

"It's rousing theatre. Not Shakespeare, mind you, but perfectly swell Marlowe. Since this may be your last opportunity ever to see this landmark in English literature, a visit to the Winter Garden seems imperative," wrote Robert Coleman in the tabloid Daily Mirror under the heading: "Rip Roaring Drama."

"A gory pageant about an early Hitler," reported William Hawkins in the World-Telegram. "There is a great deal of talk but not much of it soars."

"A new high in violence and homicide, as well as a thoroughly majestic exercise in production," was the feeling of John McClain in The Journal American. "...Our Boy is a delightful 14th Century Capone."

Walter Kerr was more critical in the Herald Tribune: "Because the blood-letting rolls mercilessly on, because Tamburlaine himself betrays no complexity of mind, because spectacular feat follows spectacular feat until the play topples over from its own dizzying weight, Marlowe's nightmare has almost no power to touch us today. Seeing it is simply a matter of paying one's respect to history.... This is your chance to see what drama was like before it was drama... With that squared away, let's go on to say that in spite of the work's failure to touch a living nerve, you won't be bored. The opulent visual canvas will see to that... A cloudburst of banners illuminates every passing conquest, tumbling crowds of extras surge and break, and roll into the wings with every tread of the tyrant's foot."

No critic yielded to the favourite sport of telling the director what he should have done, and I detected only one criticism of the acting when Walter Kerr suggested that the Stratford company was not "so effective here as on its home grounds. Voices that are rich and resonant on the open platform stage lose timbre in the high reaches of the Winter Garden proscenium."

One thing is certain. An evening with Tamburlaine is stimulating, exciting and something to talk about but it is not relaxing. We were all weary when the final curtain fell and a roar of applause and a chorus of bravos greeted Anthony Quayle in repeated curtain calls and no one made a move to leave to catch the first taxi. But it was a cold night and even the presence of Marlene Dietrich and other stars, who had paid

\$25 each for seats for an actors' benefit, did not keep people hanging around the doors.

All the Canadians in the official group, all the cast and many theatre personalities were at a big reception given by ANTA, at the Carlyle Hotel. Champagne flowed and the buffet had everything to satisfy hungry actors.

One stage trick had baffled me. A conquered king had suddenly been swung aloft, a rope around his neck, his hands bound behind his back. And as he swung, was riddled with arrows from the archers on the stage. How was it done? Quite simply. He held a cord in his bound wrists and when he pulled, arrows concealed in his robes sprang up and quivered as though they had just landed in their living victim. The stage designer had another bit of realism which was too realistic even for Tyrone Guthrie. At the point when Tamburlaine kills his coward son, the dagger was to be pulled out running with blood.

I had met Guthrie in Toronto before I left for Paris when we had talked of what might be done in Stratford. Now less than four years later I talked to Guthrie again, and it seemed hardly possible that between our two meetings the unborn group had become the world-famous Festival Players of Stratford, and Stratford, itself, a railway town, the best known theatre community in Canada.

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### THE POPE'S BIRTHDAY PARTY

To be invited to a birthday party for the Pope is not too frequent an event; yet it happened to Marie Ange, the nine-year old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Courchesne of the Canadian Embassy, Rome. Together with children from 24 nations, she took part, on March 2, in the presentation of an 80-candle birthday cake to Pius XII and, on the same occasion, she offered greetings to His Holiness on behalf of Canadian children.