

atre, and Michael MacLiammoor in Denis Johnston's "The Old Lady Says No" at the Gate Theatre. A late night revue parodying local events and a program of Yeats plays rounds out the home schedule.

While the casual tourist will probably spend a lot of his time wandering through the green Irish countryside, the serious theatregoer will be well-advised to visit the foyer of the old Abbey Theatre, where playwright-director Lennox Robinson will give afternoon talks. For this year will probably be the last in which one can see the historic old building whose auditorium was partially destroyed by fire in 1951, as next year the Irish Government plans to raze the building preparatory to constructing a new theatre on the same site.

Festival director Brendan Smith has done a remarkable job of assembling this first festival on seven months notice amid the big-talk-but-no-money atmosphere that invariably surrounds the beginnings of such projects. "Eventually," he says, "we would like to commission new plays from important Irish authors. And if we could hold the festival in mid-September we might get more star attractions to premiere here on their way to London, just as they do in Edinburgh."

A visit to a typical Abbey production revealed the current and, it is hoped, temporary dilemma this famous organization is facing. Because it must use the large Queens Theatre for the time being, it has the twin problems of attracting mass audiences and devoting itself to producing plays of Irish life. Thus, it finds itself performing a great many new and popular but not very high-quality melodramas. When asked why the Abbey preferred such fare to the later and unproduced plays of O'Casey, the Abbey's managing director, Ernest Blythe, gave this interesting explanation. "While O'Casey's later plays may be better than most of the ones we do, audiences here expect more from O'Casey and would be disappointed to find his later plays not as good as 'Juno and the Paycock' or 'The Plough and the Stars.' But they expect less from our other writers."

For all its dilemma, the Abbey remains a good permanent acting company and the stimulus of festival-commissioned plays from Sean O'Faolin, Elizabeth Bowen, and others would seem to be just what the doctor ordered. For the daily rush of colorful language, humor, and rebellious spirit in working-class Ireland still furnishes material galore, not so much for high-toned cultural exercises as for earthy festivity.

—HENRY HEWES.



TV AND RADIO

A Small Frequency for the Muse

ROSE ORENTE, a young New Yorker who writes publicity for John Wiley and Sons, publishers of scientific and technical books, has been writing poetry since she was eight years old. Steadily, across the years, she has submitted her poems, several thousand of them, to the nation's leading magazines, but she has never been published except in vanity magazines, who occasionally have accepted her work but never paid her for it. To her credit Miss Orente also has three novels—unpublished. Last October this persistent collector of rejection slips found in her mail a blue brochure: an official entry blank for a verse-play contest sponsored jointly by CBS Radio and the Academy of American Poets. The prizes for win-place-and-show were \$500, \$300, and \$200, plus a \$300 fee for the winning broadcast.

The poetess was not so much attracted by the prize money as she was by the presence on the trio of contest judges of one of her favorite writers, Thornton Wilder (Maxwell Anderson and Brooks Atkinson were the other two). She completed the entry blank, set about looking for a subject, and by February 1, 1957 (the contest closing time), she had mailed her typed, double-spaced manuscript suitable for twenty-seven minutes of broadcast time, accompanied by "a proper return stamped envelope." Two-and-one-half months later, on April 14, the CBS Radio Workshop presented "Carlotta's Serape," a verse-play by Rose Orente, first prizewinner.

My first probing question (on lunching shortly afterwards with this winner) was, "How do you account for the fact that after years of your failure to receive recognition as a poet, three prominent American men of letters unanimously chose your verse-play for first honors out of a list of 167 official entries in the contest, including the work of some highly regarded poets?"

Miss Orente's explanation was that she had recently completed a four-year psychoanalysis by a specialist in writer-patients. Her analysis has enabled her to understand that, while consciously she had always sought success as a poet, unconsciously all her creative efforts had been governed by a desire not to sell. Her characters, she feels, are now psychologically valid. Furthermore, now she is able to revise her work, whereas formerly

she was incapable of editing. The impact of her analysis on Miss Orente's poetry extends even to the theme of her prize-winning verse-play. "Carlotta's Serape," mostly a dialogue in a Mexican marketplace between an old weaver and a girl who has had several unhappy love affairs, is, in a sense, a therapy administered by a wise old man to a young woman who uses misery as a self-inflicted goad. "What unnatural laws you follow!" says the old weaver to Carlotta, as they bargain over the sale of the serape. "They win you only pain." In the end the sale is completed; Carlotta has gained some maturity.

If Miss Orente's new approach to the muse is heavily psychoanalytical, the three judges of the CBS Radio-Academy of American Poets contest responded to her winning verse-play in more conventional terms. "A charming idea!" commented one judge. "This seems to me to be pure art," ruled another. "It has a sensitive, thoughtful idea, and the writing, I think, is beautiful." As a radio play, this listener found it rather haunting and fragile but static. Three veteran radio actors played it. Technically, the actors "taped" the play first without a music background, which was later dubbed in. This is a production error, especially in a verse-play, which gains much from the evocation of a mood. Actors invariably derive important help from the presence and the immediacy of a score.

"Carlotta's Serape" represents the first brush the Academy of American Poets has had with radio. Mrs. Hugh Bullock, the Academy's president, thinks there ought to be at least one regular network program devoted to poetry. The president is right, of course. The new TV generation, growing up, allegedly turns more and more to radio, chiefly as background for homework and reading. Today's youth will never know the excitement of hearing the rich verse-plays of Archibald MacLeish, Stephen Vincent Benet, and Norman Corwin, when American radio drama strode across the air-waves to do battle with Nazis and Fascists. But today's poets have their own original testaments to articulate—clinical or otherwise, what matter, so long as they be alive. Let's leave one small frequency of American radio for the muse—amid disc-jockeys and soapsuds.

—ROBERT LEWIS SHAYON.

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SR GOES TO THE MOVIES

Kenya Violence

IN "Something of Value" M-G-M hasn't done badly at all in developing the background of the Mau Mau risings in East Africa, and while what is presented hasn't much in the way of shock value any longer—the phase of violence in Kenya has subsided—the problems look, unfortunately, to be enduring ones. One of the best scenes in the movie shows an aged leader of a colored community on trial because he has killed a baby that emerged from the womb feet first. With sweet reasonableness he tries to explain why the act was necessary and with just as much reasonableness (from the white point of view) he is put in jail for the crime. Isolated scenes of this sort stand out, and give the movie distinction; when it comes to dealing with human relationships it is weak and unconvincing.

This happens, I think, because none of the characters is developed in much depth. Rock Hudson's Peter McKenzie is a young African rancher who grew up with a handsome, intelligent Negro called Kimani, well-portrayed by Sidney Poitier. Suddenly they realize (and at a fairly advanced age for such realizations) that their friendship is menaced by color barriers and distinctions. They each go their own way, Kimani to the Mau Mau, and McKenzie to fight the Mau Mau and protect the white community and evidently the God-given right of the British to maintain their land holdings in Africa. This thin story (along with a pallid romance between Rock Hudson and Dana Wynter) is hardly capable of much dramatic impact, and by the end becomes embarrassingly symbolic. Eventually McKenzie and Kimani meet again, and while McKenzie pleads for understanding, Kimani falls to his tortured death in a trap of his own devising. As if this symbolism wasn't enough, Rock Hudson is next seen carrying Kimani's child on his shoulders, presumably to bring him up as his own.

But if the story hasn't much point or much sense, there is nevertheless some good acting by Juano Hernandez as a Mau Mau leader, and what look to be authentic scenes of native life and conditions. There are also several murders and atrocities strewn throughout the picture (in the interests of truth and, I suppose, out

of respect for Robert Ruark's novel, on which the movie was based). Rock Hudson is, of course, Rock Hudson, a mild, good-looking man who seems to go through his movie life always bearing a magnificent obsession.

* * *

In "Reach for the Sky" that first-rate British actor, Kenneth More, has himself a plum of a role as Wing Commander Douglas Bader, the legless wonder and hero of the Battle of Britain. Bader's story is one of boundless determination and courage, and the movie, which has won all sorts of British honors, sticks to these themes tenaciously, allowing now and then some time out for romance, high jinks, and well-photographed flying scenes. The accident that lost Bader both his legs occurred during a stunt-flying episode in 1931. Bader stayed in the Air Force, though grounded, and when war came was allowed to fly again. This sort of story is exactly right for the stiff-upper-lip school of movie-making at which the British excel. And Kenneth More is exactly the sort of devil-may-care type to play it. If we didn't know in advance that the material was true, we might have assumed that things were getting a bit thick. As it is, one is touched and impressed pretty much throughout.

* * *

In "The Garment Jungle" Lee J. Cobb runs a dress factory dedicated to the principle that the union will never contaminate his open shop, and in furtherance of this ideal pays off a quarter of a million a year to racketeers. Meanwhile, Robert Loggia, dedicated union organizer, is going to organize that shop if it takes him his life. It does. But he leaves behind a beautiful widow (Gia Scala) who catches the eye of the factory owner's son, and it isn't long before the open shop and Lee J. Cobb are dead. Slinking around through this contrived, clumsily written and directed mess is Valerie French, glamorous fashion buyer, who has little to do or say except things like: "I wish you two would try to understand each other." Miss this one, if you can.

—HOLLIS ALPERT.