

AMAZING GROWTH OF REPERTORY MOVEMENT

Review of Year's Drama

By A. H. THOMAS

The production of "Make Believe" by the Twelfth Night Theatre on Saturday evening at the Princess Theatre brings the amateur theatrical year to a close in Brisbane.

What a year it has been . . . a year of activity unprecedented. There was a time, only a few years since, when the sum total of the work done in this way was three or four plays a year by the Brisbane Repertory Theatre Society. That seemed to represent the capacity of the Brisbane community for drama on the amateur stage.

But this year has seen an amazing development. At least 25 major productions and 16 one-act plays have been publicly presented during the year by the various organisations.

IT would be interesting for some statistician to work out exactly how many individuals took part in these productions. An average of ten for the three-acters and five for the one-act plays would give you approximately 300 people actively associated in the drama. Moreover all of these folk devote their time for rehearsal in the best spirit of self sacrifice for the cause of the drama. Let us glance over the list of plays that have been produced during the year. Surely an impressive record for a community, which a year or two ago, thought that three or four plays a year by the Repertory Theatre Society was almost too much to expect the public to support.

REPERTORY THEATRE SOCIETY.

Major Productions.

"Grief Goes Over" (Merton Hodge).
"The Dover Road" (A. A. Milne).
"Youth at the Helm" (Herbert Griffith).
"She Stoops to Conquer" (Oliver Goldsmith).
"Lady Precious Stream" (H. I. Hsiung).
"Hamlet" (William Shakespeare).
"The Roundabout" (J. B. Priestley).
"The Touch of Silk" (Betsy M. Davies).
"Lovers' Leap" (Philip Johnson).

One Act Plays.

"They Refused to be Resurrected" (N. K. Smith).
"King's Son Churl's Son" (Jane Cran).
"Symphony in Illusion" (J. Wallace Bell).
"Birds of Passage" (Hiving Lenfranc).

THE TWELFTH NIGHT THEATRE.

Major Productions.

"Touchwood" (C. L. Anthony).
"Labyrinth Grove" (J. B. Priestley).

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"The Admirable Crichton" (J. M. Barrie).
"Mary Magdalene" (Maeterlinck).
"Wild Decembers" (Clemence Dane).
"Family Affairs" (Gertrude Jennings).
"Personal Influence" (Neil Grant).
"Make Believe" (A. A. Milne).

One Act Plays.

"The Open Door" (Sufron).
"The Price of Coal" (Harold Brighouse).
"Five at the George".
"A Knight Came Riding".

W.E.A. DRAMATIC SOCIETY.

Major Production.

"Street Scene" (Elmer Rice).
"Martin" (Jean Jacques Bernard).
"The Black Eye" (James Bridie).

One Act Plays.

"In the Zone" (Eugene O'Neill).
"Arising Out of the Minute" (Louise Regnaud).
"The Sister's Tragedy" (Richard Hughes).
"Mr. Sampson" (Charles Lort).

"Cloudbreak" (Roberts).
"The Dumb and the Blind" (Harold Chapin).
"Elizabeth Refuses" (Margaret McNamara).
"Ladies in Waiting" (Wendy St. John Maule).

BRISBANE AMATEUR THEATRES.

"To Tell You the Truth" (Sydney Howard).
"Oliver Twist" (arr. Trundle).

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"The Case of the Frightened Lady" (Edgar Wallace).
And one other.

In addition the University Dramatic Society produced a number of one-act plays and a three-act play. This list also excludes a number of major productions presented purely for charity purposes.

In addition to these organisations there has recently been formed another, the Student Theatre, formed for the express purpose of presenting plays of a sociological interest, and some of the plays of exceptional merit dealing with sociological and economic questions. Their first production, "Squaring the Circle," a comedy on the Soviet and its catchwords, was given recently, and gave promise of good work considering that neither players nor producer had had experience before. This organisation should find a ready-made public for them.

But to revert to the work of the major societies during the year, such an impressive list of plays cannot be taken as anything but a tremendous increase in interest in the drama. While none of these organisations have waxed fat, they have all managed to keep alive, and to improve their standards as the year continued.

One cannot help feeling, when glancing over the lists, that the Twelfth Night Theatre has shaded even the Repertory Theatre Society somewhat in the choice of plays. At all events their lists has a solidity and strength that the Repertory list does not possess in quite the same measure.

In the majority of these major productions the standard of production has been reasonably high. It would be idle to say that there is no room for all round improvement, but with so much activity quality is bound to suffer to a certain extent. It is worth while considering whether fewer plays and better production would result in greater benefit.

Yet, since most of these organisations are now firmly established it is reasonable to believe that next year will see an even greater activity on all sides. These societies are filling the gap created by the lack of activity on the professional stage. Perhaps that is why they can exist, and continue to exist.