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Rice, and Clare Booth have offered this slogan—by design. Philip Barry advanced it out of apparent muddle-headedness. But by not clarifying the issues of anti-Nazism versus true international anti-fascism, *Watch on the Rhine* lends itself to distortion by the enemies of the people, those fascists who are currently disguised as anti-fascists.

The play itself is highly uneven. It lacks the tight and almost inevitable construction of *The Little Foxes*, as well as the mounting emotional tension. The device of using the Mueller children to state certain political theses—"out of the mouths of babes and sucklings," etc.—seems contrived, artificial. There is a liberal dosage of pure hokum in the more melodramatic scenes, and in the touching farewell of Mueller to his children. Some of this has been supplied by Miss Hellman, some by her otherwise brilliant director, Mr. Shumlin. There are few acting performances on the current stage, however, that can equal those offered by Paul Lukas as Mueller and George Coulouris as his fascist antagonist. Both these men play magnificently within the framework of their roles, fill them to the skin, endow them with three-dimensional life. In Lukas there is great emotional force and sincerity; in Coulouris a quality of genuine humanity, partly supplied by the author, partly by the actor. You understand him. As Mueller's wife, Mady Christians displays womanly devotion and great sensibility. As her mother, Lucille Watson is as brittle and as genuine as her written character. Credit should also go to Frank Wilson as a Negro servant for the sensitivity of his performance; to Eda Heine-mann as a white servant-companion. Two of the children are charming if indifferent performers; one of them, who has been treated to startling superlatives, is objectionable.

ALVAH BESSIE.

Tortures of Escapism

The physical ordeals of an evening at the movies

THIS churlish note will be about showmen—the people who run the movie houses—and will contain several helpful hints for easing the ordeal of going to the movies.

The architecture of Manhattan movie houses, until the Rockefeller pleasure dome was built, derived from the Grand Opera House. How silly the interior can become is illustrated by the fact that ten percent of the interior space is lost in boxes at the side of the hall—boxes that afforded a splendid intimacy with Lottie Crabtree, but make Greta Garbo look like Dore's Don Quixote. Result: nobody sits in them. The simple long rectangle of the nickelodeon, adapted from storerooms, was forgotten when the big business-Roxy era opened, and has only been revived in the small art cinema. Even Radio City has side sections where you are forced to sit at a maddening forty-five-degree angle

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Have You Read
Page 13?

from the screen. Pure commercial greed is the main factor, but also plain stupidity in design; perhaps they are corollaries. Practically all of the Broadway first run houses are wretchedly overblown for movie purposes. Decentralization, or breaking a Capitol audience up into three audiences in rooms of agreeable vantages, will not be possible until the first run practice is broken up. People will continue to jam into the first run monster until first run films are distributed simultaneously to a dozen neighborhood theaters.

Commercial avarice is also responsible for the crowding of seating space. Radio City is the only theater I frequent where it is possible to walk erect into middle seats without forcing your fellow fans to suspend themselves on the upraised edge of their seats or risk dislocation of the knee caps. By the surrender of six rows the stress could be distributed. Another possible remedy might be the addition of several more aisles, particularly on the dead side walls of the houses, and splitting the separate sections so that no more than four or five seats are together in a row. These aisles could of course be narrower than the ones now in use, since there are more of them.

The matter of women's hats is a traditional curse of the cinema. Finding myself in the shade of some of this foliage I have been emboldened to tap the lady on the shoulder and politely request the removal of the hat. I have met only one woman, and then in a projection room, who had the wit to turn around and ask if her plumes were in the way. You can't admire a woman's hat in the dark, anyway. Perhaps an unwritten law should be made that women check their hats in the lobby just as Western gunmen were required to leave their hardware in the foyer of social halls in the old days. Reviving the sound practice of slides on the screen admonishing such anti-social practices would also be welcome. One-minute shorts could be made in which the more palpitating male stars would stare into the ladies' eyes, smile winningly, and chide them against keeping their hats on.

We might also learn from the European blackout and require white kneepads and carapaces on moviegoers whom you stumble over in the dark, getting to your seat. Some people have the trick of complete invisibility and you cannot wait for a snow scene to venture into your chosen seat.

Prior seating in an empty row gives you the privilege of occupying the arm rests and your neighbor must become distraught shifting his arms about. No wonder people sit on their hands. Let some daring entrepreneur sit down with pencil and paper and consider the general good will he might gain by providing arm rests for all.

Did you ever drop a coin in a movie theater and hear it rolling saucily away down the slope? A small gutter or ridge under each row of seats would break the course of lost and rolling objects.

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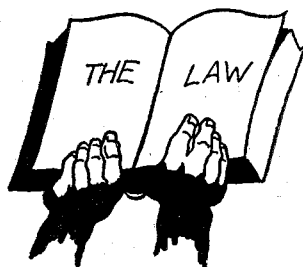
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peared in recent years in the movie palaces is the complete nonsense of drawing the curtain between each subject on the bill. There's nothing behind the curtain but the screen and the first frames of the main title are weirdly distorted as it is projected on this stupid curtain. Run the curtain once, if you must, during the two-minute intermission that clears the house, but hands off between subjects.

Equally infuriating is the red or blue foot-light turned on the screen at the beginning and end of a film. The director made the film to begin and end in itself—in black and white. Away with this absurdity!

The matter of program credits is another classic malpractice of the movies. Hollywood films generally carry the cast of characters at the beginning and end of the film, but for a short time, and again distorted by the ubiquitous curtain. A hundredth of the ballyhoo fund on a nationally distributed film could be allotted to simple printed programs carrying this information, which the audience could carry out of the theaters for perusal over a coke. This idea alone would revolutionize public awareness that there is more to the film than Robert Taylor and Hedy Lamarr. These programs could be distributed to every crossroads theater along with the cans of film, and have space for the manager's own imprint; could, in fact, be mailed beforehand by the manager as advertisement for the picture. Children who collect fan photos would treasure these souvenirs and learn something of the people who make the movie.

I am not so impractical that I would object to the love, fear, and violence appeals of movie advertising, but there are several things that might be squeezed in under the closeups of the stars—such as the playing times of the feature to encourage the growing practice of entering the theater at the beginning of the drama. Not having this information works no hardship on a reviewer whose familiarity with plot cliches allows him to fill in the rest of the plot no matter at what point he begins the film. But others are not vocationally fortunate and are sometimes puzzled upon encountering the middle of a plot they haven't seen for five years.

Newspapers might invite from the movie houses the same sort of orderly advertisement they afford the legitimate theater, in this case alphabetized by stars rather than the titles of pictures. As a concession to the special nature of film advertising appeal, small standardized symbols could be included in these uniform ads. For straight love melodrama a pair of ripe lips; for romantic comedy smiling lips; for Westerns a small smoking gun; for Dead End movies a battered ash can; for the British Army in India a glorious Union Jack. The possibilities are endless. No more than symbols, sometimes in limited combinations, would cover Hollywood's yearly output.

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JOB SMITH.

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April 15, 1941 **N**

New Recordings

Brahms is given a brilliant reading by Toscanini

COLUMBIA has just reissued two of the best known symphonies: the Beethoven "Eroica" and Brahms' "Third." Bruno Walter's forthright reading reveals the essential character and sweep of the Beethoven music, while Frederic Stock with the Chicago Orchestra, although treating the Brahms with consistent sympathy, presents no more than a workman-like job, straight and academic.

The recording of Brahms' "Second Piano Concerto" with Toscanini conducting the NBC Orchestra and Vladimir Horowitz as soloist, is the Victor disc for March. This combination, together with an especially careful engineering job, results in a recording far beyond the average. The tonal power, the thematic growth, the relationship and balance of orchestral choirs and solo instrument are executed with the brilliance we have come to expect from Toscanini. If you are accustomed to the tempos of Arthur Schnabel's recording of this concerto, you may find Horowitz uncomfortably slow.

An opportunity to understand the evolution of music during the Middle Ages may now be enjoyed on a new Victor set called "Medieval and Renaissance Choral Music." Starting with a hymn composed about the year 995 A.D., it traces the various types of medieval music, through the Gregorian Chants to the religious pieces of Orlando, de Lassus, and Palestrina. The vague, floating character of this music may sound strangely thin to the modern ear, but on repeated hearings the listener will discover a serene kind of beauty, and a type of esthetic reaction that cannot be experienced in music of relatively recent times. The level of performance and material is extremely high. The Choir of the Pius X School of Liturgical Music, who perform these works, possess remarkable intonation and purity of tone.

Keynote Recordings' latest addition to the swelling list of musical Americana is a collection of songs of the American Southwest called *The Old Chisholm Trail*. The special histrionic and vocal talents of Tony Kraber are well suited to the requirements of these ballads. Especially ingenious is his rollicking delivery of "Rye Whiskey," and the lyrical "Green Grow the Lilacs," "Blood on the Saddle," "Kansas City Boys," "The Tenderfoot," "The Boll Weevil Song" are some of the other titles in a handsome album that brings the color and expression of the Southwest into your parlor.

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