



## Mr. Carey's Summer Chickens

**W**HEN Lawrence Langner began raising funds for the American Shakespeare Festival Theatre and Academy in Stratford, Connecticut, people shook their heads—twice. First, they thought he never would be able to do it. Second, they thought that, even if he were able to, the productions would feature a stuffy bunch of middle-aged to elderly actors who turn up in most American attempts to do Shakespeare in the artificial and fustian way we tend to associate with the nineteenth century.

Well, Mr. Langner *has* raised the dough, with the help of a fine committee, and to the surprise and delight of everyone in the theatre he has engaged Denis Carey to direct the first summer's productions of "Julius Caesar," which opens the theatre July 12, and "The Tempest," which will alternate from July 26 on.

Mr. Carey is the forty-six-year-old director who astounded London audiences two years ago when he presented his Bristol Old Vic Company there in a lively and vital production of "Two Gentlemen of Verona." The play had long been put aside in the "least likely to be revived" category, but the Carey version of the comedy was a smashing success, and earned the director a promotion to the London Old Vic. The key to the play's success was, according to Mr. Carey, a young company who approached the play freshly and the use of simple music—a guitar and the human voice.

Interviewed in a dark cubbyhole behind some file cabinets at the The-

atre Guild last week, Mr. Carey, a short gray-haired Irishman, revealed that his approach here would be in terms of a fresh young company working towards vital productions that stress the fundamental human values in Shakespeare.

"In casting," he stated, "I have had to find actors with an ability to hold themselves properly in costume and who could use the full range of their voices. But what I've really looked for in them are virility, passion, and swiftness of mind."

Mr. Carey was given a free hand by ASFTA in the selection of a young cast to support the more experienced Raymond Massey, who will play the leading roles of Brutus and Prospero. He came up with Jack Palance to play Cassius and Caliban, Christopher Plummer to play Marc Antony and Ferdinand, Hurd Hatfield to play Julius Caesar and Gonzalo, Fritz Weaver to play Casca and Sebastian, Roddy McDowall to play Octavius Caesar and Ariel, and Joan Chandler to play Miranda.

"I think also that I've discovered a pair of brilliant comedians," says Mr. Carey proudly, "in Rex Everhart and Jerry Stiller, who will play Stefano and Trinculo in 'The Tempest'."

**I**F THE cast is young so is the theatre. Its birth is Caesarian in more ways than one as the carpenters rush it to completion on its Stratford-on-the-Housatonic site. Designed by Edward C. Cole of Yale, the peculiarly-shaped stage represents a compromise between the conventional picture-frame stage and the open stage at Stratford,

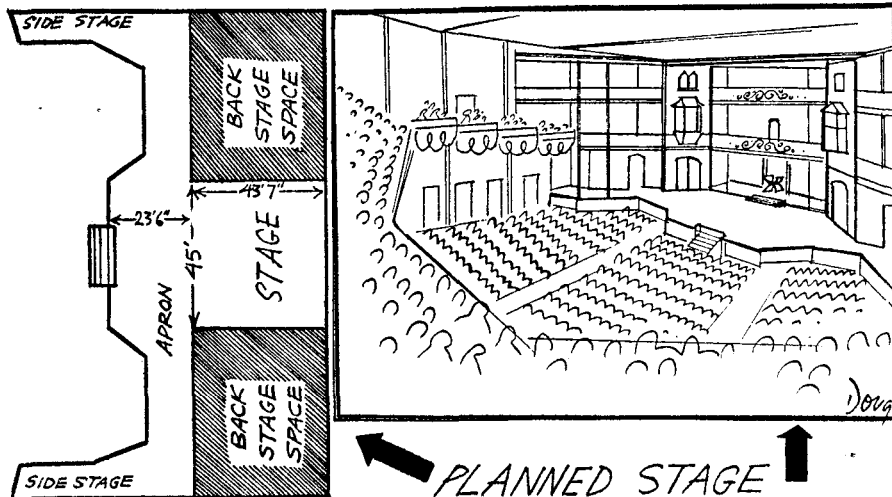
Ontario. "I like it," says Mr. Carey, "because it offers both the opportunity of big panoramic effects and at the same time permits you to bring the individual actor far forward for more intimate scenes."

"Julius Caesar" seemed to the director an ideal choice for the ASFTA Theatre for the play contains both pageantry and powerful individual scenes. It also contains a large number of good parts, which is a helpful thing when one is working towards an acting company rather than towards a one-shot star vehicle. "The Tempest," which is half-masque-half-play, not only works well on this stage, and makes a nice contrast with "Julius Caesar," but it also works out in terms of the cast of one being suitable for the roles in the other.

As for method of presentation, Mr. Carey is pretty much a Granville-Barker man. Carey claims that the key to this production of "Julius Caesar" came out of the second volume of G-B's "Prefaces to Shakespeare" (Princeton University Press). Granville-Barker wrote, "Are not our noble Romans, flinging their togas gracefully about them, slow-moving, consciously dignified, speaking with studied authority, and all past middle age, rather too like a schoolboy's vision of a congress of headmasters?"

Whatever the influences that have molded Mr. Carey as a director, he insists that he is an empiricist. For instance, he has learned from experience that although actors like to get on their feet in a hurry it is better to spend as much time as possible reading and discussing the play with the cast, because if everyone has the same idea of the play as a whole, and can see their character in relation to other characters, they will end up by being much more aware of the other actors onstage and avoid the declamatory solos too often seen in Shakespeare. However, he does block out his movements in advance, although he changes his plans as he finds better ones in rehearsal. "You know," he says, "everyone's feet are completely different, and that makes each character move in a distinctly individual way." He also makes full cuts in the text before giving it to the actors. "In this way you avoid sales resistance from the actor later on," he jokes. "Actually, if it seems he is doing exceptionally well, you can always reinstate some of the deleted speeches as you go along." As for getting vitality into his productions, Mr. Carey has an answer. He says, "The vitality of a production depends on how much your actors can project their own personality into the roles they are playing."

—HENRY HEWES.





## SR GOES TO THE MOVIES

### Whence This Pleasing Hope?

NOWHERE are the perils of the star system more clearly revealed than in the careers of our popular comedians. A star may rise in vaudeville, radio, or TV and get along very nicely by playing on the one string to his fiddle. But when he switches to the movies he had better have some other strings handy. Remember Joe Penner and his duck? Bob Burns and his bazooka? Jack Pearl's "Vas you dere, Charlie?"? In vaudeville or radio such trick mannerisms and catch-phrases help characterize and identify the performer for his audience. Significantly, few of radio's top comics—Jack Benny, Fred Allen, Amos 'n' Andy—have ever been able to achieve an equal success in the movies. Their comic personalities are too fixed, too limited, and—so far as the public is concerned—too rigidly preconceived for free translation to the broader ranges of the movie camera.

Unhappily, when the studios do snag a comedian who can make the transition (generally these days from musical-comedy or the nightclubs) they promptly set about making his screen personality as rigid and predictable as any radio performer. The Abbott and Costello comedies, the Martin and Lewis films, Judy Holliday's, the Donald O'Connor "Francis" series—each new picture emerges as a somewhat paler carbon of the one before. Paramount seems suddenly to have realized that this process was slowly writing *finis* to the screen career of its most durable comedian, Bob Hope. Though he has been popular in television, successful in radio, an SRO performer on his worldwide personal appearance tours, Hope's recent pictures have consistently fallen far below expectations both as entertainment and as money-makers. His brash jibes, barbed insults, and frantic farce routines were wearing thin, and what lay beneath just wasn't very funny.

In "The Seven Little Foyes" Paramount—or, more precisely, writer-director Melville Shavelson and writer-producer Jack Rose—have struck out in a new direction. Riding the mounting tide of more realistic, more human film biographies, they have given Hope a script with teeth in it, a far from saccharin account of the life and times of vaudeville's Eddie Foy. Foy, like so many comics, apparently

was a lot more fun on the stage than off.

As Hope portrays him he was callous, crusty, egocentric, and often downright mean. He was also saddled with as ornery a bunch of kids as ever busted up a suite of the best parlor furniture. When the mother died Foy simply incorporated the gang into his act to keep them out of mischief. It lasted as a vaudeville "standard" until well into the Twenties despite frequent brushes with the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, one of which provides the climax for the film.

Hope blusters through it all in a way that suggests at once what a difficult man Foy must have been to live with, but also the charm and professional good humor that endeared him to his contemporaries. The traditional heart of gold he keeps tightly buttoned beneath his loud checkered vests, revealing it only once—and quite credibly—in the scene at the Children's Court. For the rest we see Hope cavorting through smartly-paced variations on the old Foy vaudeville routines (and catching Foy's vocal and facial mannerisms extremely well), wrangling with fellow performers for the best dressing room and stage time, and trying desperately to play the unaccustomed role of father to his unmannerly brood.

High point is a Friar's testimonial dinner to Foy in which James Cagney, as George M. Cohan, exchanges kidding insults-on-the-square with Hope, then both swing into a lovely, graceful soft-shoe challenge routine to the tune of Cohan's "Mary." The sequence captures all the hard-shelled sentimentality of the old pros, emerging as a warming tribute to Foy and Cohan from two latter-day old pros, Hope and Cagney. For Bob Hope "The Seven Little Foyes" suggests both a new comedy style and a much rosier future on the screen.

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Walt Disney in his latest feature-length cartoon, "The Lady and the Tramp" (Buena Vista), has also taken an interesting new turn. His story this time is not derived from a standard classic; he was under no compulsion to recreate characters already familiar to generations of readers,

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