

Theatre Directors Confer On Actor Training Schools

EDITOR'S NOTE — Mrs. Turner is director of Will-O-Wappan Theatre in Bloomfield Hills.

By CELIA MERRILL TURNER
Special Writer

America's half-trained young actors were the subject of serious study by directors of repertory theatres from all over the country during a special conference called by Michael Langham, artistic director of Canada's Stratford Festival.

It was held recently under the sponsorship of the Theatre Communications Group, an organization founded by the Ford Foundation, which has already done much to help theatre help itself.

Langham led the conference in a comparison of school and apprentice programs. There was consideration of the possibility of exchanging junior actors and of sharing the top speech and movement experts.

MANY REGIONAL directors told of experimental training programs. The Minnesota Theatre Company recently brought a skilled speech instructor to the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre before the season started. However, they found that the few weeks she was there were just a beginning.

With the help of the Rockefeller Foundation, the Seattle Repertory Company under Stuart Vaughan is working on speech and movement before beginning its second season this fall.

The Lincoln Center in New York worked eight months in a training program for supporting actors before opening and now has a complete apprentice program.

In San Francisco, San Diego and Chicago, permanent professional companies backed by actors workshops are developing.

THE STRATFORD Festival has developed the National Theatre School. I interviewed Powys Thomas the artistic director of the English section.

The school accepts only 30 students, 15 French-speaking, 15 English-speaking. Tryouts are held throughout Canada. They study in Montreal in the winter and in Stratford in the summer. The course is a three-year plan.

The first year is spent in speech and movement technique and interpretation classes. The second year they practice a variety of acting styles. The third year they give a series of performances. All of the graduates of this school already had been placed in acting companies before graduation.

ALTHOUGH THE conference was called to discuss the inadequacy in movement and speech of the young actor, the pros and cons of government subsidy of repertory theatres came in for a good deal of attention.

R. Elmo Lowe, director of the Cleveland Playhouse, could use a little of that "bad money."

Whereas, Dr. John Reich from the Goodman Memorial Theatre in Chicago fears his theatre would become a political football. Of course, the Stratford Festival itself is now supported by a national foundation.

It was stated that the artistic management has never been pulled in any direction by its board.

When I asked Lowe if he thought the United States would ever be as fortunate, he replied, "A national theatre springs. It happens. It must grow from the middle and spread out rather than be sent out. It cannot be in Washington or New York. Stratford didn't say we are the national theatre and start beating its breast. It just became it."

THE STRATFORD Festival is theatre's dream come true. It brought a new pattern to America, the repertory theatre.

Repertory is created by a com-

'Y' Offers Lessons For Folk Guitar

The Birmingham YMCA is offering four separate classes of folk guitar instruction beginning Oct. 19 and lasting for eight weeks.

Classes for beginners will be held Mondays and Tuesdays from 4 to 5 p.m.; adult beginners (18 and over) on Wednesdays from 7 to 8 p.m.; and instruction for intermediate players will be held Thursdays from 4 to 6 p.m.

Tony Hill, a senior at Seaholm High School, will instruct. Classes are limited to five persons each, and registrations are now being taken at the "Y." There will be a fee.

New Deadline Set for Arts

News for the Arts of Living section now is due at noon Friday for publication the following Thursday. Address your news to Arts Editor, Birmingham Eccentric, Birmingham, 48008.

Included in the arts section are amusements, antiques, art, architecture, books, bridge classes, cooking, crafts, dance, decorating, gardening, hobbies, homemaking, lectures, music, theatre and travel.

pany of actors who rehearse and produce two or more productions each season which are then alternated in performance.

For example, while in Stratford we saw "Richard III" on Tuesday evening, "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme" Wednesday evening, "King Lear" Wednesday afternoon and "The Country Wife" Thursday evening.

A much longer rehearsal period is possible than in stock, where the actor must memorize and rehearse a new play each week while playing another. The stock company develops versatile actors who are good sight readers. The repertory company develops ensemble playing and art.

The Cleveland Playhouse is an example of a company that mixes the two techniques. They produce 20 plays each year, running them in three small theatres for about a month each.

They offer a classic, a comedy and a drama all at the same time, thus catering to all tastes. They are good sight readers. They give grants to students. This method has kept the Cleveland Playhouse open since 1915.

RAPIDLY TRAINED actors have resulted from slapdash stock experience, theoretical college courses that "talk about" theatre but don't do and a basic mistake in attitude in the student. He believes himself ready for Broadway after winning the lead in the high school play.

He takes off for New York believing some magic will make him rich and famous. Theatre is an art and a business. It requires imagination and craft. Those who prepare themselves, do find repertory theatres willing and anxious to hire them.

Birmingham can be proud of Martha Henry. Martha didn't take the quick way to success, although she had the opportunity. She began her study at Will-O-Way at the age of 11, and kept up lessons winter and summer through her high school.

She had stock experience at Will-O-Way and in Canada and went to college at Carnegie Tech. After college she had leading roles at

Art Class May Need Less Order

Keeping order in art class shouldn't be the teacher's major concern, says Michael Church, assistant director for cultural activities in the University of Michigan Extension Service.

"Creativity is sacrificed when all the class projects are so structured that most movement in the class is avoided," he declares.

"Recently," Church says, "I picked up a hitch-hiker who turned out to be an art teacher. He is determined to leave the fold because he is satisfied that his superiors and administrators are all out to convert creative people into authoritarian figures in order to preserve the fiction of orderliness and class control."

"THIS TEACHER believes his seventh and eighth grade classes are creatively stilled and his own personality thwarted by administered-centered operations," says Church.

"Before we parted he asked, 'Do you think respect for a teacher is a conventional sense is necessary

One-Man Show Set At American House

An exhibition of ceramics by John Glick will open Oct. 19 at America House, 555 E. Maple Road, Birmingham, adjoining Englander's.

The one-man show will continue through Oct. 31. Glick, a Farmington resident, is an instructor this fall at the Bloomfield Art Association.

Hours at America House are 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday and 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Thursday and Friday. The crafts gallery will extend its hours until 9 opening night.

for effective teaching? Can respect be obtained in different ways, outside of having a student sit down when ordered?"

Church says he has been in art classes where you could hear a pin drop and agrees that creative activity classes need not be a scene of chaos. "At the same time they shouldn't be regimented. While authoritarianism is not the rule, there are still too many art classes where it prevails," he adds.

"To be in the presence of a truly creative teacher invites intuitive respect," he emphasizes. "Command always commands without commanding."

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