

Theater News

Little Me

By EUPHEMIA WYATT

LITTLE ME — Whatever the merits or demerits of Patrick Dennis's abundantly sold novel, it now offers opportunity to Sid Caesar to appear as six of the males encountered in the autobiography of Belle Joltrine who is played by two different actresses, Virginia Martin as the heroine of her promiscuous past and Nancy Andrews as the well padded current screen star.

Little Me has no pretensions of being witty satire like *How To Succeed*. It's just fast, funny and Sid-Caesarish. It also has extraordinarily clever dances arranged by Bob Fosse which, after Caesar, are the most important part of the show and Sven Swenson whose soft shoe Broadway Apache dance conquers Belle as well as the audience.

As for Caesar, after an entrance of beautiful round cartwheels right across the stage — surely an understudy — he is Noble, the richest teenager in Venezuela, Illinois; then the octogenarian, Mr. Pinchey; then a French night club singer singing "Boom-Boom" and a daffy movie director followed by Otto Schmitzler, the Hollywood director — his best — and Prince Cherley who dies after a bullet in Monto Carlo with his faithful subjects doing a cardas round his royal death bed.

And last of all there is a middleaged Noble walking with Poitrine into a vast red setting sun. *Little Me* is an example of how expert showmanship and technical agility can polish platitudes, nice clean polish at that. Only one incident seems questionable — a ship hitting an iceberg. Has the Titanic really become a joke?

LORD PENGU — For nine years, ever since S. N. Behrman's stupendous profile of Lord Duven, the art dealer, appeared in the New Yorker, Broadway has been awaiting its dramatization. For nine years we've been told, "Mr. Behrman has been writing it. Characters have been put in and pulled out, Duven became Pengo, an Hungarian, who sells art in six figures to clients who are easily recognized as Mellon and Kress, but the saga of even the greatest salesman in history is not drama.

The axis of the play might have been the National Gallery which we really owe as much to Duven as to Mellon; it might have been Duven torn between home and Lady Duven and his Art Galleries; it might have been young Duven's romance broken up by his father's super salesmanship. But neither Lady Duven nor the girl appear. Instead there is a very ordinary client's widow who is only a bore.

Agnes Moorehead as the devoted secretary; Brian Bedford as Derek Pengo; Cliff Hall as Kress and especially Henry Daniel as Mellon are capital. Charles Boyer, who could draw a smile from Medea, puts all his charm into Lord Duven — I mean Pengo — but he never quite convinced me of his real passion for the old masters.

THE CHERRY ORCHARD — In this intimate comedy of Russian country life at the close of the last century, Chekov forces the change that was coming. First, the old servant, who considered the Emancipation of the Serfs as pure tragedy, is dying and with him, while Russia, Lopahin, the ambitious peasant, typifies the rising bourgeoisie; Madame Ravensky and her family, the declining gentry.

An absentee landlord, she has come back to her sentimentally loved estate for a visit, she refuses to sell the cherry orchard for a development even if it means losing the whole property. The click clack of the axes on the trees brings down the final curtain after Lopahin has bought up the mortgage.

In 1929, Nazimova radiated the whole play with her deliciously endearing personality. In 1944, Miss Eva Le Gallienne came very close to Nazimova in a production staged by Margaret Webster.

Davis Ross, in his lofty new Theatre Four (424 West 55th St.) has caught the spirit of Chekov who wrote, not cynically but affectionately. In that same spirit, Bramwell Fletcher plays Madame Ravensky's bach-

elor brother whom Schildkraut made a sophisticate and parasite. This Gaev is full of irresponsible kindness.

Richard Waring adds force without much shading to Lopahin and Miss Marian Winters gives everything a good actress who is so Nazimova can give to Madame Ravensky. The decor by David Ballou is admirable but the translation by Constance Garnett never lets one forget that the lines were once in Russian. Everyone should see *The Cherry Orchard* — recognized now as a classic.

THE LIVING ROOM — Graham Greene's first play with Barbara Bel Geddes ran for three weeks in New York in 1954; in London it ran for nine months with Dorothy Tutin. The present "Cappagariff Productions" at the small Gramercy Arts Theatre is so good that it gives lucidity and point to the discussion of sin and suffering clouded over in 1954.

On the surface it is the distressing story of a girl of sixteen who falls rapturously in love with a married man of forty and defies his wife, her two Aunts and priestly Uncle, the Church and even God to put an end to the affair. The Aunts are spinsters with a neurotic fear of dying that they have shut each room in the house in which a death has occurred.

They are very pious but not religious and take care of their brother, a priest who lost his legs in an accident twenty years before and is confined to a wheel chair. Father James has charity and his spiritual life has become so shrunken that when it comes to helping his niece, he is helpless "Give me, dear God, the words to say—" is his prayer. But no words come and Rose, driven to despair when she begins to understand the bond that persists between two married people, swallows the poison the wife has dropped.

Just before she dies, however, she finds God in a child's prayer. Dying in the dead "living room," Rose, who had the potential of so much love, brings it to life again. It was the living of Christ's love which not Father James needed not "words." Martyr Green, once of the D'Oyley Carte, plays Father James with understanding and sympathy; in fact everyone in the cast and the director, Wildor Lewis deserve encliums. They do unusual justice to a tensely constructed and well written play.

Legion Of Decency

The following are the titles of the films reviewed this week to be used in their respective classification of the Legion of Decency. The last complete listing appeared in the Oct. 26 issue. Clip and save.

Class A, Section 1
Constantine and the Cross
Make Way for Lila

Class A, Section 2
Everybody Go Home

Class A, Section 3
Trial and Error
Sundays and Cybele

Class B
Sodom and Gomorrah

Objection: The Old Testament Biblical story of Lot and his wife is presented against the pagan and demoralizing background of ancient Sodom and Gomorrah. While granting the validity of the theme, the treatment resorts to excessive sensuality in costuming, dancing and situations. These negative elements tend to destroy the spiritual value of the film.

Class C (Condemned)

Objection: This film, an adolescent and immature excursion into sex under the guise of a travelogue to the South Sea Islands, is developed in an atmosphere of pagan sensuality. The treatment highlights grossly suggestive costuming, dancing and situations.



Program For Sisters of Charity

PARTICIPANTS in the program "Meet the Sisters of Charity" at St. Mary's Hospital Saturday and Sunday Nov. 18 and 19, were Ann Santere as "Jeanie", Ann Hoffman as the Postulant, Patricia Glew as the

Seminary Sister, and Sandra Spearman as the Sister of Charity. The girls presented a skit depicting the various stages in the formation of a Sister of Charity of St. Vincent dePaul.

Theatre Guide

- MONROE**
The Legend of Lobo (Unobjectionable) A-1
- RIVIERA**
Hatali A-1
- Hatali**
The Counterfeit Tractor (Unobjectionable for adults) A-3
- CINEMA**
The Miracle Worker (Unobjectionable for adults and adolescents) A-2
- LITTLE**
Secrets of Women Not Listed
- CORONET**
Westside Story A-3
- LOEW'S**
Period of Adjustment A-3
- Two Tickets to Paris** A-2
- REGENT**
We'll Bury You A-1
- Get Outta' Town** Not Listed
- PALACE**
Billy Budd A-2
- The Frightened City** Not Listed
- FINE ARTS**
Lavender Hill Mob A-2
- PARAMOUNT**
Gay Purr-ee A-1
- Hand in Hand** A-1

KC Testimonial Dinner

To Honor John R. Ward

A testimonial dinner to honor John R. Ward, retiring grand knight will be held by Rochester Council No. 178, Knights of Columbus in the K. of C. clubrooms, Columbus Civic Center, 50 Chestnut St., Tuesday, Dec. 4 at 7 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT was made by Grand Knight George J. Schenk who succeeded Ward in June. Knights and their wives will attend the dinner, Edward Schultz will be toastmaster.

Ward was active in the local council before and after World War 2 in which he served. He held several committee posts and offices until being elected Grand Knight in 1959 and served two terms until 1961.

At present he is chairman of the Catholic Activities committee and was recently named a vice chairman for this area in the state-wide campaign for

Mission Plea Brings \$500

An appeal in last week's Courier Journal to aid a Rochester nun in Bangkok, Thailand, brought 17 contributions and a total of \$271. An anonymous pledge to match donations means the missionary is assured of \$542.

Ursuline Mother Virginia Marie (Claire Langie) is assigned to a school and religious center in the Thailand capital.

Contributions for her mission work may still be sent to Rev. John Duffy, diocesan director of the Propagation of the Faith Society, 50 Chestnut St., Rochester.

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American Ideals Chamber Opera This Week

Rochester Chamber Opera will begin its sixth season this week with two productions at Cutler Union, University Ave., Saturday, Dec. 1, at 8:15 p.m., and Sunday, Dec. 2, at 3 p.m.

The series which is prepared by the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus is being aired by radio station WRVM at 680 K.C. on Sundays at 8:05 a.m.

The topic dramatized last Sunday was entitled "The Natural Rights of Man." On succeeding Sundays the following topics will be aired: "The Equality of Man," "Freedom of Religion from the Restraints of Government," "States' Authority from God," "Representation or Tyranny," and "Sources of the Declaration of Independence."

Prelate To Visit GIs Overseas

Rome — (NC) — Cardinal Spellman, of New York, said here he plans to make his 12th annual Christmas visit to U.S. servicemen at overseas bases this year.

The Cardinal will spend Christmas in Saigon, Vietnam, and then go to Bangkok, Thailand.

The Cardinal revealed his intention to make the trip when he received a group of 70 American airmen and their wives who are stationed at Brindisi and Taranto. Cardinal Spellman received them at his hotel (Nov. 23) at 8 a.m. before leaving for one of the sessions of the ecumenical council.

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