

THREE ONE-ACT PLAYS

Well-Variied Programme
By The Questors

Although each of the three one-act plays presented under the comprehensive title of "Magic Carpet," by the Questors in their theatre in Mattock-lane, Ealing, last Friday and Saturday evenings belonged to a completely different dramatic category, and were representative of American comedy, stark tragedy and romantic fantasy, it is true to say that in each the human element predominated. It was a programme good to have seen and the hope expressed by the company that the audience would enjoy the "summer excursion" and go back to work in the great national effort refreshed in spirit was assuredly fulfilled.

Thornton Wilder's "The Happy Journey to Trenton and Camden" began the evening on a lively note and rolled merrily along, the audience supplying, as it was asked to do, the imagination to turn some chairs and planks into a motor car and to furnish the scenery of roadside and village. The play was produced in just the right key by Miss Muriel Curtis and Mr. Philip Allen, and Miss Mary Chanter as the talkative American matron, Mr. Lionel Locke, who managed imaginary steering wheel and starting gear with intense realism, and Miss Pat O'Connell and Miss Joan Cowderoy as their children, played the chief roles with an evident enjoyment which was shared by the audience. Miss Betty Turner and Mr. John Turner completed the cast.

DIGNIFIED TRAGEDY

Mr. Alfred Emmet's production of J. M. Synge's "Riders to the Sea" struck throughout the right note of unadulterated brooding tragedy, tragedy which seems the persistent heritage of those fisher-folk of islands off the west coast of Ireland, where the sea takes so many of their men. Miss Kathleen O'Neill's Maurya, the bereaved and sorrowing mother whose last son the sea claims, had about it something of the restrained despairing dignity associated with the old Greek tragedies.

Miss Yvonne Angel's portrait of Maurya's daughter, Cathleen, was the best piece of emotional acting she has yet done. She seemed to forget herself in her part, and Miss Peggy Cooper played truly and tenderly as her younger sister, Nora. Subsidiary roles were taken by Messrs. Anthony Rickards, Lionel Locke and L. E. Bayling. Mrs. Mildred Emmet and the Misses Eleanor Bishop, Mary Chanter and Joan Cowderoy.

The moaning of wind and rain struck one as a little too accommodating in their sudden coming on and off at the beginning and end of the play.

EVERYDAY FANTASY

In their production of Sudermann's "The Far-Away Princess," Mr. and Mrs. Emmet created the only atmosphere in which this fantasy in everyday dress plays successfully. This is not the first time the Questors have produced this play. Mr. Emmet himself as the impoverished poet, Strubel, who prefers a far-away princess whom he can just see through a telescope to a genuine one, acted with easy comedy and some happy touches of romance. Miss Denise Archer as the real Princess von Geldern gave a measure of wistful beauty to her role, and Miss Eleanor Bishop was a German plutocrat to the life as the Baroness von Brook. Lesser parts were taken by the Misses Edith Woods, Barbara Sharp, Muriel Curtis, Jean Mackrory and Thelma Gordon, and Mr. L. E. Bayling.

C.C.

Amateur Stage

THE QUESTORS IN "MAGIC CARPET"

The Questors: "Magic Carpet," three one-act plays; the Questors' Theatre, Ealing, Friday, July 19, 1940.

NEW JERSEY, an island off the West of Ireland, and Southern Germany were the scenes of three short one-act plays chosen by The Questors.

"The Happy Journey to Trenton and Camden," by Thornton Wilder, shows an American family's car journey to visit a married daughter, and all the petty annoyances and quarrels so apt to arise in such travels are all the more amusing because of their actuality. Mary Chanter, Lionel Locke, Joan Cowderoy, and Pat O'Connell represented the members of the family.

The constantly changing scene of the family's travels was left to the audience's imagination. The most elaborately equipped stage could hardly keep pace with that car as it speeds across the countryside, stopping at petrol stations and "hot dog" stalls, and so The Questors decided quite rightly to leave all to the imagination, four chairs representing the inside of the car. In fact the action is like a glorified game of charades.

Comedy is transformed in a flash to tragedy in a short scene between mother (Mary Chanter) and married daughter (Betty Turner), when the sad story of the daughter's newly-born child is mentioned for the first time. A cleverly contrived episode, this, and one which leaves the audience aghast by its unexpected appearance: credit is due to the producers, Miss Muriel Curtis and Mr. Philip Allen, for the way in which this tricky part of the action is carried off.

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THE magic carpet's next destination is a remote island off the West of Ireland, where something of the stark tragedy of the "men who go down to the sea in ships" is conveyed.

A hard life, that of the fisherman, and "Riders to the Sea," written by J. M. Synge, is too well-known to need comment. Production was by Mr. Alfred Emmet.

Dramatic tension remains unbroken throughout. Kathleen O'Neill, seen as the mother of sons, all of whom are drowned, gave a good performance, and her sentiments on seeing the body of her last son carried into the cottage by fishermen were well conveyed.

Bartley, the last son, was portrayed by Anthony Rickards, and Yvonne Angel and Peggy Cooper were Cathleen and Nora, two of the women in the cottage.

"For men must work and women must weep" sums up the spirit of this play pretty faithfully.

LAST stopping place of the magic carpet was an inn above a watering place in Southern Germany, where the arrival of a princess is causing considerable disjunction in the establishment's routine.

Fritz Strubel, impecunious student, was played by Alfred Emmet. Barbara Sharp took the role of the formidable proprietress and Edith Woods that of her pert waitress. The imperious maid of honour to the princess was played by Eleanor Bishop, and Denise Archer was the Princess von Geldern, soon to be married to a Grand Duke, but, apparently, rather averse to the prospect.

The mainstay of the production is her scene with the young student, who, needless to say, does not guess her identity, until Frau von Halldorf and her two daughters (Muriel Curtis, Jean Mackrory and Thelma Gordon), who have social aspirations, make their appearance with a convincing show of reverence.

Miss Mildred Emmet and Mr. Alfred Emmet were responsible for the production of this play, "The Far-away Princess," which was written by H. M. Sudermann.

Other members of the company to participate in the three plays were John Turner, L. E. Bayling, and Mildred Emmet, who was also wardrobe mistress.

Mr. F. L. Robinson was stage manager, and Mr. Michael Kelly was responsible for lighting effects. Miss Peggy Cooper and Miss Thelma Gordon were property mistresses.

Members of the audience were invited to attend a discussion on the plays at the theatre on the following Monday.

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C.C.