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*Saturday Review's*

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"Henry IV." "Falstaff is not a stupid old oaf, but a brilliant man much like Shaw," he argues. "Why that speech about 'Honor' could have come right out of 'Don Juan'."

He is also very much interested in a new play by Norman Collins, who wrote "Dulcimer Street." "I would be playing a retired general again, but this time still alive," Sir Cedric reveals. "It takes place after the Franco-Prussian war and is anti-militaristic but not pacifistic."

Sir Cedric also discloses that several prominent playwrights have submitted scripts for possible production by the Quartette, but that none had seemed comparable to "Don Juan." "There are very few Shaws, you know," he adds with the casual assurance that the owner of the Hope Diamond might exhibit when browsing at Tiffany's.

—HENRY HEWES.

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NEW YORK'S City Center has won the opening round in its battle to prove that it can revive sure-fire comedy hits successfully. Its production of Elliott Nugent's and James Thurber's "The Male Animal," which emphasizes the New Yorkerish satirizing of the childishness of the American adult, is just as funny as flipping through the cartoons of that magazine.

Mr. Nugent, playing the timid English professor, throws away his lines with the same deceptive relaxedness that a farmer uses pitching ringers. Martha Scott as his wife has some difficulty playing against such a style, and instead of being alternately nagging and sweet, she elects the safe course of being not very much one or the other. Halliwell Hobbs and Ruth McDevitt provide a deliciously grotesque counterpoint as the dean and his wife who have grown past the age of caring about the pretenses of grown-up behavior; and Matt Briggs and Robert Preston make the meeting of the boisterous old grads not only hilarious, but also nostalgically warm for those who remember the original production.

The element strangely softened in the current presentation is the stirring defense of a teacher's right to present any and all ideas to his students. A recent report by Norman Cousins would seem to indicate that this right is even more imperiled today than it was when "The Male Animal" was written. Perhaps the very volatility of the issue has dictated its restraint, for once let loose it might well have consumed the delightful comic essence of Mr. Thurber's play.

Two other revivals have not fared so well. One, Olivia deHavilland's "Candida," encumbered Shavian wit with

sticky sentimentality and Herman Shumlin's psychological probings, which wrinkled the author's comic fabric. The other, the Claire Luce-Antony Eustrel "Much Ado About Nothing," succeeded only on those rare occasions where it abandoned the realistic approach to one of Shakespeare's most ridiculous plots. Since John Gielgud and Diana Wynyard are scheduled to bring their version of "Much Ado" here next season, the cast of this production can at least be thanked for furnishing theatre-goers with a basis for a "Before and After" comparison.

—H. H.

## Drama Notes

*THE SHRIKE.* By Joseph Kramm. Random House. \$2.50. To Joseph Kramm, who has sat by and seen his play bypassed by the Drama Critics Circle, attacked by psychiatrists, and praised by many critics only as a melodramatic expose of mental wards and wife-hate, the winning of the Pulitzer Prize for drama must have seemed triply sweet.

There is no question but that the play in performance [SR Feb. 9, 1952] is infinitely better than the text, but Mr. Kramm maintains [SR Feb. 16, 1952] that a play should only be the skeleton on which the director and actor build.

To give Mr. Kramm his due, Carlisle's speech on Page 124 is a beautiful example of telling a whole story in just six lines of dialogue, and Ankoritis's curtain speech at the end of the first scene of the second act is a telling summation of the irony of the protagonist's situation.

"You see, Mr. Downs, we are all here, but the question is, are we all there?"

The awarding of the Pulitzer Prize to Mr. Kramm for his first produced play may be disputed by those who expect more literary quality in a prize-winner, but "The Shrike," which in its finest moments is a stripping bare of our society's norms, certainly fits the current phrasing of the Pulitzer requirement, "an original American play which shall represent the educational value and power of the stage, preferably dealing with American life."

*GIGI.* By Anita Loos. Based on the novel by Colette. Random House \$2.50. The text of the successful comedy about a wouldn't-be French cocotte. The play, now in its sixth month on Broadway, is slightly more conventional than the original, but all changes were approved by Colette, as was ex-ballet dancer Audrey Hepburn in the title role.

—H. H.

# TV and Radio

## UNADAPTED THEATRE

**M**ARC Connelly's play "Green Pastures," so the story goes, went the Broadway rounds begging a producer for five years. Theatre legend has it that this is not uncommon: other stage hits have mouldered in faithful agents' files before they saw the light struck by \$4.80 seats. In spite of the fact that managers read manuscripts avidly, who would confidently deny that rave notices would not be the morning-after destiny of many a Pulitzer Prize candidate heaped ignominiously now in type-blurred copies on playreaders' desks?

For the presentation brochures of some try-anything television program packager, here is an idea: a show which would present choice selections from the peddlars' packs of play agents. It could not be argued that such are untried properties and would therefore have doubtful audience appeal. If we accurately gauge the success of WOR-TV's "Broadway TV Theatre," which presents full-length, former hit plays in their "unadapted" versions, the qualities to be derived merely from characters and situations free to flow in an hour and a half of air time are refreshing and satisfactory enough to win sustained approval.

WOR-TV is the New York station of the as-yet-hypothetical Mutual television network. At this writing, it has presented three former Broadway hits substantially in their entirety, "The Trial of Mary Dugan," by Bayard Veiller, "Three Men on a Horse," by John Cecil Holm and George Abbott, and "The Jazz Singer," by Samson Raphaelson. It has presented them between 7:30 and 9:00 P.M., five nights a week, Mondays through Fridays.

"Broadway TV Theatre" has two sponsors, General Tire and Rubber Company and Cavalier Cigarettes. The commercials come at the end of the acts and they do no violence to the moods of the plays precisely because the theatre intermissions are technically and psychologically normal. The WOR-TV innovation, produced by Walter Wade, hoped originally to run for at least twenty-six weeks. No doubt it will run longer: it has struck gushers of critical applause plus ordinary ratings multiplied by five. Which arithmetic, at the repeat division of costs, adds up to a very good dollar-per-thousand buy.

The idea, of course, is daring, and

could probably only appear on a local station with no seller's market problem of satisfying a small host of time-hungry, big-spending advertisers. How can you reserve seven-and-a-half hours across the board for only two sponsors and keep all your customers happy? Nevertheless, WOR-TV is to be congratulated, coincidentally, for defying, in one bold scoop, a whole bundle of trade shibboleths.

The conventional contortions of TV-wrights, directors, and set designers to achieve "motion" were thrown into agonizing relief by the literal stage reporting of the cameras in all three plays. In the Veiller piece they were pinned to the witness chair for the full playing time; in "Three Men on a Horse" and "The Jazz Singer" there were modest changes of interior, but again the business was of the pros-cenium and completely satisfying. Only in the last moments of "The Jazz Singer" did the producers introduce an unoriented television shot and it was an error.

The chief excitement of "Broadway TV Theatre" is the play. A courtroom melodrama, a high farce suffering from a poor cast and lack of indigenous audience laughter, and a dated overdrawn excursion in sentimentality were attention-compelling because they were all good yarns ably told. They had not been thrown together in a hectic hurry and their authors had been privileged to re-examine their work. Moreover characterizations

could be made in some depth, situations could be slowly pointed to climaxes. In "The Trial of Mary Dugan," a gifted actress, Ann Dvorak, had a role susceptible of some real insights and true tension.

Time, valuable time in which to create drama, to develop a character, time and time alone can do these things—and time in its contracted rather than its extended form is present master of TV. This is why the plays on "Broadway TV Theatre" are relatively so satisfying. They achieve their effect by sheer contrast with the pressurized product.

**I**T IS no use weeping over television's economics which rules that these things shall be. Conversely, for the TV practitioners the bread and the butter lie in the quick turnover: the business is, after all, a living; and there are many making it who would welcome the opportunity of thought. The drama-disposed audience can only be grateful for a "Broadway TV Theatre" and hope it runs forever and that it is widely imitated.

And, eventually, when Samuel French's weighty catalogue of plays is exhausted in TV's insatiable material maw, there will remain those yet untried plays that pass from authors' desks to producers and back again. Most of them may be unworthy of Broadway's highly selective screen of hits—but, at least, they are an hour and a half long, their characters can play a scene for more than a side without moving, and the acrobatic camera "reporting" them, would be forced to give way to the considered line. Even television can never consume the annual output of hopeful hits.

—ROBERT LEWIS SHAYON.



"The Trial of Mary Dugan" on TV—"gushers of critical applause."