

AS YOU LIKE IT

(Continued from opp. page)

stems on appearance alone. She shows a fine flair for the readings of the Bard's lines and her occasional flat tones are the more effective when she is playing her male counterpart. Also, for once, Rosalind comes across a girl who seriously wants to be taken for a boy—and not as an actress who is just coyly pretending. It is an extremely effective and intelligent performance.

Benthall a Big Help

Royal assistance is given her via the staging pattern of London's Old Vic director, Michael Benthall. While it places the comedy's emphasis on Rosalind's absurd masquerade, the comic interludes and sub-plots are beautifully integrated for a smoothly flowing whole. Britisher James Bailey's sets are a joy. They look like old-fashioned, tinted engravings—a wonderfully imaginative improvement on the "another part of the forest" backgrounds.

Support-wise the Benthall As You Like It also has its solid assets. William Prince gives a good account of himself as Rosalind's equally love-sick Orlando. Cloris Leachman makes a graceful Celia. Veterans Ernest Thesiger and Aubrey Mather contribute masterly reading of Jaques and the banished Duke. Bill Owens is a commendable touchstone, and Judy Parrish, Patricia Englund, Robert Foster and Robert Quarry are fine in the bucolic comedy department. Honorable Shakespearean mention always goes to Whitford Kane, and this time Frank Rogier, Ernest Graves and Jay Robinson must be included.

Whether you like *It* or not, Katharine Hepburn's Rosalind is something to see. Since the Theater Guild reports a sight-unseen advance of \$200,000 already in the till, it is likely that she will be on view at the Cort for some time to come. And aside from Miss Hepburn, the production is so artful that it almost convinces a reporter that he likes the play himself.

Bob Francis.

THE HAPPY TIME

(Continued from opp. page)

involved in the family conflagrations. All of them, plus assists from various neighbors, combine to make *Time* happy.

Synopsis

Taylor's plot is simple, the story of a growing, curious boy, under the influence of a devoted but completely uninhibited male clan to the distraction of an equally devoted but conscious mother. Into the picture comes a handsome young French gal whose goal is a home and security. The tumultuous Bonnard ménage takes her to its collective bosom—with special emphasis on the handsome, wolfish uncle, the Dominion's most active garter collector. The lad's emotional growing pains are likewise stimulated, with results that range from belly-laugh to a moist eye.

But plot has little to do with the charm of *Time*. It is the aura of warmth, loyalty and affection which envelopes the Bonnard tribe. Mrs. Grundy would not approve them, but there are a forthright truth and honesty in their dealings with one another and the world which spell rich living. Taylor has highlighted their relationships with scenes tenderly poignant—such as Dauphin's attempt to teach Johnny the facts of life, and with rib-tickling interludes—as when uncle Louis (Kurt Kaszner) crumps out with a timid suitor for his daughter's hand. And there is one enormously hilarious scene when the three freres Bonnard musketeer on a bigoted school principal. But tender or funny, the family is always splendidly united and vital. They are a wonderful tribe for a boy to grow up in, and delightful people to meet on a stage.

Robert Lewis has directed them in a vein as happy as the play and Aline Bernstein has provided excellent backgrounds and costumes for a middle-class French-Canadian family in Ottawa, circa 1920.

Bob Francis.

BROADWAY OPENINGS

THE MAN

(Opened Thursday, January 19)

FULTON THEATER

A drama by Mel Dinelli. Staged by Martin Ritt. Setting and lighting by Joe Mielziner. Costumes by Julia Sze. General manager, Max Allentuck. Stage manager, Robert Caldwell. Press representatives, James Proctor, Ben Kornzweig and Anne Sloper. Presented by Kermit Bloomgarden.

Mrs. Gillis ..... Dorothy Gish  
Ruth ..... Peggy Ann Garner  
Mr. Armstrong ..... Robert Emhardt  
Howard Wilton ..... Don Hanmer  
Mr. Franks ..... Frank McNeillis  
Doug ..... Josh White Jr.  
Mr. Stephens ..... Richard Boone

Probably astute students of dementia will recognize the focal point of Mel Dinelli's melo-chiller as a scholarly and exhaustive exposition on a certain type of insanity. Even a nodding acquaintance with psychiatry allows at least that the actions and reactions of his homicidal protagonist are presented with grim and impressive authority on the stage at the Fulton. Dinelli's premise is patterned on the lines of Emlyn Williams's grand old chiller, *Night Must Fall*, but instead of a mad wheedling bellhop, his is a somewhat sad killer with delusions of oppression. And whereas Williams put together a sock-shocking melo, *The Man* plods along as a possibly excellent clinical study and rarely lifts a hair on a pew sinner's neck. It may have been the intention of Dinelli and Director Martin Ritt to shear it of goose-pimpling hokum and keep matters on a realistic plane. Certainly such a last day of horror as projected could happen to any lone widow of good will, but it is not the sort of fare which is going to lure pew buyers who are looking for an hour or two of chills and fever.

Dinelli's psychopathic doings concern the advent of an itinerant handy man into the home of a kindly and elderly widow. What his particular brand of mania is, a reporter wouldn't know, but the guy is over-riden with fears and suspicions which make him black out into a potential killer at the slightest provocation. The causes and effects of his condition via his own disordered reasoning are clearly underscored in a two-act dialog when the good lady finds herself locked up with him in her own house, in which he has decided to remain a permanent guest. The situation develops considerable interest in the medical aspect of his compulsions, but less realism and more hoked-up suspense are what is needed to sell tickets.

Good Set

However, Kermit Bloomgarden has given *Man* a fine send-off with an excellent combination living room-kitchen set by Jo Mielziner designed to fit the action precisely. Ritt has staged it with intelligent care to point up the lad's alternate shifts from outright madness to pseudo-sanity and his casting has been meticulous. Dorothy Gish paints an outstanding portrait of a friendly, gentle woman made almost witless by steadily mounting terror. Don Hanmer stamps himself again as a young actor of fine promise with the equally long and trying assignment of the handy man. It is a part which could easily be hammed to the nth degree, but Hanmer, even in his most hectic moments, shows a splendid restraint to make the character horribly believable. The script allows others in the cast little more than bits. However, Robert Emhardt gives roundness to a genial boarder and Peggy Ann Garner contributes a competent scene or two as a smart-aleck teenager. Little Josh White Jr. has his moment, too, as a gabby grocery boy.

But when all the chips are down a commercial future for *Man* doesn't look too happy. It's aimed at the intellect rather than the spine, and that approach doesn't fall in the popular chiller-diller groove.

Bob Francis.

THE DEVIL'S DISCIPLE

(Opened Wednesday, January 25)

CITY CENTER

A comedy by George Bernard Shaw. Produced by Margaret Webster. Sets by Peter Wolf. Costumes by Emeline Roche. Production executive, George Schaefer. Artistic supervisor, Maurice Evans. Company manager, Ben Ketcham. Stage manager, Billy Matthews. Press representatives, Jean Dairymple and Marlon Graham. Presented by the New York City Theater Company.

Mrs. Dudgeon ..... Hilda Vaughn  
Essie ..... Betty Lou Holland  
Christie ..... Logan Ramsey  
Anthony Anderson ..... Victor Jory  
Judith Anderson ..... Marsha Hunt  
Lawyer Hawkins ..... Somer Alberg  
William Dudgeon ..... O. Tolbert-Hewitt  
Mrs. William ..... Cavada Humphrey  
Titus Dudgeon ..... Robinson Stone  
Mrs. Titus ..... Janet Marla Burtis  
Dick Dudgeon ..... Maurice Evans  
Sergeant ..... Ian Martin  
Major Swindon ..... Gavin Gordon  
General Burgoyne ..... Dennis King  
Brudenell ..... Somer Alberg

OFFICERS—Cliff Cothren, Robert Hartung, Joseph Longstreet, Louis Lytton, Keith Taylor.  
SOLDIERS—Robert Anderson, Bennet Brownell, Bruce Jewell, Robert Latta, Joe Mego, Kenn Milston, Alan Miller, Richard Curry, John Primm, Leon Shaw.

TOWNSPEOPLE—Paul Anderson, Martine Bartlett, Mary Bell, Paul Davis, Olive Dunbar, William Hawley, Louis Hollister, Billy James, Dorothy Johnson.

As the third item of the New York City Theater Company's fortnightly rep, the Margaret Webster presentation of Shaw's *The Devil's Disciple* is by far the best to date. Again it is proved—as does the maestro's *Caesar and Cleopatra*, currently blooming at the National Theater—that good 50-year-old vintages can keep their flavor. There is nothing dated about *Disciple*; it is fresher, wittier and funnier than a host of comedy fare that has come along in the meantime. Margaret Webster has divided the original three-act text into two stanzas. The change is all for the better in emphasis and speed of the play.

Since the last formal Stem revival of *Disciple* was unveiled in 1923, a little plot refreshment may be in order. With it, Shaw is up to his youthful tricks, tossing barbs right and left at hypocrisy, bigotry and just plain human stupidity. He also has the usual few in his quiver for the idiosyncrasies of the ladies and British pig-headedness. The comedy is located in New Hampshire in 1777 and its hero is a rebellious scapegrace who styles himself "the devil's disciple." To the horror of his pious and unprincipled relatives, a final will of his late father puts him completely topside financially, and he revels in his unregeneracy. However, when Burgoyne and his redcoats arrive with the intent of making a hanging example of a leading citizen as a shocker to the rebel community, for no reason that he himself can explain the lad substitutes for the town's minister. The parson's young wife thinks it is because of her, but Shaw has an answer for that angle. At all events, the cleric takes to the timber, and the lad is left for a Sidney Carton fade-out. The cream of the comedy comes with a trial scene when British diplomatic suavity and bull-head stupidity are shredded up in the persons of General Burgoyne and a thick-skulled major. The final twist, of course, has the lad escaping the noose, the British army discomfited and the parson turned up in Continental officer's buff. Apparently, their spiritual philosophies have become slightly mixed. The devil's disciple will stick around to mind the parson's duties and his wife, while the latter is off to finish the American revolution.

The company's four-star cast is excellent. Maurice Evans gives the turbulent hero just the right bravura touch. Victor Jory gives a finely shaded reading to the warrior-minister. Marsha Hunt is sharply effective as the cleric's wife. But in the later scenes it is the Burgoyne of Dennis King who comes close to stealing the show. It is, of course, a wonderful acting assignment, with the comedy's most acidulous jibes included in its sides. But King makes it peculiarly his own, a really virtuoso contribution. Hilda Vaughn, Ian Martin, Betty Lou Holland and Logan Ramsey and solid support, and

THE COCKTAIL PARTY

(Opened Saturday, January 21)

HENRY MILLER THEATER

A verse drama by T. S. Eliot. Staged by E. Martin Browne. Settings and lighting by Raymond Sovey. General manager, Harry Fleischman. General stage manager, Kenneth Fraser. Stage manager, Donald Balm. Press representatives, Richard Maney, Frank Goodman, Peggy Phillips. Presented by Gilbert Miller by arrangement with Sherek Players, Ltd.

Edward Chamberlayne ..... Robert Fleming  
Julia (Mrs. Shuttlethwaite) ..... Cathleen Nesbitt  
Celia Coplestone ..... Irene Worth  
Alexander MacColgie Gibbs ..... Ernest Clark  
Peter Quilpe ..... Grey Blake  
An Unidentified Guest ..... Alec Guinness  
Lavinia Chamberlayne ..... Eileen Peel  
A Nurse-Secretary ..... Avril Conquest  
A Caterer's Man ..... Donald Balm

T. S. Eliot's *Cocktail Party* is an even stronger stimulant than the title implies. In essence a play of ideas, it is not a show to enjoy in relaxation. It demands undivided attention. An intellectual play, *Cocktail* is a must for the serious-minded, but one doubts if the mental stimulus will be palatable to general taste.

*Cocktail's* skeletal premise deals with a husband and wife who after five years of marriage are suddenly confronted with the reality of their relationship. The wife, rejected by her lover, realizes she has been loved by no one, including her husband, whom she leaves. Attending the cocktail party, which the wife has arranged and forgotten, is the husband's mistress, who sees thru his trumped-up excuse for his wife's absence and knows she has really left him. After the party the lady confronts him with definite demands, which he rejects because he realizes in his wife's absence that he has never been capable of loving even a light o' love. A stranger at the party, who turns out to be a psychiatrist, finally unites the couple via mutual soul-baring and aids the mistress in finding her salvation in a religious order. The lover, unaided, pursues his illusions in the movie industry.

But *Cocktail* concerns itself not with plot but ideas. Those not emotionally involved in the lover's entanglements are really guides to aid the four out of their confusion. Eliot's hypothesis is that one may live according to his desires and illusions as long as he wants, but eventually there will be a reckoning with "one's tougher self" or with something outside himself. His three bystanders have broken down their own illusions and faced themselves honestly, and it is their function in the play to guide the others to similar enlightenment.

The end result is confusing, and Eliot—perhaps confused himself—leaves the question unanswered. There are two truths, he explains; one is the vision of reality before us, the other—the justification of that vision—can be found only in the grave. His hypothesis therefore remains hypothetical and offers no satisfactory answer. Herein, at least to an untutored ear, Eliot has failed.

Production-wise there is little more to be desired. Again proving the value of unified acting, the all-English cast has no flaws. Each gives and takes as the scene requires for a flowing pattern as a unit. There are no stand-outs. One can merely say the cast is vastly superior. For sheer length of role, however a special nod should be given to Alec Guinness, Cathleen Nesbitt and Robert Fleming. E. Martin Browne's direction is impeccable, and Raymond Sovey's two sets provide proper backgrounds.

*Cocktail* should be done. Its form of poetic playwrighting gives it a quiet rhythmic flow and provides great power where emotional heights demand it. It's compelling to those inclined. But after the thinkers and those who feel they must see it for the sake of Eliot and poetry have seen the play, the bottom will probably drop out of the Henry Miller b. o.

Dennis McDonald.

the lesser roles are withall competently filled.

Peter Wolf's simple settings are again imaginative and well designed for the quick changes demanded by the Webster arrangement. Emeline Roche has supervised the costuming with equal imagination. *Disciple* is a credit to the City Center troupe. It's their best effort yet.

Bob Francis.