

"DANGEROUS CORNER"

Toowoomba Repertory's
Good Showing

Excellent Performance of
Priestley Play

THE CAST.

Freda Caplan (Robert's wife), Una Hall; Miss Mockridge (a novelist), Eulys Buchanan; Betty Whitehouse (Gordon's wife), Mignon Beirne; Olwen Peel, Elaine Chesell; Charles Stanton, Gordon Whitehouse, Robert Caplan (directors of a publishing house), W. A. Turnbull, Idwil Davies, Andree Lacaze.

THE Toowoomba Repertory Theatre Society paid its first official visit to Brisbane on Saturday, and put itself on the map by its presentation of J. B. Priestley's "Dangerous Corner." What this very large audience of the Brisbane Society expected, it is not for me to conjecture, but what they did experience was a very well acted, well produced play, in which there was more unaffected naturalness than we usually experience in our own productions. They saw in action what was virtually a better balanced cast than the Brisbane Society could muster for the same work.

There was not one crude characterisation in the entire play. To determine who should be singled out for special praise is a real problem. Indeed the play was a most difficult one for amateurs, for everything depends on the handling of lines rather than on the handling of situations. The whole script is bent on the development of one central theme, and it is only Priestley's masterly handling of it that all this to-do as the result of a casual reference to a cigarette case in the first act does not become somewhat tiring towards the end.

STAGE GROUPING.

THE producer, Mr. John Lane, ran the gamut of criticism in one respect in that he ignored, at the behest of the author, certain well established principles of grouping on the stage. This far from being irksome provided quite a refreshing change, for in our local productions producers are sometimes prone to work to death the principle of symmetrical grouping of characters. The producer in this case was instructed by the author to ignore the audience. The result was more naturalness and less of the sometimes awkward and stilted

result was more naturalness and less of the sometimes awkward and stilted disposition of characters. After all why should not people sit with their backs to the audience? Why even should they not speak with their faces looking at the back curtain, if audibility is not impaired? It is true, too, that at times there was a quite unsymmetrical grouping as a result of this emancipation from tyrannous practice. And while it would be venturing off safe ground to attribute to the theatre too much dependence on the natural habits of mere man, is it not natural that three people wishing to discuss a most urgent and vital problem, should gather at one point in the room, rather than fling themselves symmetrically about the stage and shout at each other.

On Saturday evening this break from established practice was a relief; it was not overdone, and it gave to the whole cast a greater smoothness and ease of movement. They all moved about naturally and without apparent self-consciousness. Only once was an unwarranted liberty taken. And that was when Robert Caplan, in the form of Andree Lacaze's rather broad figure, stood stock still in front of Olwyn Peel blotting her out completely from the audience while he carried on an animated and vital conversation with her. There was no necessity for this. It seemed to be taking too great an advantage of a liberty granted by the author.

UNQUALIFIED APPROVAL.

IN all other respects the production earned unqualified approval. Every member of the cast seemed to fit into the picture; the timing of lines, in a play in which there is a great number of occasions where timing is of the utmost importance, was admirable throughout; there was some very good acting, and very little over acting; the diction of nearly all the players was good, and a number of highly dramatic situations were extremely well handled.

Miss Una Hall perhaps had the most opportunities in this respect, and not once did she allow the tempo of her characterisation to fall below the one which she set at the start. Dr. Andree Lacaze might have given his characterisation greater significance by a more varied vocal inflection. He spoke of love with precisely the same tone of voice as he spoke of murder. The result was that when he wanted to be highly dramatic, as for instance one exit in the second act, he had to shout, which was rather a pity. Yet despite these things his portrait of Caplan, the man who refused to be warned that probing too far into this problem would lead to unhealthy discoveries, was very convincing. It is almost impossible to dif-

upneatny discoveries, was very convincing. It is almost impossible to differentiate between the remainder of the cast. They all had difficult passages to handle and they all handled them convincingly. It was in truth a beautifully balanced cast.

This visit is the first of what is hoped will be many more, under an arrangement with the Brisbane Society whereby reciprocity has been established. If the Toowoomba Society maintains this standard, and in course of time, improves on it, its annual visit to the metropolis will be an event in our theatrical calendar.

A.H.T