

A HISTORY OF THEATER
AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF DETROIT
1880-1950
-
STRIVING FOR EXCELLENCE

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Volume II

Edited, written, and compiled

by

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"Education in dramatic art; (Our goal is) the encouragement and development of amateur talent and the presentation and management in detail of stage entertainments."

(Wendall Hall, President: U-D Thespians Club, 1922)

"The actor who performs an important role effectively exhausts his resources in a performance; the teacher who effectively teaches can do no less."

Richard J. Burgwin: Chairman, The Theater Department
(University of Detroit, 1960)

"Our idea here is to prepare these students to become professionals by training them in a professional theater, working side by side with professionals, yet studying at the same time."

Dr. James W. Rodgers: Artistic Director, The Theater
(Detroit Free Press, 1974)

"Too many people have worked too hard for too long earning this Company's good name and I'll NOT give it up by dealing with a bunch of amateurs! Either share our commitment to be the very best... or get the hell out!"

David L. Regal: Artistic Director, The Theater Company
(Notes following a production rehearsal, 1993)

PREFACE

Any three people watching a car crash into a tree will provide three slightly different descriptions of what happened. All will get the car into that tree but will vary slightly as to form and content. That's just the way we humans are and that difference is manifest in everything we do. The car crash we are investigating in this book is, of course, theater at the University of Detroit.

Being a creative enterprise, theater, more than most beasts and car wrecks, takes on the personality of those in charge, the person calling the cues. And excellence to be achieved must be pushed and demanded every moment. If the Director takes time off, the beast that is theater will begin looking for another master to follow, another direction to take. Again, this is the nature of the creative impulse.

As we journey through the history of theater at the University of Detroit (U-D), one should be able to perceive the persona of the person in charge by the plays chosen for performance, and the methods and people chosen to execute that performance. Thus, more than most periods of history, the periods of theater can be summarized under the banner of the Artistic Director. And this is not in any way to be seen as a cult of personality. A heading of "the Burgwin," "the Rodgers," or "the Regal" years carries real significance beyond mere political or geographic distinction. It shows the creative drives, the artistic demands, and literary vitality of that Director. Thus, in this book we will endeavor to zero in on those Directors... "the Chairmen."

Throughout this book we will also, wherever possible, use the actual words of the people involved in their entirety. This will give the reader views that may be different from this writer. It will also allow the reader to draw the flavor of the times and sample the essence of the people themselves.

Finally, I will not attempt to account for each year and every play presented in U-D's long history. That will be amply covered in Part II. Instead I will try to note the larger movements both in theater at the University and the world of theater at large. We will also note some of the occurrences that we all remember or can identify with. It was amazing to read through the papers and notes from years ago and see the students of those days facing so many of the same problems as we faced. It hasn't changed all that much!

So, with those "understandings" well in hand, off we go!

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST STEPS

Wendall Hall, when President of the Thespians Theater Club at U-D in 1922, wrote that an interest in theater was the natural outgrowth of a quality University education. "When you read and study the great literature of the world there is a natural desire to perform that literature." And indeed, it would hard to imagine any serious study of the liberal arts that would not end up with several of the students up in front of the class acting the great lines of Shakespeare, Morleire, or Sheridan among many others. From there it is a small step indeed to performing for an audience and then to studying, at least some of, the conventions of theater.

It should not be surprising then to find that the first drama society at Detroit College was founded by the students in 1878, the second year of the college's existence. The archives of the University record that in that year a group of students got together "to read and produce plays for their own amusement."

After a further two years, this first group of students felt strong enough to produce ELMA, THE DRUID MARTYR for a public audience. This three act melodrama, typical of popular theater of the period, was produced at the Detroit Opera House on Campus Martius (now the Kern Block). All proceeds of the presentation went to the St. Vincent's (Female) Orphan Asylum in Detroit. The production went off on Wednesday evening December 29, 1880 despite very cold weather (-10F), and seemed to satisfy everyone present but the theater critic at the Detroit Evening News. His review was presented in the paper on December 29, 1880 and set off a firestorm of controversy. It does appear that consistantly down through the years, critics do seem to have that ability, don't they.

Here are the comments of both parties presented for the most part in their entirety in "Point and Counter-point" style. First the review of the Detroit Post and Tribune:

"The presentation of ELMA, THE DRUID MARTYR, at the Detroit Opera House last night by the students of Detroit College, for the benefit of the St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum, was witnessed by a large and responsive house. The asylum doubtless profits largely by the entertainment. The costumes were especially prepared for the play, and the music, which was furnished by Speil's Orchestra, was skillfully directed by Prof. Gerold of Cincinnati. There are a number of tableaux in the piece, which were very prettily done, and the picturesque features were happily conceived and executed.'

The Detroit Home-Journal carried the following review. As one reads this review, you cannot help but be struck by that fact that, although the language is somewhat more stilted and flowery, it compares favorably with the better criticisms of today, over a hundred years later. This would be a good solid review whatever year it was written:

"The piece is tragic in the extreme, there being no light or easy by-play to relieve the serious nature of the action. For a successful representation, the dismal and hard feature of ELMA. THE DRUID... should contrast strongly with the sad but quiet resignation, of the Christian spirit... Nori was, in the main, a very fair portrayal of the superstitious old king. We hardly think, however, that with the exception of the scene in the last act, strong passion should have been so generally manifested. A quieter action in the earlier portion of the play would have been more natural. Rollo did in many parts show great dignity of bearing, but was perhaps the most nervous player in the piece. His conception of his part was not as thorough as was that which some others had of theirs. he is, however, a powerful actor, who, with a longer and more detailed cultivation of his voice and greater freedom of gesture, can easily sustain a prominent part in any tragic action.

"The drama should be repeated... with fine weather an opera house can be crowded to see it. We would suggest that the time of action be cut down. Some of the soliloquies can be abbreviated or elided, a little shortening up here or there be indulged in, and the play made more effective..." (Detroit Journal, Jan 1881)

And then... there was the Detroit Evening News:

"A THEATRICAL NIGHTMARE AT THE DETROIT."

"The tragic muse roosted among the flies at the Detroit Opera House last evening and spread her darkest mantle over the performance of ELMA, THE DRUID MARTYR, by the students of the Detroit College. It was by all odds the most gloomy and lugubrious representation of a gory subject ever seen behind the footlights of a Detroit Theaytre, or perhaps of any other theater - a sort of theatrical nightmare, which possessed a horrible fascination from being the most atrocious amateur drama on record in these parts. There are times when bad acting becomes so extremely bad that it actually gathers about it an atmosphere of grandeur, such as may be conceded to the arch fiend himself in comparison with smaller fiends; and that was perhaps the reason why a

sable halo of glory last evening bathed the head of the youth with the false beard who took the part of Oswain, It is suggested that a leather medal, suitable inscribed, be presented to this cheeky youth. He might wear it with proud consciousness of being at least the worst, if not best actor in Detroit. Smaller medals can also be struck off for the misguided youths who represented Nori, Adulf, and other characters in the play. The audience apparently hailed from the Ninth Ward, although a few Celts may have strayed in from the Eighth and other adjacent colonies. There was a large attendance, and of the whole number probably not more than 100 had ever been inside a theater before. Several of the Jesuit fathers sat in the right proscenium box, and gazed with pardonable pride upon the efforts of their students and acolytes. The 10-year old lad who took the part of Elma is perhaps entitled to more favorable mention than any of his companions." (The Detroit Evening News, 12-30-1880)

Well, the optimist would say that there was no place to go but up. Needless to say the Ninth Ward of Detroit in those days was the Irish area on the near west side of the city around Holy Trinity in Old CorkTown. The Eighth Ward was on the downtown side of the Ninth. No records have been found, so far, indicating any possible subsequent "discussions" or "interactions" between the families of the students mentioned and the theater reviewer for the Evening News. And it's difficult for us at this late date to ascertain if there was a genuine anti-Irish bias in the writer for the Evening News, but it was clear enough back then to at least one writer. The following is from the Detroit Home-Journal:

"COWARDLY MALICE"

"The writer in the (Evening) News would injure the Detroit College, a Jesuit institution, and attacks boys because he is afraid to openly attack men. His assertions are false in every line, as those know who witnessed the drama, and as we can prove to those who did not. The verdict of intelligent observers was that the acting was excellent - a trifle too stilted perhaps, but equal to any amateur efforts.

"Elsewhere we (The Journal) gave criticism. It will be noted that the writer in the (Evening) News entirely ignored the praiseworthy object of entertainment. This is the more remarkable because the writer has often said a good word for the asylum... The writer in the (Evening) News states that 'the audience apparently hailed from the Ninth Ward, although, etc.' - as if the Ninth were not as respectable a locality as any in the city. Some Celts from the other colonies appeared! The fact is that many

of the most prominent Catholics of Detroit were present, and the audience was a highly intelligent gathering. The "theater" slur is to be expected. Why the writer in the (Evening) News should have gone out of his way to criticize the social position of a public audience is only to be explained by the theory that he wished to vent all possible venom upon the institution represented.

"This false and stupid article has excited contempt of every fair minded reader. Its malice is evident, but the missile overshot the mark and will rebound to hurt the projector. The Catholics of this city and State should teach a lesson to the vulgar and abusive sheet which admitted such an article to its columns. The Catholic who henceforth buys the Detroit Evening News, or advertises in it, is sadly lacking in proper spirit. Those who do either, deserve to be slapped in the face, and to pay for having it done..." (Detroit Home Journal, Jan 1881)

In reading the pages of the Evening News of the period, a case could be made that any bias of the reviewer in the News was against theater in general and not necessarily against the Irish or the Boys of the Detroit College. Other reviews of other plays by the reviewer of the Evening News were just as nasty and virulent. For instance, also playing the Detroit opera houses (The Whitney and The Detroit) at that time were two troupes of UNCLE TOM'S CABIN performers. UNCLE TOM'S CABIN is one of the marvels of the American stage. In 1879, there were forty-nine traveling companies performing this melodrama in America. It has been put forward that no other play has been produced so many times in the history of drama. (Wilson, p 202) The Evening News reviews for these productions are as follows:

"AD NAUSEAM"

"UNCLES TOM'S CABIN that ancient corpse of a dead and buried issue, was revised in dual form in Detroit last evening, being presented in both Opera Houses. For several days the air has been full of the boasts and claims for excellence of the rival companies, and had the result been at all commensurate with the wind expended, there would have been two fair shows instead of the dreary farces that were in fact produced." (Detroit Evening News, Dec 28, 1880)

It's interesting to note that forty-seven years later in 1928, the U-D Union Opera production of HOOFS, MY DEAR would be opening while a troupe performing UNCLE TOM'S CABIN was closing in that same theater, then called the Shubert-Lafayette. Anyway, back to 1880. The Evening News went on to say the best performance in either production of UNCLE TOM'S CABIN was surely the donkey in

George E. Stevens production at The Detroit. He concluded his review in this way:

"... each bloodhound was held by a strong strap and muzzled, except one bloodthirsty fellow that went along all right, perusing the fugitive until the middle of the stage was reached, when his nobler feelings overcame his houndship. He stopped short, laughed at the audience for a moment, and then trotted back the same way he had entered, amid the enthusiastic plaudits of the audience, who went wild over this bit of realism. But the donkey! Thunders of applause greeted this distinguished actor, who by a large majority carried off the honors of the evening... (It) was a big house, and the roars of laughter, thunders of applause and barrels of tears must have delighted Mr. Steven's 'original' heart, and, like old B.T.B., he probably smiled to himself as the applause reached in the box office, and whispered: 'I knew it; the American people like to be humbugged.'"

Not one production in Detroit during that month escaped the reviewers caustic pen. "Schiller's 'Song of the Bell' was given a rather dreary and monotonous fashion by the Detroit Chorus..." and on and on!

The Detroit Evening News was founded by James E. Scripps. Scripps, born in England, had come to the United States at age eight. The Evening News, founded in 1873 to be non-partisan, was aimed at the mass market with each four page addition selling for two cents a copy. Published daily and only four sheets in length, it "thrived on exposes and scandals. Within a year it had twice the circulation of any of its (Detroit) competitors. Out of it grew the world's first newspaper chain." (Pg 119, American Odessey, Robert Conat, 1974. Wm. Morrow and Comp, N.Y.)

The pages of the Evening News of this period show the news of Ireland reported in a straight forward fashion along with such announcements as the date, time, and location of the next meeting of the local Emmett Chapter of the Irish Land League. These pages do not show any particular anti-Irish or anti-Catholic bias. And this stands to reason because in 1880, Detroit, with a population of 140,000, was not that large a town. It seems unlikely that The Evening News would deliberately and as a matter of editorial policy slap one of the hands that it was most certainly aimed at, the very literate Irish community, then the largest immigrant minority in the city. More likely, the highly negative review of ELMA, THE DRUID MARTYR was the result of the Evening News goal of printing "scandals and exposes for your information and enjoyment" and an over-eager reviewer.

Yet, within five years, the Evening News showed an obvious "Us" versus "Them" attitude when reporting the so-called "Kalasinski Affair" then unraveling in the expanding polish

speaking community on the near east of Detroit, which the Evening News derisively called "black bottom" and "polacktown." (Orton, 1981) So, the question of an Evening News prejudice against immigrants is probably still open for further examination. But the theater experience at the Detroit College (soon to become the University of Detroit) and this book examining that history, will leave that question to someone else and another time, and move on.

Chapter 2

THE UNIVERSITY THEATER

Prior to the 1920/1921 academic year, dramatics at UofD had traditionally been a function of the Philomathic Society. A philomath, at the time, was defined as one who pursues knowledge for the sake of knowledge. During those years, the traditional venue for demonstrating the depth of this knowledge was speech and debate. During this same time, the high school debate society was known as the "Philomentic" then the "Philalethic Society." The University archives report on each without making a distinction between the grade levels, or what were then called "Academics" and later "Divisions."

In these early years, the Philomathic Debate Society received large notice from the College and University community. For instance, the contest that awarded the first Skinner Prize for excellence in debate (May, 1897) was held before a full house in the Detroit Opera House, at that time still the best auditorium in Detroit. The winner of that contest argued the following (which should strike a note not unfamiliar to the reader of more recent years): "Resolved: The naturalization laws of the U.S. should be made more stringent, and that full citizenship should be required as a necessary enjoyment of the electoral franchise." (Tamarack, 6-1897)

Later, the speech aspects of public speaking gave way to the more theatrical and became effective recitations of soliloquies from dramatic literature. For instance, the winners of the public speaking contest in 1919 were Maurice I. Ronayne and Kenneth D. Cassidy. All entries that year embraced selections from Shakespeare. Ronayne performed as Shylock from the *MERCHANT OF VENICE* and "Cassidy undertook the difficult task of impersonating four distinct characters" from Shakespeare. (VN, 6-11-19, pg 1) In 1920 the winners of the public speaking contest were Leo J. McHugh with selections from *KING LEAR* and Edward Kennedy performing "Polonius Advice to Laertes." (VN, 4- -20) It should be noted that down into the early Theater Company years of the 1970's, theater and theater classes were still listed under the auspices of the Communicating Arts or Speech Department.

But performance of the stage variety was also seen on and off at U-D during these years. For instance, the Clement Clay Dramatic Club (CCDC) was organized complete with constitution, by-laws, and a committee for play selection on November 14, 1892 by the Rev. Magivney, S.J.. Membership in the CCDC was limited to the three upper divisions with 15 students signing on as charter members. (VN, 1-19-28)

On April 4, 1894, a play *REWARD OF TREACHERY*, written by the

Rev. Hind and directed by Mr. Harrington, S.J., was performed by the CCDC in the parochial school hall before a "delighted crowd of 350" and was "a remarkable success." The general admission charge was 25 cents. (VN, 2-8-28)

The last notation of a CCDC production in the University's archives is a production of "THE TRIUMPH OF JUSTICE, a melodrama in three acts (that) was presented in the Parochial school hall. Thought the scenery was wonderful, the play quite good, the audience quite small. Scenery was by Brother J. Louis, S.J. who came to U-D last November just for this play." (VN 2-22-28)

There are many notations in the University Archives that show the students attending performances and readings of the classics as school projects. For instance, during the afternoon of Saturday, March 28, 1896, many students were allowed to see the MERCHANT OF VENICE starring the great English actors Henry Irving (1838-1905), as Shylock, and Ellen Terry (1847-1928), as Portia, at the Detroit Opera House. The Jesuit diarist noted the previous night "many students helped stage" Irving and Terry's production of KING ARTHUR. This was one way into the theater for the students as the tickets were scaled back from \$3.00 for an orchestra seat. The students earned their way into the Opera House in a couple of ways. First, they helped move the trainload of sets and costumes to the theater and then back to the train. Secondly, the papers of the day note that many young men were hired to be extras, wear the armor, "without money and without price, solely for the experience and satisfaction of saying 'When I was with Irving.'" (Detroit News-Tribune, 3-25-1896, 2-1) As the diarist notes: "for many it is as good as a class." I imagine it was!

The magnitude of the world renowned Sir Henry Irving bringing his one hundred person troupe, complete with props, from England to Detroit can be seen by the fact that the review of THE MERCHANT OF VENICE was run by the News-Tribune on page one, column one of the Sunday paper. (Detroit News-Tribune, 3-29-1894)

For the students of theater history, it should be noted that Irving, considered by many the greatest actor of the English theater during this period, conducted the Detroit performance as a tribute to his long time friend Sir Henry Howe who had died the previous week while touring with the Company. Sir Henry was the last surviving eye-witness to Edmund Kean's powerful and legendary RICHARD III. Irving loved the theatrical past and Howe brought that past to life in story and anecdote. His loss was hard on everyone in the troupe but was especially hard on Irving. (Irving, Pg 686)

Lawrence Irving, in the autobiography of his grandfather, wrote that this tour in 1896 coincided with another of the seemingly regular as clock-work diplomatic crises (this over British Guyana) that occurred during this period between his

England and the U.S. At the time, the situation had inspired a wave of anti-English feelings that threatened to destroy the tour. "Irving did all he could to allay this feeling, not only for business reasons but because he had a sincere desire to strengthen the friendship and understanding between English speaking people... KING ARTHUR proved to be immensely popular, perhaps for the very reason which Irving, by happy inspiration, was able to exploit... at the end of a performance the audience called for a speech, Irving thanked them 'for the appreciation of this effort to illustrate an old world legend', adding, after an effective pause, '--- your old-world legend'. This reminder of common ancestry was widely reported and applauded, but was only incidental to the policy of fostering Anglo-American fellowship which Irving pursued wherever he went." (pg 586, Irving)

The Detroit News-Tribune reported that Irving had closed the first act here with a variation of this same speech: "It is very delightful that this legend of the English-speaking race should be so warmly accepted. I thank you for this recognition of my colleague, Miss Ellen Terry, and myself. Our hearts respond to your gracious welcome." (News-Tribune, 3-28-1896, 2-3)

One final note comes from the Irving tour that visited Detroit that March of 1896. The manager of that tour had worked for and with Sir Henry for many years at the Lyceum Theater in London. Ironically, today this manager is probably more familiar to the modern readers than either Henry Irving or Ellen Terry for his name was Bram Stoker of DRACULA fame. (News-Tribune, 3-26-1896, 5-2) Now you know the rest of the story!

In 1916, a visit to U-D by Shakespearian scholar and reformer William Poel with a troupe of student actors from Professor Thomas Wood's renowned theater program at Carnegie Institute of Technology further whetted the campus appetite for Shakespeare. (Caine, 1960)

However, the lineal parent of the present Theater Company was to be the Thespian Club of the University, founded in early 1920 by Professor Charlemagne Koehler of the English Department. For the previous three years, Professor Koehler had recruited students from his speech classes at the University to put on productions and plays around the Detroit area as an extra-curricular activity. This was seen especially in the passion plays so popular during that era. So, when the time came to start the Thespian Club at UofD, Koehler had a trained cadre of students available and eager.

"The first production of the Thespian Club (not surprisingly as it turns out) was Shakespeare's AS YOU LIKE IT which was staged at the new Orchestra Hall on Woodward Ave) in the spring of 1920." (Hall, 1922) This production was listed as the first Shakespearean production given there. (Detroit News, 4-22-20) Although the reviews were good, the play incurred a loss of \$300.00 which was reluctantly borne by the parent University Athletic Association.

Professor Koehler had an interesting personal history. Born Charlemagne J. Koehler on October 2, 1860 in Cincinnati, Ohio, he graduated "Charles J. Koehler" with a B.A. from St. Xavier College there in 1881. Koehler's interests in college included membership in and the attainment of the honor status as "Censor" in the German Society and the Philopaedian Society. The latter was formed in 1841 at Xavier to encourage excellence in debate, literature, and elocution (Johnson, 1995). Koehler possessed a great booming voice, and in his career, had shared the stage with many of the greats of American theater including several years with Lawrence Barrett's (1838-1891) touring company that came to include Edwin Booth (1833-1893) and at times included such actors of renown as Madame Helena Modjeska (1844-1909). (VN, 5-1920, pg18)

The theatrical marriage of Lawrence Barrett and Edwin Booth remains to this day one of the landmarks of the American stage. Both were then at the end of their long and illustrious careers but Barrett felt that if he could lift the burden of the business aspects of theater from Booth's shoulders and let him concentrate solely on performance, the American public could again see the genius that was Edwin Booth. During the their time on tour, Barrett would play Horatio to Booth's Hamlet, Othello to Booth's Iago, etc. For two years (1886-1887, 1887-1888) our Charlemagne Koehler, as a member of the company, was part of that history making marriage, that Indian summer of American drama.

The tours played anywhere that had a theater on a rail line. Tickets were scaled back from the unheard of price of \$5.00 for an orchestra seat and made Booth and Barrett in excess of \$7,000.00 a week. The others in the company such as our Charles Koehler were not as fortunate, although they still made \$30.00 a week while providing their own costumes. Sleeping accommodations were provided on the train. The actors were also provided one meal a day by the theater they were playing. (P 302. Lockridge)

The tour of 1886-1887 was a phenomenon generating large crowds where ever it went. They started in Buffalo, New York on September 13, 1886 and played one and two night stands never pausing for more than a day or two along the way through the middle of the following June. In the rural areas, farmers came down to the railroad tracks with their families to watch the Booth train pass. All of this must have been heady stuff indeed for the young Koehler.

On Monday May 21, 1888, there occurred at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City one of the landmark productions in the history of American theater: the benefit performance of HAMLET for Lester Wallack (1820-1888). Wallack's Lyceum Theater had been opened in New York by James W. Wallack (1791-1864) in 1857 and then operated, in turn, by his son Lester until 1887. During its thirty-year run Wallack's Lyceum was one of America's foremost theaters specializing in Goldsmith, Sheridan, and the other giants of "old comedy." By 1888 that theater was closed and old Lester

destitute. But Wallack's vast theater family came together to show its appreciation for his distinguished career.

And the performance that resulted was renowned first for its cast, from top to bottom some of the biggest names in theater of that period. The benefit was produced by Augustin Daly and A.M. Palmer. Booth, of course, played Hamlet. Barrett played the Ghost and Frank Mayo, the original stage Davy Crockett, portrayed the King. John Gilbert, in the second last role of his long and distinguished career that centered at Wallack's, played old Polonius; Helena Modjeska played Ophelia; with Joseph Jefferson and W.J. Florence as the grave diggers. Our Charles Koehler played Orsic. What a company it was!

Being Monday, the rest of New York theater was dark and everyone who was anyone showed up at the Metropolitan. Georg C.D. Odell in his Annals of the New York Stage wrote: "A great feature of the performance was the large number of famous players who served as supernumeraries. I cannot say they were 'stagemanaged'; in the court scenes they simply moved about, trying to get into the lime-light. Rosina Vokes, particularly, as I remember it, maintained a front position regardless of those behind her." (Vol XIII, pg 508)

Years later, Mr. Odell remembered that night fondly. "I stood, for a time, behind the orchestra rail, where so often I later stood for opera; finally, I went to the dress circle or balcony (I forget which) and I saw and heard as from a distance. But to this day I can recall the exquisite Ophelia of Modjeska and the astonishing grave diggers of Jefferson and Florence." (Pg 509, Odell.)

Secondly, the performance was made special by the magic that resulted between Booth's Hamlet and Modjeska's Ophelia. Many reported that in the opening scenes Booth appeared to sleep walk through his lines but then he had a scene with Modjeska. For once Booth was playing against an Ophelia equal to his talent. The energy of Modjeska's Ophelia "was a tonic to Booth to glow with the fire of his youth... he played with unwonted concentration, energy, and spirit. He probably never acted the part so fully. Theater will be considerably older before another such worthy presentation of HAMLET is witnessed." (60 YEARS OF THEATER, Towse, pg 263)

There were 3,950 customers that night at the Metropolitan paying a total of \$21,560.17 for poor old Wallack. He died the following summer. (pg 509, Odell)

During his years with Barrett, Charles Koehler also played Alberti in Steele MacKaye's adaptation of RIENZI, Roderigo in OTHELLO, Pindarus in JULIUS CAESAR and De Beringhen in RICHELIEU. (Odell, Vol XIV, pg 260) Other shows the Company put on during these years were FRANCESCA DA RIMINI, THE FOOL'S REVENGE, THE KINGS

PLEASURE, YORICK'S LOVE, THE MERCHANT OF VENICE, and DAVID GARRICK. No mention is made of what roles he or other "minor" members of the company played in these productions. (Odell, Vol XIII, pg 254-5)

After leaving the professional stage, Koehler spent a number of years at Georgetown and Notre Dame Colleges. Reportedly, he was the first to stage an outdoor production of AS YOU LIKE IT in America. This was in 1895 in the Walnut Hills of Cincinnati. (VN, 5-28-19, p3)

By the time of his arrival at U-D in the fall of 1916, Professor Koehler had earned a national reputation as an excellent actor and teacher of dramatic speech and drama. His most famous role, his signature character if you will, was that of the "Fool" - "Touchstone" in Shakespeare's AS YOU LIKE IT. Professor Koehler reprised this role to great effect with The Thespian Club at Orchestra Hall in April of 1920. The faculty notes of the period record the actors were "off book" by the beginning of February. But Koehler's demand for excellence called for another ten weeks of rehearsals before the play was put on for a paying audience. (Moeller, pg 110) His faculty picture shows Professor Koehler, in the style of the day, wearing formal tux and tails. (VN, 5-1920, pg18)

During Holy Week in 1921, the Thespian Club produced Professor Koehler's play THE NAZARENE at the Elks Club for five performances. Moeller writes that Koehler "departed from the then familiar type of passion play with its somewhat stiff, didactic form, in favor of the rapid moving style of modern drama. Also new for this type of play was the frequent musical accompaniment of spoken lines." (Pg 122)

Wendall Hall later remembered that the play came off only after University President Rev. Wm T. Doran, S.J. interceded in a series of misunderstandings between the Thespians and the Athletic Association. As a result of these arguments, President Doran decided that, henceforth, The Thespians would be recognized as a student organization independent of the control and influence of the Athletic and Alumni Associations. "It should be noted that certain officers of the Athletic Association have always been more or less antagonistic to the Thespian Club and the University Theater." (Hall, 1922)

THE NAZARENE earned a return of over \$600.00 to the Thespians which repaid the loss of the previous year, crubstaked whatever the next production would be, and paid for a going away party for the departing Professor Koehler. Koehler left UofD to teach Oratory and Theatrics at St. Louis College. Since no other faculty member stepped forward to lead The Thespians that fall (1921), theater at UofD was dark.

In December of 1921 "the Thespian Club decided to re-organize

into a complete and self-sustaining play producing unit under the guidance of a professional stage director. The students were to learn Theater by doing a variety of tasks under close professional supervision." (Wright, 1932) To accomplish these ambitious goals, Winniett P. Wright was brought in as Director. The name of the organization was changed to the University Theater in order to correspond more closely with the new director's aspirations.

Prior to this time, Mr. Wright had worked as the stage manager and been a member of Sam Hume's acting company at the renowned Arts and Craft Theater on Watson Street in Detroit. Hume had been a student of Professor George Pierce Baker (1866-1935) of Harvard. Professor Baker was a moving force in American Theater at the time teaching such radical ideas as: (1) theater dramatists could be trained, (2) the innate talent of certain writers could be encouraged in an academic atmosphere, (3) insisted that the director have a determining position in the production of the play. Among Baker's students at the time was one Eugene O'Neil. Another of course, was Sam Hume who eventually was to come to Detroit.

Hume also was one of the leading proponents of the "new stagecraft" then being introduced into America. This "new stagecraft" used "scenery and lighting of the production to emphasize simplicity, suggestiveness, and poetic symbolism, which many playgoers found more appealing and effective than a lavish display of realistic details... Hume, who had studied with Gordon Craig (1872-1966) in Italy, staged the first exhibition of scenic designs inspired by the new stagecraft. Between 1916 and 1918 he introduced examples of the new scenery when he used a simple arrangement of architectural forms in his productions... in Detroit." (Wilson, p310) One of Hume's proteges while he made history in Detroit was Winn Wright.

Mr. Wright saw the Theater at UofD as a natural product of the Little Theater, or Theatre Libre, movement in America. According to Wright, this was an outgrowth of "the revolt against commercial theater begun in Paris in 1887... and (by then) successfully under way in America. This movement was to discover and nourish new playwrights, create new concepts and methods of staging and (most importantly) promote the stage director to the status of creative artist." (Wright, 1932)

Andre Antoine, founder of the Theatre Libre in Paris, developed his small theater (342 seats) as a venue for playwrights who could not be produced anywhere else. Because it was a private theater open only to subscribers, its productions were not subject to government censors and the whims of rich backers. His theater produced 111 plays in ten years written by 51 authors. "In staging his plays, Antoine demonstrated how to produce realistic plays and how to humanize the acting of poetic or romantic drama. He also inspired new playwrights, both foreign and French, and created imitators all over the world." (Wilson, 306) In America, the

Provincetown Playhouse, founded in 1915" was preeminent among this Little Theater movement in America. As Mr. Wright notes, although there were not many such theaters in America at the time and those that were had big ideas and "little money...", their influence was massive upon the commercial theater." (Wright, 1932)

In many ways, this "Little Theater" of Antoine, Hume, and Wright featured the type of production not unlike that for which the University's Theater Company would become so well known more than half a century later.

As Mr. Wright saw things, the University Theater at U-D had "two objectives, one immediate... the other to be achieved as soon as possible. The first was to get into play production at once... the other... was in keeping with the 'Little Theater' movement here and abroad: to have our own small theatre, to put on many small plays, and often, and to build a subscription audience... The students were to learn theater by doing a variety of tasks under close professional supervision. The commercial theater, with respect to it's operational aspect (only, however) were to be closely followed." (Wright)

The board of the University Theater had Wendall Hall as President; Emmett Collins as Stage Manager; Joe Costello as head of publicity ("...amazed us by the amount and quality of publicity he and his staff were able to get."); John Flannery headed box office and ticket sales ("... could have conducted a course in box-office etiquette and sales."); and Jim Flynn ("who designed and built our electrical equipment, (that) would have pleased Belasco). (Wright) We will meet Wendall Hall again in the years to come.

The University Theater Club's first production, THE PASSING OF THE THIRD FLOOR BACK by Jerome K. Jerome (1859-1927), was produced at Holy Redeemer Hall to great artistic acclaim. Playing with the actors that night, the U-D Symphony made its performance debut. The Symphony consisted of 9 violinists, a cello, a french horn, 2 flutes, a cornet, and a piano. It was modeled after the Russian Little Symphony and was the first of its kind at any American college or university.

So, it shaped up to a be night to remember. However, in a hall that seated 1000, there were never more than 400 seats sold. Part of the problem was that the production went up on Tuesday and Wednesday nights. Another problem came about as the result of the recent division between the high school students (who in prior times had sold most of the tickets to these performances) and the University. Before this time the high school grades were treated as just another "division" of the University. In 1922, the high school had effectively become a separate organization.

But the resulting deficit couldn't keep a good company down. We'll let Mr. Wright tell the rest of the story himself: "About two

weeks (later) our entire organization was suddenly given a rare opportunity to test its capabilities: The famous comedian, Bert Williams (1876-1922), was booked into the Garrick Theater (in UNDER THE BAMBOO TREE) for one week. (However,) he died after the Tuesday night performance (leaving the Garrick dark until the following Sunday). One of our alert members, I think it was John Flannery, proposed that we rent the Garrick for the following Saturday night and do a performance of THE PASSING OF THE THIRD FLOOR BACK. The 'Board' met Wednesday noon to consider the many problems involved: Could we in three and one half days sell enough tickets to pay theater rental, professional stage-hands, and other costs? Would we be able to get enough publicity? Was the cast available? There were production problems to be met. We decided to take the risks. Joe Costello and his staff, in the four Detroit Newspapers, got a total of two whole pages and one column of publicity and pictures... John Flannery conned many a ticket holder who came to return his Bert Williams tickets into seeing our performance, at a lesser price, of course. It was a strange audience but large enough to pay every bill... And, of course, it gave The University Theater prestige which helped us later when we took the play out on a restricted road tour." (Wright)

A side-bar on this story concerns Bert Williams himself. It seems he was considered by many as one of the great dramatic actors of the day. But, in the context of the period, Bert Williams had one problem he could do nothing about: he was black. As a black man in American Theater in the early years of this century there were no serious dramatic roles for him to play so he had to content himself with comedy. And true to the scope of his talent, Bert Williams became one of the greatest "silhouette," or pantomime, artists of his day. W. C. Fields said that Bert Williams was the funniest man he ever saw. Eddie Cantor claimed that everything he knew about comedic timing he had learned from Bert Williams. (Toll, pg 131) Len G. Shaw, long time drama critic for the Detroit Free Press, wrote of Mr. Williams' performance in his review of UNDER THE BAMBOO TREE: "... it is as much what he does as what he says that brings laughs. There is an eloquence in his every move, every expression..." (DFP, 2-27-22, pg 8)

The dichotomy of being a star in the theater and yet a second class citizen in the real world grated on Williams as it must have all the black stars of the period. Eddie Cantor recalled that Bert was finally allowed to stay in the luxury hotel in New York with the other Ziegfeld stars after years of starring with the Follies but only if he used the back stairs. One Christmas, the Jewish Cantor and Jamaican born African-American Williams, shared the distinction of both not being invited to the cast Christmas Party. Cantor remembered taking the back stairs to their room with take-out Christmas dinner when Williams suddenly turned to Cantor and said: "You know Eddie this wouldn't be so bad if I didn't still hear the applause ringing in my ears." (Toll, pg 121)

Bert Williams loved wild duck dinners. Whenever the Follies were in Detroit, it was traditional that he be feted to such by his friends (black and white) in the basement of Louis Schneider's saloon on Woodward Ave. But, after playing a matinee on Tuesday afternoon that week in 1926, Mr. Williams suffered a stroke during the opening act of the evening performance of UNDER THE BAMBOO TREE. He died while being transported by train back to his home in New York City. Bert was said to have been a fine man and, it is written, was greatly missed by all his friends in Detroit. (Bingay, p347-348)

One of Mr. Williams favorite expressions was, "When it comes to picking up money, I can stoop as low as anybody." (DFP, 2-27-22, pg 8) As we have seen, in this ability he found a ready group of conspirators to carry his banner at the University of Detroit Theater. And that drive and hutspa so impressed the Dean at the time (1922), Father Simon J. Nicholas, S.J., that he made the old Godfrey House at 656 East Jefferson available to the Theater for the balance of the school year.(VN 2-1-22) Father Nicholas also held out the possibility that an old stone barn at the back of the University property (on Jefferson) would be available to be turned into a small theater during that summer. This marks the first time UofD theater was close to getting their own facility. Money was secured for a new roof for the barn, but, before things became permanent, Father Nicholas was transferred to a new assignment. Unfortunately, according to Mr. Wright, the new Dean did not share Father Nicholas' appreciation of the stage. So theater at UofD remained homeless. Shortly thereafter, Wynn Wright resigned to organize the Detroit Repertory Theater which he was to run until the mid 1930's. But the first great effort of making theater at University of Detroit a landmark organization, a beacon of excellence, was over.

The next twelve years showed theater at UofD being organized and reorganized again and again as moderators and instructors came and went. During this period there were successes, some notable, but nothing of any permanence. In the main, what was missing was a firm, long-term commitment from the University itself to guarantee theater a place in the University family and an instructor that could make something happen with that commitment.

For instance, at the beginning of the 1923 fall term, the Yearbook noted that "the University Players, an outgrowth of the University Theater, was reorganized under faculty control (my emphasis) and placed under the direction of English instructor Francis J. McCabe. Father William Cogley, S.J., the new Dean, became moderator." (Yearbook, 1924)

The Varsity News-(Nov 14, 1923, pg 1) reported that the change to University control of theater "had been contemplated for some time... one reason given was the desire of the faculty to have the

theater represent the school as a unit; another, to provide the means whereby the theater can grow into a large and intrinsic part of the University; and a third reason, to secure better cooperation between the Faculty and Student body with regard to theatrical productions... It is understood that the policy of faculty is to give the students as wide a latitude as possible in the matter of running the organization..." (VN,11-14-23,pg 1)

When one reads the accounting of this "re-organization" from the theater (student) side, it sounds more than just a bit Machiavellian: the University stepping-in and taking a viable organization away from students who had worked so hard to make it happen. But a clue to the real reason for this sea-change in the University's attitude is contained in the next sentence of that VN article of Nov 14, 1923: "... with the provision, however, that all expenditures first receive the approval of the Moderator." It seems on further examination that all organizations on campus at that time faced this same "faculty control" because of a problem that became evident first over at the Varsity News.

During the 1922-1923 school year, the Varsity News was compelled to cease publication. Publication was again resumed in the fall of 1923 but this time under University auspices and control. What had happened to make this necessary?

"As originally chartered, the VN (like the University Theater) was a student owned and operated enterprise free of University control and subsidy. Evidently, this set-up was not fully explained to the various vendors in town and they had been sending in supplies to the VN confident that the University was standing good for payment. Such, however, was not the case. At the time of shut-down, the paper owed \$1,900.00 to various creditors. Today (in 1993) nineteen hundred dollars is a lot of money. But at a time when tuition for a student was \$80.00 a year, nineteen hundred dollars (in tuition dollars) would be equal to \$1,378,125.00" (VN 75th Anniversary Show, 1993)

As a result of the VN fiasco, all campus organizations were taken firmly under the wing of the University. From that point on, the theater, or what ever it was to be called, would have a faculty moderator and/or faculty chairman to keep things... proper!

As noted above, the new "Moderator" was Boston-educated Francis J. McCabe. Mr. McCabe felt that university theater programs would be the salvation of theater in America. He cited the fact that the previous year in New York, of all the many productions put up by the Dramatic Guild only five were by American authors. This was caused, he felt, by the fact that we were applying European standards to American drama. It was high time, he said that we, as Americans, stepped out into the sunlight of our own productions and University educated actors, writers, and audiences could lead the way.

McCabe told the interviewer that college dramatics programs were the best training for actors because it made the actor a more fully rounded person. "One reason why Shakespearian companies have such poor subordinate casts is because these actors and actresses have no cultural background." From the standpoint of acting, the stage has deteriorated materially. There are a few like John Barrymore and John Hempden, who are real actors. The American stage needs cultured players. But it seems that cultured players avoid the practical side of acting, perhaps because it is so precarious. They take up vague ideas like the Little Theater." (My emphasis) (VN, 11-14-23)

In McCabe's estimation, UofD had "a wonderful opportunity to develop dramatic art as art, rather than a plaything." With all the new building that was then going to happen on the new campus (McNichols Campus), he felt it would be natural to build a separate theater center. That would allow the University of Detroit to join the eminent "'47 Workshop" at Harvard, the then leading drama departments at Cornell, Columbia, and the University of Wisconsin. McCabe wrote that the program he would like to emulate was the program put together by Frederick Koch at the University of South Carolina. (VN, 11-14-23) This effort at including a theater building in all the new construction then going on at McNichols and Livernois would mark the second time theater came close to having their own facility.

One other notable bit of history during this year occurred on January 12, 1924, when a one act play, SUPPRESSED DESIRES was given over the new medium of radio at the Detroit News (WWJ) by the University Players. Thus UofD was one of the first American Universities to attempt such a presentation. ('24 Yearbook)

The following bits of theater trivia are taken from the pages of the Varsity News:

10-2-24 VN "Father William E. Cogley S.J., Dean of Arts and Sciences, announces a new course in dramatic art that opens Thursday (Oct 2, 1924) under Professor Daniel E. Sullivan, Professor of Public Speaking and Dramatic Art) Dean Cogley was born in Emmett, Michigan in 1874. He was a U-D student until 1899 when he began his studies to become a Jesuit.

10-9-24 VN Cogley announces "Players tryouts the last of this week for the next production. If custom is held to, the first one act production will be a comedy."

10-23-24 VN Cogley says the Players "begin second season under faculty control."

During the rehearsal for TWELFTH NIGHT in 1924, student Jerry Magrum was picked up by Detroit Police for being drunk on the

street during Prohibition. After much discussion, it was agreed that Mr. Magrum had merely been rehearsing, in a most realistic manner, his role as the drunken Feste in the play. (VN Feb, '27)

Typical of this period, the 1926 Yearbook reported "when he assumed control of dramatics at the University in the fall of the scholastic term just ended, Professor C. Baldwin Bacon found no well organized, enthusiastic group awaiting his leadership. The stage had been neglected since 1924, when a meager production of one act plays had been produced with little success."

Throughout the Roaring Twenties, the one outlet for true excellence in Theater at University of Detroit were the student written and student performed Union Operas of 1926-1930.

Chapter 3

THE UNION OPERAS

As we have seen, theater at the University of Detroit from 1922 to 1926 was a series of small, amateur performances presented primarily for a student crowd. The sporadic results and specific lack of direction mirrored the University's indifferent backing of theater. And then, almost from nowhere came the very organized, professionally directed, highly capitalized Union Operas! The first of these operas, MARY-ANN, was presented in December of 1926. What happened? Where did the energy yo do MARY-ANN come from?

It's hard looking back from the distant perspective of the late Twentieth Century to realize just how big the Union Operas of the "Roaring Twenties" were. At a time when legitimate theater was the biggest show in town, movies still silent, and radio in its infancy, the students of the University of Detroit took over the most prestigious legitimate theater in Detroit for a week long run. The play itself was student written and performed with professional direction and presented with a production budget of \$25,000.00. Billboards all over the city promoted the play. Opening night was a black tie affair and most of the performances sold out during Christmas week, the week long considered theater's weakest.

So again, how did all this happen at just that point in time? The obvious answer is that a number of disparate elements came together to make it all possible. Some of these factors were: the maturing Mens Union searching for a place in the University family; the all pervasive optimism of the "Roaring Twenties" convincing people anything was possible; the University itself moving to a new and larger campus far out in the country off Palmer Ave (Six Mile); a group of talented students who came from all over the country at just this time; successful alumni who decided to share their success with their University; and lastly, there was "the kindness of strangers."

First, there was the Union. Founded as the "Men's Union" in March of 1919, its mission was to provide the men of the University with a home away from home. The Union house, then located on East Jefferson adjacent to the University, provided meals, clubrooms that allowed a living space to get away from it all, a pool table, study rooms, and other services of the type that could only be provided in a house. Not surprisingly the first big controversy in the history of the Union, coming within weeks of its incorporation, was an effort to make it co-ed. The arguments on both sides were loud, long, and acrimonious. One student commented that the arguments going far into the night suited the Lit and Law students just fine but he was an engineer and had to be to work early in the morning. The Mens Union stayed the Mens Union. (VN, 4-19)

But after six years, student interest in the Union was flagging and its debts mounting. Something was needed to give the Union a shot in the arm if it were to continue its course. That year (1925-26), the new President of the Union, Alan Devine, instituted several original student programs, cleaned up the Union rooms, tightened up on expenses, and improved the food service. For the first time in its short history, the Union did not lose money. In fact, during the year ending June 30, 1926, the Union made a profit of \$3,053.67.

So, the stage was set for bigger and better things. The first mention of a musical review to be sponsored by the Union came in the Varsity News issue of March 10, 1926. At that point, it was anticipated the student written review would run two nights in the early part of May, 1926 at Orchestra Hall on Woodward Ave. But by May 6, 1926 the idea of a review had been abandoned in favor of an "Opera" to be presented "early in the next school year." At the same time, Cornelius McIntyre (Arts Junior) was appointed general chairman. "It is too large a project to be started and ended in a hurry. Its success will require a great expenditure of time and effort by the members of the executive committee. We know they will contribute all the effort required, and we must concede them the time necessary." (VN, 5-6-26)

By May 28, 1926 the concept of the Union Opera had grown to a two week run in a downtown Detroit venue after which it would go on a tour of the larger cities of the East. Seniors James S. Pooler and P. Ralph Miller were set to write the book and the music was to be composed by fellow students Charles Schumm and Paul Mertz. The rest of the operational and promotional committees were also set by this time.

The summer of 1926 must have been a busy one for many of the students of U-D because the first issue of the Varsity News in 1926-1927 school year (October 13, 1926) carried an extensive description of the Opera "MERRY-ANN" that was to be performed in the Shubert-Detroit Theater during the week before Christmas. Students had written the "book" and all music for the play. The nationally known Shubert organization would be providing a professional director, choreographer, and music director. All cast members were to be drawn from the membership of the Union. This last item would necessitate men playing women's roles but that was in keeping with the spirit of the times as seen in Harvard's "Hasty Pudding Club" and the "Triangle Club" at Princeton.

But again, the most startling piece of news in the PR notes about the upcoming Union Opera was the cost. It was reported that the budget was set at \$25,000.00! How did the University come up with that much money? Both John Galbo (1908-) and Jack Tuebert (1908-) maintain that was common knowledge at the time that the Fisher Brothers, of automotive fame, backed the Operas.

So far we have been unable to verify this directly though there are various clues that lead us to accept it as fact. First off, it sounds like something the Fishers would do for they were world renowned for their charitable contributions. To this day, Detroit carries the Fisher name proudly on many of their funded institutions and buildings including the University's current administration building. So, funding theater would not be out of character for this remarkable family.

Secondly, Lawrence Fisher's secretary at this time was none other than Wendall Hall, who we have seen to have been the founder of the Thespian Club at UofD in 1922. Now, it was Lawrence Fisher, as Manager of the Cadillac Division of General Motors, who first brought to General Motors the concept to design the car before it was built. After several months of discussion, Lawrence was authorized by the G.M. Board of Directors to hire Harley Earl of California as a design consultant to try out this radical idea on a new car line to be called the LaSalle. The highly successful LaSalle (introduced in 1927) led eventually to the hiring of Earl full time and the establishment of GM's Color and Design Staff and, thereafter, the design of every General Motors vehicle produced until 1960. And, UofD's Wendall Hall was there at the start of it all.

Another clue is contained in the February 2, 1927 issue of the Varsity News (just five weeks after the Opera closed). A full page is dedicated to, and features a large picture of Mrs. Lawrence Fisher, the mother of the seven Fisher Brothers. The quote heading the article says: "God couldn't be everywhere. That's why he created, mothers."

Also, during UofD's Commencement of 1927, two of the Fishers, Fred J. and Charles T., were given honorary Doctors of Laws in recognition of their contributions to mankind in general and the University in specific. One can't help wondering, when reading of these and related stories, if the University were not acknowledging the kindness of the Fisher Brothers and their involvement in so many services to the University including the Union Operas.

And lastly, Fisher involvement does make sense. Their backing would have been with cash, connections, and imposing their will on the Shubert organization to do everything first class. And, as one reads through the reporting in the various papers, you are constantly struck by the fact that nothing was spared to make these Union Operas first rate productions. In other words, the finger prints of someone with a lot of money, power, and prestige are all over these shows.

But, it turns out that "imposing their will on the Shubert organization" may not have been all that difficult. For in this regard, the University had an incredible ace in the hole: former UofD student and, by 1926, the right hand man to Flo Ziegfeld (of

the Ziegfeld Follies fame) Gene Buck (1885-1957). In fact, Buck's position in New York theater was so strong that it is not all that improbable that he brought the Fisher Brothers into the project himself. For, according to John Galbo's remembrances, it was Buck who made the top professional directors and choreographers of that day available to the University. (Galbo, 1995) These directors were the stars of the Shubert Theater Production Group, no less: John Harwood, Max Schenk, and Hans Fry.

Gene Buck is one of those unremembered names from the past who changed an industry for the better. Many years later, after the death of George M. Cohan in 1942, Buck would lovingly be called "the last of the sentimental Irishman on Broadway" by ex-New York Mayor Jimmy Walker.

And Gene Buck was Detroit's all the way. Born in the Corktown section of Detroit, his father died when he was two years old leaving the family in meager circumstances. The boy went to work at a young age, running errands for a Detroit newspaper. A penchant for drawing caused him to turn his attention to caricaturing local celebrities." (New York Times, Ja30,27;VII,pg 3) Gene attended the Detroit Art School and the University of Detroit for two years as a Lit. student. After leaving school he went to work at the Dime Savings Bank for \$2.00 a week. While at the bank, he "started the vogue for illustrated song covers with his brilliant art nouveau designs" (Ziegfeld, pg 85) at \$25.00 an accepted cover (Bingay, pg 297) with the Detroit firm of Whitney and Warner, then the largest organization of its sort outside New York City. (New York Times, Ja30,27)

Thereupon Gene followed his heart to New York to compose songs and write lyrics in Tin Pan Alley. After several starts and stops, Gene managed to latch on to the great Flo Ziegfeld. It seems that while Ziegfeld was rejecting Gene's songs, one after the other, Gene, in closely observing the Great Ziegfeld, became aware of the "master's passionate love of colors. (To sell one of his songs) he (Buck) painted a whole stage setting in miniature and took it (and the song) to Ziggy. And he was right. Ziggy could not resist the colors" (Bingay, pg 297) and in 1911 Ziegfeld bought the song.

However, ~~when~~ the director, A.L. Erlanger in a dispute with the singer of the song, Lillian Lorraine, ~~and~~ fired them both. It turned out, however, that the song, "Daddy Has A Sweetheart and Mother Is Her Name" had legs beyond Erlanger's worst nightmares. The song was taken to Vaudeville where it became a huge hit earning Buck the sum of \$35,000. A not-insubstantial sum in 1911. The moxey that Buck showed in making the song work impressed Ziegfeld and he hired the young songwriter to be his aide-de-camp. (N.Y. Times, Ja30,27)

Once in the door Buck's innate common sense and ear for talent soon had him as "Ziegfeld's man Friday." (Day, pg 62) For the next

Lillian Lorraine
& THE SONG
SHE WROTE
SINGING

twenty years, Ziegfeld picked the girls and was impressed with the colors and flourishes, while Gene Buck was writing the "books" and many of the songs and comedy routines for all the Ziegfeld Follies from 1913 to 1927. But more importantly, Gene was the steady hand behind the throne.

For instance, it has been said that Ziegfeld "was utterly devoid of any sense of humor." (Ketchum, pg 137) "He could never understand why people laughed at Leon Errol, W.C.Fields, Ed Wynn, Eddie Cantor... Bert Williams, and Fanny Brice... Buck hired them all." (Bingay, pg 298) Gene also discovered and launched the careers of Will Rogers, W.C.Fields, Ed Wynn, Edgar Bergen (and in turn, the wooden humor of the wise-cracking Charlie McCarthy), and talked Ziegfeld into allowing Fanny Brice to sing "Second Hand Rose" in the Follies of 1913. In addition he wrote many songs, among which are: "Under A Japanese Moon," "Tulip Time," and "Rambler Rose."

But, By far the greatest contribution Gene Buck made to his craft was the development and success of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP). As late as the early 1920's, anybody could use songs crafted and sung by another person without paying that person a dime of royalty. Gene founded ASCAP with Victor Herbert (1859-1926) and acted as president without pay while they fought for this basic ownership principle. During the middle of the fight, radio came on the scene compounding the problem. "After ... years of bitter battling, through Congress and up and down to the United States Supreme Court, Gene won for these men and women the right to the creations of their own heads and hearts." (Bingay, pg 300)

But, all that was to be yet in the future and it was now 1926. Although his fame and fortune had been made in New York, as we have noted, Gene Buck's heart was always at home in Detroit. It was said that he never missed starting St. Patrick's day in his home parish of Holy Trinity in Corktown. (Bingay, pg 296) Buck joined the fledgling UofD Alumni Association in 1921. (VN, 3-16-27) The Varsity News in the Spring of 1926 carried a small notice that he had come back to Detroit for the opening of the touring company of the Follies and had visited the UofD campus. It can be easily surmised that the seeds of the idea that eventually became MERRY ANN and the other Operas could have been born during that week in April. (VN Magazine, June 1926) And it was his powerful position with Ziegfeld and also Gene's reputation as an honest man who could get things done that enabled him to reach back and help the school that had evidently meant so much to him.

It is unfortunate that there has not been, as long-time Detroit Free Press editor Malcolm Bingay prophesied there should be in 1946, a statue erected to the memory and accomplishments of Gene Buck. But that's not Buck's fault for lack of accomplishment. I just guess we theater people have never gotten in the habit of

erecting statues to our heros although we do hasten to the bank to cash those residual checks that Gene Buck fought to make possible. And really, I guess that's all the honor Gene would really have wanted.

For the purposes of this book, we will spend more time examining MERRY-ANN than the rest of the productions. But please note that the driven demand for excellence seen in MERRY-ANN appears to have been a constant throughout all the four Union Operas.

As noted above, Gene Buck made the offices of the Shubert Theater Corporation (STC) out of New York City available to the University. At that time, the STC was a publicly traded company and was one of the biggest names in legitimate theater of that day. It was, by 1924, operating theaters across the country. It had its own studio, scenery, property, and electrical workshops. Among the necessities of operating an organization as large as the Shubert Theater Corporation, was a collection of over 14,000 individual costumes, 50 complete sets of electrical stage equipment, and over 2000 trunks and crates for trans-shipment of merchandise for use in company-owned and operated theaters across America.

And John Harwood (1876-1944) was the Shubert's number one Director. He was to be the Producer and over-all Director of MERRY-ANN. Harwood's credentials were impressive starting with his first appearance on stage at the Lyceum Theater at the age of five with Sir Henry Irving. In 1896, he was appointed stage manager of the Haymarket Theater in London. (Who Was Who..., Vol 2, pg 1115-6) Harwood recalled later that his first show at the Haymarket featured Frederic Harrison and Cyril Maude, two of the most famous names of English stage of the period. He feared the older men would be reluctant to follow the orders of one so young but "luckily" he (Harwood) was spared that indignity by contracting "typhoid fever which left him bald and thus gave him the aspect of one advanced in years." (VN Magazine, 1926) Harwood stayed at the Haymarket for two more years before moving on to the London Playhouse where he was to stay for twenty years and direct more than 100 plays.

At that stage of his career, Harwood moved to New York and his success moved with him. The 1925-26 season saw him become the first Director in the history of the New York stage to have three hit shows running on Broadway at the same time. Among them were the runaway hits TIP TOES (192 performances in New York and 182 in London) and TELL ME MORE (263 performances in New York). Harwood came to Detroit after opening OH, KAY in New York on November 8, 1926 starring Gertrude Lawrence, Oscar Shaw, Victor Moore, Harland Dixon, and the Fairbanks Twins. OH, KAY featured music by the Gershwins and a repertoire of songs that included "Someone To Watch Over Me." It was to run for eight months on Broadway in 1926-7 before going to London for an additional 214 performances. (Loney,

pg 129) His production of TWINKLE TWINKLE starring Joe E. Brown and Nancy Welford was due to open on Broadway the end of that month. (VN, Nov 4, 1926)

Harwood said in an interview in 1926 that he had three rules for actors: "First, be natural; second, thoroughly get into the skin of the play and know everybody else's part as well as your own; and third, sit down then, and say to yourself: 'Now, if I was really this person under these circumstances, how would I do it?'"(VN, Nov 4, 1926))

The second professional on the roster was Max Schenk, who staged all the dance and ensemble productions for MERRY-ANN. Schenk was internationally known for his dance creations for the Shubert operettas. He and Harwood had worked together in a number of productions and, it is said, they never had a failure. Prior to coming to Detroit from London, Schenk had staged all the dances for LADY BE GOOD, in which Adele and Fred Astair, no less, took London by storm. (VN, 10-13-26) LADY BE GOOD had run in New York's Liberty Theater for 330 performances in 1924-25 before going to London for another 326 performances. (Loney, pg 126)

Schenk arrived several weeks ahead of Harwood to begin work on the production numbers. Schenk brought his talent, his knowledge of dance, and he brought tradition. The following is written by E.J. Corbet, A&S Freshman, in December of 1926.

"It is a tradition of the theater that every dramatic and chorus director has a pet superstition, one which he places the greatest faith and which is called into play in all his undertakings. In the case of Max Schenk, noted dance master who directs the chorus and incidental dancing of MERRY-ANN, the superstition surrounds the pair of shoes 'that made a million bucks.'

"When Schenk was directing the famous male chorus of the STUDENT PRINCE, his greatest success and, in fact, one of the greatest successes in the field of light opera in a century, he wore these dancing shoes. The show went forth a finished production and won an instantaneous triumph throughout the country and abroad. The shekels, which theatrical magnates do not disdain, poured in upon the producers in torrent.

"Since that time Max Schenk has lent his directorial genius to many musical productions, including PRINCESS FLAVIA, recently seen in Detroit. In none of these productions, however, were the 'million dollar shoes' worn unless (Schenk) felt assured that (the play in production) would command the unrestrained approval of the public. This has become his obsession.

"Last week, after a fortnight of instructing the cast and chorus of MERRY-ANN... Schenk put on the 'shoes that made a

million dollars.'"

So Schenk, like most great directors, was also a master psychologist. He had the stubborn demand for excellence above all that is characteristic of all successful directors. During the rehearsal for MERRY-ANN, the lead actors had spent the early hours of the day at the Detroit News doing publicity pictures and were hustling to be on time for rehearsal. They pleaded with Schenk for a few moments to catch something to eat. But Schenk would have none of it for, in his estimation, theater and, in this case, rehearsal ALWAYS came first. Nothing else in ones life carried any meaning until the show was ready for its audience. Schenk looked at the hungry students with for a long unsympathetic moment before announcing in a voice loud enough for all to hear, "'I haven't had anything to eat since I came to Detroit' and rehearsal began. Nor was that all. After a session that lasted until 5 o'clock they met the cold announcement that they must return at seven to complete an unsatisfactory scene." (Marguerite Gahagan, VN Magazine, Spring 1927)

The final professional to round out Harwood's staff was Hans Fry.

"Coming to Detroit from Chicago, Hans Fry, a well known composer of music, has joined the staff of directors who are working to make 'MERRY ANN' a success. He has for several years been associated with the musical direction of many famous musical comedies. He composed many of the song-hits of the 'PASSING SHOW' which opened in Atlantic City recently.

"Assisting Max Schenk, the dance director of the Opera, he is working daily with the chorus in perfecting the songs of the show, besides writing the orchestra parts. His experience in writing music for popular songs has made him a collaborator of Walter Donaldson, nationally famous writer of popular songs hits, for which he composes the music. Moreover, he is the personal representative of Irving Berlin, the 'King of Tin Pan Alley' in Chicago." (VN, 11-4-26)

The books (non-musical scripts) for all the Union Operas were written by U-D student James S. Pooler. Copies of all four Operas are in the University Achieves. Pooler was joined on MERRY-ANN by P. Ralph Miller, then editor of the Varsity News.

The music for MERRY ANN was mainly scored by U-D student Paul Madera Mertz (1904-). Mertz was a special student in Arts and Science College. Born in Reading, Pennsylvania, Mertz had travelled the Keith Albee Vaudeville circuit with the "Broadway Entertainers" before settling into a contract to play with a prominent band in Philadelphia that allowed him to enroll in the University of Pennsylvania. Then he got a job playing with Jean Goldkette's Orchestra (based in Detroit through the '50's) then at

the Book-Cadillac Hotel. While in Detroit, Mertz recorded several songs with the Jean Goldkette Victor Recording Orchestra and travelled throughout the country with them. Also while in Detroit, Paul Mertz finished his schooling at the University of Detroit. After graduating from UofD in 1927, Mertz was the musical director for Fred Warring and His Travelling Pennsylvanians for a period before leaving for Hollywood. His first roommate there was the young Bing Crosby who was also just starting his career. During the '50's Mertz was the musical director for several of the largest movie musicals of the period.

Two of the songs for MERRY-ANN were written by U-D Law student Ange Lorenzo (1894-1971). Mr. Lorenzo co-wrote "Sleepy Time Gal" the song hit of 1925 and a melody still familiar to a great many people to this day. Many of the songs of MERRY-ANN were recorded and released by the Victor Company and all of them were recorded by the Gennett Recording Company in Richmond Indiana. Albums of the show music from MERRY-ANN were on sale in the lobby of the Shubert Theater during the shows run and around Detroit after the show closed.

"With the assistance of Hans Fry, who is writing the orchestrations for the songs, Max Scheck composed a novel opening chorus, which will serve to send the comedy off to a good start. Other first-act songs are: 'Goodbye Blues - Howdy Black Bottom,' 'Merry Go Round,' 'We're On Our Way to Burke's Dance,' 'So Long, Toughie,' 'Devilish Eyes,' 'Park Nights,' 'I Don't Believe In Wishing,' and 'Fickle Girl.' (VN, 12-9-26)

The ticket sales were handled by the University up until December 4, 1926 when all unsold tickets were taken down to the Shubert. The December 9, 1926 issue of the Varsity News recounted that the ticket sales fell into certain patterns: "Fraternities purchased huge blocks of seats, High School students showed a decided preference for Wednesdays, Thursday was Knights of Columbus Night. The Christmas Day productions are sold out and it will probably be the biggest day of the production run."

During the one week run, more than 11,000 people paid to see MERRY-ANN, a figure representing about 90 percent of the total capacity of the Shubert-Detroit Theater. The reviews in the city papers were uniformly very good. Len G. Shaw of the Detroit Free Press (whose theater reviews were found on the Editorial Page of the paper) felt "... everyone in any way connected with the venture had acquitted himself with credit. The performance moved with professional celerity... Paul Mertz has trimmed all this with tunes that are easy to listen to. Mertz reveals a distinct flair for catchy composition... It is recommended as cheerful Christmas fare that will awaken campus memories, and otherwise entertain." (DFP, 12-20-26)

G.W. Stark of the Detroit News wrote: "The situation may be

summed up by stating that the first Opera of the U. of D. is a gay success. Last night's audience found it so, and others will agree with last night's verdict."(DN, 12-20-26)

And finally, Ralph Holmes of the Detroit Times wrote: "We doubt if we have ever heard more sincere and spontaneous applause in the Shubert."(DT, 12-20-26)

The University fielded several good offers to take the show on the road. These offers included a two week run at the Cass Theater (Detroit), a one week run at the Garrick (also in Detroit), a showing at the Whitney Opera House (Detroit), in Ann Arbor, and a two night's run at the Hippodrome in New York City. All were turned down for reasons that the students who sweated over the American College Theater Festival entries of the 1970's and 1980's would definitely understand. They had already fallen so far behind their school work during the six weeks of rehearsal they could not possibly take any more time off. The time and emotional demands of achieving excellence in a professional theater production were far higher than any of them could possibly have anticipated.

Harwood insisted that the production be done on the Shubert Theater stage for the entire week prior to the opening. Rehearsals regularly went long into the night (1:30 A.M. with classes starting at 8:00 A.M.). Harwood also made some changes in the original script. For instance, the football team under Gus Dorais were to make an appearance at the close of Act I. Harwood would have nothing to do with "football persons" and so dropped the scene. And finally, of course, the student actors were treated to that most revered of stage traditions: the lousy final dress rehearsal. The afternoon of the Opening for the first time in weeks cues were being blown, lines forgotten, and the production numbers alarmingly disorganized. Everyone involved with the production was alarmed and worked throughout the afternoon to make all ready for the "SRO" black tie performance that night. And, when the curtain went up that night, the play went off flawlessly to everyone's relief and gratification. And, hence, another theater tradition was served.

But perhaps greater problems were alluded to by Jimmy Pooler in his nomination of Rev. Claude H. Heithaus S.J. as the most valuable player of the Union Opera. Following the close of MERRY-ANN, Pooler called Father Heithaus, the faculty moderator for MERRY-ANN, "the Prometheus of the Opera... He gave 18 hours of his time (a day) to the Opera. He kept the directors from deserting after one of them had his bags packed! He humored the cast and chorus when it was in the dumps, and he brought rebellious members of the committee back into the fold. Mr. Heithaus may not alone have made the Opera what it was, but he was at least its savior." (VN, 1-13-27)

Galbo remembered that Harwood and Schenk became disenchanted with the student's lack of professionalism. They had been staying

in the Book-Cadillac Hotel on Washington Blvd and were packed to go back to New York. Father Heithaus went over to the Hotel and got down on his knees to beg the two men not to leave, to stay the course. Father's passion worked and the students worked and the play came off to everyone's satisfaction. It came off so well that both Harwood and Schenk came back to UofD the following year.

During the winter and spring months of 1927, the music of MERRY-ANN could be heard again and again over crystal radio sets from stations all over the midwest and from as far away as New Orleans. (Varsity News, Spring 1927)

As noted above, the "books" for all four Union Operas were written by U-D student James Silas Pooler. Pooler was born in Alpena, Michigan and joined the Detroit Free Press as a copy boy in 1923. At the University, he was a Journalism student in the College of Commerce and Finance. After graduation in 1927, Pooler went on to write for the Detroit Free Press until his death. Several of his play reviews for the "Freep" from the early '60's are included in the Show Roster. During the 1930's he wrote the very popular "Sunny Side" column for the Free Press. In 1932 and 1947 Pooler won or shared Pulitzer Prizes for articles written for the Free Press.

One local legend of Pooler's time at the Free Press, concerns his institution of what became known as the "Two Hour Work Day." It seems that the change of shift between "days" and "afternoons" in those days at the Free Press occurred at 6 P.M. So, young Pooler started arriving at work everyday at 5 P.M. thus impressing the day manager with his early arrival for the afternoon shift. Then, at about 7 P.M. he cleared up his desk and went home, leaving the afternoon manager to marvel about young Pooler being such a go-getter that he always worked an hour over-time. There was no note made of how long Pooler got away with this "Two Hour Work Day" but it was long remembered by his friends at the Free Press. (Angelo, 1981, p 161)

While researching this book, I became aware that, unknowingly, I had met Jimmy Pooler and his wry sense of humor many years before myself. He was an Usher at St. Mary's in Royal Oak and I was a teenager who insisted on coming to Mass late. The first two weeks "Mr. Pooler" showed me to a vacant seat in the back of the church after earnestly reminding me that I "should try harder to be on time." Finally, upon arriving late on the third Sunday, he took me all the way down front. It seems he had saved a seat, just for me, in the second row center! After slowly walking me past the entire congregation kneeling in prayer, he turned at the pew and faced me with a large smile on his face. Jimmy knew I would never be late for his Mass again and he was right!

In the program for "Aces Wild", the Union Opera of 1927, James Silas Pooler wrote the following lament that will ring a note

of recognition with anyone who has fallen in love with Theater and is included here as a tribute to "Si."

"The Autobiography of a Playwright."

"I come from a family of actors. I'm not boasting for I refuse to say what kind of actors. Grandpa was hanged by a group of admiring citizens. He could never tell the difference between real and stage money. Papa's death wasn't such a magnificent social affair as grandpa's. The hero used real instead of blank cartridges. The man that shot papa got a medal from the Actor's Guild for Best Performance of the Year. It made me an orphan at thirty.

"It wasn't so bad. I'd always been on friendly terms with the stagehands. They carried better lunches than actors. They were strong friends. They really should be thespians. They can move Uncle Tom's Cabin or the Woolworth building with ease. Those things are only set-ups for them.

"They gave me a lot of good advice. Mixed with, 'You sap, don't lean on the old homestead, its just been painted,' was a quaint footlight philosophy. To them stagehands, actors were just a bunch of guys that got in their way when they were busy and audiences a gang of nitwits that would sit out front all night unless you dropped a curtain or flashed a sign, 'Good Night.' I always remembered that. Its funny more stagehands haven't turned to writing plays.

"At last they got tired of carrying my lunch for me so in a fit of despondency I entered college. But I couldn't get away from the stage. College began to prove much too difficult. My eyes gave out from sitting in galleries at some of the best revues. I wanted to keep on at college. My girl liked the parties. But theater had drawing power. At last came the idea of combining theater with college.

"That started my downfall. I borrowed paper at downtown hotels. I used to substitute for a blind man while he went to the movies. In that way I acquired pencils. There's the principle requisite for writing musical comedy. If you don't believe it try writing one without pencil and paper."

James Silas Pooler died of cancer in 1967.

The semester after the success of MERRY-ANN a drama club called the Jesters was formed Hugh J. Wines. Its purpose was to perpetuate the success of operas such as 'Merry Ann.' A pin was awarded to members who gained admittance to the club by having participated in one of the Union Operas. (VN, 1-20-27)

In between producing and directing MERRY-ANN in 1926 and ACES

WILD in 1927, John Harwood produced RIO RITA for Ziegfeld in New York (496 performances) and HIT THE DECK at the Belasco (35 weeks) ACES WILD opened at the Shubert-Detroit for a two week run on December 19, 1927.

[11-22-27 VN --- good picture of John Harwood in front of the Shubert-Detroit Theater with his luggage, just arrived for the next production.]

It was widely reported in 1927 that Harwood and Schenk "assumed a personal interest in ACES WILD" and actively helped sell tickets that year. They put up the "Harwood and Schenk Cup" to be awarded to the class or club who sold the most tickets and were also present at all the pep rallies to drum up support. In reading the newspapers and PR material of the period it becomes immediately clear that the "personal interest" Harwood and Schenk had in the show must have had some long financial strings tied to it. (VN, 11-20-27)

ACES WILD rehearsed in the Garrick Theater on Griswold for a week before going across Woodward to the Shubert. Again, rehearsals went long into the night but this time everyone knew what was expected of them and problems were minimal. At the end of November, 1927, Harwood brought Carlton Rivers in from New York to act as Stage Manager. After the third performance, Harwood, Schenk, and Fry left Detroit and the show for Rivers to run. Harwood went to London to begin the production of LADY MARY. After the close of ACES, Rivers returned to New York to work for Belasco.

The Detroit production of ACES WILD was again very successful. The Varsity News reported that 19 performances netted 20,000 paying customers and earned the Union a net income of between \$600.00 and \$1000.00 and the University much positive publicity. It was decided that there would be a third Union Opera.

In April 1928, bad news came to the University family when word that Hans Frey, musical director for both MERRY-ANN and ACES WILD had died at his home in Chicago of peritonitis caused by a ruptured appendix. At the time of his death, Mr. Frey was engaged in writing a new school march for the University of Detroit football team. (VN, 4-18-28)

In an interview in 1994, John Galbo remembered performing in the last three Union Operas, as was the custom of the day, in black face. His was not the stumbling, shuffling "Stepin Fetchit" type of African-American so popular with white American theater at that period but a reflection of some of his friends from Galbo's old neighborhood around Hastings Street. That is a genuine, smart, clever, aware man familiar to moviegoers of later times who watched the comedy of Richard Pryor. To a great extent, the action of the plays revolved around his character. He observed the action, made comments and evaluations to the audience, and in general, tied the

action together to keep things moving. The VN reported that Galbo was "not only a clever dancer but he sings well and will probably get a chance to perform along both lines." His role in ACES WILD called for him to get kicked from 47 different angles during the course of the play. But that was alright, as friend Jack Tuebert recalled matter-a-factly in the spring of 1995, "John was after all only a freshman."

Like several others in the Union Operas, Galbo had a firm offer to go to theater in New York with John Harwood's introduction and support but he chose to stay in Detroit. John's family were immigrant poor and he could have never have afforded the tuition at U-D without the help of Monsignor Vismara who sponsored him. The only return the good Father wanted was that John be a good citizen and contribute to the community. So John turned down the offers from New York, married Anna, the girl of his dreams, and became a dentist. He has had a long and successful practice and has had a longer and more successful marriage. Recently, he gave his "Jester Pin" from the 1927 Jester Club to his nephew Peter Bellanca. Peter has, himself, appeared many times on the stage of UofD in recent years. And the beat goes on!

It's interesting to note that the production playing at the Shubert-Lafayette immediately before HOOFS, MY DEAR opened in 1929 at the Temple Theater was the old, reliable war horse UNCLE TOM'S CABIN still touring the theaters of America. The ticket spread for UNCLE TOM'S CABIN was \$.50 to \$ 1.50 while the ticket spread for the UofD production was \$.75 to \$ 2.50. (DN, 4-28-1929)

Jack Tuebert, who played the female lead of Suzanne in HOOFS, remembers that, on the whole, they were pretty good looking women. John Galbo remembers with a smile all the whistles that Jack got as he walked down Woodward Ave "dressed to the nines" for a performance. But there is some dispute on this point for Rex G. White of the Detroit News charitably wrote, at the time, that the play allowed "the chorus to demonstrate how very like - also how very unlike - a group of young men may be to a group of young women." (DN, 4-29-1929)

White noted that "the leading role is done by Jack Tuebert, who plays it deftly, calmly and with (an) understanding of male limitations in a feminine role. He deserved all the applause given him. Two black roles carried the hits of the evening, with John Galbo and George Morris singing in excellent voice and doing a couple of dances with almost professional abandon." (News, 4-29-29)

There was a fourth Union Opera was "HELLO STRANGER" held in 1930 at the Shubert-Lafayette. But the gathering catastrophe of the Great Depression spelled an end to these gala events.

It is interesting to note that the lead story in the Arts Section of the Detroit News the day of the opening of HOOFS, MY

DEAR waved at the future with a headline predicting the imminent death of the legitimate stage at the feet of the newer medium of talking movies. (DN, 4-28-1929) This story seems to reoccur on a regular basis and is, in fact, being repeated by some at this time in history. Of course in 1929, this obituary was decidedly premature. The world had not yet experienced OKLAHOMA, CAROUSEL, DEATH OF A SALESMAN, CATS, TRANSLATIONS, MR. ROBERTS or any of the other giants of live theater that have moved the people of the world from the stage during the next sixty plus years. Hopefully, performance theater will always have a firm place from which to comment on and examine the human condition.

And, on a totally unrelated note, in November 1927 Marguerite Gahagan was to unknowingly start another popular Varsity News and University tradition familiar to many UofD students down to very recent times. In that months copy of the Varsity News Magazine, she made the first recorded report of a car being "lost" in the mud puddles of the then three month old McNichols parking lot between the Commerce Building and the Stadium on Fairfield. This report would be repeated in some form or another on a semi-annual basis over the next 67 years, only the names and dates would be changed.

During the early '60's, in one of this story's regular reincarnations, in a twist on the usual, it was alleged that when the wrecker finally managed to pull the stuck vehicle out of one of these huge ever-lasting puddles that were, for so many years, the parking lots of U-D, three other cars and a small truck were dragged out with it. It seems they had all hooked bumpers. The story went on to claim that one of those other cars had been lost in that puddle before World War II. But alas, with the paving of the north lot in the summer of 1994, any further repetition of Marguerite's and all her successors articles apparently came to an end after a sixty year run and with it the passing of another era.

It must get harder and harder to write for the Varsity News these days as more and more of the traditional sources for stories dry up or are paved over. And, so it goes.

Chapter 4

THE PLAYERS and THE LITTLE THEATER

Even before the Union Operas had been driven to ground by the Great Depression, smaller productions had once again returned to the University campus. Much of this came as a result of the demand of the female students who had no stage to perform on in the all male Operas.

The Fall of 1929 saw the revival of the University dramatic society. Rev J. Joseph Horst, S.J. had become Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences succeeding Father Cogley. On November 6, 1929, Father Horst called a meeting of those interested in a dramatic club to be held in the Commerce & Finance (C&F) Building. At a subsequent meeting of the new Drama Club on Dec 4, 1929, James Frazer was elected President, John Galbo as Vice President, Marguerite M. Gahagen as Secretary, Mike Peters as Treasurer. (VN, 12- -29) In later years, John Galbo remembered Jim Frazer as being a wonderful actor who worked well with people and Marguerite Gahagen as being a great writer.

Father Horst was born in 1880 in Dusseldorf, Germany. In 1901 he came to America to study in the Jesuit Compion College in Praire du Chein, Wisc. John Galbo remembers Father Horst as a firm but extremely fair and friendly man. He could also step in and teach any of the classes then taught at U-D being fluent in Latin, Greek, German, English, French and carrying degrees in Biology, Chemistry, Philosophy, Ethics, and English Literature. Galbo said in an interview in 1994 that he felt Father Horst was among the smartest men he has ever met and also one of the nicest. Galbo remembered that while at U-D, the students bought Father Horst a new car, a little coupe. Unfortunately, when he was transferred from U-D the car had to stay here because Jesuits took vows of poverty. Galbo remembered Father as saying he was going to miss U-D... and, of course, he was really going to miss his Chevy!

On Jan 15, 1930 in the Florence Ryan Auditorium (now the Chapel in the Commerce Building) the Dramatic Club produced its first productions: TWO GENTLEMEN FROM CHICAGO and THE DEAR DEPARTED. Father J. Joseph Horst, S.J. who was also Faculty Moderator of the Dramatic Club said of the productions that: "The cast for each of these plays was picked at random regardless of talent or experience. In this way, everyone gets involved and fair play and a square deal, ideals of the club, are achieved. Politics are not given an opportunity to wreck the sincerity and progress of the organization." (VN, 1-22-30)

In September, 1930 Daniel M. Sunday, alumni of UofD and professor of English, was appointed director of the U-D Dramatic

Society.

Again, the 1931 Yearbook reads: "Since its reorganization two years ago, the dramatic club of the university has achieved a remarkable record during its comparatively brief term of existence." By 1932 "The Players" were back to one act plays scattered about the city at facilities such as the auditoriums at St. Theresa's, Royal Oak St. Mary's, and St. Vincent's... with "all proceeds (going) to the Sodality."

As we have seen, during all these years, the theater was without a permanent place to call their own. It was not until 1934, that the University finally made Rm 17, in the southeast corner of the basement of the Chemistry Building, available for student theater. This put the theater across the hall from the then location of the Student Union (southwest corner of the basement) so it was not as far out of the way as it appears to be today. Decidedly small (holding about 65 seats with the only way off the stage during a production without going into the audience was to go out through a window) the space, never the less, was something the student who wanted a theater could build around. It was theirs! (Mueller, p. 221)

Also at this time, speech instructor Michael P. Kinsella (1907-1958) was appointed to head of the theater by the Speech Department. On October 17, 1934, Kinsella reorganized THE PLAYERS as the main sponsoring element for student productions. In a letter to Arthur P. Hagan in 1936, Mr. Kinsella recounts how The Players took over and remade the old Chemistry Laboratory in the Chemistry Building into "the Little Theater" with the students own hard labor. To encourage this "hard labor", each candidate for the Players had to serve an apprenticeship of one year. During that year he had to "earn 100 points -- on the basis of three points for each hour of actual work -- in all phases of the theater in order to attain full membership."

In order to appear in a production at UofD in those days, a student had to be a member of, or apprentice for, the Players. Points could be earned by appearing in a show, working on a show, producing or directing a show, or being on the office staff. But prospective members could only gain 1/3 of the points they needed in any one area. For instance, even if the student appeared as an actor in every production, they wouldn't have enough points. They also had to be a carpenter, or electrician, or house manager, or any of the other myriad of tasks theater demands. In other words, everyone sweated together.

In a letter of June 16, 1936 Mr. Kinsella reported in his summary of the Little Theater's season for the school year 1935-1936, that 15 plays were produced in house and two (MERRY DEATH and MURDERED ALIVE) were produced and open to the public. Through it all the Dramatics Club lost \$30.77. Expenditures were listed at

\$214.78 with revenue totalling \$183.91. The memo noted that Mr. Kinsella made up the difference himself and would be repaid from the following year's budget.

Michael Kinsella was born in Spaulding, Michigan. After earning his Ph.B. from Marquette in 1930 in Speech, English, and Philosophy and his M.A. from Marquette in 1933 in Speech and English, Mr. Kinsella started as a Speech Instructor at UofD in the Fall of 1934. That first year, he founded the Players as part of the University Theater. Mr. Kinsella taught at the University from Fall of 1934 to Spring of 1942. In tribute to his contribution to theater at UofD, the Player's top theater award for student excellence down through the late '50's, was named "The Kinsella" after Michael Kinsella.

After leaving UofD, Kinsella served in the Army Air Corps in 1942 as a bombsight specialist and was on Tinian Island in the Pacific when the A-Bomb was dropped in August, 1945. After the war, he joined the Briggs Corp which was taken over by Chrysler Corp. At Chrysler Kinsella was Director of Adult Education until being laid off in 1958. UofD hired him back as a night school instructor in English to start in the Fall Term of 1958.

Now for the rest of the story: On Sept 16, 1958, before classes started, for no apparent reason Kinsella killed his wife, Mirianne. At the time, the newspapers reported that they were heavily in debt. His attorney, John H. Gillis, asked for a sanity test. On Oct 31, 1958, while in jail awaiting trial, Kinsella died of a massive brain hemorrhage. The autopsy showed he had a large brain tumor and calcification of the front parts of the brain. Doctors said this condition could easily have accounted for the murder.

And, of course, there had to be a theater angle to this whole tragedy and all its details. It seems Mr. Kinsella tried killing his wife by hitting her on the head with a bullpen hammer four times as she laid on the couch watching television. But she wasn't yet dead. So, he then tried strangling her with an electric cord. This cord broke so Kinsella got a real rope and finished strangling her. But it didn't look right so he then got a butcher knife and slit her throat. Then he ran water in the bath tub and submerged her body under the water to make it look like an accidental drowning. Kinsella said that as he sat on the toilet top looking down at the body in the tub he realized that probably no one would believe it was accident so he just called the police and confessed. The arresting officer, when told both what Kinsella had intended to do and that he had taught acting in his career commented that no one was that good an actor that he could have convinced anyone that this had been an accident. No one!

But all that was to be in the future when on Feb 21, 1940 Kinsella introduced Rev John P. McEvoy, S.J. as the new faculty

Moderator for both the University Theater and the Players. A "Moderator" was a "Chairman" by another name. According to the official by-laws of the Players, the Moderator was: responsible to the University for the actions of the theater; was the official censor; enforced all University rulings; and had complete authority with-in the context of the Players and all of it's functions. (Players By-laws)

The cast list of the "Merchant of Venice" presented in the Little Theater during May, 1941 contains the first mention of John McCabe ('47). During these years he was just plain "John McCabe." The "C" of "John C. McCabe" would not appear until later. The McCabe name can be seen around the McNichols Campus until this day but more on that later. This particular production was to be the last directed by Michael Kinsella at UofD. The Varsity News reported that the "Merchant..." was the most ambitious production mounted by the Players since they started in 1934. This version was shortened and revised to fit into the confines of the Little Theater by Mr. Kinsella.

During these years, "the Bard of Avon" reigned preeminent. In the Nov 19, 1941 issue of the VN, new theater Moderator Father Joseph Staudacher says, "in explaining the Little Theater's recent strict adherence to Shakespearean productions... that University authorities feel the actors might as well learn 'good' lines if they're going to the trouble of memorizing a part" anyway."

During the 1963 Theater Anniversary ceremonies, Dr. John C. McCabe remembered fondly his experience in theater at UofD during these pre-World War II years. Attending UofD, as he said, "more or less" from 1939 to 1947, much of the early part of that time was spent in and around the Little Theater then still located in the southeast corner of the Chemistry Building basement. Later, McCabe went on to become Chairman of Theater at NYU and, as such, was a nationally known and revered voice of university theater for years. Through his eyes, we will go back to those days of yore before the war:

"Well, folks, it was pretty awful.

"It was pretty awful, that is, if you count theater in terms of space, facilities and money. It was pretty awful if theater means to you what it means to many people in the educational theater these days -- splendidly cantilevered risers and levels surging and swirling in a great variety of glutinously esoteric shapes.

"But if you mean theater as it is in direct function, if you mean theater projecting character into action, if you mean theater acting as a microcosm of society or as the great living museum holding up a view of ages past, then

we were at it. Finally it, perhaps, but it. Our work was warm, vivid, vital -- and really, really now, damned good.

"The memories are rich and they are lasting: a 65-seat theater in the basement of the Chemistry Building with a tiny stage that could stretch out and up many leagues when talent lit up the acting area; John Lee's forceful and flowing direction; sawing and hammering one lovely winter day on out "Twelfth Night" set when the music on the radio was interrupted by news of Pearl Harbor, and the music came on again, and we went on hammering; all of us listening to a beautiful reading of great moments from "Romeo and Juliet" by talented and tragic Michael Kinsella; Jodi Harrington's delightful sets that frequently had to suggest an opulent palace on a budget of five dollars, and did so; talking intensely at the Peter Pan (Ed note: local bar on Livernois known to later generations as the Golden Twenties) after rehearsal about theater, life, theater, girls, theater, theater, theater.

There are so many memories came to me, and I can't sort them out easily into a pattern that I can point to and say, "This was pre-war theater at U of D." However, I have a strong impression of a shared and loving involvement in that mysterious thing called creativity."

The McCabe name would be known on the U-D campus down to the current time because the lounge in the basement of the McNichols Library is named for U-D graduate, Major Charles J. McCabe who was killed in 1943 during World War II. Major McCabe was the father of John C. McCabe, PhD and Brian McCabe M.D. Brother Brian was active with the Players in the post-war theater playing the lead in several productions.

The following are notes and theater trivia taken from the pages of the Varsity News:

William T. Rabe, later to be the local leader of the "Baker Street Irregulars," the founder of the highly popular "Ask The Professor" radio program and originator of the Mackinaw Island Stone Skipping Contest, described the Little Theater as "being on the lower concourse of the Chemistry Building." (4-29-42 VN) During the school year 1992-1993, the theater students (this writer included) had their rehearsal space in the North-west basement of that Chemistry Building. So, I KNOW this description is generous to a fault... spin control 1942 fashion.

The following fall (1942), saw the arrival at UofD of two men who would, through: (1) their leadership, (2) the decisions they

set in effect, (3) and finally through the people they hired, continue to contribute to the ascent to excellence of theater at UofD down to this day. Richard Burgwin was then a sixteen year-old freshman, already with a love of Shakespeare, studying English in the College of Liberal Arts. And, the faculty was enriched when Rev. James P. Caine, S.J. was appointed by the Society to teach that English. Burgwin and Caine would come to actively work together for the advancement of UofD Theatre for the next twenty years.

Again, back to the pages of the Varsity News:

11-10-43 VN, pg 3. New location of the theater will be Commerce Room 206. They will share the space with a classroom. But President of the Players Richard Burgwin announced that a portable stage will enable the Players to transfer from the classroom in a theater in a matter of minutes."

11-17-43 Woman's League announces "Theater Night at the Masonic" cost will her \$2.20 includes transportation from campus. It also announced a meeting on "War-Time Dating and the Catholic Woman"

12-1-43 Richard J. Burgwin, Arts Sophomore and President of the Players, named Editor-in-Chief of the Varsity News. The following year it was reported that Burgwin's hero was Orson Welles. (VN 11-29-44)

The growth the theater was experiencing had to be put on the back burner during the middle days of WWII because of a lack of man-power. For instance, the 1943 production of OUR LADY OF LYONS was canceled because so many of the male actors were drafted and taken into the armed forces between the casting call and the production date. The cancellation of theater at U-D caused a firestorm of controversy lead incidentally by John C. McCabe III. But really, there was no other choice.

Theater resumed during the 1943-1944 term with a full season. By the spring of 1944, the Varsity News announced Carl Olson as the Kinsella Key winner for 1943-1944. Carl was not present for the ceremony as he too had been drafted and was in the service. The Kinsella Key was awarded for many years for "general and consistent thespianic excellence in many productions." The best play winner '43-'44 was "Bury the Dead" by Irwin Shaw and directed by Jon Marlin. The Sanders Award (Named for WJBK station manager and UofD alumnus George Sanders was won by Rosemary Linahan (Arts, Fr.)

Lastly, and most importantly for future generations, Rev James Caine, S.J. was named the faculty moderator "until further notice." (4-19-44 VN) In this case, "further notice" would prove to be the next quarter century. Rev. James P. Caine, S.J. born in 1905, was

raised in Cleveland, Ohio before earning a bachelor's degree from Xavier University and a master's degree from St. Louis University. He entered the Society of Jesus in 1928 and was ordained 10 years later. Before coming to UofD in 1942, he taught English at Milford Novitiate in Milford, Ohio. His love of English Victorian literature and drama led him to ask for the assignment of Monitor for the Players. Father Caine would spend the rest of his career at UofD and his beloved UofD theater before dying peacefully in 1979.

But, getting back to the Little Theater, finally all good things had to come to an end. After ten years of service to the cause, it was announced that the last production held in the Little Theater in Room 17 of the Chemistry Building was to be JANE EYRE written and directed by a very young Richard J. Burgwin in December 1944. Burgwin remembers this production well to this day because this was the last time he wrote a play and the last time he ever directed himself in a play! Luckily, he says, he had learned both these valuable lessons early in his career.

Further Productions of the 1944/1945 school year were canceled because of move. Every available inch of space was being prepared as classroom space for the returning veterans. This included the small space that had been the home to the University Theatre for all those years. It must have been traumatic for the students to lock that door for the final time and walk away.

Well, as we all know, that war was eventually won and the men came flooding back to school. UofD went from a small war-time campus of 600 students to a large one of 6000 students. So, now things would be different. For the most part, everyone was just a little more serious... so, I guess, freshmen bennies were now out! Lou Bonamy remembered later that "the people who weren't here before the war don't appreciate the change though. The general atmosphere is much more adult in nearly every aspect." The female correspondent that wrote the VN article then went to wax about his "curley black hair, brown eyes and black convertible with red leather." (VN, 9-30-49) *So, MAYBE THINGS HADN'T CHANGED THAT MUCH!*

This alleged seriousness had a firm basis in experience. The men who came home to UofD were not the boys who left only a few years earlier. For instance, Bonamy had spent 22 months overseas as a bombardier with the 15th AirForce and flew 28 combat missions. He was fluent in five languages, was to earn his degree in Philosophy in 1950, and went to work with the U.S. Diplomatic Corps.

But, back to 1945. After the war, once again, the Players gypsy life again took them to venues all over the campus and all over the city. "It was with mixed feelings that the students left the Chemistry Building for the somewhat more spacious quarters in Commerce 108. The following year the theater was set up in the Florence Ryan Auditorium (C&F Chapel)." (Mueller, p221)

Productions were also put up in the old St. Francis Club, Detroit Institute of Arts, Dowling Hall Gym, Music Hall, and the FWC Auditorium. The Players Office was set up in the closet on the north stairwell in the basement of the C&F Building. Alumni fondly remember all the business meetings and talks of future dreams going long into the night in that small space.

It was also announced that tryouts for the new theater season were to be held in Commerce 108. And, once again, talent would count in naming the cast of post-war productions. On Oct 24, 1945, the Varsity News reported that "... unlike past procedure, participants will be judged on dramatic ability rather than enthusiasm or willingness to work. This year attention will be focused on acting and directing, since, after primary arrangements are made, there will be very little stage work to be done" according to John Linahan, Players President. Like noted above, things were a little more serious now.

Also in the fall of 1945 a revised point system was announced for the Players. There would now be a distinction between Minor Plays (one act) and Major Plays (more than one act). The point system was as follows: (VN, 10-10-45)

Minor		Major	
15	Leading Role	20	per performance
5	Supporting Role	15	per performance
-	Extra	5	per performance
25	Directing	50	
10	Typing Manuscripts	20	

Remember that we said that after the war "for the most part everyone was just a little more serious." Well, here's a note that qualifies both as the exception that proves the rule, and the fact that "we haven't changed all that much." In Oct, 1945, the VN reported that Jerry Burke had been elected Bonfire Queen for Homecoming. Eventually however, Jerry showed up to pick-up HIS crown and was disqualified from the competition because, well, he was a he.

In these post-war years, the Players began to rebuild. And now two of the people on which so much of the theater's future growth would depend were now officially in place: Father James P. Caine, S.J. was into his second year as Theater Moderator and Richard J. Burgwin had graduated in 1945 to be appointed to the University staff as an English Professor. Patrick J. Blaney would soon be added to the mix.

During the 1946-47 Season the University hired nationally known director Bert Walker from Loyola Chicago for the particular task of directing a "first cabin production." It was to be the Union Operas all over again - - but with a much smaller budget. "Closet drama," ala the Chemistry Building, was out. (Lee, 1963)

The larger, professional space at the Institute of Arts was rented and a production mounted of Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman's George Washington Slept Here. - This production is also important from a historical standpoint for this was the first University production to be open to anyone of talent and not just members of the Players Club. The concept of the theater at UofD was now large enough, and the theater people taking part confident enough of themselves, to accommodate anyone who had the talent. The "Town and Gown" concept of later years was born here.

George Washington... was successful enough to wet everyone's appetite for more. But Father Caine's budget was exhausted. I'll let John Lee recount what was going on from the inside. In later years, John B. Lee ('48) would write ~~of~~ that, while at UofD, ~~that~~ he learned more about his craft than at any other time in his life. And he would count these "as the most formative, exciting years of his life." John would graduate from UofD and move on to direct, among others, the "Soupy Sales Show" at WXYZ T.V. before going national with ABC-TV in Hollywood.

"This show ("George Washington...") played in February. And neither Fr. Caine's budget nor time allowed another such effort to be mounted before semester closed. Yet - a number of buffs were still gung ho.

"It all began with a few friendly rounds of Buzz at a back table in the Peter Pan. Lou Schneider and Charley (Aquinas-in-the-original) Crippen... both top-ranking competitors... were among the few who moved on to the finals of Colonel Puff at Corby's (now Larco's). Result: an impassioned plea before the after-dinner crowd at the St. Francis Club. (THEY had a home... and the players were homeless... something like that). We petitioned for permission to use their clubrooms to stage an area theater production (in the round)... I forget where we rehearsed - but the real thrill and excitement was in the staging. Fooling with a new method of expression -- groping for a technique that was literally non-existent - - was quite a kick. Production difficulties were monumental: snoods were made from #10 cans. Dressing rooms: the Club's kitchen... the show was the "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray"... Pinero was the Victorian Williams. And stars Roser Linahan and Dan Horgan were both magnificent. Not to mention my wife (Ruthe Compton Lee) -- who still refuses to take direction from me!"

As noted above, the main artistic innovation of the period center around Richard Burgwin's introduction of "Theater in the Round" and "3/4 Theater." Many of the reviews of the times debate these concepts and recount the great difficulty the audiences had in acclimating themselves to this new use of an old concept. One can only imagine, the problems the actors had orienting themselves

and mastering this same foreign concept. The Varsity News commented that "not the least feature of the new circular theater is that it allows you to easily watch the audience across the theater as they react to the play with sorrow and anger..."

John B. Lee's remembrance continues into the 1947-48 season:

"Jim Crowner was Players president that year. And we were still trooping. I'll never forget the rash of absolutely good talent in that Freshman Class... Maryann Brownlee particularly. All productions were arena style... rehearsals were in the Womens League Room. BUT -- the shows were done in the Gym at the Downtown campus. Brownlee was sensational in "Spring Dance"... Lou Bonamy stood out as Crock in "Winterset." Best of all, Lou Charboneau repeated his magnificent Judge Garth. (His first outing being in 1943 in the Little Theater.)

Bill Rabe was impressed with the path theater at UofD was taking and commented on the above as follows:

"With WINTERSET the University of Detroit Players have established something of a landmark in the current post-war revival of campus dramatics. Not that this is a perfect production. A group of amateurs, however, talented are always open to improvement. However, in staging, acting, and general over-all effect this production leaves little room for eye-brow raising and-sympathetic criticism by patronizing audiences."

John B. Lee continues into the 1948 - 49 Season:

"This was the year when one felt a brush with the great days of Union Operas. A major push: Father Caine committed the University to staging a Passion Play. It was to appeal to city-wide audiences. We were booked into the Music Hall - Wilson Theater... The show was an original by John Charles McCabe III (was directed by Mr. Lee himself) and it starred Dr. Brian McCabe. Dick Burgwin described the whole effort as 'interesting'... a devastating but true remark!

"I have one vivid recollection -- Jim O'Dea -- an exemplary member of IATSE Local 38, got thoroughly smashed while on the light board and a beautiful light plot was ad libbed through one whole performance. I think we had lightning during the Last Supper and Day Intro for the Crucifixion scene."

But things were definitely getting better and the product was, at last, selling itself. So much so, that Patrick J. Blaney, President of Players in 1948/49 authored a note in the Varsity News

for the December 4 - 11, 1948 performances of `ILE and MACBETH to the effect that "the faculty will no longer be allowed comps (free tickets)... too much demand for the limited number of seats." (Now there's a problem we should all have.) Lou Bonamy won the Players Award as best student director for his production of ILE. (VN, 9-30-49)

The talents that the UofD students demonstrated in theater arts was not lost on the other theaters in the area. Sister Marguerite Butler at Mercy cast Players members Brian McCabe as Jason, Lou Bonamy as Creon, Roman Lagowski as Aegelis, and Thomas Conklin as Tutor in her production of MEDEA in October of 1949. UofD Engineering student Daniel Hurley was the Teck Director for the production. Mercy Student Patricia Vogle was outstanding in the title role of Medea. The VN at UofD went so far as to report that Miss Vogle's performance in this play together with her outstanding Lady McBeth of the previous season had solidified her place as the first lady of the Detroit stage. (VN, 10-18-49)

Dick Burgwin remembers both this production of MEDEA and Sister Marguerite herself. First, the production was excellent but then, as Burgwin said "all of Sister Marguerite's plays were well done. She had a real understanding for the stage and a grasp of both the play and the audience dynamic. Marguerite knew what she was doing." Burgwin remembered that at this same time Marygrove was also doing theater. But, the nuns there would not cast males in their plays. And, if one of their girls was performing a male role and was wearing mens pants as part of that role, she also had to wear a skirt over the top of the stage costume. Burgwin said it was bizare.. But, there was none of that nonsense at Mercy with Sister Marguerite. (Burgwin, 4-96)

David Culhane, later to be the European correspondent with CBS news, made his stage debut at UofD a hit as "the inebriated" `Cassio' in Burgwin's production of OTHELLO presented during December, 1949 in the Florence Ryan Auditorium (now the Chapel) in the Commerce and Finance Building. James O'Neil was Iago and Charlene McCabe outstanding as Desdmona. (VN, 1-6-50)

And, finally at long last, the September 22, 1950 issue of the Varsity News carried the one paragraph announcement that Patrick J. Blaney had been appointed to the staff of the English Department. His duties would also include the directorship of the new Theater Department which would operate the new theater starting that fall on the third floor of the new Library Building.

And so, with those simple words, the next great step in the history of theater at the University of Detroit was announced. Theater at UofD was going legit for it was finally going to have it's own stage on campus. John Lee summarized, I am sure, the majority opinion of generations of theater alumni in addition to the then current students that, surely, the "millennium had at long

last arrived!"

But whatever! Praise the Lord and pass the script for the next play! At long last, the Players had themselves a real "theatre!"