

THE STORY OF



**RICHMOND**  
**CIVIC Theatre**

1941

1959

**THEIR EXITS  
AND THEIR  
ENTRANCES**

by

**Opal Thornburg**



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*TO THE FOUNDERS —*

*Those Who Conceived The Idea,  
Enlisted Members, and Pioneered  
In Play Production, Starting  
Richmond Civic Theatre On  
Its Triumphant Way*

## FOREWORD

History accentuates and makes important the accepted benefits we enjoy today. Eighteen years ago Richmond had no community theatre. Today Richmond Civic Theatre is one of the most important contributors to the culture of the community.

The first years were a struggle but, no matter what happened, high standards were maintained. This was a theatre planned to last, planned to grow, determined to succeed in its aim to give Richmond the best in theatrical entertainment.

During its eighteen seasons Richmond Civic Theatre has had only one director — Norbert Silbiger. He has given it stability and purpose. The theatre is indebted to a man devoted to build Civic Theatre even in the face of inertia and other discouraging factors. To him only is reserved the title "Mr. Civic Theatre."

Membership has grown from 500 to nearly 3000. Richmond Civic Theatre can look back with an indulgent smile on its small beginnings, a rueful laugh at its tribulations, and pardonable pride at its growth into strength, maturity, and solid character. It has been climbing steadily and might be forgiven for thinking it has arrived at the ultimate peak. But there are Everests yet to climb. We pause here only to reflect on the humble beginnings and to gather strength for the climb to greater eminence.

*Edward N. Anderson*  
President of Richmond Civic Theatre

## PREFACE

The history of a community project, set up and conducted on democratic principles, is one of the most difficult to write. The aspirations and the efforts of so many people go into the conception and the organization, the personnel is so changing, each person making his impact, great or small, not always apparent, and not always rightly evaluated at close range, that the story of events may do less than justice to one and attribute to another more than he deserves, while the vastness of the number of participants makes it impossible to mention by name many who were of great importance. Yet the general trend of events is clear, and the organization lives and grows into something bigger than the aggregate of its adherents, and more significant.

Truly Richmond Civic Theatre through its eighteen years has been a stage, and those who have given to it their enthusiasm, their devotion, and their labors have had "their exits and their entrances." Some have moved from the city, others have died or made way for younger workers. There have been leading roles and bit parts. The biggest role of all has been that of the director, the one constant member of the cast from the beginning, without whom it is scarcely possible to imagine Richmond Civic Theatre. In the words of E. Merrill Root, "Richmond was the well-prepared fuel, Norbert Silbiger the lightning from heaven." Yet it is inevitable that in time he too will leave the stage, and it is highly important to realize this and to resolve that Civic Theatre can and will go on.

The program for the Jubilee play in 1948, *The Magnificent Yankee*, included these words by the President, John Edwards:

*The group is more important than the individual in survival. At almost any given time in the theatre's past history it would have been possible to say, "Without these individuals our Civic Theatre could not go on," but the individuals have passed and the theatre has survived — limping for a time, perhaps, but still going on and getting steadily stronger. It would be foolish to look at the future, then, and say "We will be lost if this man goes or that man goes."*)

And as E. Merrill Root wrote on a later occasion, when for a time controversy rocked the little world of Civic Theatre, "None of us matter much, and our prestige and feelings matter not at all. It is Civic Theatre that matters."

The preparation of this account would not have been possible without the cooperation and encouragement of Civic Theatre's Board of Directors, which made available the minutes, program file, and other records; the kindness of Norbert Silbiger in lending his extensive scrapbooks of newspaper clippings; and the patience and collaboration of other individuals, particularly those involved in the events leading up to the birth of the organization, for which there are few records. Credit is given to the various photographers—Meek, Loehr, Phillips, Pyle — for illustrations.

Finally, the author asks the indulgence of readers for errors in fact, in interpretation, or in emphasis. The intention has been to tell the story accurately, without bias, with the keen appreciation of one who has loved Civic Theatre and gained from it vast enjoyment over the years, and with confidence that the past is prologue in the history of an organization that will go on to even greater achievements.

*Opal Thornburg*

Richmond, Indiana  
February, 1959

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NORBERT SILBIGER, DIRECTOR

(Pyle Photo)

## I AN IDEA IS BORN

“How did this idea of a Civic Theatre in Richmond originate?”

The question was asked in an exploratory meeting of persons interested in the possibility of a community theatre in Richmond.

The answer came from Hazel Thornburg Emry: “Just in idle conversation among a few individuals.”

This much is a matter of record in the stenographic report of the meeting. But who were these few individuals, and how did the idea come to birth? The time has come to tell that story, and to set down, step by step, the history of an organization which has developed far beyond the wildest hopes of those who started the movement.

Mrs. Marion S. Emry moved to Richmond from Jamestown, N.Y., in September 1939, following the death of her husband. Her sister, Cleo Thornburg, had returned the preceding March for work in Richmond following several years in Philadelphia, where she had enjoyed seeing the many theatre plays and ballets available only in the larger cities, and where she had been a member of a group of amateurs singing light opera. Hazel Emry likewise had seen outstanding productions in Boston and had attended plays of a cooperative children's theatre in Portland, Maine, and a little theatre in Jamestown, N.Y. One of their happy memories was the “bug opera” with characters drawn from the fauna of the fields and woods, and other home-written and -produced entertainment of their childhood.

The family frequently bemoaned together the lack of anything creative to do in Richmond, something to work on in their leisure time which would be of more significance than the usual activities of a small city. They thought of amateur theatricals, but they knew of the summer theatre project in Richmond which, after an uncertain career, had come to an abrupt end, and they saw no hope of its revival. They explored, only half seriously, a fantastic idea of a canoe club on the Whitewater; they read aloud delightedly Gertrude Stein's *Paris, France*.

Then Hazel Emry volunteered as a teacher of a class at Quaker



Hazel Thornburg Emry, "Mother" of Richmond Civic Theater

Hill, which was being utilized in those early years of the Second World War as a temporary home for European refugees from the Hitler rule. Coming home from Quaker Hill one evening late in November, 1940, she remarked, "I have a new little man in my group, and I'm convinced he's a genius."

Norbert Silbiger, arriving in November after several months in New York City, seized the opportunity for coaching by Earlham College students Stephen Randall and Dorothy Myrick to improve his halting English, and joined Mrs. Emry's class in American Literature, where he proved to be a delightful addition. A reporter later described him as "a gnomelike little man with tufts of hair sticking out on each side of a balding head."

A week later Hazel Emry had a conversation with him at a social event at Quaker Hill, in which he told of seeing a production in Vienna of that zany American play *You Can't Take It With You*.

"'The play is crazy,' said the Viennese people. 'No one lives

that way,' But now that I have seen America," added Silbiger, "I think everybody here lives like that."

"How did you learn so well colloquial *American* English?" asked Hazel Emry.

"In New York I read American plays, hours and weeks on end, for I knew they would give me the flavor of the spoken language of this country."

This led to a conversation on the theatre in America, and Hazel Emry mentioned coming down from Maine to Boston to see productions by New York companies of *Amphitryon* with the Lunts, *Our Town*, *You Can't Take It With You*, and Ethel Barrymore in *White-oaks*.

"Why don't more cities have their own theatres?" asked Norbert Silbiger. "And why isn't there a city theatre in Richmond? A city of such wealth and size in Europe would have a Burg Theatre."

Talk of Little Theatre projects followed, and Hazel Emry suggested that in Richmond a group might at least get together to read plays.

"Ah, but then they will want to produce them!" exclaimed Silbiger. "That always happens."

So the idea began. Bored and restless, Hazel Emry and her family were ready for this exciting new creative concept of a community theatre. It should not be a project appealing only to a limited group of persons invited to participate, but a genuine community theatre, without patrons, whose only qualifications for membership would be the ability to help in producing plays or the interest in seeing them, at a membership fee small enough to be afforded by anyone. It should draw from all economic and social levels of the community.

It was an alluring pipe dream; but need it be only that? Richmond was the right size for such a project, the time seemed ripe, and here in the community was a man of wide experience in play production who could help. The first step was to sell leading citizens on the idea. At every gathering of the family—Hazel Emry, Opal and Cleo Thornburg, the Edward Weadicks, the Wilson Wrights, the Everett Bennetts, all of whom were Richmond residents, they talked of the chances of a community theatre and racked their brains as to the right procedure and personnel.

## II A MAN ENDURES

Questioning as to the background of Norbert Silbiger brought out the story of a life filled with stark drama, but lived with gusto and humor. A native Viennese, he joined other children in going once a week to see the great plays performed on the stage, and thus an inborn interest developed into an undying love of the theatre. He studied at the University of Vienna and at the same time at the Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts. He was directing plays at the University when he was called at the beginning of World War I to service as an officer in the army. Soon thereafter, when only nineteen years old, he was wounded and captured by the Russians. On the way to a prison camp he escaped, only to be recaptured within a few hours and sentenced to a penal colony in Siberia.

As months of imprisonment lengthened into years the young drama enthusiast helped to relieve the tedium for himself, and to raise the morale of his fellows, many of them Austrian officers, by originating and directing a "little theatre" in the prison camp.

"The costumes were made of old uniforms, dressing and bandages," he recalls. "From candles and ointment we prepared the make-up. Wigs were produced out of cotton and string. And young officers with schoolgirl complexions acted the female parts as it was done in the time of Shakespeare." Their plays, including Hamlet, were noted ones that Silbiger knew by heart. Word of this extraordinary activity under such unlikely circumstances drifted far beyond the borders of Siberia.

Then came the revolution in Russia in 1917, and Silbiger became an American prisoner of war, but the withdrawal of the United States forces resulted in his being sent to Manchuria as a Japanese prisoner. Finally, at the end of the war, he was able to return to his beloved Vienna, one of the few Austrians to survive the rigors of their captivity.

The fame of his prison camp theatre had preceded him. In recognition of his amazing achievement he was hired as Regisseur\* of

\*In Europe the regisseur does the work of the director in America; the European director is the producer or owner of the theatre.

the State-Wanderbuehne at the Urania and State Academy-Theatre in Vienna. In addition to directing plays he was a private coach in drama, taught in a college for adults, and had various connections with other theatres.

After a half dozen years in this work he transferred his interest and abilities to journalism. For fourteen years he held editorial positions on newspapers. The Grillparzer medal, the highest distinction that could be won by an Austrian writer, was awarded to him in 1935.

Because of his political activities as a journalist, Silbiger was thrown by the Nazis into a concentration camp. "A single day in concentration camp" he says, "was worse than the five years I was in prison in Siberia. Death isn't so bad, but torture — it's hard to believe people can be so cruel." After some months the Service Committee of the Society of Friends in England secured his release.

The next chapter of his story derives from one of those improbable incidents that somehow happen despite logic and the laws of chance. Like so many refugees, he was eager to get to America, the promised land of the oppressed; but to enter under the refugee quota it was necessary to have an affidavit from someone in America who would be financially responsible for him for a five year period if he was unable to make his own way. Silbiger knew not a soul in this country. In this extremity, leafing through a telephone directory of New York City, he came upon a surname the same as his own. Polishing his limited English, he wrote to Samuel Silbiger, a lawyer, appealing to him to reach a friendly hand to him across the ocean. Amazingly, he had a prompt reply in the affirmative, and after a two-year delay caused by red tape procedures, in February 1940 he was entering New York harbour. He was more moved to see the Statue of Liberty than when he returned to Vienna after five years as a prisoner of war. As he has related many times, he arrived with only \$2.50 and his accent, adding "The Lord created the 'th' sound to punish refugees."

In New York he called on his benefactor to thank him, and hunted for work, but the city was overrun with refugees and he found nothing. The American Friends Service Committee suggested that he come to Richmond for some weeks of orientation, a venture into which he entered with thankfulness, knowing he would at least have freedom and some measure of independence, but little realizing that the next exciting chapter of his life story was to have its setting here.

By January his facility in English was sufficient for him to accept invitations to speak to various groups on his experiences in concentration camps and as a play director and journalist. Another



favorite topic was "Austria Before and After Hitler." His engagements included various service clubs, the local Republican Women, church groups in Indianapolis and Kokomo, and the Wayne County Federation of Clubs in Fountain City. The Richmond Business and Professional Women arranged for him to be the guest speaker at their annual June breakfast. The Tourist Club in Portland featured him at their annual guest affair.

In January he made a trip to Indianapolis to call on Norman Green, President of the Workshop group of the Civic Theatre of that city. This visit became a matter of record through the following story in the *Indianapolis Times* on January 13, 1941, under the caption "Inside Indianapolis."

Norman Green, who is appearing in the Civic Theatre's *Two On An Island*, went through one of those frightening coincidences the other day.

*In the play Norman is a theatrical producer who is pestered by a never-ending stream of aspirants. One of the more memorable is the character of an old Viennese actor. In the course of the interview on the stage Mr. Green says:*

*"Yes, I know. You acted for 18 years with the Burg Theatre. You speak Spanish, English, German, Portuguese and Esperanto. You can play anything in the theatre and you want a job in the theatre — anything, acting, directing, stage managing or usbering — just so it's working in the theatre."*

*Well, the other day a visitor came in to see Mr. Green. A refugee from the Nazis, he had acted for four years at the Burg Theatre in Vienna, he spoke English, German, Spanish and French and he wanted some sort of a job in the theatre — acting, directing, stage managing, even usbering — just so long as it was in the theatre.*

*Still a little dazed, Mr. Green is trying to find the Viennese a job somewhere at the Civic.*

While no such job developed, Norbert Silbiger was guest speaker for the Workshop group of that organization following dinner at the Athenium Club on February 27. On that occasion he sketched his experiences as a play producer in Vienna and gave his impressions of theatre work in the United States.

### III THE IDEA GROWS

Having reached the point in their thinking where a community theatre seemed conceivable and possible, with a talented director possibly within reach, the strategy of the planners was to introduce the idea, by a few judicious words here and there, into the minds of Richmond citizens in such a way that it seemed their own, and to find a leader who would get behind it. They expected to pitch in and help to their full ability, but they did not think of themselves as leaders.

It would be helpful, they thought, to get advice from persons with experience in a community theatre. This Cleo Thornburg undertook to secure. In late February or early March, on a Sunday afternoon, she drove to Indianapolis to attend a reading performance of the Civic Theatre and to talk with any of the personnel who might be available. She had a helpful conversation with Norman Green, and with Ford and Lila Kaufman who were reading that day and who had considerable experience in play production. The three, remembering Norbert Silbiger's call on Green and his address to their group, expressed enthusiasm over the suggestion that he might find an opportunity to direct a community theatre in Richmond and offered helpful suggestions on starting the project.

About this time, following an address by Silbiger at First Friends Church, when Hazel Emry and Edward Nusbaum met in the corridor they were discussing the address and Nusbaum said, "I think Richmond ought to keep him here as director of a civic theatre." Mrs. Emry agreed with enthusiasm, and at home reported delightedly this first evidence that the idea was taking root.

Nusbaum had enjoyed his participation in the defunct summer theatre and was intrigued with the thought of a winter project of this kind. After the conversation at First Friends he talked with Walter Woodward, editor of *The American Friend*, about the idea, and Woodward talked with Hazel Emry. Both Mr. Nusbaum and Mrs. Emry discussed individually with Mr. Silbiger the chances for a Richmond Civic Theatre, with himself as director. About the first he was encouraging, but he seemed reluctant to think of himself in

a leading role. Knowing the immense amount of work involved, he may have hoped to change his tumultuous life to a more quiet existence. As the weeks passed, the enthusiasm of others for the idea, the difficulty of finding congenial employment, and his genuine love of the theatre seemed to overcome this reluctance.

Meanwhile Mrs. Emry was taking every opportunity to try out the idea on representative citizens. One such opportunity was a Scribblers Club meeting at the Thornburg home, when she was to be a guest. It was arranged to invite Norbert Silbiger so that he could thus be further introduced to Richmond people, who would serve as a sounding board in informal discussion of the Civic Theatre idea over the punch cups. Among those present was Mrs. Byram Robbins, dramatic chairman for the Woman's Club, who proved to be a strong recruit.

Soon afterward a counter movement was set afoot by Silbiger's coaches in English at Quaker Hill, Earlham seniors Stephen Randall and Dorothy Myrick, to introduce him at Earlham College and to work toward his employment on the Earlham staff. Through their influence Silbiger appeared under the auspices of Mask and Mantle as the assembly speaker on March 19. His subject was "The Theatre in Austria Before and Under the Hitler Regime," with an account also of his experiences directing plays in the prison camp in Siberia. "We who come to America from the old world," he added, "must not expect to find work in our own professions. Instead we must support ourselves by washing dishes or whatever work we can do." His address prompted a student letter to the editor of *The Earlham Post* including this paragraph:

*The enthusiastic response of the students (as well as faculty) to Mr. Silbiger was tremendous. It is the first time I have heard so many students express such unanimous approval of a chapel speaker and in addition voice a heartfelt desire to have him in Earlham's dramatic department.*

On the invitation of the *Post*, Mr. Silbiger reviewed for that publication the Mask and Mantle production on March 21-22 of *Family Portrait*. Soon thereafter the senior class arranged for him to direct their class play, to be presented on June 14. Together they chose Jane Austin's *Pride and Prejudice*, a difficult play, since its effectiveness depends mainly on the dialogue.

It is evident that by mid-March the Civic Theatre idea was being discussed openly, for the *Palladium-Item* report on March 19 of Silbiger's address at Earlham quoted him as saying: "Arguments currently being used against a theatre project in Richmond are (1) no interest, (2) no actors, and (3) competition with the movies."

So the Viennese play director and journalist moved to a campus

of a small college in mid-America to direct a class play and to do some independent study. The *Quaker Hill Post* reported:

*Our beloved Norbert Silbiger left us last week. He unstintingly devoted his gifts and the fruit of his experience as an editor in Vienna to our paper. His fertility of ideas, his ingenuity, and his quiet persistence in reminding contributors of articles due, were responsible for the Post. We were thankful to benefit from his talents while he awaited a larger scope for them.*

Meanwhile the enthusiasts for a Civic Theatre were actively promoting the idea. "We should call a public meeting," it was said, "of those interested in a Civic Theatre." Who should have special invitations, and who should preside? All those interested in acting or producing plays should be invited, and it was agreed that invitations should be issued to all the local clubs to send representatives. For presiding officer the choice fell on Joseph I. Hoch, Executive Vice-President of the Junior Chamber of Commerce and insurance executive, by virtue of his successful promotion of a recent project to bring Alec Templeton to Richmond for a concert. Hazel Emry called on Joe Hoch and was successful in enlisting his help. Cleo Thornburg spent her noon hours calling on business men up and down Main Street to stir their interest in the project.

The local newspaper announced the meeting at the Leland Hotel on the evening of April 8, adding that J.K. Meek, President of the Indianapolis Civic Theatre, and Norman Green, President of its Workshop group, would be present for talks and to answer questions. At the appointed time and place approximately thirty persons assembled, not an encouraging number, especially since it included some who were doubtful or frankly cynical. The Indianapolis Civic Theatre representatives had been unable to come, and this was a blow. Nevertheless, after a general discussion of the possibilities and problems of a civic theatre association, a committee of five was appointed by the chairman to investigate other such organizations in the state and to report at a meeting on April 22. The committee consisted of Hazel Emry, Margaret Kemper (Art Chairman for A.A.U.W.), Mrs. Gladys Robbins, A.O. Vioni, and Walter O. Rudolphson, with Joseph Hoch as ex-officio chairman.

This committee met immediately after the general meeting. A stenographic record of their discussions shows that a question was raised immediately whether Norbert Silbiger, if appointed director of the proposed community theatre, could really "produce the goods."

"My sister in New York," said Gladys Robbins, "wrote to me

about meeting Theophile Goetz,\* who is a refugee from Vienna. He knew Mr. Silbiger there, and what he told her about him corresponds in every particular to what we have been told here. He said he is a really marvelous play director."

Nevertheless it was the consensus that a trial play under Silbiger's direction should be given before any commitment was made, for he would be in America, working with English-speaking people, producing largely English and American plays.

There was further discussion at this meeting as to procedure in securing information on other community theatres; the reasons for the lack of success of the summer theatre project; the difficulties of launching the initial season without funds, without properties, without a home for rehearsals and productions; the big job of selling memberships, in competition with the Civic Music Association, the A.A.U.W. series, and other programs.

"If only we had a membership of 800!" said Hazel Emry in later discussions. "I would love to see people standing in the street waiting for tickets!" It was decided to aim at 1000 members, in the hope of not falling too far below.

Inertia was the greatest hazard. The investigation period lengthened, and momentum was dissipated. Everyone was waiting to see whether the play directed by Norbert Silbiger at Earlham would be a success. On June 5 when he gave an address to Kiwanis Club he stated that he expected to leave Richmond soon. "We must do something to keep him here," said some of those who heard him. But nobody did anything.

Then Hazel Emry called on Edward Nusbaum at Neff and Nusbaum's shoe store. "Will you take the lead in this civic theatre movement?" she asked.

"I am one hundred percent for a civic theatre in Richmond," he replied, "but you are the one for this job. You have the vision, the enthusiasm, the burning desire to see it accomplished."

"But I am a comparative newcomer to the city," she protested. "My acquaintance with Richmond is based only on my four years as a student at Earlham and my later residence here for less than two years." Nevertheless, Nusbaum urged her to take the lead, and she saw no alternative but to accept the challenge.

*Pride and Prejudice* a few days later was a tremendous success. It was the perfect answer to those who doubted whether a

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\*Theophile Goetz, then the fiancee and later the husband of the apartment maid of Mrs. Robbins' sister, has had a career in television, notable in the part of Papa Bower in the series "The Guiding Light." Following this meeting Mrs. Robbins wrote to Theophile Goetz for further verification and received from him an enthusiastic letter concerning Silbiger's ability and accomplishments, on the basis of his personal association with him in theatre work in Vienna.

Viennese, with a heavy accent, could direct acceptably plays in Richmond, Indiana. Some thirty persons attended a reception for Silbiger after the play, at the Thornburg home, including Norman Green and the Kaufmans from the Indianapolis Civic Theatre.

There was no further thought of a trial play for the civic theatre, and on the wave of enthusiasm for the project plans for organization developed quickly.

The interest of Elmira Kempton of Earlham's Department of Art had been gained through her designing the sets for *"Pride and Prejudice"*. Mrs. Olive K. Robinson, former director of Mask and Mantle plays at Earlham, and active in the earlier summer theatre project, had been dubious about the new community theatre project until she saw that *Pride and Prejudice* was so outstanding a production. These two, with Hazel Emry, Jeanne Kennedy, Clarissa Ahl, Gladys Robbins, and perhaps others met to discuss the price of tickets and the possibility of getting enough members.

To supplement her limited knowledge of Richmond people and the information others could supply, Mrs. Emry enlisted thereafter the interest of Mrs. E.C. Cline, whose help and advice were invaluable. In Mrs. Cline's home assembled Mrs. Emry, Clarissa Ahl, Gladys Robbins, and Cleo Thornburg to make up a list of possible members. Every name on the membership lists of the Woman's Club, A.A.U.W., the service clubs, and other organizations was weighed in the hope of finding a civic theatre worker or member. Even the telephone directory was searched. Each member of the group who met with Mrs. Cline then took her portion of the list and spent many hours in telephoning prospective members and in calling at their homes to tell them of the new project.

One of the persons whose help as a leader was coveted was Dail W. Cox, head of Earlham's Department of Music, who had experience on the legitimate stage. In a well laid plan Mr. and Mrs. Harry Bangert, whose interest had already been aroused, invited Cox with a number of leaders in the movement to a garden party at their home in mid-June. The ember of his interest, thus fanned, broke into a lively flame. On the evening of June 27 a committee of fifteen met at the Cox home, organized the Richmond Civic Theatre, Inc., and elected officers. The presidency was offered to Hazel Emry but she insisted that it would be better policy, at least in the early years, to elect a man. The final decision was that Dail Cox should be President, Mrs. Emry the Vice-President, E.C. Cline the Secretary, and Edward Nusbaum the Treasurer. Mrs. Olive Robinson was to head the committee on the choice of plays.

Other members of the first Board of Directors were Clarissa Ahl, Mrs. Burton Carr, Mrs. Richard Coate, Mrs. G.A. Gemmer, Mrs. Joseph Hoch, Mrs. Harry Frankel, Mrs. Byram Robbins, W.G. Sudhoff, and A.O. Vioni.

A committee consisting of Hazel Emry, Clarissa Ahl, and A.O.

Vioni was named to draw up a constitution and by-laws. This was accomplished in due time, typed in Mr. Vioni's law office, and adopted the following May 19 by the Board. "The purpose of the organization," stated the constitution, "shall be to encourage, cultivate, and develop the art of drama, music, and literature among the adults and students of our community; to produce or cause to be produced in the City of Richmond, Wayne County, Indiana, dramatic or operatic presentations, concerts and other entertainments; to erect, acquire, equip, and maintain by purchase, lease, or otherwise, one or more theatres or opera houses; to acquire all necessary costumes, properties, musical libraries, and other material for use in connection with the giving of dramatic or operatic entertainments."

The week of July 14 was set for the membership campaign.

#### IV TO TASTE THE LILY

On the occasion of the small garden party in June, 1941, at the Bangert home with the intent of capturing the interest of Dail Cox for the benefit of the new civic theatre venture the Madonna lilies were in bloom, and the breeze wafted their fragrance over the lawn.

"Isn't the scent of the lilies gorgeous," remarked Hazel Emry to Dail Cox.

"But I have absolutely no sense of smell!"

Mrs. Emry was shocked at the thought of so great a deprivation, but remembering that a blind man may be compensated in part by developing a more sensitive touch, and that the smell of an onion resembles the taste, she suggested, "Perhaps if you were to taste a lily you could get an idea of its odor."

Both thought this idea worth an experiment, so they repaired to the lily bed and the one fed a lily petal to the other. Whether or not Dail Cox thus acquired an appreciation of the scent of lilies, the incident may have been prophetic of the strategy used in introducing a community to an appreciation of the theatre.

To many a call came the familiar answer:

"I've seen so few plays, and they interest me so little. I'd rather see a movie."

"Why not give it a try? You can drop out after the first season if you don't enjoy it. At least it will be interesting to see people in the cast whom you know." Thus, through going to see their friends and neighbors on the stage, gradually a taste for the play itself usually developed.

In preparation for the membership campaign there appeared a carefully prepared news story calculated to catch the interest of potential active members in addition to actors and actresses: "Civic Theatre to Offer Jobs Behind Scenes." Attention was called to places on a dozen committees, all important in successful play production. The theatre would need people to design and build sets, to secure props, sew on costumes, write publicity, work on make-up, handle ticket reservations, and look after other numer-

ous details. Although solicitors for membership had been recruited, anyone might volunteer to help.

Six plays were planned for the 1941-42 season, for which the season ticket would cost \$2.50. There was no announcement yet as to who would direct the plays, what they would be, or where they would be given. Indeed, the Civic Theatre Board did not yet know all the answers.

On the day before the time set for the opening of the drive, a streamer across an entire page of the newspaper announced: "Thousand Adult Memberships is Goal of Civic Theatre Group's Campaign." Dail Cox was quoted: "It is only through a cooperative movement that this community project can succeed, and it is the plan of the organizers to keep that cooperation alive to make the theatre a really civic enterprise."

Some forty men and women assembled for instructions at campaign headquarters in the Leland Hotel on Monday, July 14. Included, in addition to members of the Board of Directors, were many whose names were to become very familiar to Civic Theatre audiences. Among those who worked especially hard at the job were Dail Cox, Gladys Robbins, Cleo Thornburg (these three selling the most tickets), Manley Lawrence, Mr. and Mrs. Fentress Tucker, Mrs. Robert Backmeyer, Mrs. Charles Kemper, Mrs. Wilson Wright, Mrs. Mark Kennedy, and Elmira Kempton, and of course the chairman, Hazel Emry, who kept the membership lists, banked the proceeds each day, and took home with her the money that came in after banking hours. The organization did not have so much property as a cash box until Wilson Wright emptied out his new fishing tackle box, which was carefully concealed at night under Mrs. Emry's bed. Soon thereafter Cleo Thornburg removed to Indianapolis, so her further role in Civic Theatre had to be limited almost entirely to that of an enthusiastic applauder at occasional plays.

Wednesday's newspaper carried the big news: "Silbiger to Direct Plays for Civic Theatre Movement," with a photograph of the director. The reporter who interviewed him sketched his remarkable background and mentioned his opinion "that plays are primarily for entertainment, but that they also should be concerned with current problems." For this reason the Civic Theatre director said that he would like to give *Our Town*. She quoted him further as "declaring that the civic theatre movement is growing all over the United States. He pointed out that there is no reason why such a project should not succeed in a cultural center like Richmond. He admitted that the first year might be difficult, but added that with the cooperation of everyone the Richmond Civic Theatre, Inc. would soon grow to be a successful part of the community."

But membership sales were lagging. "Each Civic Theatre Member to Hold Reserved Seat," wheedled a news story. Plays would be scheduled so as not to interfere with lectures, concerts, or

other programs. On July 21, when it had been expected that the campaign would end, hardly more than a start had been made toward the goal of 1000, but the solicitors worked doggedly on. Further publicity helped. On the 24th the Palladium-Item carried a photograph of Mr. and Mrs. Fentress Tucker and daughter, Margaret Sue, accompanying a story: "Average Family Looking to Civic Theatre Season," with a pointed quotation from Margaret Sue: "There are lots of larger families in town who are all joining Civic Theatre." Requests for tickets were reported to be coming in from Richmond residents who were vacationing from Vermont to the Canadian Rockies.

At the end of the second week of the campaign around 500 memberships had been sold, and it was agreed to carry the campaign to Wayne and adjoining counties. "From all indications" said the news stories, "the goal of 1000 memberships will be reached for the theatre's first year." The evidence, however, did not seem to justify the conclusion.

Nevertheless, plans went forward for the opening of the season. Single admissions were to be sold to bolster the treasury, and students would be offered season memberships at \$1.00. The director was to be paid the modest sum of \$600 for part-time service, since he was also to be a part-time member of the Earlham staff, teaching one course, directing at least three of the evening plays and from four to six short plays for assembly programs. In planning the season's program for Richmond Civic Theatre his help was invaluable, for it was soon evident that he was a shrewd man of business. He could give a reasonable estimate of the cost of production of each play, and he had an accurate knowledge of how many persons would be needed for all phases of production.

The time for Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, that "strange and wonderful" play, in the words of the director, was set for October 9-10 in Goddard Auditorium at the college, and try-outs were announced. These were to take place, as for later plays that year, in the tower room at Morrisson-Reeves Library. Mrs. Olive Robinson was to be the assistant director and her son Francis, a veteran of plays at Earlham and those of the summer theatre group, was chosen for the leading role of stage manager and narrator. The parts of the leading young people of the story were taken by Earlham students Sue Carr, John Thorne, and June Griswold. For other characters the director drew widely from the city and the county — schoolteachers, housewives, a junior high school principal, the executive secretary of the Rural Life Association, salesmen, and a variety of other professions, besides students of all ages. It was a new experience for play-goers in Richmond to see in a play middle-aged and older people instead of youngsters made up to look older.

Earlham students, headed by Wilbur Oldham, built the sets. Fentress Tucker of the City Light Plant and Manley Lawrence, who were to become mainstays of so many later productions, had their initiation in *Our Town* as Master and Assistant Electricians.

Hazel Emry undertook to sell advertising to cover the cost of the 8-page printed program, and her announcement at Board meeting of a profit of fifty cents was heard with relief. One page of the program carried the announcement of the second production on November 13-14, *You Can't Take It With You*, and a list of the cast.

Opening night came. Standing at the back of the auditorium watching audience reaction, Hazel Emry with E.C. and Eunice Cline kept saying over and over to each other, almost hysterically, "We've got a hit! We've got a hit!"

Attendance at the two performances was good, and reviews were gratifying. "If *Our Town* was an example of what Civic Theatre can do in Richmond and the talent available here, then the success of the organization is assured." Thus wrote Carolyn Maund in the first of what was to become her long series of Civic Theatre play reviews in the local Palladium-Item. There was tangible evidence that members of the community were surprised and pleased with the venture, for many who bought single admissions became members for the season. The 500 memberships in September grew until the season ended with 800.

To taste the lily had proven to be good strategy.

V  
THRILLS AND SPILLS  
1941-1943

*You Can't Take It With You* won praises from an enthusiastic audience, stated the news report. "I would award top honors," wrote Professor Edwin Pattee in *The Earlham Post*. "to Messrs. Morgan (Earlham's play director) and (Francis) Robinson and to Mme. Frankel (Mrs. Harry Frankel, widely known as Smiles because of her frequent singing of the song of this title as an entertainer for soldiers in the First World War). Professor Morgan's interpretation of the ebullient and irrepressible Mr. De Pinna was excellent, while Mr. Robinson, despite a certain tendency to overact, showed also much of the verve and no little of the finish of the Broadway professional. Professional too in quality was the work of Mrs. Frankel as the actress with the heeby-jeebies. Between them these three contrived to keep the audience in a virtually continuous dither of delirious delight."

A small start had been made at building up a list of patrons, who contributed more than the membership fee, this money to be used for purchasing permanent properties and sets. The program for the second play listed nine couples or individuals as patrons. While this type of membership was discontinued thereafter, the help of these patrons at the beginning, when the Theatre owned no prop and no flat, was much appreciated.

Thus far the College had been Civic Theatre's home, except for try-outs at the city library, but beginning with the third play, *Little Women*, the 500-seat auditorium in McGuire Memorial Hall, the fine arts building of the new high school plant, was utilized. In many ways this was an ideal setting, although there was a serious lack of back-stage and dressing room space. The Richmond Art Association cooperated by opening its galleries in that building for a period before the curtain rose, and many persons took that opportunity to see exhibitions who otherwise would have missed them.

With *Little Women* in January the dream of a children's theatre for Richmond began to be realized. For this production Hazel Emry, chairman of the Children's Play Committee, served as

assistant director. The Parent-Teachers Association gave their full cooperation as sponsors, assuming the responsibility for the ticket sale to children, and retaining a small percentage of the proceeds. Many who could not secure admission to the matinee performance for children overflowed into the two evening shows. "The play was a delight," wrote Professor Anna Eves in *The Earlham Post*.

So the season progressed, with *The Trial of Mary Dugan* in March (easy of the slim treasury, since it required only curtains), followed by *Death Takes a Holiday* and *The Swan*. After *The Trial* no further single admissions were made available.

Meanwhile, in his half-time role at Earlham, Norbert Silbiger directed *Hamlet*, *The Imaginary Invalid*, and *Everyman*, besides the assembly plays. All were triumphant successes. With his characteristic enthusiasm Professor E. Merrill Root wrote, "Earlham is becoming an Athens, where drama is rising to the level of a great art." Mask and Mantle elected Silbiger to honorary membership, and he was presented an honorary certificate of membership in the Indiana College English Association. He continued to make scores of addresses — at other colleges, for high school commencements, for clubs of all kinds. Arrangements were made for him to direct the Richmond High School senior play, *Charlie's Aunt*.

But Norbert was not happy. He felt a stranger in a strange land, without roots, without the inspiration of the theatre he loved other than what he could produce by his own efforts. Friends and family in Europe were dead. "It's hard for a refugee to adjust to a new world," he sometimes said. "You can cut a worm in two and it will live, but a refugee is a man, and it's hard to lose half your life. You can't change your past like a lantern slide."

On March 10, A.O. Vioni reported to the Board that Silbiger had stated to him that he would not return next year. This was a heavy blow, which the Board hoped to avert by all its powers of persuasion, including the offer of a full-time appointment. Nevertheless they named a committee to study the possibilities of an out-of-town director. E.C. Cline, Richmond High School principal and secretary of Civic Theatre's Board, sent this letter on May 14:

Dear Mr. Silbiger:

*The Board of Directors of Civic Theatre, Inc., by unanimous vote, directed me to convey to you their great appreciation for generous and expert service to the organization and for your attitude of courtesy and cooperation toward all of the many people with whom you had contact.*

*Looking forward to the continuance of our pleasant relations for another year, we are*

*Most cordially yours,  
Board of Directors of Civic Theatre, Inc.  
E.C. Cline, Secretary*

Norbert's unhappiness may have been relieved somewhat by this letter, but perhaps greater good was done by President Dail Cox, who said to him, "With your temperament and background you will be unhappy anywhere, so why not be unhappy here with us?" Norbert laughed heartily, told the story with delight, and accepted the offer. His salary was to be doubled, but in view of the limited resources of the organization it still was only \$1200.

In the spring drive almost all members renewed their tickets, and enough new members were added to total 950. To top off the season on a lighthearted note, it was decided to present three one-act plays in June: *The Happy Journey*, *The Boor*, and an old time mellerdrammer, *Her Fatal Beauty*. Groups were to be organized for play reading, as a basis for play selection, and for back stage and workshop training. Civic Theatre had paid its bills, and had a sound financial basis for the coming year.

First season enthusiasm even carried over into the summer in the presentation in Goddard Auditorium of a locally written play by Opal Thornburg, Earlham's Registrar, *Betwixt Life and Death* was based on characters and events in a volume of short stories, *Men of the Mountains*, by Jesse Stuart of Kentucky. Professor Howard Morgan served as director. The cast, including the usual assortment of town and country people of all professions, gave an opportunity for the participation of a tremendous list of whole families of youngsters of all ages in the roles of grandchildren and great grandchildren of prolific Grandpa Grayhouse. The play, presented jointly by Earlham and Civic Theatre on August 3-4, was for the benefit of the Relief Fund for the Widows and Orphans of Navy Men. An invitation to Jesse Stuart to attend the first performance, combined with an address in Earlham's assembly, brought an acceptance. Mr. Stuart was a sensational addition to the occasion which only that colorful personality could have provided.

Civic Theatre was in great need of a place for their headquarters, where sets could be built and rehearsals could be held. To fill this need the Board rented for their second season a storeroom at 921½ South 8th Street, at \$30 monthly. A committee was appointed to make it as attractive as possible, without spending any money except by Board authority. The terms of Board members were regularized on a three year basis. Coming on the Board as a result of their election by the membership at their first annual meeting on May 19 were Mrs. Charles Kemper, Mrs. Mark Kennedy, Harry Bangert, who was to serve as treasurer, Francis Robinson, and Fentress Tucker. Remaining on the Board were Dail Cox as President, Mrs. Hazel Emry as Vice-President, E.C. Cline as Secretary, Clarissa Ahl, Mrs. Burton Carr, Mrs. Joseph Hoch, Mrs. H.R. Robinson, Mrs. Gladys Robbins, and A.O. Vioni.



In John Wray Young's book on *The Community Theatre, and How It Works* the author, who has been director for many years of Shreveport Community Theatre, states: "I favor complete separation of the board and the production side of the theatre." He believes that lack of such separation detracts from the authority of the director, since the people who hire him may also work under his direction, and those who are close to play production may lack perspective. Certainly Richmond Civic Theatre throughout its history has operated on a contrary principle, but one which the director preferred. Among the fifteen members of the Board in 1942-43 were seven who had acting roles in the preceding season, four in leading roles; two others had important backstage responsibilities; and two had been assistant directors. This was typical of later boards. A "working board" such as this made for a high degree of interest and devotion, but at times conditions were likely to be stormy.

Such a stormy period developed early this season. *Quality Street*, *Heart of a City*, and the children's play *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* turned out well. But in November, with the play *George Washington Slept Here* in rehearsal, the thorny problem of censorship arose, and the Board split in two parts over the question whether objectionable lines should be cut. For the time being, the matter was settled by leaving final decision to the director, and the lines remained. The next play, however, *Ab Wilderness*, presented a similar problem. The advocates of censorship made headway through a Board action setting up a committee of three, including the director, to censor the play.

That the struggle may really have been one for leadership was indicated by later developments. When the time came in March to contract for a director for the next season, four of the eight Board members present dissented on the re-employment of Norbert Silbiger, two having left before the vote was taken. At the next meeting it was reported that Silbiger was not interested in a contract unless he had 100% cooperation from the Board, to be evidenced by a unanimous vote to offer him a contract. The meeting ended in confusion.

A week later the Board reassembled, with the resignations of Mrs. H.R. Robinson and Francis Robinson before them. They accepted these and proceeded with the necessary unanimous vote to offer a new contract to the director. John Graf and Whitney S. McGuire were appointed to fill the unexpired terms. The Board had lost two valuable members, the nucleus of the old summer theatre, but it would carry on. At least the Board hoped so. Hazel Emry sent an S O S to Cleo Thornburg in Indianapolis to ask the Kaufmans of Indianapolis Civic Theatre how many resignations a community theatre could have and still be normal. Her question was met with a whoop of laughter, for Indianapolis Civic Theatre was

passing through a fight of its own, in which a rival group later split off.

To name succeeding members of the Board, to list all of the hundreds of actors crossing the stage, and the hundreds of back stage workers, as year followed year and production was added to production, would be confusing and time-consuming, and it must be left to those interested in these details to consult the programs.

Perhaps the biggest hit of the 1942-43 season was *Arsenic and Old Lace*, which was still playing on Broadway. In generous praise, the review in the local newspaper ranked it as professional in quality. Especially noteworthy was the performance of Frederick Jaehne, high school music teacher in Cambridge City, already a Civic Theatre veteran, who on three days notice substituted as Teddy Brewster and turned in a star performance.

Another accomplishment of the season should be mentioned, since it indicated a degree of stability and of confidence in the future. In February the Board authorized the construction of three clothes closets to accommodate the growing collection of costumes, many of them donated. In addition two closets were given by Mrs. W.E. McMains and Jeannette Knowles.

At the end of the season the treasury showed a balance of \$186.66. Memberships rose to 1550, on the basis of which a third performance was to be added, and the salary of the director was to be boosted by \$300, plus \$50 for a trip to New York to scout possibilities for plays which might be produced in Richmond.

Another significant development was that a rehearsal room was rented at 1022 Main Street, easily accessible to the public as well as to play producers. A partition was built to provide a front room for rehearsals, ticket reservations, and office use, and a rear room for the building of sets and the storing of properties.

"The Civic Theatre of Richmond," wrote Milton Elrod, editor of *The Richmond News*, an advertising weekly, "is finishing its second year, and what a treat these two years have been. Richmond has never had finer entertainment. The promise of a new year for Civic Theatre means entertainment for a community in need of relaxation in war time. Civic Theatre's director, Norbert Silbiger, and his large corps of workers and actors, have done more to contribute to the cultural life of Richmond than they can know. It is more than Mr. Silbiger, being a modest man, would admit. Every person has felt the need of doing his or her part to further the war effort and Mr. Silbiger has done more than his share. The National Government itself has emphasized the great importance of recreation and entertainment to maintain the spirit and morale, not only of the armed forces, but of the workers in industry and business, also the citizens and communities, generally."

In this two year period Norbert Silbiger had directed 14 productions for Richmond Civic Theatre, four plays for Earham College,



besides several one-act plays, and two for Richmond High School. He had given 150 addresses throughout Indiana. *The Richmond News* commented further:

*Too few Richmond citizens realize that in Norbert Silbiger, director of the Civic Theatre, we have not only a topflight director, but one of the most brilliant and informed minds. Experts declare his work in the development of talent and staging it amazingly perfect. He is also a brilliant speaker and conversationalist on many subjects.*

## VI YEARS FOR GROWING 1943-45

The election in May 1943 made Fentress Tucker the President, Hazel Emry continued as Vice-President, and Harry Bangert was Secretary-Treasurer.

With the accumulation of property, and as the organization became better established, various new problems arose and were solved in turn by the Board. They authorized in September the purchase of a 28-foot backdrop curtain, complete with borders, also a ground cloth. They arranged for the building of a trunk with a lock, for valuable small properties. Easels and mirrors were bought for makeup. Requests were coming for the use of costumes by school, college, and church dramatic groups, and a rental arrangement was agreed upon, but inasmuch as Civic Theatre received many such articles on loan they did not feel comfortable about this provision, and soon decided to follow the Biblical injunction to freely give, since they had so freely received. Property insurance and workman's insurance relieved their minds of undue anxiety over mishaps.

The list of plays for that season was impressive. Following two Broadway hits, exceptionally well presented — *The Patriots* and *The Man Who Came to Dinner* — members saw in December one of the greatest religious dramas of all time, *Everyman*. This was Civic Theatre's first attempt at a classic play. It was introduced by a harp and organ recital, and the banquet scene incorporated a ballet. The version chosen was the modern one presented annually for many years at Salzburg, Austria, and in 1936 in the Hollywood Bowl. The Richmond production was on a professional level, with Rev. Howard Brown giving a magnificent portrayal in the leading role. Two years before Mr. Silbiger had directed this play at Earlham, and it was his hope that so beautiful and significant a drama might be produced by Civic Theatre every year, but this was not to be.

Theatre goes relaxed in hearty laughter over *Abie's Irish Rose* and *Junior Miss*, then sobered again on seeing Elizabeth Moore's splendid performance as Saint Joan in George Bernard Shaw's great play.

The season could have ended triumphantly with *Saint Joan*, perhaps its best production since the beginning, but there was to be still another triumph, another first for Civic Theatre — the fairy opera *Hansel and Gretel*. This was a children's production, not covered by the membership fee, produced under joint auspices with P.T.A. The demand for tickets was so great that a fourth and fifth performance were added, including a Sunday afternoon matinee. To provide the orchestral accompaniment a Richmond Civic Theatre Orchestra of 43 members was formed. For this production Harry Pollock was the conductor, and Ben Graham trained the voices.

Members of the orchestra were eager to continue as an organization, and the Civic Theatre Board saw the advantages for future musical productions, so a new committee was formed, with A.O. Vioni as chairman, to oversee this activity. Ben Graham, director of music for the public schools, was appointed director with a nominal remuneration of \$150 per year. The orchestra was to supply



Howard Brown and Ellen Drace in "Everyman."



Elizabeth Moore, star of "Saint Joan."

music as required for any play, with Harry Pollock and Paul Kring as alternate directors if Ben Graham had a conflict with his other activities. Orchestra members, like those in play production, must be Civic Theatre members if they wanted to see productions other than those in which they played.

*Hansel and Gretel* netted \$549.06, of which 30% went to P.T.A. The Board, feeling justified in indulging in a little luxury, presented two dozen roses to each of the five leading girls in the cast, with pictures of the production to the boys in the leading parts, and batons to the musical directors. For this resounding success the Board extended hearty thanks to Hazel Emry and her chief assistant, Dorothy Cutter. In their enthusiasm they reappointed them to the same positions for the coming year, but the minutes recorded that "neither lady gave a definite acceptance."

Meanwhile a contest in Scribblers Club had resulted in three

prize plays, and it was proposed that Civic Theatre use these in workshop productions. While this did not prove feasible, it was another evidence of the stimulation provided by a community theatre to other activities and persons.

Invitations from organizations to produce plays in nearby communities presented problems. Howard Brown was appointed Traveling Production Manager to survey possibilities in neighboring towns for such shows. But to what extent could this be done without vitiating energy for home productions? Should workshop plays be presented in the summer? How much of the net proceeds should the director receive for the added work involved? Hazel Emry led in opposing the production of plays outside those covered by membership dues plus the plays for children, on the ground that to do so would be too great a drain on energies. Civic Theatre's auditor, Everett Bennett, warned that an increase in such activity might take the organization out of the non-profit-making class, thus involving taxes. An invitation to produce *Abie's Irish Rose* at Fort Benjamin Harrison near Indianapolis was regretfully declined.

The balance at the end of that fiscal year (ending then in May, but changed later to August) was the encouraging sum of \$620.31. The costs of play production were increasing, however, and the director should receive a more adequate salary, while the current membership of 1550 could not be increased unless a fourth night could be added for productions. The original season membership fee of \$2.50 had been increased, and needed to be increased again. The Board agreed that the fee for 1944-45 should be \$4.00 plus tax, with a student fee of \$2.50 plus tax, limiting student tickets to 150 in a total of 1500. The need for revenue presented a temptation to eliminate student tickets, but on Hazel Emry's plea that students not be crowded out the quota remained and, on the basis of later developments, was doubled.

To lend greater stability to the enterprise, with scope for long range planning, Norbert Silbiger was re-employed on a three year contract. The election of officers in the spring of 1944 resulted in the re-election of Fentress Tucker as President, with Mrs. Mary Helen Backmeyer, a hard worker in leading parts and backstage, as Vice-President, E.Z. Elleman, bank president, as Treasurer, and John Edwards, another stalwart on stage and behind scenes, as Secretary.

Pressure on membership limitations was a serious matter. Without a membership campaign, renewals this year reached almost 100%, and there was a waiting list of 425. It was a common saying about town that the only way to get into Civic Theatre was for a member to die or to leave town. It will be recalled that, when Civic Theatre was planning its first membership campaign, Hazel Emry, thinking of an optimum of 800 members, exclaimed, "I would love to see people standing in the street waiting for tickets!" Only four



Winifred Chasteen and Mary Haskall in "Hansel and Gretel."

years later, with twice the longed-for membership, a traveler through Richmond noticed three long lines of people waiting in the street and asked the reason. He was astonished to learn that they were waiting to reserve their tickets for a Civic Theatre play. In a program note (October 1945) E. Merrill Root commented:

*In too many cities of the world people stand in queues for bread, but in Richmond, Indiana, people stand in queues for beauty. . . . Outside the office of the Civic Theatre people begin to gather by eight, although the doors do not open until nine. By nine the street is a good-humored whirlpool. People four and six abreast are lined up in tumultuous rebuttal of pessimists who decry American interest in the arts, Factory workers, bankers, business men, professional women, clerks, college professors, stenographers, clergymen, housewives, students, the "butcher, the baker, the candle-stick maker" of the old nursery rhyme are here in impatient but good-humored crowds. They are united in expectation of another community play superbly given, not by outside talent but by their own talents. . . . The shows of the big time in the big town are dimmed by a theatre of their own, not*

far off the Main Street, that equals and often surpasses the best professional companies.

The Board saw danger in over-expansion, but they did not want anyone to think Civic Theatre was exclusive. It was argued that the present years were not normal, and to expand now might mean a later period of contraction. The number on the waiting list was enough to require a fourth showing of productions. The Director stated his willingness to do the extra work involved in a fourth showing, and his conviction that the actors were likewise willing, but he was not so sure about the backstage crew. It might be necessary to hire some help. The demands of the school program were such, however, that a fourth night in McGuire Memorial Hall seemed unavailable. In this exigency the Board appointed a committee consisting of Whitney McGuire, E. Z. Elleman, and Edward Weadick to investigate possibilities of another auditorium.

The problem of conflicts in use were the same at Earlham's Goddard Auditorium as at McGuire. In the old high school building, now under private management as Morton Center, it was proposed to build an auditorium, but its adequacy needed to be weighed. Later this possibility faded so far as the coming year was concerned, and the only recourse seemed to be to use McGuire for five plays, four nights each, and Goddard for the sixth play. On this basis the membership limit was raised to 2000, later expanded to 2100.

But was even a fifth play at McGuire possible? For weeks the School Board, trying to meet school pressures on the use of facilities, was willing to consent to only four plays, while Civic Theatre's director insisted that it was too great an undertaking to move equipment and manage details for even one play elsewhere. He would no longer cooperate with the public schools, he declared, by directing their plays and lending Civic Theatre properties and facilities, if the School Board could not consent to the full cooperation needed by Civic Theatre. Eventually, the following December, the School Board yielded, and all six plays during 1944-45 were in McGuire.

Norbert Silbiger departed in June for his initial summer of teaching and directing plays at the School of the Theatre of the University of Denver. There he produced again, in the Rocky Mountain Summer Arts Festival, his beloved *Everyman* and for the School of the Theatre *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and *Our Town*. In addition he gave a number of addresses, twice to University assemblies, to the wounded soldiers at Fort Logan, and to all the Denver service clubs. Colorado won his heart because its mountains reminded him of Australia, and summer after summer it drew him back.

The fourth season opened with Ferenc Molnar's *Liliom*, an

excellent production of an outstanding play. While the reception was a little disappointing, it was a milestone in Richmond's education in good theatre, for without a Civic Theatre, and without Norbert Silbiger, would this small city in mid-America ever have had an opportunity to see *Liliom*, one of the best of continental dramas?

Farce and comedy followed in *Three is a Family* and *Claudia*. The Board's intention was to present this season three plays of outstanding literary value and three of the best Broadway plays. "We will not please everyone with every play," stated Fentress Tucker in the program for *Liliom*, "but by offering a varied program we hope to earn your continued approval." Since many members preferred to come earlier, hours were adjusted so that the first two performances opened at 8:15 and the second two at 7:30.

The familiar and popular *Our Town* was presented again on December 2, 1944, as a workshop production, first by request for the State Ili-Y Conference in McGuire Memorial Hall, again to the general public, and on December 5 in Cambridge City. The local radio station, WKBV, made in October a tentative proposition for Civic Theatre to produce thirteen radio plays, for a flat fee per play, and the Board looked on the plan with favor, but it proved to be abortive.

Richmond Civic Theatre Orchestra presented in November of that season a highly satisfactory concert at Morton Center, and was planning another for January. It was hoped to include another musical play, but this with a children's play and *Hamlet* seemed too heavy a program. The Children's Play Committee was eager to retain its project. The fate of *Hamlet* hung in the balance, but a favorable decision was reached, and it was the musical that lost the vote. *Racketty Packetty House* was chosen for the children, with Mrs. Gordon Bringle directing and Norbert Silbiger assisting.

Meanwhile there was an outstanding and popular production at the end of January of *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*, with Harry Bangert at his magnificent best in the leading role. John Edwards also, as Ninian Edwards, gave another of his splendid performances. "The play was a victory," wrote Professor E. Merrill Root in *The Earlham Post*, and an event touching the equipoise of the days with the white flame of beauty. . . . It is difficult to see how anyone — even Raymond Massey — could better Bangert's Lincoln." The Civic Theatre Orchestra was utilized for the national anthem each performance.

Also preceding *Hamlet* was a special production, under the auspices of the Junior Chamber of Commerce, of *Junior Miss*, repeated in Cambridge City under the auspices of Psi Iota Xi; and there was the regular play in March, *Stage Door*.

According to Dr. Milton Kraft, *The Earlham Post* reviewer, Newell Smalzried's *Hamlet* was "a thinker at war with himself" and

his portrayal was "consistently fine;" Ellen Drace at all times "seemed the queen of medieval Denmark;" Polonius, "the incomparable Professor Root," was adequately doddering and crafty; and Elizabeth Moore Stout was a sensitive and satisfying Ophelia. "The professional quality of this amateur production of *Hamlet*, he concluded, "adds still another reason for us to thank the Civic Theatre director, Norbert Silbiger, Vienna's gift to Richmond, who has done so much to take the agri from our culture."

In May a summons was received by Norbert Silbiger to report to the Wayne County Circuit Court. He had dreaded this summons, and had spent anxious hours in preparation lest he fail to meet the test. But the ordeal proved to be no ordeal at all, and he returned a naturalized citizen of the United States. Richmond could now truly claim him.

The Board's year-end business included attention to the Constitution and By-laws. There was criticism that the organization was operating without such regulations, and that the Board was assuming powers which the members should have. So the Constitution and By-laws were unearthed for mimeographing and distribution to members. A review of the Board's minutes, however, showed that only the original short constitution, without By-laws, had ever been formally adopted, so first they must review, bring up to date, and approve these documents. Meanwhile a temporary change was made in the By-laws to permit the re-election of Fentress Tucker as President. Civic Theatre had thrived for two years under his leadership, and they wanted to continue this leadership until the organization was on a firm basis. It was not until May 20, 1946, that proposed changes in the Constitution and By-laws were formally approved.

By the end of the year Civic Theatre Orchestra seemed capable of standing on its own feet, and was desirous of doing so, therefore the Board gave it their blessing and discontinued sponsorship.

With a favorable balance of about \$1500 at the end of the year, it was agreed to authorize the purchase of new equipment costing up to \$600, and the director's allowance for his annual trip to see New York plays and agents was increased to \$100. To insure a roof over their heads, a two-year lease was signed to continue headquarters at 1022 Main Street.

It had indeed been a period of growth, and Richmond citizens showed their appreciation by a full page of comments printed in the program for *Claudia*: "One of the finest things that has ever been started in Richmond is the Civic Theatre movement," declared Ella W. Comstock. "It is a sort of community miracle," said E. Merrill Root. Mrs. Harry Woolley saw it as "one of the good things of America - the people of the community working,

playing, laughing and crying together," And Rev. H.T. Reinecke admonished, "Like the old Mission Plays of the Church, it is an instrument of community education. With its production of great plays of the past and present it can be a force for good civic life."

A reporter for *The Cincinnati Enquirer* on April 18, 1945, cited Norbert Silbiger as authority in the following comments:

*Conservative Richmond audiences do not like modern comedies emphasizing smoking, drinking, and sex. . . . Richmond audiences do not request as many curtain calls for their favorite performers as many other groups do, but they show their appreciation by their faithful attendance. . . . Silbiger's aim is to allow as many persons as possible to participate in productions. With this in mind he uses a few experienced players for each production and tries to fill the remaining roles with persons with less experience or those new to Civic Theatre. In the 29 productions since the beginning of Civic Theatre more than 500 different persons have appeared. Silbiger terms Civic Theatre a "democratic enterprise - a theatre of the people, by the people and for people." Actors include business men, college professors, teachers, writers, factory workers, students, ladies of leisure and working girls. . . . Richmond Civic Theatre is considered one of the largest civic theatres in the United States. Silbiger is proud of the way the whole community participates, as he says many civic theatre groups, like stock companies, have the same actors appearing in each production.*

An Associated Press writer, Leonard E. Pearson, in a news story on November 1, 1945, stated facts which are well known to the Richmond public:

*Silbiger does his casting without tryouts. He selects the actors and actresses he believes best fit the parts. If he knows no one suitable for a role, he asks the theatre's board to find a candidate. His "talent scouts" never fail.*

*There are no stars in the Richmond Civic Theatre. The leading man of one play may be a stagehand for the next; the leading woman may be a maid, or even a property helper. Silbiger believes this equality is a part of democracy.*

Silbiger's favorite epigram is: "There are no small parts; only small players."

VII  
CURTAIN GOING UP  
1945-1947

The organization could now afford an occasional advertisement in the newspaper, just for goodwill. CURTAIN GOING UP — 5TH SEASON. Thus they announced *Harriet*, in which Helen Hayes had toured in the preceding year. *Kiss and Tell* which followed was said by the *Palladium-Item's* Carolyn Maund to be "as polished as that given by the professional troupers who took the play on tour." The third performance of *Street Scene* was the hundredth performance of Civic Theatre. In January *The Trial of Mary Dougan* was revived as a workshop play under the auspices of the Junior Chamber of Commerce, with in part the same cast as the first season's production. It was presented three times in Morton Center and repeated in Hagerstown and Cambridge City. *Romance in Vienna*, *I Remember Mama*, and *Angel Street*, with Tom Sawyer for the children, concluded the season. Not one was a great play, but each had its own color, charm, or appeal, and each showed the professional touch the community had grown to expect. An invitation to produce *Everyman* in Indianapolis for the benefit of Hanover College was declined regretfully, since no suitable date could be found.

A crucial problem arose in December 1945 when the Board received from the play director a letter asking for a release from his contract at the end of the season. He gave three reasons, quoted here in part:

1. *It is my honest opinion that a community theatre without a theatre building cannot exist in the long run, and does not have any future whatsoever. In the four years of its existence we have achieved what other community theatres couldn't achieve in twenty years: we have built up without patron subscribers a membership of 2100 and have become one of the largest civic theatres in the nation, because we have — different from the programs of other civic theatres — produced historic and great plays of outstanding literary value as well as the most recent Broadway*

*bits. But my hopes of arousing some community interest in getting a home of our own have not been realized and, so far as I can see, nothing will be done in that respect. Under these conditions, it is nerve-wracking for all connected with a production to go on with only two rehearsals on the stage, extremely difficult to do any plays except one-set bedroom farces or drawing-room comedies, unsound not to have the chance of expansion of the organization. . . .*

2. *If any theatrical group is to live and flourish it must welcome and develop young actors, who have learned to cherish the artistic aspirations of the given theatre. Where youth is, there is enthusiasm, and where youth and enthusiasm are tied together, there is a longing for beauty, and the theatre can be beauty in its highest achievement. Who in Richmond shows concern for the training of acting youth? . . . .*

3. *The third reason for my request concerns the financial question, as since the signing of my contract about two years ago, the living conditions have changed very much and my compensation now is not sufficient to enable me to meet my needs, and it is far below the standard now being paid. I realize that changes in living costs and salaries have taken place since my contract was made and could not be foreseen, but that does not make the hardship on me any less real.*

*Mr. (Luther) Peeger, honoring Mrs. M.F. Johnston at a recent Kiwanis meeting, stressed in one of the finest speeches I've heard here, for the first time the importance of a cultural movement for a town. Our theatre has become known in the nation as an outstanding artistic and democratic theatre. I seriously hope that my successor may be more successful in arousing an interest for a cultural movement, as the Richmond Civic Theatre represents it, than I have been. . . .*

This letter was received by the Civic Theatre Board with dismay but with real sympathy. Members were keenly aware that the current arrangements at McGuire Memorial Hall were unsatisfactory to all parties concerned, and agreed that they must redouble their efforts to improve the situation. They felt that little could be done for the present about giving additional training to youth in dramatics. As to the director's salary, however, immediate action was taken. A new two-year contract was offered at an increase of \$1000 a year, i.e. \$3500, starting the following September, with half of the net profits on all outside plays authorized by the Board, except Children's Theatre plays, and a bonus of \$500 on the current season, to be paid in January and June, this in addition to the 20% to the director on the net yearly profit, which was a part of the existing contract.



**"Street Scene," with Lang Bally, Frederick Jaehne, Harry Bangert, Stuart Emry, Josephint Jordan and Helen Bringle.**



**"Romance in Vienna," with Winifred Chasteen and William Tillson.**



**Harry Bangert and Jane Kemper co-star in "Angel Street."**



**"The Taming of the Shrew": Emory Stidham, Stephen Randall, Norval Webb, Helen Ford, Josephine Jordan.**



But Silbiger was still reluctant. He was happy over the proposed increase in salary, but still he insisted that he could see no future for a community theatre without a theatre building.

Fentress Tucker explored with the City Council the idea of the city providing a place for a civic auditorium which Civic Theatre could use, and found them receptive though disinclined to take any action. There was talk of a possible building site in Glen Miller, the South 10th Street Park, the City Market lot, or in the river bottom area. There was further exploration of the possibility of using the old Indiana Theatre, but this continued to be unavailable. Might Civic Theatre build an addition on McGuire to provide added facilities for dressing rooms and storage, in return for adequate use of the building under a proper rental arrangement? Could the ballroom at Morton Center be remodeled to provide auditorium facilities, this to be done by Civic Theatre on a long term lease? Might Civic Theatre buy the vacant lot on the 8th Street side of Morton Center, build an auditorium against the present structure, and use heat and power from the Morton Center facilities? The discussion dragged on, and the problem seemed unsolvable for the time being.

On March 6th the Board wrote the director that it had decided with great reluctance to grant his request for release, but at the same time they renewed their offer of a new contract on the terms previously set forth, concluding, "We feel that a good director is our most important asset, far more important than any physical properties we could acquire, and we want you badly if you can find it in your heart to stay."

But it was another six weeks before the report came to the Board that Norbert Silbiger was willing to sign the contract, provided he was assured that the Board would work earnestly to get another auditorium. By that time the space in Morton Center had been judged too small, and any hope for the use of McGuire Hall on a permanent basis seemed unfounded. One thing they could do — employ an architect and explore further the possibilities of building. The final program of the year included a letter from Fentress Tucker in which he said:

*We hope during the next few months, to be able to make plans for a new auditorium to be built as soon as building restrictions are lifted. We will appreciate any suggestions you may have to relieve "our housing situation." We have come a long way in five years. With a new auditorium we can have an increased membership and better plays. We should and CAN have the best community theatre in the Midwest.*

To meet increasing costs, the membership fee for 1946-47 was advanced to \$5.00 plus \$1.00 tax, with a student fee of \$3.00 plus tax. Student tickets were to be limited to Earlham and Senior High

School students, to avoid the objection that some plays were unsuitable for children. Letters announcing the increase in fees, with an application blank for membership, were sent to all members. As usual, there was a quick sell-out of all available seats. It was estimated that a thousand more could have been sold if space permitted. One encouraging factor was that the School Board again agreed to rent McGuire Memorial Hall for all six plays during the coming season, provided one was presented during the Christmas holidays, a provision which was promptly accepted.

That a community theatre stimulates young people to further activity in drama and other forms of the fine arts was amply illustrated in the summer of 1946, when a half dozen Richmond-trained persons took part in one way or another in dramatic productions at the University of Denver. Norbert Silbiger was directing that summer *Hamlet*, *Street Scene*, and *Little Women*, also an outdoor production of *Everyman*. Newell Smalzried, Richmond's *Hamlet*, by this time a Detroit psychologist, was guest artist in the same role for the Denver production; William Tillson, graduate student in speech, acted in each production and served as assistant director; Raymond Jenkins, who painted the backdrop for Richmond's *Romance in Vienna*, an art student in the University, served as stage manager and was in charge of lighting; Rosemary Davidson, awarded by Denver University the Richmond High School scholarship for excellence in dramatics, played in two Children's Theatre productions; John Beasley worked backstage in several plays; Georgianna Edwards studied speech and acting.

In June 1946 all officers of Richmond Civic Theatre had been re-elected, despite the protest of Fentress Tucker that it was bad policy to continue him so long as president. Others of the Board, however, urged that in view of the "distinct possibility" that a civic auditorium might be built soon, it was better to retain the officers who were working to this end. Soon afterward at his own request the secretary, John Edwards, was released with an expression of appreciation for his fine work, and Howard Hammer was appointed in his place.

As any member of a governing board knows, much goes on at meetings that does not become a part of the minutes. When opinions differ, when problems need to be solved and no solution seems possible, tempers may flare and hot words may fly. Such a meeting was this one, when the only business recorded other than the election of officers was an innocuous report or two. Yet the secretary pro-tem wrote to John Edwards, in forwarding the minutes:

*There was much more that went on at this meeting bringing red faces and shaking of fingers, calling names, and some suppressed profanity. Mr. T. said it should not go in the minutes,*



*but don't miss a recital of the occasion. It was very peppery, to put it mildly.*

Alas for the historian that some of the drama in real life, be it comedy or tragedy, is lost in the process of saving feelings or in pouring oil on the waters so that the tossing back can continue its journey. It is all-important to save the ship. Perhaps, after a dozen years to cool off, many of those present besides the secretary program would pronounce it a good show, and even at the time perhaps they were enjoying themselves thoroughly.

At their midsummer meeting President Tucker presented to the Board in writing a list of suggestions, all of which were adopted:

*1. Plans for a New Auditorium.*

*A committee should start to work to crystalize our thinking in regard to a new auditorium. They should recommend, (1) the development of an auditorium in Morton Center, (2) the construction of a new building, or (3) some other plan. Upon approval of the Board they should consult an architect, have preliminary plans prepared and cost estimates submitted. Again, on approval of the Board they shall set up a program of financing this construction. I would like the Finance Committee to allow this committee funds to carry on this work.*

*2. An Assistant Director.*

*Mr. Silbiger feels that the appointment of an assistant director would be of great benefit to him in (1) the survey for talent; (2) the casting of a play; (3) assisting at rehearsals; (4) helping him during the run of the play. I have asked Mrs. Hazel Emry to do this.*

*3. Development of a Social Program.*

*I suggest that we form two groups within the theatre; (1) The Back Stage Club, and (2) the Actors Equity or any other title you choose. Membership in the Back Stage Club would be open to those who served on back stage crews last year and to all new workers who serve as an apprentice on one or two plays this year. Membership in the Actors group would be arranged in like manner. Both groups should be self-supporting, and each should entertain the other at least once each season. Activities should largely be social but membership requirements should be rather stringent. Memberships should be a privilege to be sought for. Each group should have a chairman or president, and both should be under the direction of our Social Chairman. I have asked Mrs. Jack Fisher to look after this.*

*4. Programs.*

*Our programs should be larger, have more news of our actors, workers, and other items of interest to our membership. I would suggest doubling the size - 8 pages to 16. Increased advertising would easily carry this program and probably increase our*

*profit at the same time. I have asked John Edwards to look after this.*

Unfortunately only a part of this well-laid plan could be realized. The programs did indeed double in size and interest, under John Edwards' expert handling. But the hope for an assistant director faded when Hazel Emry accepted an appointment to teach and continue her graduate study at Indiana University. Thereafter she was lost to Richmond Civic Theatre except as a booster at long range and an occasional visitor. The Board feted her at a farewell party at the Tucker home, made her an honorary member, and presented her with the book *Standing Room Only* for her "fine and faithful work in Civic Theatre since its beginning." The minutes for that occasion noted that while they were enjoying their cake and coffee "an unrehearsed drama took place when a sneak thief entered Tucker's home and did away with some of the ladies purses as well as money from others." It was a comedy of errors, for the thief was seen in the kitchen by one of the guests, who thought he was a servant.

The proposed Back Stage and Actors social groups, it was decided later, should be one social organization, but it was not until June 6, 1947, that their first party took place - a subscription affair in honor of Norbert Silbiger at Mrs. Wagner's Colonial Kitchen in Eaton.

An item of \$500 for the building fund was included in the current budget, but that year saw little other tangible progress toward a new auditorium. A long-term lease on city-owned ground, said the Mayor, would be impossible, since an administration has no right to thus obligate its successors; also a Civic Theatre under these conditions would necessarily be under municipal control. It was estimated that to build a theatre would cost from \$100,000 to \$150,000.

For a time it appeared that a reasonably satisfactory agreement might be reached with the School Board for Civic Theatre to build additional facilities to supplement those provided by McGuire Memorial Hall, in return for permanent use. But Civic Theatre needed fifty percent more use of the building for such a plan to be feasible, an arrangement which seemed unlikely of attainment. Might a quonset hut theatre better serve the need? For a time it seemed that the most promising possibility was for Civic Theatre to find a home at Earlham College. Its current rentals of about \$2000 a year should justify the College in enlarging its off-stage area in Goddard Auditorium, providing a new switchboard, space for shop and storage, a rehearsal room, and other needed facilities. But all these explorations came to nothing and, at the annual meeting of members in May, President Tucker could only appeal again for suggestions.

An improvement was made that year in the manner of handling ticket reservations, beginning with the October play, through renting the Morton Center auditorium and lounge at \$10 per play, thus providing seating for those waiting for reservations, in place of the long wait standing in the street or in a bare room.

An innovation of a different kind was intended to encourage a continuing interest in all phases of play production. The Board approved two Merit Awards of \$25, one to a senior in Richmond High School and the other to an Earlham senior who, in the judgment of the school's dramatic organization, showed the most improvement and proficiency in that activity. These awards were duly announced and conferred. They were repeated in the three succeeding years.

The 1946-47 season opened with the popular and captivating *Blythe Spirit*, followed by *The Late George Apley*, probably the first showing of this play by a community theatre. The December play was the new folk drama *Dark of the Moon*, not yet released to any other community theatre. The selection of this play was not made easily. One member of the Board thought it thoroughly objectionable; another feared that certain scenes, particularly that of the revival meeting, might offend some people, or that the audience might miss the meaning and laugh. Director Silbiger cited favorable reviews by critics, urged that Richmond Civic Theatre had always tried to select unusual plays, and though this was not a great play it was definitely new and different. In the end eight voted for the play, and two against. Those who fought for the play had their faith amply justified when it was well received, and even the dissenters agreed that no harm had been done. On this play Mr. Silbiger did one of his most outstanding jobs of directing. Professor E. Merrill Root wrote in *The Earlham Post*:

*Having seen the play given by the first professional company, I say categorically that the production of the Richmond Civic Theatre was in every way superior. For one thing, the wisdom and delicate tact of Norbert Silbiger changed the play slightly but saliently to eliminate the crude brass that jangles here and there in the original, and to enhance the beauty of the mountain religion and the central theme of the pang of human love and loss. . . . Also the scenery and lighting in the Richmond production created an expressionistic artistry of superlative quality . . . . The whole cast, and not just a few stars, were one in a single mood, so that the play found its soul.*

Two months later, following an address by Fentress Tucker to the Richmond Ministerial Association on the history and purpose of the Richmond Civic Theatre, a letter of appreciation from the secretary of the Ministerial Association expressed their "recognition of the powerful moral and spiritual impact of the Civic

Theatre upon the community," adding "We would like to encourage you to maintain the high standards that have marked the Civic Theatre in the past."

*Dark of the Moon* had indeed made the contribution for which its promoters hoped. Civic Theatre was not always to remain in this state of grace, however, for before many months the Board was to receive a letter from an organization of church women registering their disapproval of local plays depicting drinking scenes.

*The Old Maid*, rated an exceptionally fine production, was given in Goddard Auditorium, single admissions supplementing membership tickets to fill the larger hall. Then came a topnotch performance of *The Taming of the Shrew*, with Josephine Jordan, who had been the passionate and lovely Barbara Allen of *Dark of the Moon* in the role of the equally passionate and lovely but very different Katherine, and Dr. Warren Staebler, Earlham's Shakespearean scholar, in his first Civic Theatre role as Petruchio.

Since anything that followed such a performance was likely to seem anti-climactic, it seemed a good choice to present the mystery thriller *Ten Little Indians*, trite but excellently done. This ended the season, except for a non-subscription performance in June, sponsored by the Junior Chamber of Commerce, of *Apple of His Eye*, which gave another opportunity to non-members to see a Civic Theatre performance.

One of the problems with which the Board had wrestled was the small attendance of hardly more than two dozen members at the annual business meeting. In May 1947 they innovated a plan which brought up attendance to 120. Members were enticed to attend by announcing the presentation at the meeting of two radio workshop plays by Miami University students. At this meeting the secretary sketched the history of the local theatre, estimating that an average of 80 persons had taken part in each production, totaling over 2000 since the beginning. He announced that the coming season would be a Jubilee Year in which Civic Theatre would produce its fiftieth play, with over 150 performances. "It has become a custom of community theatres reaching this goal," he said, "to celebrate the occasion as proof that the local theatre could overcome early obstacles and become an integral part of the cultural life of the community." He closed with a tribute to the director, adding "He is so modest he refuses to take curtain bows or to have his picture taken with the casts of any play. His favorite saying when approached is "Not for \$100, not for \$1000."

Visitors this season had come from Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Muncie, Chicago, Fort Wayne, Dayton, and other cities, not to forget a talent scout from Warner Brothers.

In his fourth summer at the University of Denver, Norbert Silbiger directed *Dark of the Moon*, with Richmond's Lang Baily

repeating his sensitive and beautiful performance as the Witch Boy. Silbiger directed also *Pillars of Society* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, the last an outdoor production, in which Richmond-trained John Beasley as Grumio gave the outstanding performance of the play according to the *Rocky Mountain News-Times*. When a panel of six, including Hedda Hopper, with Burns Mantle as moderator, discussed "The American Theatre" at the Central City Opera House, Silbiger was a panel member.

## VIII JUBILEE AND CRISIS 1947-1949

The year of Jubilee opened with three new officers — John Edwards as President, Mrs. Jack Fisher as Vice-President, and Ernest Borradaile as Treasurer. Howard Hammer continued as secretary. The retiring officers deserved high tribute, and received it from their colleagues in generous measure. Retiring president Fentress Tucker, who had been active in production since the first play, was presented a briefcase and made Technical Director for the season. Listed with him on the technical staff was Morton McConnell, Master Carpenter, who had served in this capacity for a dozen shows, putting in about a hundred hours of work on each. This staff included also William Adler, Jr., as Stage Manager and Hazel A. Pigg as General Property Chairman. If there had been such a post as Permanent Transporter it would have been occupied by John Graf, who until that time and for many seasons thereafter faithfully trucked every set from the workshop to the auditorium.

On October 28 of that year Fentress Tucker gave an address to Exchange Club members on the current procedure used by Civic Theatre in play selection. At least it was the standard procedure hoped for, and when it was not possible to carry it through the method was adapted to the existing circumstances. From a list of thirty or more suggested plays, he said, the Director selected fifteen to twenty as perhaps suitable for local production. The President, Technical Director, and Director then narrowed the list to six on the basis of these criteria:

1. The cast must be fairly large.
2. The play must contain no offense to any race, creed, or nationality.
3. It must contain a minimum of profanity, drinking, or sex.

The next step was to name committees and the set designer. The master carpenter with his crew then proceeded to build the sets designed. Meanwhile rehearsals were progressing, properties were being assembled, the costume chairman and her helpers were



**"The Barretts of Wimpole Street": Nancy Elleman Colth, John Edwards, Josephine Jordan.**



**Harry Bangert as "The Magnificent Yankee," with H.G. Walters and Mrs. Donald Bell.**



**"Years Ago": Howard Brown, Georgianna Root, Jane Kemper.**

measuring, making, or ordering costumes, the make-up group were ready to step in at the proper moment, the stage manager, the electrician, the sound man each had his assigned duties. The program editor was preparing copy and seeing it through the press. Ticket reservations must be made. Finally came the dress rehearsal and the doors were opened for the four night run. Although details may vary, play production by a community theatre is a complex and highly organized job.

The season got off to a good start with *Dear Ruth* and *Years Ago*, and tucked in a Children's Theatre production of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, "the play that stood still while its cast grew up," as the program stated, for five years had passed since it was produced by the same organization. Blick, the Dwarf, (Richard Olson), after acting in four intervening plays, was now the Court Chamberlain.

Someone forgot to count *Snow White*, the forty-ninth play of Civic Theatre, for *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* was listed as the forty-ninth when it should have been the Jubilee play. Without such fanfare, it was a kind of jubilee in itself — an altogether satisfying production. Goddard Auditorium was utilized, and a fifth night was added, with all Earlham students and faculty receiving complimentary tickets, and leaving 850 extra seats for single admissions, a further boost to the treasury.

The real highlight of the year, however, was the "50th" play, *The Magnificent Yankee*. It was heralded by special news articles, locally and in the Indianapolis and Cincinnati papers. The desired fifth performance in McGuire Memorial Hall was possible only by including Sunday night, so the Board asked the blessing of the Ministerial Association for this unusual procedure, and received it, with the understanding that the play would not start until 8:30, so as not to conflict with Sunday evening services in churches. Sunday was to be the opening night, with invitations to special groups and persons, including Civic Theatre members who had been longest with the organization and the most active.

As has been said, to produce a Civic Theatre play is a complex and highly organized job, and for the Jubilee play the organization became even more complex. At least \$500 worth of additional advertising was to be sold to help defer added expenses for the 40-page souvenir program, which was to list the entire membership; a speaker on some phase of Civic Theatre was to be provided for each of the service clubs in the city; the local radio station was to include a program featuring backstage workers, another with excerpts from outstanding plays of the organization, and a third broadcast from the theatre lobby as guests arrived for the premiers; there was to be special music by local artists at each play performance, a different group each night, along with a different speaker. The speakers were to be Richard James, Lieutenant Governor of

Indiana, along with Mayor Lester Meadows; Dr. Thomas E. Jones, President of Earlham College; Mrs. Harper Hale Muff, local club-woman; James Farmer, Principal of Richmond Senior High School; and Rev. Paul Stephenson. Finally, there was to be the Civic Theatre banquet in the Leland Hotel ballroom on the Sunday night following the last production, with Mrs. Harry Bangert as General Chairman, heading another complex organization of committees.

The play proved to be a triumph, with Harry Bangert giving a superb characterization of the great Justice Holmes, and Mrs. Donald Bell sharing top honors as his wife Fanny.

A visiting columnist, Corbin Patrick of *The Indianapolis Star*, told in that publication on February 10 of the *Jubilee in Richmond*:

*If you want to get a good idea of what a community cut off from the attended tours of Broadway can do to entertain itself, visit Richmond. . . . Once there, your only problem is to lasso a ticket before sitting down to a performance that would look good on any stage. . . . Tickets according to John Edwards, Richmond Civic's president, have become heirlooms, to be passed along with the rest of the estate. . . . The audience I joined learned not only what Emmet Lavery's character study of the late Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes is about, but also how fine and beautiful it is. I doubt if they could have obtained a great deal more from the original Broadway production in which Louis Calhern starred. . . . The rightness of their acting is to the credit of the Richmond Civic's guiding genius, Norbert Silbiger, a director of great imagination, experience and sound judgment. Mr. Silbiger is a whizz at type casting. He won't do a play until he has found just the people for it. He has an uncanny gift for sensing talent and realizing its biggest possibilities. . . .*

The special speakers at the performance paid their tributes: "No other town in Indiana," said Lt. Gov. James, "can come close to matching Richmond in culture," Mrs. Harper Hale Muff, representing the mothers, expressed "appreciation that the door of the theatre has been opened here to our children, for to most children the magic of their first great play is a memorable event." James Farmer expressed his conviction "that Civic Theatre has produced an interest in the theatre on the part of high school students that has not been shown before."

The banquet, a fitting climax to the great week, featured *The Trial of Norbert Silbiger*, with the defendant found guilty of "having provided the community with much pleasant entertainment, with having added greatly to the cultural life of the city, and with having enriched the lives of many who have participated in or attended the performances." The judge, who was Judge Gustav H. Hoelscher himself, in appropriate robes, wig, and whiskers, sentenced the culprit to serve time "on the rockpile of would-be ac-

tors and actresses" and "to direct at least 50 more productions" — a sentence he has more than fulfilled. The program included also burlesque skits from a half dozen Civic Theatre plays.

The season progressed with a workshop play, Ibsen's *Ghosts*, at Earlham, with students and faculty admitted free in exchange for free use of the hall; then *State of the Union*, during which the backstage workers drew a good hand when the curtain was left up between the second and third acts so that the audience could see the set being changed. "Never sneer at our stage hands" said the program. "They are the stars of yesterdays' show, and will be on again tomorrow." Finally came *Dream Girl* for the grown-ups and *Mr. Dooley, Jr.* for the children — a total of nine plays, the heaviest program in seven seasons.

The problem of a permanent home for Civic Theatre continued to weigh heavily on the Board. In November 1947 President John Edwards proposed that a drive for building funds be scheduled the following spring, but almost immediately the local hospital initiated its own drive for funds, so Civic Theatre would have to wait, meanwhile setting aside in the budget \$500 a year for the building fund.

The following February 19 saw an innovation in the program, when Civic Theatre joined Earlham's Mask and Mantle in sponsoring a dramatics clinic at the College, attended by some 35 students and teachers from five Wayne County high schools.

That year saw the presentation of two children's plays instead of the usual one. There was a further development in the Children's Theatre, which had been the responsibility of a committee appointed annually by Civic Theatre. As has been noted, children's plays were under the joint sponsorship of Civic Theatre and the Parent-Teachers Association. For the first five years Hazel Emry served as chairman of the Children's Play Committee. She was succeeded by Mrs. Mary Helen Backmeyer for a year, and then Mrs. Jeanne Kennedy served as chairman. To give this activity a permanent foundation, in March 1948 a Children's Theatre Board of five members was formed, with Jeanne Kennedy as President. There was no change in the sponsors. Season tickets were to be sold through the P.T.A., and this organization would be responsible for providing an auditorium, while Civic Theatre would provide a rehearsal room and other facilities, besides the services of its director. Each of the sponsoring organizations was to receive a minimum of \$100 each year, any net gain to be divided equally except for \$100 to be left in the Children's Theatre account. This was a controversial point, for Hazel Emry and Jeanne Kennedy had always contended that any net profits from children's plays should be used solely for furthering that activity instead of the project being used for money-making purposes by the sponsoring organi-

zations. While they had been unable to gain sufficient support to carry their views into effect, the question continued to arise from year to year. Three children's plays were presented in 1948-49. In the autumn of 1949 the Children's Theatre rented its own Playhouse, an old carriage house at 12 South 19th Street. With this asset, and with a membership of 1150, they felt that the organization was ready to lead an existence separate from the parent Civic Theatre, so after its December play, *The Indian Captive*, its only affiliation was with the P.T.A.

The seventh season of Civic Theatre had been an expensive one, partly due to the high costs of the Jubilee performance, and for the first time the organization operated at a loss. It was only \$248 and not a real loss, since it was counted after \$500 had been placed in the reserve fund. Another difficult financial year was ahead, for the director felt he could not get along without a 10% increase in salary. Over this matter a cleavage quickly developed in the membership and the Board, with the President heading a "hold the line" faction and certain non-Board members, with the support of the majority of the Board and the membership, maintaining that the Director's expectations were reasonable and must somehow be met. At the same time the leader of the disaffected group maintained that the Board was self-perpetuating, and that it was high-handed in asking for membership renewals without clearly setting forth the plans for the coming season's productions.

A compromise agreement was reached that the Director should receive a 5% increase, but no one was happy about the matter, and further trouble was brewing. Nevertheless, only 2.35% failed to renew their memberships — those who died or moved from the city — and the waiting list contained 380 names.

For the fifth summer Norbert Silbiger was directing plays at the University of Denver, and seven young people from Richmond participated in the various productions. At summer's end Civic Theatre's president received a letter from Campton Bell, Director of the School of the Theatre of the University of Denver:

*Dear Mr. Edwards:*

*I think the Board of Directors and members of the Richmond Civic Theatre might be pleased to learn that the influence and reputation of the organization extends far beyond the corporate limits of your city. Your theatre is now recognized as one of the most outstanding community theatres in this country, and this rating is due not only to the excellent directing of Mr. Norbert Silbiger, but also to the many young actors and technicians who have received their initial training under him and gone on in their chosen fields elsewhere.*

*Mr. Silbiger has just completed his fifth consecutive year as summer guest director at the University of Denver School of the*



Theatre. During the past five summers he has been responsible for our major productions and at the same time has taught hundreds of students in his inimitable way. I need not tell you of his excellence as a director. That you know from his fine record at Richmond. It is of his work as a teacher and counsellor that I wish to speak. Without exception every student who has worked with him is devoted to him. His interest in and sympathetic understanding of their problems, his patience, humor, enthusiasm and sense of justice makes him a great teacher. He not only instills in his students a great love for the theatre, but he makes them realize that the theatre demands the best they have to give, and they give it day in and day out. As a result our productions have become increasingly more finished, and our standards of instruction in all classes have been raised to the point where our graduates are now adequately prepared to take their place in the professional and educational theatre.

Without exception the students coming here from Richmond have made a fine record. Some have come for only a summer, like Georgianna Edwards and John Beasley, while others have taken now or are in the process of taking advanced work here, but in every case they have been a credit to your city and civic theatre. Newell Smalzried, William Tillson, Lang Baily, Robert Moore, Frank Torrence, Lucy Emry, and many others have contributed to the success of our productions. They are all talented, serious, and enthusiastic, and each is a fine person in every sense of the word. I know you are as proud of them as Mr. Silbiger and I are.

I can't begin to tell you how much this relationship with the Richmond Civic Theatre means to me personally and to the school, but I can say in all sincerity that the superior standing of the School of the Theatre today is due in large measure to the work and devotion of Norbert Silbiger and his loyal students.

With best wishes for a successful season, I am

Sincerely yours,  
Campton Bell, Director

That summer Norbert Silbiger received a letter signed by J.E. McDaniel, deputy in the office of the U.S. Military Government for Bremen, Germany. Would he, the letter asked, be willing to come to Bremen to head the theatre and music department of the educational division of the War Department? The offer was made on the recommendation of J.R. Mitchell, former principal of Richmond Senior High School, then chief of the secondary education division of the Bremen office of the military government. To a man who had suffered imprisonment and torture at the hands of the Germans, it was an alluring idea; but the old ties with Europe had been broken, and he was not greatly tempted to renew them, even if he had been

free of commitments to Richmond Civic Theatre and the University of Denver.

Renewal of memberships for 1948-49 had followed a new plan. Heretofore it had been necessary to apply in person at Civic Theatre Headquarters during the specified week, but now an easier method was provided. Members might simply mail their requests with a file card and check to the membership chairman. This change proved so popular that it is still in effect.

The success of this plan suggested that a trial be made of reservations by mail. An announcement was made in the program of the first play for the 1948-49 season that thereafter one-half the auditorium would be set aside for those who wished to use the mailorder method. More and more members took advantage of the opportunity, and in 1952-53 the new plan was expanded to include all reservations, with a provision for reservation at Headquarters only by those few who slipped up on the mailing deadline. How any Committee on Reservations can continue, year in and year out, to keep the confidence of members that their personal interests are as well served in this way as if they personally made reservations



"Pygmalion": Stephen Randall, Joan Golz Snyder, Frederick Jaehne.



Ruth Ellen Fleming in "The Young and Fair."

remains an enigma, and speaks highly for the skill and impartiality of committee members. Since 1951 Mrs. Jack Fisher has either carried the chief responsibility for both reservations and memberships or has had a large share in it.

The list of plays in 1948-49 (with the fourth of the series at Earlham) included the delightful *Life With Father* and *Pygmalion*, the entertaining *John Loves Mary*, and *The Winslow Boy*, which had scored a tremendous hit in England. Eric Curtis, the Englishman who saw it there before becoming a member of the Earlham faculty, gave as Sir Robert Morton the first of his outstanding performances for Civic Theatre. Then followed *The Glass Menagerie*, that poignant drama of illusion and loss, and the season ended with *The Young and Fair*, one of the most beautiful of Civic Theatre's productions. Interspread through the season were three plays for the children: *The Ghost of Mr. Penny*, *Santa's Toys*, and *Jack and the Beanstock*.

The week of the production of *The Young and Fair* was a particularly happy one for its director, for his "telephone book cousin," Samuel Silbiger, now of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, and his wife and daughter Edith were guests. This was not the first visit for Mrs. Samuel Silbiger and Edith, for six years before they had

come for a performance and to see their protege, of whom the family was immensely proud. "It was the best thing we ever did," they said, and Edith Silbiger, a former WAC, added, "I think by helping Norbert to come here we really did more for the country than we did for him."

On January 13-14, 1949, a conference on Adult Education in the Community was held at Lafayette under the sponsorship of Purdue and Indiana University, with exhibits and representatives from various types of organizations. Because of its eminence in the field of civic drama, Richmond Civic Theatre was invited to represent that field at the conference. A poster in the exhibit prepared by Elmira Kempton included the imposing list of plays presented since its beginning, and Mrs. Jack Fisher gave a brief talk on the work of the organization.

The smouldering controversy of the preceding season broke out anew in September 1948, and soon spread to a series of stories on the front page of the local newspapers. It was precipitated by a news item to the effect that Norbert Silbiger would teach in the Earlham College-Indiana University Center a course on Saturday mornings in acting, and a Thursday evening class in Contemporary



"The Winslow Boy": Jane Mercier, Janet Kercheval, Howard Stearns, H.G. Walters.



European and American Theatre. The president of Civic Theatre, unable to get in touch with the director, protested to the Center that Silbiger was not free to enter into such an arrangement without the permission of Civic Theatre. Silbiger had known this, but had waited to see whether the proposed teaching assignment would actually be offered and, when the offer came, the time was too short for clearance before the Center made the announcement. Silbiger had not anticipated that Civic Theatre might object, since plays had been scheduled far enough apart that it was not necessary to rehearse every night; the drama course was intended primarily for Civic Theatre members, as evidenced by a postcard announcement sent to such members, and it would help to further raise the level of the organization's work; and such an alliance would further enhance the relationship of Civic Theatre with the relationship of Civic Theatre with the College.

In the mind of Civic Theatre's president, however, there had been a breach of contract, in view of its wording that "the director may assume or engage in other employment of a like nature provided that the said director shall first obtain the permission of said corporation." When this was brought to the director's attention he promptly withdrew as a teacher for the EC-IU Center. Within a few days the Civic Theatre Board met and gave their approval of his teaching these classes on the understanding that it would not interfere with rehearsals, for which Silbiger expressed his appreciation, but he did not feel inclined to resume the arrangement for classes.

Thus matters rested until November 1, when the program for *Pygmalion* appeared. The first page contained a chart showing how the year's budget was allocated, by dollars and percentages, with the largest percentage (34.3%) going for the director's salary. To Silbiger it seemed that to thus publish his salary was an invasion of his privacy and an attempt to win adherents to the idea that his proportion of the budget was already large enough, whereas it was actually less than the beginning salary of directors of comparable theatres. With this added incident he promptly asked to be released from his contract, which would not expire until June, saying "My health doesn't permit me to go on under the present conditions, which have become extremely unpleasant to me."

The drawn battle which followed was fully delineated in the newspaper reports, which spread to surrounding cities. The Board declined to release their director and asked him to reconsider his request. He replied that he could not continue to work with the Theatre's president and treasurer. The *Palladium-Item* published in full a letter from Professor E. Merrill Root of Earlham calling attention to the great contribution Civic Theatre's director had made to Richmond: "We who have acted, worked, and attended every production during these many years know our director," he wrote.

"We support him, we are behind him 100 per cent, we rightly regard our Board of Directors as our elected representatives, whose faithful work we deeply appreciate, who are there to express our will. Our will is that Norbert Silbiger shall remain our director; and that he shall be given that intelligent understanding, that cooperation, that harmony, without which an artist cannot work."

Another member of the Board, Rev. Howard J. Brown, while maintaining that he held the director in highest esteem, resigned in protest over what he called the intimidation of the Board by its director in the choice of plays and in determining the budget. "If the Board of Directors must be only a rubber stamp to the dictates of its hired director, I cannot find either interest or value in serving on it." Rev. Brown's resignation was not accepted. Soon thereafter, however, he moved from Richmond.

The next move of supporters of the director was a petition asking that the Board "take any steps necessary to correct any conditions now existing which must be corrected in order to retain our present director." In the week allowed, 1171 members signed the petition and it was formally presented to the Board.

Meanwhile Silbiger had written to a Board member: "I have not made any commitments with a university or community organization concerning the next season. I still hope things will work out satisfactorily. I like Richmond and would go on working for and with our community theatre provided I would have a working board that respects my work."

The Board was trying hard to reach a common understanding. Various members offered to resign in the interests of harmony, but others were not willing to release them. Finally, with the resignation of John Edwards as president, and its acceptance by the Board, and with Mrs. Jack Fisher, Vice-President, moving to the head position, the period of reconstruction began.

"Civic Theatre Troubles Over," said the news headline, and the Board's statement followed:

*Since the Civic Theatre petitions were presented to the board, we have been in contact and conference with Mr. Silbiger and the group which was most active in the circulation of the petitions. Mr. Silbiger assures us that he is most happy with the expression of confidence given him and that it is his only desire that Richmond Civic Theatre continue to grow, and that he will spend every effort to cooperate with the board and the full membership to make it attain even greater heights in achievement..*

*We have the assurance of the group who worked for the petitions that their only desire was to give expression to the high esteem in which they hold Civic Theatre and its present director, Mr. Silbiger, and that they have no desire to engage in any further*

*dispute and are perfectly willing and happy to leave the management of Civic Theatre to its present board and to those who, at this time, hold responsible positions in Civic Theatre and whose interest in holding that position is for the continued growth and welfare of our organization. They earnestly hope for the full cooperation of the entire membership.*

*We pledge every effort to help Civic Theatre be an organization of which the entire community can be truly proud.*

The issues themselves had not been so serious as to be unsolvable had the situation not been complicated by a clash of personalities. John Edwards, as one of Civic Theatre's earliest adherents, a constant worker in its behalf, one of its best actors, a program editor with an inimitable gift for expression, secretary and president of the organization, had a deep love for Civic Theatre and acted for what he thought its best interests. In accepting his resignation the Board unanimously expressed appreciation for his long and loyal service, and their best wishes.

In the program for *John Loves Mary*, Mrs. Fisher wrote under "Greetings from the President":

*For the past few weeks Richmond Civic Theatre has been embroiled in a controversy of considerable proportions. It might not be an exaggeration to say that the fate of Civic Theatre teetered perilously for a while. I, for one, was amazed and alarmed by the seriousness of the situation but, and I hope you will not put the wrong interpretation on this statement, I was also somewhat gratified by the interest shown. . . . If nothing else good has come out of this disturbance we have all, directors and members alike, reaped a benefit of knowing that Richmond Civic Theatre is important to us. The primary consideration of the Board is now and has always been "What is best for Civic Theatre." By your recent show of interest it has more completely become your Theatre and you are more personally committed to it. It would be foolish to say that there are no scars to hide, no wounds to heal, but now that we have reached an amicable decision, and with our Director remaining, it should be easy for us to go forward to a bigger and better Civic Theatre.*

## IX RECOVERY 1949-1952

While Norbert Silbiger directed plays and taught at the University of Denver for the sixth summer, with his usual success and the usual contingent of Richmond students participating in his productions — *Liliom*, *The Young and Fair*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* — the home organization was hard at work making a major move. Civic Theatre had outgrown its headquarters at 1022 Main Street, and in April 1949 seized the opportunity to lease the building at 18 North 6th Street which the Salvation Army was leaving for its newly built home on South 4th Street.

The new headquarters included an auditorium with over 100 seats and a small stage, suitable for rehearsals and experimental plays, and six other rooms for workshop, wardrobe, and office quarters. Through the efforts of a House Committee, and with a \$500 loan from the reserve fund, the auditorium was redecorated, the heating plant was enlarged, and other improvements were made, including a large sign on the building to proclaim that it was the headquarters of Richmond Civic Theatre.

During the hot summer some two dozen or more members toiled long hours with soap and water, paint brushes and brooms, to get the building ready and to carry through the mammoth task of moving. The faithful John Graf supplied the trucking service, as usual. The spirit of this group was emulated the following spring when the auditorium at headquarters needed cleaning in preparation for the annual business meeting of members, and \$10 was given to Board members Burr Simmons and Frank Davidson to employ someone to do the work. Instead Davidson and Simmons did the work themselves and used the money to buy tools needed for building sets.

When the services of Fentress Tucker as Board member and lighting technician were lost that October on his moving to Indianapolis, he was made an honorary member.

A nine-play season was in prospect, including two Children's Theatre productions and a workshop play. It opened with the atomic



Robert Moore and Barbara Stout in "Two Blind Mice."

age melodrama *The Traitor*, the first performance of this play by any community theatre. Eric Curtis, still new to America, obligingly agreed to play traitor to it for the occasion.

My *Sister Eileen* followed, then *Two Blind Mice* and *Life With Mother*, the first presentations in Indiana of these two by a community theatre. The night after *Life With Mother* closed in Richmond it was taken to Portland for their Program Series. The parts of Father and Mother Day and the Day boys were taken by the same persons as in *Life With Father* the preceding year.

*Montserrat*, with Professor William Clark of Earlham in the title role, was a top performance. It served as the local celebration of the first International Theatre Month sponsored by the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO and the American National Theatre and Academy, with 300 theatre groups taking part. "What could be more international," said a program note, "than a French play, laid in Venezuela, adapted by an outstanding American playwright, staged by a Viennese director, and presented by home talent in Richmond, Indiana!" It can be added that the cast included one who was born on Corregidor, a Chilean who could speak no English, and a Spaniard.

The season came to an end with a polished performance of *The Heiress*, for which Elizabeth Moore Stout, star of many local performances, returned from Nashville, Tennessee, for the leading role. Meanwhile there had been a workshop production at Earlham of *Arsenic and Old Lace*, repeated at Hagerstown and Cambridge City, also *Cinderella* and *The Indian Captive* as the final plays for the children before Children's Theatre became an independent organization.

Civic Theatre had cooperated also in a Folk Festival sponsored by the Earlham College - Indiana University Center on three successive Tuesday nights beginning February 28. Other groups cooperating were Earlham's Mask and Mantle, the Community Chorus, the Earlham Band and Physical Education Department, and Richmond Civic Orchestra. Programs included a concert by John Jacob Niles, one of chorus, orchestra, and folk dance numbers, and two plays - *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* and Chekov's *The Marriage Proposal*.

Price inflation of course affected the cost of Civic Theatre memberships. An attempt to persuade the School Board to allow a fifth night for productions was again unsuccessful, so there was no hope for the present of added revenue from increased memberships. Fairness to the Director called for a \$300 salary increase for 1950-51, with a larger allowance to cover the cost of his annual trip to New



Family group in "Life With Mother": Gary Lee Burkhardt, Roger Cornett, Katherine Radmacher, Harry Bangert, Richard Lerner, Richard Olson.

York. It was decided to advance the membership rate to \$6.00 plus the tax of \$1.20, and to eliminate the lower rate for students. Economies in play production costs had made it possible to add the usual \$500 to the reserve at year's end.

Again the Director spent the summer term in Denver, producing *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*, *The Heiress*, and *Everyman*. He participated also in a panel discussion on *George Bernard Shaw and Modern Comedy*, with Maurice Evans, then starring in *The Devil's Disciple* in the Central City Opera House, and four professors of Denver University, the University of Colorado, and Stanford University.

The tenth season opened with a confidence justified by the record of 73 shows with more than 250 performances. As the President, Mrs. Jack Fisher, stated in the program for the first play, *The Silver Whistle*, during the nine years Civic Theatre has "given more than 1000 people an opportunity to act or to work backstage; established a nation-wide reputation as one of the outstanding civic theatres of the United States; grown from a membership of a few hundred to 2100, the size limited by the seating capacity of McGuire Memorial Hall. Beginning in infancy with very little know-how, the technical department of the theatre has developed, in the last nine years, to the point where our sets compare favorably with those of the professional stage. To the audience itself it is obvious what a remarkable thing it is to take people from the routine walks of life and with a maximum of four weeks preparation turn them into actors who amaze you with their excellent performances."

In this period a change had come about in set-building. No longer, stated the program for the season's second play, *Born Yesterday*, was there a job of designing original sets: "The set director works with the construction committee to adapt the plans of Broadway productions to our stage, he works with the property committee selecting the best styles and colors available in stage furnishings; and he is responsible for all the painting and ornamentation on the sets. It still leaves a great scope for the artist. His work should establish the mood of the play when the curtains open. He must study the changes brought by stage lighting which govern color, perspective, and design. He has all the advantages and disadvantages of using space — something the painter on canvas does not encounter. Always his chief purpose is to enhance the actors and the play."

The foregoing quotations from the first two programs of the year illustrate a function which Richmond Civic Theatre has made the programs serve — to educate members in the art of play production, as well as to acquaint them with matters of business, to introduce the cast and production staff — always regarded as of equal importance — with interesting background data, to tell something of

the play and its author, with other varying data such as news items concerning former workers, quotations from theatre critics, and reactions of local people to Civic Theatre. Thus the program has been in the nature of a small magazine, read with interest and filed for future reference. Best of all, it has made every member feel a part of the complicated and exciting business of play production. If this account seems to make excessive reference to the printed programs, it is because so much of Civic Theatre's history and spirit are recorded there.

The program of the third play of that season, *Goodbye, My Fancy*, included another short essay on set construction: ". . . The actual building takes about two weeks of five hours a night. . . . Peculiar to theatre building is the necessity of keeping a set solid enough for the safety of the actors, yet light enough to be quickly put up and taken down, ported about, and made into something else for the next play. This leads into the use of illusion, an art that taxes the ingenuity of builders and designers. Solid walls, heavy carving, beautiful columns, whole trees and houses, may be hollow pieces easily carried by one man."

*Anne of the Thousand Days* was another splendid performance of a fine and stirring play. Then came a melodrama, *Detective Story*, and the season closed with one of the most enjoyed of all Civic Theatre productions, the hilarious *Harvey*, with funeral director Deskin Jones in the leading role of Elwood P. Dowd, and Mary Helen Backmeyer as his sister, in her seventeenth role, one of the best of her many superior performances.

It had been a successful year, and a satisfying one. Although the lease on the new headquarters building had another year to run, the organization looked ahead and signed another two-year lease and, to make sure that the roof over their head would not leak, they put a new one over the rehearsal room, besides repairing plaster over the entire building.

In May the presidency passed to Judge Gustav H. Hoelscher, an enthusiastic member of the Board and a capable actor in a number of roles. Norbert Silbiger left for his usual business trip to New York on behalf of the organization, followed by his summer responsibilities in Denver, where he directed *The Merchant of Venice*, *Hamlet*, and an outdoor production of *Anne of the Thousand Days*.

In his first program note President Hoelscher stressed participation: "Come on and get into the swim!" The complete organization for the season was outlined—officers, directors, and the list of eighteen committees from Advertising to Sound and Transportation, with the names of all members. "If you would like to take an active part in the production of any play during the coming season,"

he urged, "Speak about it to the chairman or co-chairman of the committee in charge of the activity in which you may be interested, and if you wish to take the part of an actor, speak to the Director. Do not hesitate to speak your desire."

The same program attacked the problem of profanity on the stage, to which objections were occasionally made, and quoted from a recent Playbill of the Baton Rouge Civic Theatre:

*You will appreciate that according to the copyright laws, we have no legal right to make a single word change in the play without the permission of the copyright owners, or the author. Also, it is not the producer, the directors, the actors, nor even the author, who utters the profanity in the play, but the characters portrayed on the stage. . . . For us to cut words or change what the author has written is both unethical and illegal, and would partially destroy or render ineffective what the author intends to say.*

Two years later, in the program for *Mister Roberts*, Director Silbiger added his own pungent comments on the matter of profanity, under the heading "Damn!!" He said, in part:

*After every show since Civic Theatre's first production in fall 1941, I have received many letters, kind and gracious letters, letters of constructive criticism and encouragement, and — nasty letters. . . .*

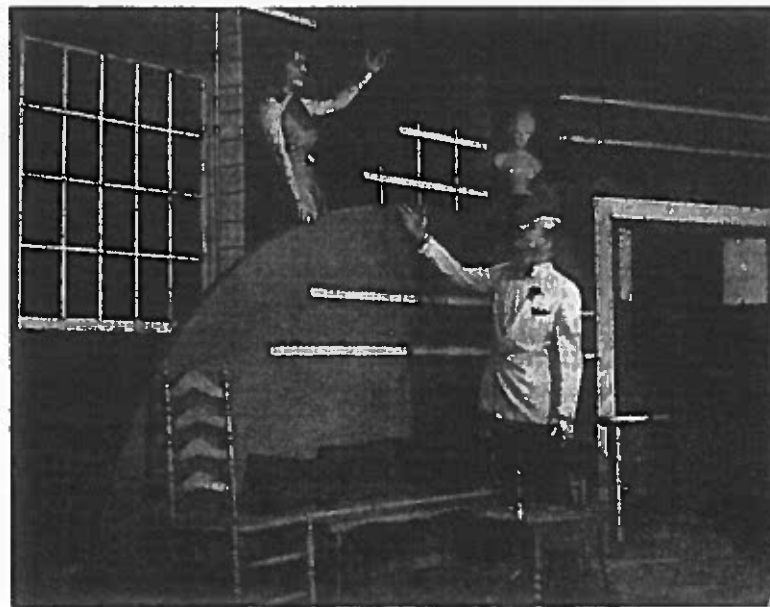
*I expect that after the present production of "Mr. Roberts" my collection of "love letters" will quite increase. . . . The question arises: Why does Civic Theatre produce "Mister Roberts" if you know in advance that some people will be disgusted? And the next question: "Why didn't you clean up the play and delete some offensive scenes or lines?"*

*To answer the first question: We consider it our responsibility and our duty to show to the Richmond audience a famous play. . . . We know we cannot please everyone with every show, but we also know that a good play is not shocking in any moral sense, unless the audience is prudish to the point of disliking honesty.*

*To answer the second question: Why didn't I change the script, delete certain words and omit "shocking scenes?"*

*As a matter of fact, I did. But, when the rehearsals started and the actors read the changed lines it sounded phoney and impossible. By omitting swear words and changing the navy men's lingo, I had changed the flavour of the play and, therefore, we returned the wording to the way the play was written and has to be done. . . .*

*Just don't listen to the swear words, but rather to the heart-beat*



Mickie Teetor and Don Manlove in "Idiot's Delight."

*of men. American boys, who went out to fight for us and died. Then you will leave the theatre with an almost religious feeling, as many of us did who saw the professional production of "Mister Roberts."*

The season of 1951-52 opened with a good performance of *Idiot's Delight*. It proceeded through *The Curious Savage* (for which members may remember longest Mary Helen Backmeyer's startling blue hair); the pageantry of *Distant Drums* portraying the covered-wagon days; then a repetition of *You Can't Take It With You* as a workshop play, with especially superb performances by those who played the same parts in the production ten years before — June Kemper as Penelope Sycamore, Frederick Juehne as Grandpa Vanderhof, and Jeanne Kennedy as the Grand Duchess Olga. After two performances at Earlham the play was taken to Cambridge City and Hagerstown.

The February production, *The Devil's Disciple*, the third Shaw play since the organization's beginning, constituted Richmond's part in the observance of International Theatre Month for the furthering of world peace and understanding.

Civic Theatre members enjoy an occasional good melodrama or

mystery, and *High Ground* was both. *Light Up the Sky* ended the season on a hilarious note.

At that time announcement was made of a goal attained after years of striving – an auditorium where all plays could be presented, and of a size to enable an increase in membership. With 150 more seats it now was possible to accommodate 600 more people during the four nights of each play. This was accomplished by a two-year lease of the Indiana Theatre at Tenth and Main Streets, with the privilege of renewal for three more years. At the same time it was announced that Norbert Silbiger had signed a two-year contract. Thus members could enjoy a comfortable sense of security.

The Board agreed that for the season of 1952-53 the adult membership would be limited to 2500, making available 200 seats in the second balcony at a student price of \$3.00 for the season. All available seats were taken before the next season opened, and a new waiting list promptly began to form.

The Indiana Theatre, formerly the Murray, was built in 1909 for vaudeville, road shows, and stock company plays. In recent years it had been a moving picture theatre. It needed renovating, but this



Halla Shaver and Josephine Jordan in "High Ground."

problem would be attacked in the coming months. "Obtaining the Indiana Theatre was a master stroke," commented Rudolph G. Leeds, publisher of the *Richmond Palladium-Item*.

"This season," wrote Professor E. Merrill Root, "I have especially enjoyed *The Curious Savage*, *High Ground*, and *The Devil's Disciple* – which though I had seen it given before, came truly alive for me only when Civic Theatre gave it so richly and brilliantly. Has anything ever brought more wisdom and beauty to Richmond than has Civic Theatre?"

At season's end the director departed for his ninth summer with the School of the Theatre of the University of Denver, where he directed for the Rocky Mountain Festival *Hamlet* and *The Merchant of Venice*, teaching also classes in contemporary theatre and Shakespeare.



X  
THE HAPPY TIME  
1952-56

The four years that followed the change to the Indiana Theatre for play presentations were, on the whole, a time of consolidation, a happy time, with only one major problem, which proved to be temporary, and with various signs of growth. The use of a legitimate theatre building made it necessary to hire a representative of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees and Motion Picture Operators in the United States and Canada during each week a play was showing, but the cost was not onerous, and the employee, William Kyle, proved to be very helpful and cooperative. The following year the Union representative was Edward Atkinson, Jr., already a Civic Theatre member and worker.

The rehearsal room at Headquarters was redecorated in the summer of 1952, and the Indiana Theatre was cleaned and redecorated, at Civic Theatre's expense. Lighting equipment suited to the needs was installed, with Manley Lawrence giving much time and effort to the project. The judgment at the end of the first season in the theatre building was that the plan had worked rather successfully, and with further renovation and adjustments it should work quite well.

The first season in the new setting, the twelfth of the organization, opened with *Remains To Be Seen*. Curtain time now and for the succeeding productions was uniformly 8:00 p.m. instead of two nights at 7:30 and two at 8:15 as in preceding years. Jodie Snyder, star of "Bom Yesterday," who later moved to Van Wert, Ohio, timed a visit in Richmond to give a sparkling performance in the leading role of the opening play.

Two more Broadway hits followed — *Lo and Behold* and a Pulitzer Prize play, *Death of a Salesman*, in which "Scotty" Campbell gave a superb performance as Willy Loman. The local theatre was the first community theatre to attempt its production, and its success was a tribute not only to the fine cast but also to the crew of technicians who solved admirably the special problems inherent in the play.



Jane Kemper, Charles Matthews, Richard Loney, and Z.A. Campbell in "Death of a Salesman."



Josephine Jordan and Helen Bringle in "The Wingless Victory."

*The Wingless Victory*, with its theme of racial conflict, was chosen for the International Theatre Month presentation, and the season was rounded out with *Affairs of State* and *The Happy Time*, the most popular play being perhaps the last, although every production had been a distinct success.

In the middle of the season came a special two-night stand of the *Murray Follies*, an innovation outside the membership fee and open also to non-members. To the many people in Richmond who could remember seeing vaudeville shows at the old Murray Theatre, with the same backdrop as for the present occasion, the *Murray Follies* had a nostalgic quality. The younger set joined heartily in their enjoyment, with all the audience participation one could wish.

There was a piquant pleasure in seeing Judge Hoelscher, Civic Theatre's president, as master of ceremonies, introducing dance routines, a barbershop quartette, a melodrama. The melodrama was a repetition of *Her Fatal Beauty*, which had closed the first season eleven years before. In the second half of the program, with Robert Herbst as M.C., old-timers in vaudeville who were residents of the community were introduced, and other variety acts followed, including a skit by veteran players Mrs. Charles Teetor and Charles Matthews who presented variations of the same scene as it might



"Affairs of State": George Wheeler, Richard Jessup, Bert Keller.

be played in modern England, in the deep South, in Brooklyn, and in the time of Shakespeare, with appropriate changes in costume and accent. Another feature was a skit written by Esther Kellner, *Gertie Kolp's Dancing Class*, about a Richmond institution which had delighted generations of young people. Not the least interesting feature of the printed program was the advertisements, which made use of the old time cuts and phraseology to set forth modern wares.

The reception given this innovation was so tremendous that it was promptly decided to include a similar show in the next year's program. It had proven to be financially profitable, also, with a net of \$822.44.

Another innovation that year was the plan for Sunday afternoon programs of dramatic readings in the studio theatre at Headquarters, where one hundred persons could be comfortably accommodated. Cuts of interesting plays not suitable for production, or one-act plays, might be presented, followed by refreshments. Three such programs were given in 1952-53: *Don Juan in Hell* from Shaw's *Man and Superman* (repeated at Earlham); a three-part program consisting of Christopher Fry's *A Phoenix Too Frequent*, *Before Breakfast* by Eugene O'Neill, and a sketch *Post Road*, the last two performed by Jodie Snyder; and finally four readers in a cutting of Benet's dramatic poem of the Civil War, *John Brown's Body*.

The Headquarters building, admirable as it was for most purposes, provided only cramped room for set construction, and in the final program of the year President Hoelscher appealed to members to help locate a large room or hall which might be rented for construction work and painting of sets. The crowding was relieved in another way the following November when arrangements were made to rent a four-car garage on South 10th Street for the storage of set equipment. As equipment accumulated other garages were rented for storage.

When the joint convention of the Speech Association of America and the American Educational Theatre Association met in Cincinnati on December 29-31, 1952, Norbert Silbiger was one of four speakers for the section on Community Theatre, discussing "The Community Theatre Director and His Problems." He shared this honor with Dr. Louis T. Benezet, President of Allegheny College; Richard Hoover, General Manager of Pittsburgh's Playhouse; and Dr. Edwin Schoell of the University of California.

The President of the organization during the next two seasons was Hazel A. Pigg, a faithful Board member and worker for many years.

Without a drive, with no fanfare, no telephone calls, almost the





"Mr. Roberts": Loren Moss, N.E. Arbogast, Wm. Warfel, Ned Berheide, Andrew Cecere, Bert Keller; back row, James Hardman, Richard Dils, Phil Shinness, Edward Borrodalle, Paul Youngert.

total membership continued to renew from year to year. For the 1953-54 season the membership fee was set at \$8.00, at which figure it remained for three years. All of this went into the treasury, since the organization had established itself as educational and therefore not subject to an amusement tax on admissions. Second balcony seats cost \$4.00 for the season. These were not necessarily students seats, but served as interim seating for new members until vacancies developed, at which time they were given first chance for regular membership.

There would be seven productions this year, including the *Murray Follies*, instead of making it a special show with a separate admissions fee. The director's salary was increased proportionately, because of the extra work involved and in lieu of his percentage of the net income from the *Murray Follies* as an extra production.

The season was off to a good start with *Bell, Book and Candle*. Pywacket, the Siamese cat, almost stole the show. *Mister Roberts*, for which a rotating stage was built, received generous applause and appreciation. Then came a superlative production of *The Merchant of Venice*, which also used a rotating stage. Arthur Vivian, an automobile dealer by trade and in only his second role for Civic Theatre, was a tremendous Shylock; Eric Curtis and Harold Hyman gave superb representations of Bassanio

and Antonio, and Josephine Jordan was an equally fine Portia. Not the least remarkable part of Mrs. Jordan's performance, only one of many starring roles for Civic Theatre, was indicated by a program note: "Jo runs a farm home complete with four children, has a 20 mile round trip drive to Richmond, yet seldom misses a rehearsal."

Again the *Murray Follies* delighted the audience with its array of Olio Acts, its Floradora girls, and its old-time melodrama, *Curse You Jack Dalton*. The 98th production, *Guest in the House*, was especially notable for the outstanding performance of Henrietta Hirshburg as the reprehensible guest, her first major role, *The Male Animal* expressed effectively its theme of academic freedom. A "stage whisper" in its program, issuing from the Director, reiterated his favorite theme: "There are no small parts, only small actors." He added, "We are glad that the early days of our organization when an actor refused a small part or doing backstage work are gone. I am deeply grateful to all those wonderful people who give so much of their time to Civic Theatre to make things go."

The gold on black program cover of the next play, matching that of the Golden Jubilee production, signified that another milestone had been reached. The 100th production! *Our Town* had been the



One hundredth production, "Our Town": Judge Gustave Hoelscher, Ruth Ellen Fleming, John Beasley.

first play, and so good a play deserved to be repeated for this occasion. Even thirteen years later, two parts were played by the same actors — Dr. Gibbs by Stanley Hamilton and Constable Warren by J. Wilson Wright. Manley Lawrence, an assistant electrician for the 1941 production, was in charge of lighting and sound for the 100th. And of course the Director was the same. A program note for *Our Town* in 1954, written by Kathleen Postle, paid tribute to him:

*During its thirteen seasons, Richmond Civic Theatre has had but one director, an amazing record of stability and purpose and tenacity. Revered, loved — at times feared as he cracks the whip with insistence on perfection — he is always the artist. Throughout the frenzy of rehearsals, designing and creating sets, of costuming and lighting, he remains the focal point around which all action swirls, and from whom the final verdicts issue. Obviously a venture directed by a perfectionist, slave-driving and Old-Worldish in theatrical training, cannot have innocuous, smooth sailing. There have been periods when insurrectionists among the membership rebelled at policies, perhaps at choice of plays. But the big standards of the mentor and his intolerance of the mediocre have prevailed.*

There had been one Sunday afternoon program that year, but that one was outstanding. It was another one-act play of Christopher Fry, *Tbor With Angels*. The cast consisted of Earlham faculty and students, and it was presented at both Earlham and Civic Theatre Headquarters.

As has been noted, there had been criticism that the Board was self-perpetuating. The reason for this had been simply that the Board felt it could thus better insure that every member would be actively interested. A step in the desired direction was taken in April 1948, when the By-Laws were amended to make the Nominating Committee consist of only two members of the Board and one representing the membership at large. In the spring of 1954 the Nominating Committee was enlarged to five members, including three representing the membership at large.

Preceding the 100th production it had been decided that the time had come to add a fifth night, taking in additional members, and running from Tuesday through Saturday. This plan was to begin with *Our Town*, the final play in 1953-54, and new members of the coming season were invited to see *Our Town* as a bonus. With over 2900 members for 1954-55, all at \$8.00 since no second balcony seats were offered, and with over \$1900 sold in advertising, the annual budget was now over \$25,000. The lease on the Indiana Theatre was renewed for three years, with ten days allowed for each play, which added days for painting and erecting sets. The lease on the Headquarters building was likewise re-

newed for three years, and a new three-year contract was signed with the Director.

The year was topped off by a dinner on May 11 at the Forest Hills Country Club, which had as its special feature the Jaycee Theatre Awards. An announcement had been made at the beginning of this season that as a tribute to Civic Theatre and to honor players and workers, the Junior Chamber of Commerce had set up annual awards for the best actor, the best actress, the best supporting actor and actress, and the most outstanding backstage worker. This last was changed to the outstanding production. A committee consisting of Civic Theatre's President and Director and Jaycee's Project Chairman named the judges from the theatre's membership, and notified them by registered mail. The judges, unknown to one another, attended all plays and at season's end mailed their selection by registered letter to the Jaycee Project Chairman. The committee then called the judges to meet with them to tabulate the results, and for the judges to re-ballot if necessary until a final decision was reached. Awards to players were 8½ inch statues bearing the Greek masks of comedy and tragedy and inscribed "The Jaycee Theatre Award." A recipient would be ineligible for a later award. For the most outstanding production the award was a framed certificate.

Interest in these awards ran high, and cheers greeted the announcement at the dinner that Arthur Vivian had won first rank for his portrayal of Shylock, and Henrietta Hirshburg as Evelyn Heath in *Guest in the House*. Best supporting actor and actress were Ned Berheide as Ensign Pulver in *Mister Roberts* and Resy Kipfer as Miss Holroyd in *Bell, Book and Candle*. The outstanding production was judged to be *The Merchant of Venice*, with A.P. Miessler receiving the award on behalf of his staff.

During that summer the entire interior of the Headquarters building was repainted. The Indiana Theatre was painted and redecorated, including the painting of seats. All ropes and cables were checked and needed replacements made. With the added membership, the budget was no longer so tight. The report to members at the end of the season indicated a balance of \$1500 after all bills were paid, and an accumulation of \$5500 in the reserve fund.

A perennial problem had been that of complimentary tickets and guests at dress rehearsals. It had been customary to allow the President and the Director a limited number of complimentary tickets for special out of town guests or other needs. Dress rehearsals provided, in addition, an opportunity to issue passes to contributors of properties and services. Sometimes it was necessary to discourage a tendency of a few people to appear repeatedly at dress rehearsals, in lieu of becoming paying members. The whole matter came up for review in a Board meeting in September 1954.

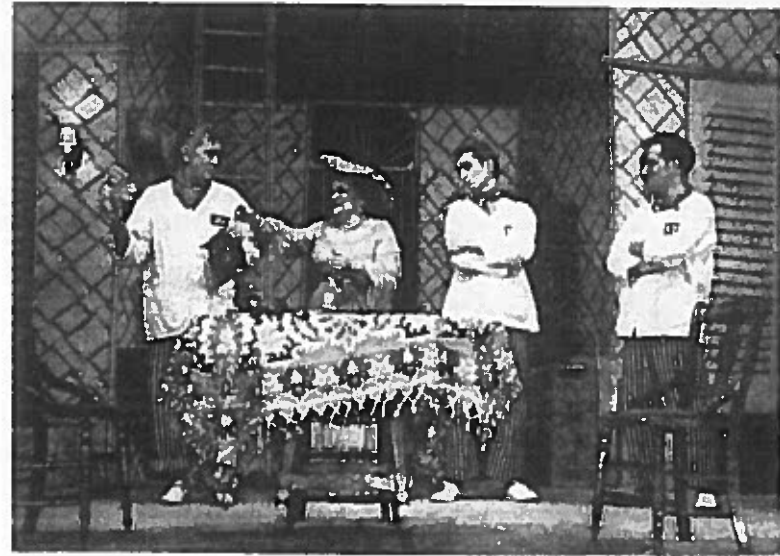
Some members, with the Director, felt that an audience at the dress rehearsal helped to relieve the tension of the opening night. Recognizing the valid objections, however, it was agreed that a limit of ten complimentary tickets each to the President and Director should be available for out of town guests and any others who should have such recognition; no other passes would be given.

With the example of the Junior Chamber of Commerce participating as a group in Civic Theatre, through the Jaycee Theatre Awards, other organizations were eager to have a part. Throughout the season of 1954-55 and for two years thereafter various groups supplied ushers regularly on successive nights of each performance - Delta Theta Tau Sorority on opening nights, then in succession Tri Kappa Sorority, Senior High School students, Junior Chamber of Commerce, and the Y.W.C.A. Newcomers Club.

The season's plays included six recent Broadway successes and a classic. *My 3 Angels* had played for eleven months on Broadway before going on tour. *Come Back, Little Sheba* was perhaps the best American play of the 1950 season. *Hamlet* was repeated after ten years, with Eric Curtis in the leading role, perhaps the most outstanding of his many superior characterizations for Civic



"Come Back, Little Sheba": Grace Burkhardt, George Shepard, Arthur Vivian, Carl Nichols, Mary Helen Backmeyer.



George Ranck, Ruth Russ, Eugene Stegall, Andrew Cecere in "My 3 Angels."

Theatre. Henrietta Hirschburg was an appealing and convincing Ophelia. Two gay comedies followed - *For Love or Money*, which had run for 262 performances on Broadway, and the equally popular *Time Out for Ginger*.

For International Theatre Month the choice fell on *The Crucible*, a controversial but powerful play about witch-hunting, including the present by implication. A part of the purpose of International Theatre Month as applied to Richmond, said a program note by Kathleen Postle, was "to dramatize the need for education against ignorance and prejudice and superstition; to point up again the need for freedom of speech, for freedom from fear. Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* underlines admirably the statement of such universals."

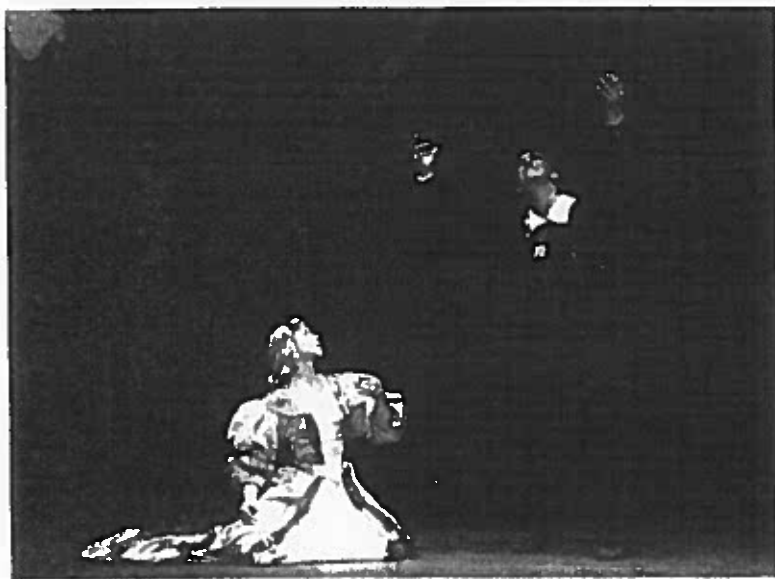
The light-hearted *Sabrina Fair* concluded the season.

*The Crucible* did not meet with universal acclaim in Richmond, nor did *Hamlet*, for which about ten per cent did not even reserve their tickets. In the final program for the year the Director publicly thanked the *Palladium-Item's* reviewer, Carolyn Maund, "who, from the very first production, has helped us in our efforts to bring ADULT ENTERTAINMENT TO AN ADULT AUDIENCE."

The judges for the Jaycees Theatre Awards showed their appreciation for the less popular "meat" of the balanced fare of the

year by naming *Hamlet* as the most outstanding production (Max Scudder as Stage Manager receiving the award on behalf of the staff), and Roger Gale, as John Proctor in *The Crucible* as the best actor. E. Merrill Root was chosen as the best supporting actor for his portrayal of Polonius in *Hamlet*. Mary Helen Backmeyer was honored as best actress for her portrayal of Lola in *Come Back, Little Sheba*, and the best supporting actress was judged to be Mrs. Sarah C. Murray as Nita Havemeyer in *For Love or Money*. These awards, as in the preceding year, were made as a part of the program for the annual dinner at the Forest Hills Country Club.

The election of officers in the spring of 1955 had placed in the presidency Edward Atkinson, Sr., a mainstay for years in set building, and head of a family of Civic Theatre workers. His sons, Edward Jr., and Tom, worked regularly also in set construction, while his daughter Mary Ellen and Mrs. Tom Atkinson also were frequent backstage helpers. Another good year seemed to be in prospect, with no special problems, until in July the dismaying news came that Director Silbiger was seriously ill in the local hospital. Whether he would be able to return to his work with Civic



Henrietta Hirshburg and Eric Curtis star in "Hamlet."



"The Remarkable Mr. Pennypacker": Dr. Morris Wertenberger, Roger Cornett, Tom Klute, Al Miessler.

Theatre was doubtful, and at a called meeting on July 26 the Board discussed possible substitutes. By mid-August it appeared that in a matter of weeks Mr. Silbiger would again be able to serve, so the Board's attention was focused on the choice of persons capable of directing the first play or two of the coming season. Mr. Silbiger was able to attend the Board meeting on September 20, when he presented a list of available plays, including the suggestion that *South Pacific* be considered. There had been no musical presentation since *Hansel and Gretel* in 1944, and the Board was generally favorable to the proposal.

Meanwhile *The Remarkable Mr. Pennypacker* was in rehearsal under the direction of Arthur S. Postle of the E.C.-I.U. Center staff. It was successfully presented on October 3-7. The November production, *Dial M for Murder*, directed by Jane Kemper, was of equally high standard. Norbert Silbiger directed *The King of Hearts* in December, fully recovered and cracking the whip in his old way. An added feature for this play was the exhibition in the lobby of paintings by members of the Richmond Arts Club.

*The Caine Mutiny Court Martial*, so tremendously successful all over the United States, was one of the outstanding productions

of the year, with Arthur Vivian giving a brilliant performance in the difficult role of Lt. Cmdr. Queeg. Three months later, on April 29, the play was repeated in Dayton under the sponsorship of Post 587 of the Jewish War Veterans.

*Picnic*, the much acclaimed Broadway hit, was a moving performance. Meanwhile rehearsals were well under way for *South Pacific*.

To produce this musical play had seemed a large undertaking. The cast alone required 48 people, with six principal roles and two dancing choruses. Civic Theatre was not at all sure that this would not be their first failure from an artistic standpoint, but it would be fun trying, and fun for the audience even if it was not a finished production. Fortunately a splendid musical director volunteered his services — Manfred Blum, comparatively new to Richmond, in fact to the United States, a graduate of the University of Cologne, Germany. Mr. Blum, organist and choir director of St. Mary's Catholic Church and violin teacher at Earlham, was director of the newly formed Richmond Symphony Orchestra, successor of



Mary Ellen Ayres, Mary Helen Backmeyer, and Robert Allen in "South Pacific."



Summers Markle and Edward Vecera in "The Rainmaker."

the Civic Orchestra. For *South Pacific* only organ and piano would be used for accompaniment. James Kauper and Robert Byrd, both accomplished musicians, were available for this service, and Mary Ellen Atkinson Ayres, who conducted a local dance studio, was the choreographer. Robert Allen and Wilson Wright headed the staff as Production Managers.

Plans had been carefully laid and executed, the cast was well chosen, and the result exceeded all expectations. With this proof that the local organization could produce musical plays, it was hoped to include one in each succeeding season. An invitation was received to repeat *South Pacific* as a benefit for the local hospital drive, but the Board regretfully declined.

*The Rainmaker* concluded the year, with veteran player Josephine Jordan lured to the leading role from her farm home and children, now numbering five.

The city of Richmond was making plans for a sesquicentennial pageant and parade in the summer of 1956, and the committee in charge invited Civic Theatre to supply a general chairman and various committee heads for the pageant. A similar invitation had come from Earlham nine years before, when that institution was planning its centennial, and the same answer was given now as then: Civic Theatre as an organization should not drain its energies by undertaking to put on performances for other groups. It would, however, supply names of capable workers, who might help



as individuals. Many such individuals did contribute much to the success of both these occasions.

Again the Jaycee Theatre Awards were made at the annual dinner, with the musical play figuring largely in the judges' decisions. Max Scudder received on behalf of his staff, for the second time, the certificate for the outstanding production — *South Pacific*. That production also supplied the best actress — Geneta Kern as Ensign Nellie Forbush — and the best supporting actor — William Warfel as Luther Billis. The best actor was Ray Imperial as Lt. Barney Greenwald in *The Caine Mutiny Court Martial*; and the best supporting actress was Jane Kemper as Rosemary Sidney in *Picnic*.

In recognition of their outstanding contribution toward the success of *South Pacific* special Jaycee awards were given to the musical director and accompanists — an engraved cigarette box to Manfred Blum and gift certificates for recordings to James Kauper and Robert Byrd. A gold cigarette lighter was given to Mrs. Percy Robbins, who had supplied organ music on numerous occasions for Civic Theatre.

## XI NOW AND TOMORROW

For the season of 1956-57 the membership reached an all-time high of 2929. A big yellow Cadillac with a uniformed chauffeur at the door of the Indiana Theatre each night of the opening production in October might have been thought a symbol of the comparative prosperity of the organization, but it was only a gesture of goodwill, combined with an advertising stunt, on the part of Chenoweth Cadillac, Inc., in view of the play's title, *The Solid Gold Cadillac*.

"The goals" stated the program, "remain unchanged: entertainment and the promulgation of worthwhile drama, with plays of the highest quality for an appreciative audience." The promise was fulfilled with the succeeding plays. There was *Anastasia*, in which June Bartlemy and Resy Kipfer shared top honors as the controversial princess and the dowager empress; then *A Roomful of Roses* with Janis Ison starring as the teen-age girl with the psychological conflict. In *Time Limit*, that story of brain-washing with its bewildering traitor who eventually captures the sympathy of the audience, Edward N. Anderson was a superb staff advocate. *Anniversary Waltz* was as giddy and hilarious as intended. If the best half dozen of Civic Theatre's 120 productions to date were to be listed, surely the 120th, *Teahouse of the August Moon*, would be included. It was not only a first-rate comedy, providing thought along with laughter, but was superbly acted and produced. Especially notable was Ned Berheide, a natural as Sakani, and Dr. Richard Brown, local urologist, as the captain with the passion for gardening.

The season concluded with the hair-raising *Witness for the Prosecution*, in which Jane Kemper gave so outstanding a performance as Romaine as to be named for the Jaycee Award as the best actress of the year. That play supplied also the best supporting actress — Mrs. Gordon Bringle as Janet Mackenzie. The best actor award went to Edward N. Anderson for his portrayal of Lt. Col. Edwards in *Time Limit*, and the best supporting actor was judged to be Dr. Brown as Capt. McLean in *The Teahouse of the August Moon*, the



**"Anastasia":** Ray Imperial, June Bartlemay, Resy Kipfer.



**"The Solid Gold Cadillac":** Mrs. Harry Frankel, Florence Sweet, Z.A. Campbell.

play receiving the award as the best production. William Barth, Production Manager, accepted the award for the staff. *Teahouse* was indeed something special for Richmond, an extraordinary play presented in a highly creditable manner.

A feature of the season was a display in the lobby, changed for each play, of work by members of the Richmond Arts Club. The Theatre programs carried from time to time notices of art exhibitions at the public galleries in McGuire Memorial Hall. The attention of members was directed also to dramatic and musical events in Richmond and in nearby cities.

The Sunday afternoon matinees, intermittent but highly appreciated by a limited audience, were resumed on November 18 of that year with scenes from Shakespeare: Warren and Patricia Staebler in *Taming of the Shrew*; Earlham students in a scene from *Henry IV*; Eric Curtis reading from plays and sonnets; and Jane Kemper giving interpretations of several of Shakespeare's feminine roles. A second matinee, on February 17, was again "something special" — the 18th century comic opera *La Serva Padrona*, under the direction of Manfred Blum. The Musical Arts Society quartet composed of Blum, Kurt Glaubitz of the Earlham faculty, and Adon Foster and Joseph Bein of the Miami University faculty supplied the accompaniment. The singing parts were taken by Katherine Griffith of the Earlham faculty and Wilson Wright. It is regrettable that so outstanding a production could not have been shared by the entire membership.

The local organization continued its contacts with other com-



**"Time Limit":** Ray Imperial, Carroll Morgan, Edward N. Anderson, Wm. Bone.



munity theatre personnel and ideas by sending representatives on February 24 to the state conference at the new Community Theatre in Terre Haute. In attendance were the William Barths, the Edward Andersons, the Charles Kempers, and the Arthur Postles. Barth was featured on a panel discussing business phases of the Richmond organization.

The Board had always taken seriously the selection of suitable nominees for that body, but there had been nothing in writing for the guidance of the Nominating Committee. Such a guide was formulated by that Committee itself and reported by the chairman, Edward N. Anderson, to the Board on April 17, 1957:

1. A candidate should be a person of unshakable integrity which expresses itself in his or her whole life.
2. The candidate must be dedicated to the ideals of the Civic Theatre and have the maturity which will enable him to work patiently, firmly, and wisely with his fellow board members.
3. He must be capable of stimulating and strengthening the life of the Civic Theatre membership.
4. He must be conscientious, hardworking, and resourceful in his duties, work, and obligations to the organization.

William Barth was re-elected president, but when his work changed so that he might sometimes need to be out of town at the time of Board meetings he resigned on August 25, but retained his membership on the Board at its request. Edward N. Anderson, who had been elected treasurer, was made president instead.

The season had ended with a neat balance of \$1928 in the operating fund, but there were warning signs that the financial picture was changing. The International Harvester was closing its Richmond plant; some of its personnel who were Civic Theatre members were being transferred elsewhere, and others felt too uncertain of their future to renew their memberships. General recession conditions resulted in other non-renewals. Total membership during the year was 2718, a loss of some 200 members, even after absorbing the waiting list. For so many years there has been no membership campaign, but to retain full houses a campaign was planned for the coming season.

New physical arrangements needed to be worked out for some phases of the program, since it had been decided in February 1957 to discontinue the use of the old Salvation Army building at the end of the season. Hereafter headquarters would be in the Indiana Theatre, and since rehearsals could not take place on the stage at the same time a set was being built, a room for rehearsals was rented at the Westcott Hotel, across the street from the Theatre. In January, however, a more suitable arrangement was made by renting three rooms on the second floor of the Theatre building, removing a partition to enlarge the rehearsal space. For greater efficiency in



Harry Kepler, Stephen Sherrow, and Fred Copeland in "The Desperate Hours."

the technical side of play production, Tom Atkinson was named Technical Director for the season at a nominal remuneration.

At the beginning of the current season a formal arrangement was made with the Junior Chamber of Commerce for a concession to sell coffee and soft drinks in the lobby. In return for this privilege, the Jaycees agreed to supply ushers from their membership. Another concession was given on a trial basis to Tri Kappa and Psi Iota Xi to operate a cloakroom adjoining the lobby.

The season opened with the tense and absorbing melodrama *The Desperate Hours*, of special interest because its locale is in the neighboring city of Indianapolis, from which its author, Joseph Hayes, came. In this play Dick Dils, as the leader of the escaped criminals, joined the top rank of Civic Theatre performers.

The reputation for fine performances of musical plays was maintained by *Plain and Fancy*, with Manfred Blum serving again as musical director. Again Robert Byrd was organist, assisted this time by David Koehring. The choreographer was Gloria Dixon, dancing instructor of Connersville and Richmond.

In *The Great Sebastians* Edward N. Anderson and Sarah Murray

gave a satisfying performance in the roles made famous by the Lunts. One of the high points of the year was the thought-provoking play *Inherit the Wind*, concerning the Scopes trial in Tennessee, with Charles Matthews, a veteran in Earlham and Civic Theatre plays and now Instructor in English and Speech at Earlham, in a stunning performance as Henry Drummond, who in real life was the famous Clarence Darrow who defended Scopes. Celebrating this 125th production, and since the play is based on a famous trial, Civic Theatre saluted the legal profession by inviting all members of the Wayne County Bar Association as special guests. Another feature of the celebration was the presentation by Mayor Roland Cutter, at the Wednesday evening performance of the following

**DECLARATORY RESOLUTION  
of Richmond City Council**

WHEREAS, it has come to the attention of this body that the Richmond Civic Theatre, Inc., is staging its 125th production, *Inherit the Wind*, January 28 - February 1st, 1958, and

WHEREAS, since the birth of Richmond Civic Theatre, Inc. in 1941, the Community has been rewarded with fine, masterful and



Family group in "Plain and Fancy": Kent Beisner, Veda Pottenger, Jane Coppock, Summers Markle, Jane Kemper.



"Inherit the Wind": Charles Matthews, Frank Porfidio, Dr. Norman Cook, Donald McKinney, Loren Satterdahl, Dr. Morris Wertenberger, Ray Potter, Roger Gale.

entertaining productions from this group, and all while under the superb direction of Mr. Norbert Silbiger, and

WHEREAS, this organization has received state-wide and even nationwide acclaim through its endeavors in the field of Civic Theatre, and

WHEREAS, the people and the city of Richmond have received immeasurable pleasure and entertainment and recognition from the efforts of this group,

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF RICHMOND, INDIANA, that the Richmond Civic Theatre, Inc., its Director, Board of Directors and Membership be and the same are hereby commended for its 125th continuous production; for its unselfish contribution to the culture of the community and for its success in the field of Civic Theatres. And further, said Council wishes continued success.

Adopted by the Common Council of the City of Richmond, Indiana, this 20th day of January, 1958.

S/Kenneth Smithmeyer, President

Attest: David O. Keyser S/City Clerk

*Speaking of Murder*, that "frantic bit of implausibility," in the words of John McClain of the *New York Journal American*, was made properly shuddery by an able cast. The 127th production was a repetition of the outstanding poetic drama *Dark of the Moon*, presented twelve years previously, but now in a new version. It was a fitting memorial to Richmond's first "witch boy," the late Lang Baily. In the role of Barbara Allen was the bewitching Josephine Jordan, who played the part in the 1946 production.

There had been debate whether the sophisticated *The Seven Year Itch* might have too limited an appeal to be a good choice for the final play of the season, preceding a membership campaign, but the matchless performance of Lindley Johnson as the summer bachelor, with able support from the cast at large, silenced the most critical.

The year was climaxed on May 18 by the annual dinner and presentation of the Jaycee Theatre Awards, in the new Earham Hall dining room with 300 members in attendance. The program recaptured high points of previous performances, with perhaps a forecast of the future, by hit tunes from *Plain and Fancy*, *South Pacific*, *The Music Man*, and *My Fair Lady*, performed by some of the most talented members. Charles Matthews received the Best Actor award for his interpretation of Henry Drummond in *Inherit the Wind*, with his adversary in that performance, Dr. Norman Cook as Mathew Brady, receiving the award as Best Supporting Actor. The play was judged Best Production of the year, with Barney Runnels receiving the award on behalf of his crew. The Best Actress was Josephine Jordan, as Barbara Allen in *Dark of the Moon*, a climax to her many outstanding performances. Veda Pottenger as Hilda Miller in *Plain and Fancy* was named Best Supporting Actress.

As the final words of this account are written Civic Theatre's season of 1958-59 is in the midst of its eighteenth season, again under the leadership of Edward Anderson as President, with a membership of 2718. The choice of the opening production was ambitious — *The King and I*, offered for the first time by an amateur group. The choice was especially appropriate since the book on which it was based, *Anna and the King of Siam* by Margaret Landon, was partly written in Richmond by an Earham professor's wife, and a chapter or two had been read from manuscript to the local Scribblers Club. Any misgivings were quickly dissipated by the really superlative cast and the heroic efforts of production workers — Jean Sloop as Anna, Ray Imperial as the King, to mention only the leads, with Manfred Blum again as musical director and Jane Bennett Bowne as choreographer. The general reaction has been that it was the best production ever given in Richmond. Judging by experience, however, Richmond Civic Theatre's best is always bettered sooner or later.

*The King and I* was especially notable also for the achievement



"On Borrowed Time": Deskin Jones, Rex Smith, Helen Bringle, Margaret Beldler.

of the Costume Committee, under the chairmanship of Mrs. Leon T. Cox, which made all costumes, including masks, with all Anna's costumes made by Mrs. Everett Bennett, Jr., Costume Chairman for the year. Indiana Central College, which sent a delegation to the play, rented the costumes for their own performance. Other such requests are foreseen. It can be added that throughout the years one of the finest examples of hard work, devotion, resourcefulness, and harmonious cooperation has been supplied by the successive Costume Committees, including some members who have served for many seasons.

Many other examples of enthusiasm for, and devotion to, Civic Theatre could be cited, notably Mary Helen Backmeyer who has acted in 26 plays and worked on production of 62, a total of 68% of all productions; Elmira Kempton who has designed sets or program covers for 63% of the productions; the Atkinsons — Ed, Ed, Jr. and Tom (not to mention others of their families) — who have helped to produce 57, 31, and 46 plays respectively; and Manley Lawrence who worked on production in 38 consecutive plays, besides 11 others.

The second, third, and fourth plays of the current season — *The*

*Hasty Heart, On Borrowed Time* and *Bad Seed* – have maintained the traditional high standard of acting and production. Surely no more realistic apple tree ever graced a stage than the one which trapped our local Mr. Brink. The difficult part of the killer child in *Bad Seed* was performed by Linda Vigrass on a level worthy of any professional stage. Now comes *The Diary of Anne Frank*, with *The Tender Trap* as the 134th play, closing the season.

Civic Theatre Board and members are acutely aware of pressing needs. The lease on the Indiana Theatre will expire at the end of the 1958-59 season, but has been renewed for one more year. From the beginning members have dreamed of having their own building, or a recognized share in an auditorium with facilities adequate for play production and available to Civic Theatre for the time needed to carry out its program.

On January 20, 1947, Hazel Emry wrote from Indiana University to President Thomas E. Jones of Earlham, after discussing the problem with some of the members, an exploratory letter suggesting that Earlham and Civic Theatre join in a project to erect a fine arts building on the campus which would incorporate an auditorium and other needed facilities for play production. "The benefits would be mutual, I believe," she wrote, "for besides solving the acute housing problem of Civic Theatre and giving the organization stability and prestige, Earlham would gain a new building offering expansion in all lines of the Fine Arts."

But Earlham was deeply involved in more urgent building operations, and only now is ready to turn its attention to the needs in fine arts. On October 10, 1957, President Anderson named William Barth chairman of a committee to study possibilities for a permanent home for Civic Theatre. There were exploratory talks with Landrum Bolling, Earlham's president-elect, and in February 1958 Earlham's Board of Trustees authorized its chairman to name from the Board and Faculty members of a joint committee with Civic Theatre to consider further the possibility of a cooperative project. This joint committee is still engaged, with the help of James Hull Miller of Terre Haute as consultant, in a study of possible plans for a building to serve the needs of both Earlham and Civic Theatre. At the same time thought is being given to possible alternate plans for a Civic Theatre building without relation to Earlham.

Looking toward a membership campaign in the spring of 1958, and with involvement in a campaign for building funds likely, it seemed wise to appoint a Committee on Public Relations. Dr. Morris Wertenberger of the Board was named chairman. At the Board's request Opal Thornburg consented to write a history of Richmond Civic Theatre, so that facts concerning the origins and growth of the organization could be preserved and drawn upon as needed.

What tomorrow will bring to Richmond Civic Theatre depends on varied factors – the genius of the director, the physical facilities, the wisdom of the Board and their devotion to their task, and the continued large membership and active participation, matching the 2200 in acting production to date, not as a public duty or a charity but for value returned in overflowing measure. As Brooks Atkinson, noted drama critic of *The New York Times*, has said:

*Without a theatre a democratic community is not fully alive: part of the community spirit is being wasted. Audiences have a capacity for creation, and the theatre is one of the places where people fulfill themselves as members of the race. . . . In the life of a community the theatre is a stimulating force because it is entirely social. It brings all sorts of people together for a common experience, and sharpens their capacity for judgment. (From Antioch Notes, published by Antioch College).*

The events of the next few months may be as fateful for the future of Richmond Civic Theatre as those of 1941 when it was struggling to be born; the years to come may be even better than we have dared to dream.

APPENDIX I

CONSTITUTION  
OF

THE RICHMOND CIVIC THEATRE, INC.

- ARTICLE I. The name of the organization shall be The Richmond Civic Theatre, inc.
- ARTICLE II. The purpose of the organization shall be to encourage, cultivate, and develop the art of drama, music, and literature among the adults and students of our community; to produce or cause to be given in the City of Richmond, Wayne County, Indiana, dramatic or operatic presentations, concerts and other entertainments; to erect, acquire, equip, and maintain, by purchase, lease, or otherwise, one or more theatres or opera houses; to acquire all necessary costumes, scenery, properties, musical libraries, and other material for use in connection with the giving of dramatic or operatic entertainments.
- ARTICLE III. The officers of the organization shall be a president, a vice-president, a recording secretary, a treasurer, and a business board manager to be elected from the members in the manner stated in the by-laws.
- ARTICLE IV. The governing body of the organization shall be a Board of Directors elected from the members in the manner stated in the by-laws.
- ARTICLE V. Annual meetings of the organization shall be held.
- ARTICLE VI. Membership in the organization shall be open to any person living in Richmond or vicinity who pays the annual membership dues. All members have the privilege of attending and voting at annual meetings and of participating in Civic Theatre activities.
- ARTICLE VII. The Board shall have the power to amend the constitution.

BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I. Members

Section 1. A member of the corporation is a person who has been accepted by the Membership Committee of the corporation as a member of the corporation for any current fiscal year, and to whom the Committee has issued a current fiscal year or seasonal certificate of membership, signed by the President and Secretary by their fac-simile signatures, stating that he is a member of the corporation for the current fiscal year or season and who has paid his dues for such year. Such Certificate of Membership shall substantially be in the following form:

CERTIFICATE OF MEMBERSHIP

We hereby certify that..... No. ....  
 Richmond Civic Theatre, Inc. for the fiscal year May 1, 19.....  
 April 30, ..... Dues paid \$.....

.....  
 Secretary President

Sec. 2. A certificate of membership may not be assigned or transferred to any person, other than the person named therein, without the consent of the Membership Committee, which consent shall be endorsed on the certificate.

Sec. 3. Every member shall have the right to attend all annual and special meetings of the corporation, to vote in person for directors of the corporation, to participate in the activities of the corporation, and to attend and witness any and all regular productions of plays given and produced by the corporation for the entertainment of its members without any charge or admission fee; and to have reserved for him a seat in the theatre for any such production of plays.

Sec. 4. The Secretary of the corporation shall at all times keep at the principal office of the corporation a complete and accurate list of all members of the corporation for the current fiscal year or season, which list may be inspected by any member for any proper purpose, at any reasonable time.

## ARTICLE II. Board of Directors

Section 1. The Board of Directors shall consist of fifteen regularly elected members of the corporation. On failure of a member of the Board of Directors to attend four consecutive meetings of the Board, or on failure of a member to remain and be a member of the corporation, then a majority of the remaining members of the Board of Directors shall have the right to declare such member to have resigned and that a vacancy exists, and to fill the vacancy by electing another member to serve until the next annual meeting of the corporation. Eight members of the Board shall constitute a quorum.

Sec. 2. At every annual meeting of the members of the corporation, the members present and voting shall elect five members of the Board of Directors, each to serve for a term of three years, to begin on the date of his election and until his successor is duly elected, and shall also elect members of the Board of Directors to fill any vacancies.

Sec. 3. The Board of Directors shall hold monthly meetings, except in the months of July and August, at such times as the President and Secretary shall decide and call the same; and the Board of Directors shall hold such other meetings as the President and Secretary shall decide and call.

Sec. 4. The Board of Directors shall manage and control all the affairs and business of the corporation, and control and supervise its activities, and determine all its policies in furtherance of the objects and best interests of the corporation. The corporation shall produce between September 1st of each year and the first day of May of the succeeding year, for the entertainment of its members, plays to be selected and determined by the Board of Directors.

Sec. 5. The Board of Directors shall determine, name and elect, by a majority vote of the members present at its first or annual meeting after the annual meeting of the members of the corporation, the officers of the corporation. The officers of the corporation shall be a President, a Vice-President, a Secretary and a Treasurer, each to serve as such officer on and from the day of his election until his successor is elected. The Board of Directors may appoint such employees as may be necessary to carry on the work, activities and affairs of the corporation, and fix their duties and compensation.

Sec. 6. The Board of Directors shall consider and act on the budget presented to it by the Budget Committee and fix the final budget for the current fiscal year and deliver copies of the same to the Secretary and the Treasurer of the corporation.

## ARTICLE III. Officers of the Corporation

Section 1. **PRESIDENT.** It shall be the duty of the President to

preside at all meetings of the Board of Directors and all meetings of the corporation. He shall call such meetings of the Board of Directors as may be necessary to carry on the business of the corporation, and shall appoint such committees as may be provided in the By-Laws for carrying on the business of the corporation.

Sec. 2. **VICE-PRESIDENT.** The Vice-President shall perform the duties of the President in the event of the absence or inability of the President to act, and any special duties assigned to him by the President or by the Board of Directors.

Sec. 3. **SECRETARY.** It shall be the duty of the Secretary to give notice of all meetings of members of the corporation and to give notice of all meetings of the Board of Directors, as provided by the By-Laws. The Secretary shall keep an accurate record, in writing, of all meetings, and shall make such reports as the Board of Directors may direct.

In January of every year, the Secretary shall file with the Secretary of State of Indiana, a report of the corporation for the last calendar year, and shall also make and file any other reports required by the government, State or Federal.

The Secretary shall keep on file, a list of members of the corporation, a copy of the budget for the current fiscal year, and all the papers and contracts of the corporation, such as certificate of incorporation, articles of incorporation, leases, contracts, insurance policies, inventory of the property and equipment of the corporation, and a copy of the By-Laws.

Sec. 4. **TREASURER.** The Treasurer and such other person as may be designated by formal resolution of the Board of Directors to assist the Treasurer in handling of the funds of the corporation, shall be bonded by the corporation in the sum of \$10,000 in a surety company approved by the Board of Directors. It shall be the duty of the Treasurer to keep an accurate account of all the funds of the corporation, showing all receipts and disbursements, to submit a statement of all receipts and disbursements at each regular meeting of the Board of Directors, and to make a final report, in writing, at the end of the fiscal year to the members of the corporation at their annual meeting, showing all receipts and disbursements and balance on hand for the last preceding fiscal year.

The Treasurer shall receive and hold all monies of the corporation by depositing them in the Second National Bank of Richmond, Indiana, to the credit of the corporation, and shall pay all the fixed amounts owing by the corporation, for such items as salary of the director, rents, utilities, taxes and insurance, as the same shall become due and payable; pay such other bills and accounts as may be approved and ordered paid by the Board of Directors; pay such other bills and accounts as may be approved and ordered paid by the Chairman of the Production Committee; and pay such



other bills and accounts as may be approved by the Chairman of the Membership Committee.

The Treasurer shall keep on file a copy of the budget for the current fiscal year, a list of members of the corporation for the current fiscal year, an inventory of the property and equipment of the corporation, a copy of the By-Laws of the corporation, and receipts for all bills paid.

#### ARTICLE IV. Dues

Section 1. The membership dues shall be fixed by the Board of Directors for each current fiscal year or season, and shall be payable in advance to the Membership Committee.

#### ARTICLE V. Fiscal Year

Section 1. The fiscal year of the corporation shall begin on May 1st of every year, and extend to and include April 30th of the succeeding year. The play season shall begin September 1st and extend to and include April 30th of the following year.

#### ARTICLE VI. Meetings

Section 1. The annual meeting of the members of the corporation and of the Board of Directors shall be held at the principal office of the corporation in the City of Richmond, Indiana, during the month of May of each year at such time as shall be fixed by the Board of Directors. Notice of the place, day and hour of the annual meeting shall be given by one publication in a newspaper of general circulation, printed in the English language, in Wayne County, Indiana, such publication to be made not less than ten days nor more than thirty days prior to the date of such annual meeting; and such notice shall state the names of the candidates for the members of the Board of Directors to be elected at such annual meeting; and further, if the Board of Directors shall so order, the Secretary shall cause to be delivered to the members of the corporation at the time of the production of the last play given by the corporation in the current fiscal year, a printed copy of such notice, either as a part of the program delivered to the members at such play, or separately.

Sec. 2. Special meetings of the members of the corporation may be called by the President, by a majority of the vote of the Board of Directors, or by written petition signed by not less than one-tenth of the members of the corporation. Notice of such special meetings shall be given by one publication in a newspaper of general circulation printed in the English language in Wayne County, Indiana, such publication to be made not less than ten days nor more than thirty days prior to the date of such special meeting, and such notice shall state the purpose for which such special meeting is called.

Sec. 3. At any annual or special meeting of the members of the corporation, twenty-five members present at such meeting on the calling of the meeting to order by the President shall constitute a quorum.

Sec. 4. At each annual meeting an election shall be held for members of the Board of Directors. The election shall be conducted by the Nominating Committee, as provided in Article VII, Sec. 2 (c).

#### ARTICLE VII. Standing Committees

Section 1. The President, with the advice of the Board of Directors, shall appoint the chairmen of all committees and fix the number of members of such committees. The chairman of each such committee shall select a co-chairman and all other members of such committees and report the names of the members of such committee to the President by September 1st of every year. The President shall then deliver to the Secretary a list of all such committees, and the list of all such committees shall be kept posted on the bulletin board in the principal office of the corporation during the current play season.

Sec. 2. The standing committees and the duties and powers of such committees shall be as follows:

(a) MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE. The Committee shall, during the months of March and April of every year, make and print the necessary number of membership certificates for the next fiscal year in form as provided by Article I of the By-Laws, and deliver the same in person or by United States mail to the persons who shall be members of the corporation for such fiscal year, and at the time of such delivery shall collect from such persons the dues for such fiscal year, and pay such dues over to the Treasurer by the following May 5th. The Committee shall deliver to the Secretary and to the Treasurer by May 5th a list of the names and addresses of the persons to whom the Committee has delivered certificates of membership.

The Membership Committee shall, during every play season, make and print the necessary number of tickets for reserving seats for all the members of the corporation for all the plays given and produced by the corporation for the entertainment of the members, and assign and deliver the same in person or by United States mail to the members by at least three days before the production of each play.

The Committee shall, in due time, publish in a newspaper, printed and published in Richmond, Indiana, notices of the time and place when certificates of membership and when tickets for reserved seats will be delivered to the members of the corporation, and shall give any other publicity for such purposes as the Committee shall deem expedient. The Membership Committee shall be



in charge of and conduct any campaigns of publicity that it may think necessary for the purpose of securing members of the corporation.

The Chairman of the Committee shall promptly approve for payment and deliver to the Treasurer any and all bills incurred by the Committee for printing certificates of membership, tickets for seats and any other expenses incurred in discharging its duties and powers.

(b) BUDGET COMMITTEE. The Committee shall prepare and present to the Board of Directors at its meeting in the month of June in every year, a budget for the current fiscal year, showing all anticipated items of receipts by the corporation during such year, and showing for what purposes such money shall be expended by the corporation, particularly stating the amounts to be allotted for the production of each play during the play season, the amount for payment of all rents, salaries, taxes, insurance, utilities, heating of office building, printing of programs and seat tickets for plays, membership certificates and any other printing, and repairs of property and all like matters.

The Board shall consider and act on such budget and fix the same for the current calendar year, and a copy of the budget as so finally adopted by the Board shall remain on file with the Treasurer and Secretary of the Corporation.

The Committee at the end of every fiscal year, shall have an audit made of the books and accounts of the Treasurer of the corporation and for this purpose may employ a competent accountant to aid the Committee. The Committee shall then make and file with the Board of Directors a report of such audit and submit to the Board any bill incurred for services of the accountant for payment.

(c) NOMINATING COMMITTEE. In March of every year, the President, with the advice of the Board of Directors, shall appoint a Nominating Committee consisting of two members of the Board of Directors and three members who are not members of the Board of Directors. The Committee shall, by April 10th following, file with the Secretary a form of ballot containing the names of ten members of the corporation as candidates at the next annual meeting of the corporation for five members of the Board of Directors, and any other director required to be selected at such meeting to fill a vacancy.

The Committee shall prepare and have at the next annual meeting of the corporation the necessary number of ballots, and distribute the same to the members present, for the purpose of casting their votes for the members of the Board of Directors to be elected at such meeting, and after the voting is had, shall act as tellers and canvass the vote and report to the meeting the names of persons elected as directors. The five receiving the highest number of votes shall be declared elected as regular members of the

Board; and, in the event a director is elected to fill a vacancy, then the candidate receiving the highest number of votes shall be declared elected a member to fill the vacancy. There shall be one form of ballot for the election of the five members of the Board, and a separate ballot to fill any or each vacancy on the Board of Directors.

(d) TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE. The Committee shall, at the proper time, provide for the transportation to the theatre where any play shall be produced, of the sets, light equipment and sound equipment, and any other properties necessary for the production of the play, in due time before dress rehearsals and production of the play and after the play has been produced, to promptly thereafter transport the same back to the places from which they have been transported or to the proper persons entitled to the custody of the same. For the purpose of doing so efficiently, the Committee should consult with the Chairman of the Production Committee, the Chairman of the Set Committee, and the Chairman of the Light Committee, Chairman of the Sound Committee, and the director of the play. The Chairman of the Committee shall promptly secure all bills incurred for the transportation for the production of any play and approve the same for payment and deliver the same to the Chairman of the Production Committee.

(e) COSTUME COMMITTEE. In ample time before the production of any play, the Committee shall consult and advise with the Director and the Chairman of the Production Committee and list the costumes necessary for the play and secure the same, and have the necessary costumes at the theatre ready for use at the dress rehearsals and production of the play. Costumes may be borrowed, rented, made, or purchased by the Committee as, in the opinion of the Committee, needed. The Committee should care for the costumes and see that the same are kept in good condition during the production of the play, and help the cast with changes of costumes. After the play has been produced, the Committee shall promptly see that all costumes are promptly returned in good condition to the proper owners or custodians of the same.

All bills incurred in securing costumes, maintaining the same in good condition and delivering same back to the owners or proper custodians shall be promptly obtained by the Chairman of the Committee, approved by him for payment, and delivered to the Chairman of the Production Committee.

(f) MAKEUP COMMITTEE. In ample time before the production of any play, the Chairman of the Makeup Committee shall consult with the Director and the Chairman of the Production Committee as to makeup needed for the play. The Committee shall secure the necessary equipment, makeup kits and makeup materials and have the same at the theatre in the makeup room in due time for dress rehearsals and production of the play. The Committee shall make

up the cast for rehearsals and play nights. The Committee shall promptly clean up the makeup room after a play has been produced, and return the equipment, makeup kits and all unused materials to the principal offices of the corporation, or custodian of the same.

The Chairman shall promptly, after the production of any play, secure all bills incurred by the Committee for such play, approve the same for payment and deliver the same to the Chairman of the Production Committee.

(g) PROGRAM COMMITTEE. In ample time before the production of any play, the Committee shall consult and advise with the Director, the Chairman of the Production Committee, and the Chairman of the Advertising Committee and shall make up and edit all programs necessary for the production of any play, and have inserted in the same all advertisements supplied by the advertising committee. The Committee shall have the programs printed and delivered to the theatre for distribution to members of the corporation by the doorkeepers, in due time before the production of any play.

The Chairman of the Committee shall, after the production of any play, promptly secure and approve payment of all bills incurred in producing the programs and deliver the same to the Treasurer.

(h) LIGHTING COMMITTEE. In ample time before the production of any play, the Committee shall consult with the Director, Chairman of the Production Committee, Chairman of the Sound Committee, and Chairman of the Transportation Committee. The Committee shall secure for each play all necessary lighting equipment and see that it is packed and loaded on a truck and delivered to the theatre in due time for dress rehearsals and production of the plays. The Committee shall hang and adjust the lighting equipment according to the light plot for the play and mark the light cues on the lighting plan and see that the light operator is at his station at all times during the production of the play. The Committee shall keep the equipment in good repair at all times. After the production of the play, the Committee shall promptly pack and see that the equipment is returned to the principal office of the corporation or the proper custodian.

After the production of the play, the Chairman shall promptly secure all bills incurred by the Committee for the production of the play and approve the same for payment and deliver the same to the Chairman of the Production Committee.

(i) SOUND COMMITTEE. In ample time before the production of any play, the Committee shall consult with the Director, the Chairman of the Production Committee and the Chairman of the Lighting Committee. The Committee shall procure the necessary sound equipment for each play and have the same at the theatre in due time for dress rehearsals and production of the play. The Com-

mittee shall have and keep the same in good condition and set the same up for every play, and operate the same during dress rehearsals and production of the play. The Committee shall mark sound cues and see that the operators are on duty at all times during the production of the play. After the play has been produced, the Committee shall promptly remove the sound equipment and return the same to the principal office of the corporation or to the proper custodians in good condition.

After the production of the play, the Chairman of the Committee shall promptly secure all bills incurred by the Committee and approve the same for payment and deliver the same to the Chairman of the Production Committee.

(j) PROPERTIES COMMITTEE. In ample time before the production of any play, the Committee shall consult with the Director, Chairman of the Transportation Committee, and Chairman of the Production Committee, and ascertain what properties are needed for the production of the play. The Committee shall then secure all the necessary properties and have them at the theatre in due time for dress rehearsals and production of the play. The Committee may borrow, rent, make or purchase properties necessary for the production of the plays. The Committee shall set the stage with properties according to the production plan and make all property changes during the production of the play. The Committee shall hang all drapes and pictures, and place all rugs, chairs, tables and so forth. The Committee shall be responsible for the safety and care of all properties and have the same covered by insurance if necessary.

Promptly after the production of a play, the Committee shall return all properties to the owners or persons entitled to the custody of the same, and report to the Chairman of the Production Committee any damage done to any property.

After the production of any play, the Chairman of the Committee shall promptly secure all bills incurred by the Committee in the production of the play and approve the same for payment and deliver the same to the Chairman of the Production Committee.

(k) SET CONSTRUCTION COMMITTEE. In ample time before the production of any play, the Committee shall select a stage manager and consult with the Director, Chairman of the Production Committee, Chairman of the Painting Committee and Chairman of the Transportation Committee, and shall ascertain how the set shall be built, according to the stage plans. The Committee shall secure all necessary materials and lumber, and build the set according to stage plan. The Committee shall load the set on trucks for delivery to the theatre and have the same delivered to the theatre, and set it up at the theatre in due time for dress rehearsals and production of the play. The Committee shall make any and all necessary repairs or changes during dress rehearsals and production of plays.

After the play has been produced the Committee shall strike and take down the set and return same to the principal office of the corporation.

The Chairman of the Committee, after the production of the play, shall promptly secure all bills incurred for the play, approve the same for payment, and deliver the same to the Chairman of the Production Committee.

(l) SET PAINTING COMMITTEE. In ample time before the production of any play, the Committee shall consult with the Director, Chairman of the Set Construction Committee, and Chairman of the Property Committee, and determine definitely how the set shall be painted. The Committee shall secure the stage plan and procure all necessary paints, brushes, and materials, and paint the set according to plan in due time for delivery of set to the theatre before dress rehearsals and production of the play.

The Chairman of the Committee, after the production of the play, shall promptly secure all bills incurred, approve the same for payment and deliver the same to the Chairman of the Production Committee.

(m) PRODUCTION COMMITTEE. In ample time before the production of a play, the Chairman of the Production Committee shall consult with and cooperate with the Director and Chairman of all committees connected with the production of the play and, in general, shall supervise the production of the play. The Committee should try to keep the expense of the production of the play within the amount allowed by the budget for the play and, if it shall be necessary for any reason to exceed the amount allowed by the budget, it shall first take the matter up with the Director, Treasurer, and President of the Board of Directors for decision and approval. The Committee shall see that the stage of the theatre is in due time arranged for the reception of the set and properties, lighting and sound equipment, and that after the production of the play, the stage is left in good, clean condition.

For the production of each play, the Treasurer shall advance to the Chairman of the Production Committee a small sum of money as petty cash, not to exceed fifty dollars, to pay small bills as they shall be incurred.

After the production of the play, the Chairman of the Production committee shall request of the Chairman of the various committees involved in the production of the play, that they promptly present to him for payment, any and all bills incurred by the various committees in the production of the play, and the Chairman of the Production Committee shall then approve the same for payment and deliver the same to the Treasurer for payment.

Promptly after the production of every play, the Chairman of the Committee shall file with the Treasurer and the President of the

corporation, an itemized financial report of the cost of the production of the play.

(n) BUILDING, EQUIPMENT AND INVENTORY COMMITTEE. The Committee shall have and maintain general oversight and inspection of the building of the principal office of the corporation, and keep and maintain the same in good condition and repair, and recommend to the Board of Directors what repairs should be made, and to make them on order of the Board of Directors. The Committee shall see that the building is kept properly locked and protected when not being used by the Board of Directors, Committees and members of the corporation. The Committee shall make and keep for its records, and file with the Treasurer and Secretary, an inventory of all equipment, properties and costumes of the corporation kept in the building of the principal office or elsewhere, and shall also see that the same are properly and safely stored.

(o) PUBLICITY COMMITTEE. It shall be the duty of the Publicity Committee to confer at proper times with the Director and Chairman of the Production Committees and other Chairmen of committees and see that there is properly published in the newspapers of the City of Richmond, Indiana, for the benefit and information of its members, at proper times, any and all publicity articles concerning the activities of and plays produced by the corporation, and provide for publication of any and all announcements that should be made by the Director, by the Board of Directors, and by the Chairman of various committees of the corporation.

(p) RECEPTION AND USHERS COMMITTEE. This Committee shall provide for each play the necessary number of ushers, doorkeepers and receptionists, and distribute programs for the plays to the members of the corporation.

(q) ADVERTISING COMMITTEE. The Committee shall procure all advertisements for insertion in the programs for each play produced by the corporation and have them delivered to the Program Committee in due time to have the same made a part of the program. The Committee shall collect from the advertisers the cost of such advertising, and promptly pay the money for the same over to the Treasurer of the corporation. The Committee shall, in due time before the production of every play, consult with and cooperate with the Program Committee as to the insertion of advertisements in the program.

(r) RENTALS AND LEASES COMMITTEE. The Committee shall have charge of negotiating for leases of the premises or buildings to be occupied by the principal office of the corporation, to be used for rehearsal room, and to be used for storage of any and all equipment and property of the corporation. The Committee shall have charge of negotiating for the renting of any theatres necessary for the production of any plays produced by the corporation, and secure definite dates for the production of such plays and see

that they are available to the corporation on such dates when plays are to be produced. The Committee shall confer with the Director as to dates of production, and report to the Chairman of the Production Committee and Board of Directors the dates it may secure for production of plays, in due time before the play season beginning September 1st.

## APPENDIX II

### PRODUCTIONS OF RICHMOND CIVIC THEATRE

C - Children's Theatre Production

W - Workshop Play

#### SEASON 1941-42

1. OUR TOWN.....Thornton Wilder
2. YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU.....Moss Hart  
and George S. Kaufman
3. LITTLE WOMEN (C).....Marion De Forest
4. THE TRIAL OF MARY DUGAN.....Bayard Veiller
5. DEATH TAKES A HOLIDAY.....Alberto Casella
6. THE SWAN.....Ferenc Molnar
7. ONE-ACT PLAYS:  
THE HAPPY JOURNEY.....Thornton Wilder  
THE BOOR.....Anton Chekhov  
HER FATAL BEAUTY.....Wilbur Braun
8. BETWIXT LIFE AND DEATH (with Mask & Mantle).....Opal  
Thornburg

#### SEASON 1942-43

9. QUALITY STREET.....James M. Barrie
10. HEART OF A CITY.....Lesley Storm
11. SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS (C).....Jessie  
Braham White
12. GEORGE WASHINGTON SLEPT HERE.....Moss Hart  
and George S. Kaufman
13. AH, WILDERNESS.....Eugene O'Neill
14. ARSENIC AND OLD LACE.....Joseph Kesselring
15. THE PILLARS OF SOCIETY.....Henrik Ibsen

#### SEASON 1943-44

16. THE PATRIOTS.....Sidney Kingsley
17. THE MAN WHO CAME TO DINNER.....Moss Hart  
and George S. Kaufman

18. EVERYMAN.....Hugh V. Hofmannthal  
 19. ABIE'S IRISH ROSE.....Anne Nichols  
 20. JUNIOR MISS.....Jerome Chodorov  
 and Joseph Fields  
 21. SAINT JOAN.....George Bernard Shaw  
 22. HANSEL AND GRETEL, Opera (C).....E. Humperdinck

SEASON 1944-45

23. LILJOM.....Ferenc Molnar  
 24. THREE'S A FAMILY.....Phoebe and Henry Ephron  
 25. OUR TOWN (W).....Thornton Wilder  
 26. CLAUDIA.....Rose Franken  
 27. ABE LINCOLN IN ILLINOIS.....Robert E. Sherwood  
 28. JUNIOR MISS (W).....Jerome Chodorov  
 and Joseph Fields  
 29. STAGE DOOR.....Edna Ferber and George S. Kaufman  
 30. HAMLET.....William Shakespeare  
 31. RACKETTY-PACKETTY HOUSE (C).....Frances Hodgson  
 Burnett

SEASON 1945-46

32. HARRIET.....Florence Ryerson and Colin Clements  
 33. KISS AND TELL.....F. Hugh Herbert  
 34. STREET SCENE.....Elmer Rice  
 35. THE TRIAL OF MARY DUGAN (W).....Bayard Veiller  
 36. ROMANCE IN VIENNA.....Adapted by Norbert Silbiger from  
 "Old Heidelberg" by W. Meyer-Forster  
 37. I REMEMBER MAMA.....John Van Druten  
 38. TOM SAWYER (C).....Paul Kester  
 39. ANGEL STREET.....Partick Hamilton

SEASON 1946-47

40. BLYTHE SPIRIT.....Noel Coward  
 41. THE LATE GEORGE APLEY.....John P. Marquand  
 and George S. Kaufman  
 42. DARK OF THE MOON.....Howard Richardson  
 and William Benery  
 43. THE OLD MAID.....Zoe Atkins  
 44. THE TAMING OF THE SHREW.....William Shakespeare  
 45. TEN LITTLE INDIANS.....Agatha Christie  
 46. APPLE OF HIS EYE.....Kenyon Nicholson  
 and Charles Robinson

SEASON 1947-48

47. DEAR RUTH.....Norman Krasna  
 48. YEARS AGO.....Ruth Gordon  
 49. SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS (C).....Jessie Braham  
 White

50. THE BARRETTS OF WIMPOLE STREET.....Rudolph Besier  
 51. THE MAGNIFICENT YANKEE.....Emmet Lavery  
 52. GHOSTS.....Henrik Ibsen  
 53. STATE OF THE UNION.....Howard Lindsey and Russel Crouse  
 54. DREAM GIRL.....Elmer Rice  
 55. MR. DOOLEY, JR.....Rose Franken and Jane Lewis  
 also THE KNAVE OF HEARTS (C).....Louis Saunders

SEASON 1948-49

56. LIFE WITH FATHER.....Howard Lindsey and Russel Crouse  
 57. THE GHOST OF MR. PENNY (C).....Rosemary Gabbert Musil  
 58. PYGMALION.....George Bernard Shaw  
 59. JOHN LOVES MARY.....Norman Krasna  
 60. SANTA'S TOYS (C) Dance Program  
 61. THE WINSLOW BOY.....Terence Rattigan  
 62. THE GLASS MENAGERIE.....Tennessee Williams  
 63. JACK AND THE BEAN STOCK (C)....Charlotte B. Chorpensing  
 64. THE YOUNG AND FAIR.....N. Richard Nash

SEASON 1949-50

65. THE TRAITOR.....Herman Wouk  
 66. CINDERELLA (C).....Charlotte B. Chorpensing  
 67. MY SISTER EILEEN... Joseph A. Fields and Jerome Chodorov  
 68. TWO BLIND MICE.....Samuel Spewack  
 69. THE INDIAN CAPTIVE (C).....Charlotte B. Chorpensing  
 70. LIFE WITH MOTHER.....Howard Lindsey and Russel Crouse  
 71. MONTSERRAT.....Lillian Hellman  
 72. ARSENIC AND OLD LACE (W).....Joseph Kesselring  
 73. THE HEIRESS.....Ruth and Augustus Goetz

SEASON 1950-51

74. THE SILVER WHISTLE.....Robert E. McEnroe  
 75. BORN YESTERDAY.....Garson Kanin  
 76. GOODBYE, MY FANCY.....Fay Kanin  
 77. ANNE OF THE THOUSAND DAYS.....Maxwell Anderson  
 78. DETECTIVE STORY.....Sidney Kingsley  
 79. HARVEY.....Mary Chase

SEASON 1951-52

80. IDIOT'S DELIGHT.....Robert E. Sherwood  
 81. THE CURIOUS SAVAGE.....John Patrick  
 82. DISTANT DRUMS.....Dan Totheroh  
 83. YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU.....Moss Hart  
 and George S. Kaufman  
 84. THE DEVIL'S DISCIPLE.....George Bernard Shaw  
 85. HIGH GROUND.....Charlotte Hastings

86. LIGHT UP THE SKY.....Moss Hart

SEASON 1952-53

87. REMAINS TO BE SEEN.....Howard Lindsey and Russel Crouse  
88. IO AND BEHOLD.....John Patrick  
89. DEATH OF A SALESMAN.....Arthur Miller  
90. MURRAY FOLLIES  
91. THE WINGLESS VICTORY.....Maxwell Anderson  
92. AFFAIRS OF STATE.....Louis Verneuil  
93. THE HAPPY TIME.....Samuel Taylor

SEASON 1953-54

94. BELL, BOOK AND CANDLE.....John Van Druten  
95. MISTER ROBERTS.....Thomas Heggen and Joshua Logan  
96. THE MERCHANT OF VENICE.....William Shakespeare  
97. MURRAY FOLLIES  
98. GUEST IN THE HOUSE.....Hagar Wilde and Dale Eunson  
99. THE MALE ANIMAL.....James Thurber and Elliott Nugent  
100. OUR TOWN.....Thornton Wilder

SEASON 1954-55

101. MY 3 ANGELS.....Albert Husson  
Translated and adapted by Sam and Bella Spewack  
102. COME BACK, LITTLE SHEBA.....William Inge  
103. HAMLET.....William Shakespeare  
104. FOR LOVE OR MONEY.....F. Hugh Herbert  
105. TIME OUT FOR GINGER.....Ronald Alexander  
106. THE CRUCIBLE.....Arthur Miller  
107. SABRINA FAIR.....Samuel Taylor

SEASON 1955-56

108. THE REMARKABLE MR. PENNYPACKER.....Liam O'Brien  
109. DIAL M FOR MURDER.....Frederick Knott  
110. KING OF HEARTS.....Jean Kerr and Eleanor Brooks  
111. THE CAINE MUTINY COURT-MARTIAL.....Herman Wouk  
112. PICNIC.....William Inge  
113. SOUTH PACIFIC.....Richard Rodgers and Oscar  
Hammerstein 2nd

114. THE RAINMAKER.....N. Richard Nash

SEASON 1956-57

115. THE SOLID GOLD CADILLAC.....Howard Teichmann  
and George S. Kaufman  
116. ANASTASIA.....Marcelle Maurette, with English  
adaptation by Guy Bolton  
117. "A ROOMFUL OF ROSES".....Edith Sommer  
118. TIME LIMIT!.....Henry Denker and Ralph Berkey

119. ANNIVERSARY WALTZ.....Jerome Chodorov  
and Joseph Fields  
120. THE TEAHOUSE OF THE AUGUST MOON.....John Patrick  
121. WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION.....Agatha Christie

SEASON 1957-58

122. THE DESPERATE HOURS.....Joseph Hayes  
123. PLAIN AND FANCY.....Joseph Stein & Will Glickman  
Lyrics by Arnold B. Horwitt, Music by Albert Hague  
124. THE GREAT SEBASTIANS.....Howard Lindsey  
and Russell Crouse  
125. INHERIT THE WIND.....Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee  
126. SPEAKING OF MURDER.....Audrey and William Roos  
127. DARK OF THE MOON.....Howard Richardson  
and William Benery  
128. THE SEVEN YEAR ITCH.....George Axelrod

SEASON 1958-59

129. THE KING AND I.....Richard Rodgers and Oscar  
Hammerstein 2nd  
130. THE HASTY HEART.....John Patrick  
131. ON BORROWED TIME.....Paul Osborn  
132. BAD SEED.....Maxwell Anderson  
133. THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK.....Frances Goodrich  
and Albert Hackett  
134. THE HAPPIEST MILLIONAIRE.....Kyle Crichton  
135. THE TENDER TRAP.....Max Shulman and Rober Paul Smith

### APPENDIX III

#### PARTICIPANTS IN RICHMOND CIVIC THEATRE PLAYS, 1941-1958

*Numbers following names indicate play title, as listed in Appendix II. Actors are designated by the number alone; production workers or business staff by "P" preceding numbers; musicians by "M" preceding numbers. The 129th play was the last included in the checking.*

Addleman, Helen M22  
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 Adelsperger, Mrs. Fred 84  
 Adkins, Janice 60  
 Adler, Ellen P82  
 Adler, Wm. F. Jr. 34, 57; P: 34, 36, 37, 39-42, 45, 46, 48, 49, 53, 57, 58, 64, 75  
 Adler, Mrs. Wm. F. 34, 37, 41, 43; P: 32, 33, 34, 36, 42, 48, 56, 57  
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 Agee, Highly A. 42  
 Agee, Kukie 42  
 Ahl, Clarissa 1, 7, 12  
 Ahl, Mrs. Ralph P: 87-89, 91-93  
 Albin, Joyce 42-49  
 Alexander, Ronald P102  
 Alexander, Warren 1; P: 1, 5, 6  
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 Allen, Mrs. Charles P: 108, 119  
 Allen, Mrs. Earl P65  
 Allen, Florence P92  
 Allen, Janice P100  
 Allen, Lu Dexter 42  
 Allen, Richard 129  
 Allen, Robert 1, 6-8, 42, 67, 90, 113, 123; P: 108-128  
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 Alyea, Ramona 60  
 Ammerman, David 60, 66  
 Ammerman, Sharon 60, 66  
 Anderson, Dorothea P: 34, 40, 41, 43, 45  
 Anderson, Edward N. 109, 118, 124; P126  
 Anderson, Mrs. Edward N. P: 124, 126  
 Anderson, Emily 35, 36; P33  
 Andre, Mrs. G.W. P: 89, 114  
 Andrew, Mrs. R.H. P87  
 Andrews, Peggy 22  
 Arbogast, Grace P: 31-33, 36-38, 42, 45, 49, 54, 58, 62, 65, 70, 71, 77, 81, 88, 91, 98, 103, 104, 106, 109, 122, 123  
 Arbogast, Norville E. 95, 97  
 Arbuthnot, Mrs. T.K. P: 34, 35  
 Arford, Al 80, 84, 87; P84  
 Arford, Mrs. Al P: 83, 107, 108

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 Armstrong, Dorothy 5  
 Armstrong, Mrs. Floyd A. P: 89, 91, 103, 106, 111, 113, 121-123, 126  
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 Ashby, Elaine 8, 9, 18  
 Ashby, Lloyd W. 1, 25  
 Ashby, Mrs. Lloyd P22  
 Ashman, John 49  
 Ashman, Marna P55  
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 Atkinson, Edward Jr. P: 81-83, 85-88, 93-96, 101, 103, 104, 106, 108, 110, 111, 113, 116, 118-125, 127-129  
 Atkinson, Mrs. Edward Jr. 90  
 Atkinson, Jean 97  
 Atkinson, Sheryal P129  
 Atkinson, Tom 97, 103, 115, 125, 126; P: 81-83, 85-91, 93-97, 100-104, 107-111, 113-125, 127-129  
 Atkinson, Mrs. Tom 120; P: 85, 91, 101, 108, 120, 127, 128  
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 Ault, Jane 120; P120  
 Austin, Marilyn 90  
 Avison, Mrs. Lawrence P: 94, 95  
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 Backmeyer, Robert 86, 119; P: 14, 24, 29, 35, 37, 46, 58, 64, 67, 70, 73, 77, 80, 81, 87, 94, 102, 123, 126  
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 Baird, Patsy P80  
 Baird, Robert P68  
 Baird, Mrs. Robert P: 68, 76  
 Baird, Steve P68  
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 Ballinger, Mrs. Wm. E. 6; P: 5, 31, 44, 53



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Barnes, Ruth Ann 60  
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Bartel, Gertrude P: 17, 18  
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Bartlemay, Robbin 120  
Bartlemay, Vicki 120  
Bartlemay, Victor 115  
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Bashe, Mrs. A.L. P78  
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