

last act when the author suddenly injects a piece of sympathetic behavior into Mrs. Eastman-Cuevas's part.

Briefly interviewed over the telephone during a post-opening siege with a head cold, Miss Anderson declares that she loves doing a role so different from anything she has attempted in the past. The actress, whose "Medea" is hailed by many as a milestone in the history of tragic acting, confesses: "I'm rather tired of drapes. I love comedy and I hope that 'In the Summer House' will lead to my getting more comic parts in the future."

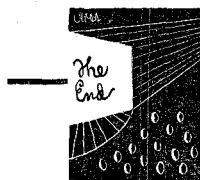
Actually, of course, Mrs. Eastman-Cuevas is a very complex and serious character, even though her speeches and actions lead to laughter. Miss Anderson says: "She is an extraordinary, highly nervous woman who is living a lie. There are far too many people like her around for her to be thought of as a special neurotic. I try and play her as taut, tense, and staccato, because I feel she is really a very frightened woman."

Miss Anderson is very pleased with some of the things former Circle-in-the-Square director José Quintero has brought to the play. "He only worked with us in such time as we could spare from our playing on the road during the final two weeks. He is particularly good at creating a mood and at movement that expresses what a character is thinking and feeling." As an example, Miss Anderson pointed to the moment when after saying "Mr. Solares is a solid manageable man" Mr. Quintero suggested that she mold the ball of wool she is holding.

The actress is also greatly appreciative of the opportunity of playing opposite Mildred Dunnock, who in the opinion of this reviewer gives a wonderfully watery performance that glows with intelligence and warmth. "It means a great deal to have an actress of that quality in a scene with you," says Miss Anderson.

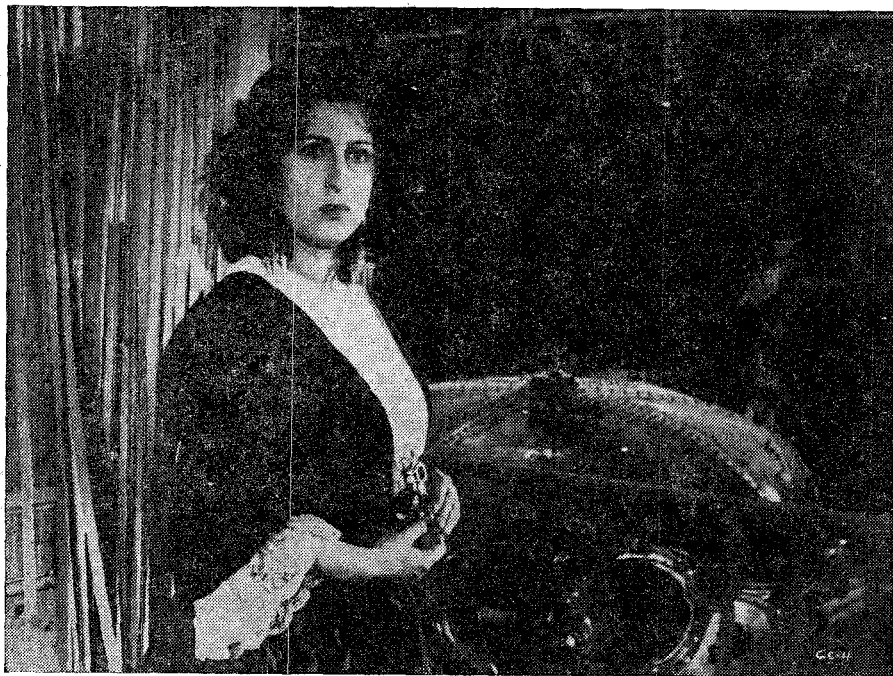
"In the Summer House" is struggling to stay open, and despite the many imperfections of the play it behooves all those with a more than casual interest in the theatre to go and see it. For, thanks to Miss Anderson, it contains one of the truest comic performances of our time.

**T**HEATREGOERS interested in poetic plays will be glad to hear that V. R. Lang's "Fire Exit," an unpublished vaudeville in verse which modernizes the Orpheus legend, is being presented at the Amato Theatre in downtown New York on Jan. 26, 27, and 28. (Admission can be arranged by telephoning John Myers at PLaza 9-1621.) —HENRY HEWES.



SR GOES TO THE MOVIES

## The Neo-Classic Renoir



Anna Magnani—"some cross purposes working in 'The Golden Coach'."

**J**EAN RENOIR the French director, has through the years obviously considered the movies an artistic form, and now that his stature is eminent and assured he has felt the need to experiment even more boldly than in the past. In "The Golden Coach," his new movie, Renoir has investigated some of the classic forms of the past, specifically the commedia dell'arte theatre developed in Italy some three centuries ago. Classicism implies, if I am defining correctly, a respect for form over content, an observance of tradition and style as against emotion. Renoir's movie would seem to be an experiment in neo-classicism (I guess this heady term has seldom before been applied to a motion picture) in the sense that it revives old forms, and also in the sense that it makes no attempt to involve the audience in the emotional vicissitudes of the characters. Since the film form, by its very nature, tends to drag one in and almost automatically induce an emotional identification, it may well be that Renoir is also being boldly wrong-headed. At any rate, my impression is that there are certainly some cross purposes working in "The Golden Coach."

What we have in the picture is essentially fantasy. The action begins on a stage. A play has come to its climax and the actors have frozen

into immobility. The camera then moves in to explore at close range what has happened on the stage. The barriers of the proscenium are removed and the action of the play becomes, for the time being, life. The players involve themselves in dilemmas and predicaments; in fact some of the players are themselves actors (members of a commedia dell'arte troupe) and one of them, Camilla, now and then becomes confused as to which play she is participating in—the world of her own art, or the world of the play that Renoir is showing. What is theatre and what is real? she asks herself. At the end, for safety's sake, she chooses the world of her own illusion. Reality is too confusing for her. The final note has Camilla being asked if she misses the world beyond the stage, especially the three handsome men who have competed for her favors. "Just a little," she says. The curtain comes down, the camera moves back from the stage, and the audience of which I was a member was left in the dark until the lights went on.

I've tried to describe it with some literalness. To say the least, it is complex; to say the most, it is confusing. It's a little like opening a box to find another; upon opening that there is still another. It is a puzzle, mildly intriguing, but at the end allowing

of no solution. Does it matter? That depends upon whether one is annoyed by the enigmatic or whether one's imagination is stimulated by it.

**S**TILL, enough happens on the main level of the story to keep one intermittently interested—even, in spite of Mr. Renoir's intent, involved. It all takes place in an eighteenth-century Spanish colony in South America. The viceroy (Duncan Lamont) has ordered a sumptuous golden coach from Spain, and arriving on the same boat with it are the commedia dell'arte players. Camilla, in the person of Anna Magnani, then proceeds to involve herself with the viceroy, a heroic bullfighter, and a young Spanish gentleman she had met on shipboard. Her trysts with the latter had taken place on shipboard right in the golden coach, and she had grown fond of the vehicle, not to mention the gentleman. The viceroy gives her the coach as a love-offering, an action that outrages a council of Spanish nobles. In the midst of the consequent turmoil the bishop of the church steps in and settles the dispute. Camilla, he announces, has generously donated the coach to the church. What does it all mean? Perhaps there are symbolic meanings. I must report that I didn't get them.

And this is where I must regretfully say that "The Golden Coach" strikes me as being largely an exercise, this in spite of laudable contributions by the cast, the set designers and costumers, and the color photographer. Miss Magnani's performance is always vivid and striking. She has opportunities to speak in both English and Italian; and, while heavily accented, her English is reasonably assured. The commedia dell'arte sequences are not as charming, surprisingly enough, as those seen in M-G-M's "Scaramouche" of a couple of seasons back, but the court scenes do have a lush splendor, which is highlighted by the poverty-stricken life of the surrounding town. There is also some humor, of an elegant kind, in Renoir's script. It's an unusual movie, an expensive and consequently a brave one to make (the filming was done in Italy, and it thus becomes the first Italian Technicolor venture), but it's all too coldly intellectual in its effects. Unfortunately, when one decides to create from the terminology of esthetics, so to speak, it is likely that artifice is the result rather than art. "Grand Illusion," always simple, human, and moving, was real and it was artistic; "The Golden Coach," glittering and ornate, is largely empty and artificial. It is to be hoped that Mr. Renoir appreciates the distinction. —HOLLIS ALPERT.

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## Washington, A.C.-D.C.

**T**HE NEW YORK TIMES recently carried an interesting account of what went on behind the scenes in preparation for President Eisenhower's two important television appearances—(1) the fifteen-minute Monday night commercial advertising his (2) Thursday afternoon State of the Union message before the Congress.

The White House staff, we are told, was augmented with advertising, public-relations, and Hollywood consultants to help establish contact with the voters through this newest of mass communications media. The preparation compared quite favorably to the chaos that goes into putting on a weekly run-of-the-mill television program.

The scripts; the rewrites; the teleprompter installed over the cameras so that the President could read his Monday night speech and yet appear to be speaking directly to the anxious citizens assembled in their living

rooms; the special platform constructed in the chamber of the House so that when he read from his script the glare of the television lights would not bounce off his famous bald pate; the make-up girl who was sent over by CBS to dust with pancake makeup the face and head of the President; the party leaders, acting as directors, who advised him on the Monday night show to make full use of his friendly grin.

All these were there.

The President had some hard selling to do. His sponsors would be watching in the forty-eight states, and the hucksters gave it all their know-how to make certain the option would be picked up. The impact of television has been evaluated as three times that of radio.

Every move, every emphasis, every facial expression are as carefully noted as every spoken word. History is recorded on the spot in sight and sound not only for the pres-

ent but for all posterity to see and hear.

Television comes a little late. The almost casual preparation for historic messages of a bygone day would have sent any TV producer scurrying around the corner of NBC to Hurley's Bar. With a slight anachronistic change of scene we set up our cameras for a remote telecast from the spot where another message is about to be delivered.

It's another Thursday. The date is November 19, 1863. Video men, audio men, directors, advisors huddle around Cemetery Hill, shouting at the fifteen thousand who have come to witness the telecast to keep off the cables and stand back from the cameras. The cameramen are setting up their shots for the speakers. The director comes briskly forward.

**"MR. PRESIDENT**, you'll open up on camera two, that's this one. We're picking up Mr. Everett on camera one. When the red light comes on on camera two you can start your speech. Then we'll cut to a profile after we set up camera one—the red light will light on this one. You'll stand about here. Oh, I'll take that shawl, Mr. President."

"Well, there's a chill in the air and I—"

"But you're not going to do the show in that shawl, are you?"

"Yes, I am."

"Well I wish we'd have known—we could have had costume send one over. I'm afraid the lights are going to pick up all that fuzz around it. Oh, by the way, I'll get the make-up girl. We ought to trim that beard a little. It's kinda straggly and it might—"

"Oh, this is quite all right."

"But, Mr. President, this is television. At least we can touch up that right cheek. That mole is going to look like—"

"No, no, young man. It will be all right."

"But, Mr. President, you know you're following Mr. Everett. He's going to look quite distinguished with that white hair and that—oh, before I forget—your speech."

"My speech?"

"Yes, I'll have the boys run it off for the teleprompter. You can look right into the camera and read it, and it'll look like you're talking to the folks at home."

"No. I'll manage with this."

"With that! You're not going to read it off that envelope, are you?"

"Well, I had planned—"

"Okay, Mr. President. But Mr. Everett will steal the show. They'll come away talking about him. They'll little note nor long remember anybody else."

—GOODMAN ACE.

## Spark That Confronts the Sun

By Helen Hoyt

**A**ND yet this earth-fire—  
So faint, so perishable—  
This little human flame,  
Sprung of perverse seed, fitful and frail—  
This spark of the earth dares know itself for a god;  
Defies its own mortality,  
Hurling itself where comets go, confronting the sun.

Born in a day and cut down in a day,  
Eating of its own being for increase,  
Powerless before its own wild power,  
Improvident, wilful—  
Having no strict paths on which to go,  
Having no fixed obediences,  
Recurring and punctual like the moon's for guidance—

Bound by no steadfast orbit,  
No tensions, such as narrow the majesty of the sun,  
Meeken the stars—  
Over and over devouring itself in futile, beautiful deaths,  
Apexes of desperate conflagration—

This earth-spark, this transience,  
So pitiful and tenuous of life—  
Has burned with ardors hot as the sun's fiercest blaze;  
Lucidities of anguish and exaltation  
Keener than beam of star;  
Candors that would shatter the sun and stars;  
That no withered moon's tranquility  
Has borne in its cold bosom!