop, the wrestling match—which are ably staged by Leo Bulgakov and played to the hilt by the entire company.

Prelude to Glory could be a better play. While the author suggests such influences on the young Lincoln as the smoldering problem of slavery and secession, and the opening up of a great new country, they are unduly subordinated to Lincoln's tragically interrupted idyl. We see the greatness of the man in the youth's quick sympathy and imagination, but we miss some sign of the anger and compassion which were to weld those qualities into statesmanship and great humanity. Perhaps it is asking too much of a play that has no such aspiration, but *Prelude to Glory* does not do its

Recently Recommended Plays

Haiti (Lafayette, N. Y.). Rex Ingram plays the lead in this stirring tale of how one of Toussaint L'Overture's generals foiled Napoleon's attempt to restore slavery in Haiti.

One-Third of a Nation (Adelphi, N. Y.). The current issue of *The Living Newspaper*, headlining the lack of adequate housing for President Roosevelt's 33.1-3 percent, and emphasizing the need for action. Thoroughly documented, witty, and admirably produced.

The Shoemaker's Holiday (National, N. Y.). Alternating with *Julius Caesar* and produced by the Mercury Theatre, Dekker's play represents with vigor and authority the Elizabethan love of life. A bawdy and lusty comedy that must be seen.

The Cradle Will Rock (Windsor, N. Y.). Marc Blitzstein's anti-fascist play, using music and satire as implements in the people's fight. (Closes April 2.)

A Doll's House (Broadhurst, N. Y.). A splendid performance of one of Ibsen's best.

Pins and Needles (Labor Stage, N. Y.). A sprightly social revue, sponsored by the I.L.G.W.U. and staged by union members. His tunes by Harold Rome and a lively book give the cast something to go to work on. Two companies are soon going on the road.

subject matter justice. Nevertheless it provides an engrossing evening in the theater, thanks in no small degree to the men and women on the Federal Theatre Project.

ELEANOR FLEXNER.

Boris Shchukin's Portrayal of Lenin

ON a murky October day in 1917 a train from Finland is approaching the Russian border. In the cab of the locomotive there are two men besides the crew, a tall, fur-hatted fellow, and a stocky man in a worn and comfortable cap, leaning out the window with his back to us, as the engine rocks through the mist-enveloped landscape.

The short man turns to speak to his companion, and a shock runs through the audience when they see his face upon the screen. It is Vladimir Ilyich. Lenin!

It is Lenin with his thumbs hung in the arm-holes of his vest, Lenin of the descriptive gesture, the brown eyes squinting under the marble baldness, Lenin, whose first presence was enough to make an admirer. He is the scribbler of history in the mornings of exile, the impatient walker of the revolutionary's refuge, the maker of great strategies and small enemies, whose every dark defeat was a milestone to victory.

As the train travels toward Holy Russia, the conflagration of imperialist war has burned into gray embers, from which the great flower of new life is sprouting, breaking into the air from the earth of factory, battlefield, and farm. Lenin is going up to Petrograd on the eve of the October Revolution.

Recently Recommended Movies

Generals Without Buttons. A masterful study of child psychology with a vein of anti-war satire running throughout. A French production.

Mad About Music. A musical with Deanna Durbin. The first musical in a year of Tuesdays from which you could drop the music and still have an entertainment.

The Ballad of the Cossack Golota. Heart-warming and adventurous tale of the Civil War in Russia, photographed with the feeling of a Breughel winterscape.

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