



on second thought —Peter Outhit

A TIME FOR HUMOR

I was happy to see that out of the passel of psycho-traumatic ordeals that is the modern theatre, DGDS last week salvaged one of the last two or three comedies written for the sake of fun without the spoon-feeding of "social message."

Is today's society so almighty "significant" that entertainment is reduced to a candy coating for a bitter pill of "reality?"

"I am all for incest and wrecked lives and tortured souls in moderation," writes P. G. Wodehouse, who has logged lightweight but bright theatrical pieces for years, "but a good laugh from time to time never hurt anybody."

He continues: "At first a laugh in the modern theatre would have rather an eerie effect. People would wonder for a while where the noise was coming from, and speculate as to whether somebody was having some sort of a fit, but . . . before long it would be quite customary to see audiences looking and behaving not like bereaved relatives at a wake but as if they were enjoying themselves."

Fewer comedies have trod Broadway boards in the last five years than ever before. Only two—La Plume de ma Tante and A Thurber Carnival—have been without an obvious "social comment," and they've pulled in a big box office. But the Misery Set has the day.

What's more, the theatre to a great extent reflects the tastes of the times—and those are fearful, humourless times.

Don't get me wrong: I don't say there aren't funny comedians or good comedies still produced by moviedom and even the television (in the latter case, it's usually by accident) but the day when there were no sacred cows has long since ended.

"Sick, sick, sick" comedy is a pale antecedent of the rout-and-tumble humour of, say, 30 years ago. The iconoclasm (with one exception in Mort Sahl) is limited to ribbing ill-defined social acceptances such as father-and-son rapport:

"How'd you get along with Dad while I was away?"

"Just fine. Every morning he took me down to the lake in a rowboat, and let me swim back."

"Isn't that a long distance for you to swim?"

"Oh, I always made it all right. Only trouble I had was getting out of the bag."

Or husband-and-wife:

"Doctor, come quickly. My husband has swallowed a fountain pen."

"I'll be right over. What are you doing in the meantime?"

"Using a pencil."

Or perhaps just general social comment:

"I was plodding through the woods when suddenly a giant brown bear grabbed me from behind and made me drop by gun. He picked it up and stuck it in my back."

"What do you do?"
"What could I do? I married his daughter."

But the carefree years that spawned the hilarious Benchleys, Leacocks, Lardners, Runyans and Woolcotts have never been regained, and all the brutal exposes in the world won't make up for it.

"It is practically impossible in these sensitive times to be humorous without offending some race or group," said Wodehouse recently. "They said it is impossible even today to be funny about porcupines and remain unscratched, but I very much doubt it. Just try it and see how quickly your letter box becomes full of communications beginning: 'Sir: With reference to your recent tasteless and uncalled-

(continued on Page 4)

A reviewer's conception of:

WITCHCRAFT AROUND US

by BETTY ARCHIBALD

For three nights last week, actors in DGDS's Bell, Book, and Candle performed a thorough job of entertaining an increasingly large audience.

The light, attractive comedy was never permitted to lose its essential gaiety, and the continual presence of witches on the stage contributed to an atmosphere of unconcern that allowed the audience to laugh at every available moment without feeling themselves slightly out of place for doing so.

Having undertones both of wit and of the supernatural, the plot, if it did not keep the audience spell-bound for the length of its traffic on the stage at least provided for a very pleasant evening.

The plot itself supplied only a slim amount of appeal, despite its superficially attractive elements, but the cast and director fashioned out of their available material some excellent characterizations and suspenseful scenes.

"Boy Meets Girl"

Even enlivened with witchcraft, the play concerned so completely all the ordinary elements of the "boy meets girl, boy loses girl, and boy and girl are finally reconciled" that much of the sparkle emanated from the production stemmed from the wanderings on and off stage of the less important characters, Aunt Queenie, Nicky, and especially Redlitch.

Gillian

As the leading lady, Ruth MacKenzie provided a most attractive centre around which both the play and Shep Henderson revolved. Very few traces of human softness and gentleness were allowed to creep into her very good portrayal of the witch; however, this very quality of supernatural unconcern that stood her in such good stead as the witch

unfortunately carried over into her performance as a human, making her transformation from a witch a little less believable. Generally she turned in a thoroughly credible interpretation as a witch who wished she were human and who finally achieved her hope at the temporary loss of her lover.

The Lover

Shep Henderson, played by Hugh Williams, conveyed a remarkable sense of the ordinary, attractive, and intelligent man who became involved in a situation that he thought was enchantment only figuratively but who awoke with the startled recognition that he had been bewitched by a very lovely woman in the literal sense. Both his love scenes and his ????? with Gillian generally showed believable intimacy. Although somewhat lacking the necessary qualities of dominance, his portrayal of the man so much in love that he neglected his business and was possessed only of a desire to be left alone with his girl, he was thoroughly likeable and amusing.

The Kid Brother

Charlie Haliburton as Nicky, became an irresponsible fun-loving and slightly lovable kid brother. As the warlock who used his supernatural abilities to help his sex life along its inevitable path, he showed appropriate unconcern with all else

save his own pleasures and comfort. His threats of revenge at Gillian's prevention of the publication of his manuscript were not convincingly forceful to anyone, but, thanks to his generally unconcerned nature, no one really missed their non-appearance.

Enter Falstaff

Unmistakably the characterization of the three evenings was turned in by Dave Nicholson as the slightly bedraggled, befogged, and thoroughly likeable Sidney Redlitch. From his first wandering on stage in an atmosphere of printer's ink and beer to his final half-hearted and confused attempt to have Gillian lift the spell on his book "sometime when you've nothing else on your mind", Dave held the audience in the palm of his hand in the traditional Falstaffian manner.

Unfortunately marred by speaking so quickly that Dave's remarks were not infrequently unintelligible, he nevertheless brought into and kept in the play an atmosphere of comic, gaiety, of the humour of a witty mind and the amusement of a great bulk lumbering on stage with the awkwardness of a man who is unconcerned about his physical appearance and who is by analogy equally nonchalant about his unorthodox opinions.

Skeleton in the Closet

Janet Coffin played Aunt Queenie Holroyd as the slightly eccentric aunt who manages to upset every situation into which she bursts. A witch who is overjoyed at the thought of moving into a hostel with "a communal kitchen we can all use for our brewing", the rules of her profession have not as yet completely erased her tendencies toward kindness and sympathy. Janet's performance lacked the all-out eccentricity (continued on Page 4)

Experiment Gives Student Travel a New Twist

As rapid and economical transportation continues to draw all countries of the world closer together, the university student is finding it increasingly easier to spend either a vacation or a period of study in a foreign country. A unique opportunity for students to combine the pleasure of travelling with the enriching experience of intimately examining the language, spirit and culture of a foreign land is provided by The Experiment in International Living, an American organization that has been little publicized in Canada.

Begun 29 years ago, the Experiment in summer of 1961 will send some 1200 students to 31 different countries that span five continents and offer cultures as diverse as those of Mexico and Poland, India and Holland, Germany and Japan. Each of the students participating in the program is able to choose whichever country interests him or her and dedicates himself or herself to the improvement of international understanding during the

course of a two month's stay in that country.

Because the aim of the Experiment is to have its members understand one country well rather than see many superficially, the program differs greatly from the typical student tour that grandly offers one the spectacle of ten countries in three weeks. The heart of the Experiment is a one month home stay with a carefully selected family that enables the student to see the country not with the blurred vision of a casual tourist, but with the intelligent and sympathetic understanding of a family member. During that month, the Experimenter shares every experience of his adopted family and comes to know the country from the inside out.

Expect the Unexpected

Following the homestay, the Experimenter along with nine other group members and corresponding number of students from the host families, sets out on an informal trip of two or three weeks duration through the country. The pace is leisurely and travel may be by bicycle, bus, train, or even hiking. The Experimenter, always prepared to expect the unexpected, may find himself at the end of a strenuous day's journey sleeping in a train speeding across India, in a crowded youth hostel in Wales, a tent in Northern France, or a chalet on an Alpine slope. At the end of the informal trip, group members spend a final week in one of the great cities of the world, or are given the option of travelling independently for that week.

For students who wish to improve their fluency in a foreign language, the Experiment, by means of the homestay and the trip in a binational group, provides a splendid opportunity. However, it must be stressed that the organization is not primarily a language study group. Consequently, the great ma-

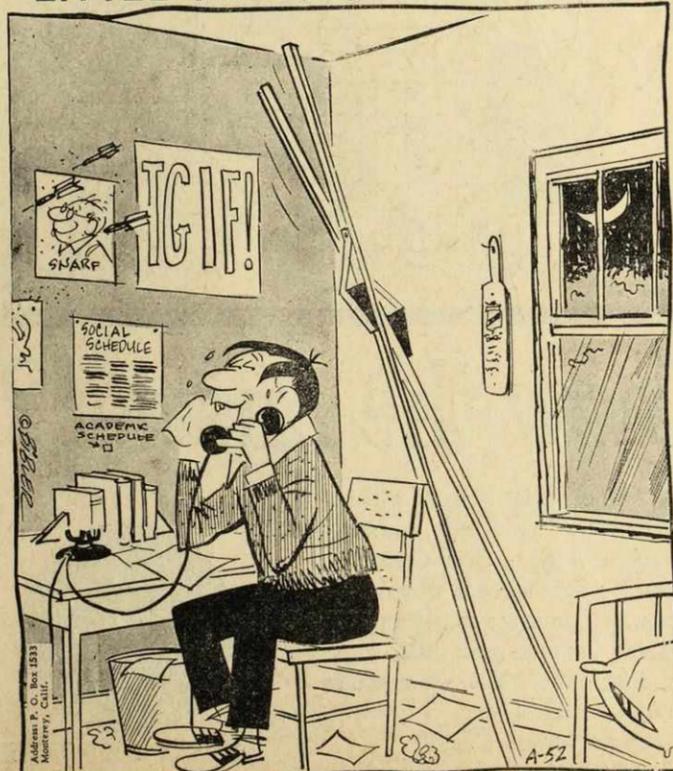
majority of the groups have no language requirement. Nevertheless, all students experimenting in France must have completed three years of current language study in French, while those speaking German, Spanish or Italian may or may not join a language-speaking group according to their capabilities.

Fees Moderate

Students accepted by the Experiment can expect the total cost of a summer in any of the Western European countries to average \$950, while a stay in an African or Asian country will cost about \$1400. Experimenters going to the USSR will pay \$1100 for their trip. These amounts include trans-Atlantic transportation in a chartered plane or a student ship and all transportation and living costs while abroad. Students in need of financial assistance may apply to the Experiment for a scholarship, a loan, or a combination of both that will cover up to 75% of the total cost of the summer.

Applications for the 1961 summer program must be submitted by March 15, 1961. Information may be obtained by writing the Director of Selection and Training, The Experiment in International Living, Putney, Vermont. For the university student who wants to learn today how to deal with the world problems of tomorrow, the Experiment in International Living provides the answer.

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