

Little Theatre Reborn Amid Rollicking Tale of Obstetrics

By LEIGH E. BURDICK

The Little Theatre of Jamestown was reborn last night,—and what obstetrics!

Frankly, we still do not believe that George Warren, clever a director as he is, thought of the parallel when he started the 1944-45 season rehearsals a month ago with "Three's a Family." But Little Theatre directors could have found no vehicle that would more cleverly have ushered in this community workshop after a year of darkened stage.

From the time the curtain went up for the first act, to the moment it dropped at the end of the three-act story of wartime living, the audience chuckled, giggled and guffawed as babies cried and adults suffered in varying mid-wifely degrees. Actually the smooth performance was the result of many a 'labor pain' not visible to the first nighters who hastened after the final curtain to congratulate both the cast of 16 and the directors. When one recalls that it was October before the directors were sure there would be a Little Theatre; when it is remembered that rehearsals were crammed into an incredibly short span, that there were multitudinous details to be ironed out after the machinery started functioning to garb the framework that made this first play possible on Nov. 1 it is a distinct credit to actors, directors, stage hands, and a host of others that "the baby is doing nicely, thank you."

From here on the 'bouncing babe' that is the revived community theater should grow rapidly and become strong.

But to get back to our obstetrics.

Being interested in this wartime rebirth of the Little Theatre we sat in on several rehearsals. We knew Director George Warren was coaching many newcomers to the local theater. We knew the cast was sprinkled with persons who never before had performed before footlights.

Perhaps you will forgive our enthusiasm, therefore, if we hand a special bouquet to Wayne J. Anderson, a newcomer to this or any other theater stage who played the part of Sam Whittaker with such convincing realism. He proved that Little Theatre indeed



VIRGINIA STECKER
... a Little Theatre 'find'

is a 'community workshop.' Not one of the 3,400 members should hesitate if he or she has a yen to appear before the footlights. Wayne accepted a tough assignment and proved that intelligent effort and adept direction are miracle workers.

Anderson overcame the obstacle of lack of experience in portraying an age that was not natural for him and carrying an unusually large number of lines without missing a cue or disappointing a sympathetic audience which was with him from the first curtain. He made the part of a middle-aged father all that the author required.

It would be unjust to fail to give proper credit to Mrs. Mino Pusbach, who played with perfect feeling and naturalness the important role of Irma, his spinster sister-in-law and thereby made Anderson's role of Sam much easier to carry. Her's was the perfect support. She rose to the comedy situations gracefully but gave to the part a sympathetic understanding that enhanced the whole. That was to be expected, for she had long since proved her ability before other Little Theatre audiences in years past.

Virginia Stecker, 17-year-old Jamestown Business Institute pupil and newcomer to the local

stage, did a finished job in the ingenue role of Kitty Mitchell, young wife.

As his host of friends expected, Denton Wable, star of many earlier Little Theatre productions, carried off his comedy role of Dr. Bartell, an ancient physician, with finesse and perfect interpretation. His every appearance on-stage was the occasion of rollicking humor. But that too, was to have been expected.

Despite its size the cast had few weak spots. Contributing to the success of the first production, to continue until Nov. 11, are Maybelle Myers, Charles R. Tranter, Josephine Bodine Lathrop, Maceyln Gibson, Bjarne Hagen, Clifford G. Olson, Silvio Cassi, William A. Anderson, Louise Francis, Jeanne Crossley, Marian Chadwick Peterson and Philip Kraft.

Failure to give proper credit for success of the production to Anne Brusone, who emitted those baby cries you hear offstage and Leland B. Ward, scene designer, whose artistic effort provided a delightful setting for a delightful comedy, would be like forgetting the cream in peaches and cream.

Yes, the Little Theatre in Jamestown is reborn and the next few years should see a healthy growth that will carry it into its own permanent home, for surely Jamestown must realize by this time that here is an institution filling a definite need.

It was symbolic that newcomers and stage veterans teamed in this delightful comedy that proved Jamestown's Little Theatre intends to take no back seat in the dramatic world.

Part of the action in this opening production takes place on a Thanksgiving Day. In one of the clever lines that sprinkle the three acts, Spinster Irma remarks, as she waits for a baby to be born:

"What a Thanksgiving Day!"

Answers Sam Whittaker: "This isn't Thanksgiving Day, it's Labor Day."

Getting the curtain up for this first production of the 1944-45 season certainly had been labor but we can say with last night's thrilled audience: "Thanks for the obstetrics. Where do we go from here?"