

# People's Theatre On Municipal Pier Opens With American Comedy

Mrs. Adele Gutman Nathan, Director, Produces A Good Play In Artistic Setting Under The Auspices Of The Children's Playground Association.

By Emily Emerson Lantz.  
"The play's the thing."  
—Hamlet.

EVERYBODY'S Playhouse opened Wednesday night, May 26, at the Municipal Pier, foot of Broadway, when Edith Ellis' comedy, "Mary Jane's Pa," was produced with great charm of stage setting and real excellence of acting, by Mrs. Adele Gutman Nathan and a group of exceedingly worthwhile players. The presentation was sponsored by the Children's Playground Association of Baltimore, to whose supervision the city has committed all municipal entertainments at the Pier.

With this dramatic production there slipped into existence, without the official municipal introduction it well deserved, the first municipal theatre Baltimore has ever known.

Commercial enterprises flourish best under private ownership and competitive spur; men engage in them because they afford a livelihood, and therefore need to be more or less driven to their tasks. Art is different. Men and women labor for art because of the overmastering impulse toward artistic things that is in them. Their toil becomes a labor of love, and since the incentive is not commercial, since artists are rarely financiers, their work is happiest when they work under conditions that remove from them the burden of financial responsibility. The Russian Ballet became the marvel of artistry it was before the Great War because of Imperial patronage.

To act is an instinctive art. Children "make-believe" while still in the nursery and through the medium of drama men and women re-live great emotional moments of history or individual life. No world movement sweeps the earth, no new idea takes hold of a people that is not immediately reflected upon the stage. The thought, manners, even the costumes of a period, crystallize into drama; the problems of life, the arguments for or against a moral point, the little comedies or sordid tragedies of daily life acted upon the stage give artists pleasure to portray sympathetically and an audience equal pleasure to witness.

The present is an age of action rather than reflection; everywhere small groups of people are amusing themselves presenting plays and presenting them creditably, and Everybody's Playhouse, while it received its impetus from the immense success of the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York and from the Little Theatre movement of which the Vagabond Players of Baltimore is the local manifestation, has even greater future possibilities than these.

Everybody's Playhouse has the great advantage of a habitation, of spacious size and dignity, a place of high architectural beauty, well lighted and heated, that belongs to the city of Baltimore and for which there is no rental nor current expenses. Given this exceptional playhouse, those managing this theatre have only to furnish stage setting and produce plays in the selection of which box office receipts will not have to be considered. At the nominal admission price of 25 cents those managing Everybody's Playhouse fully hope to see it self-supporting and a center where drama of such merit will be presented as will attract patrons from all over the city.

**Mrs. Nathan, Director.**

Mrs. Adele Gutman Nathan is socially well known in Baltimore and has had sufficient experience in the production of plays and in knowledge of public taste to insure success. She was associated, under the Jewish Alliance, with the Children's Theatre of Baltimore; also she has been a moving spirit and talented actress among the Vagabond Players; and now, with Miss Hilda Berger its associate director and Miss Helene Hedian and J. Carl Fisher as technical directors, she has thrown herself with enthusiasm into the management of Everybody's Playhouse.

It is her intention to make the municipal theatre a people's playhouse in very truth, with only plays given there that will be worth seeing and in which the people themselves will have real interest both as actors and patrons. Bohemia is a country rich in authors of drama and with plays that lend themselves to picturesque native costuming. Baltimore has many Bohemian residents who would find a Bohemian comedy interesting and who could assist in giving it. There are many Greeks in Baltimore who would enjoy a Greek comedy or tragedy, and there are always the many who will be interested in any worthwhile play intelligently acted.

Everybody's Playhouse, as it opened for its initial performance, was a triumph of co-operative effort. The fore stage is 8 by 30 feet and the back stage 15 by 20 feet. Mrs. Nathan, with the assistance of Miss Hedian, designed the portable stage. The scenes were designed by Miss Hedian, and so wisely designed that one side showed the interior of a residence and the other the interior of a printing shop. They were painted by her with the assistance of

her pupils at the Maryland Institute, among whom were Misses Elizabeth Jones, Mary Lockwood, Alice Wallace and Doris Cooksey. The decorations were designed by E. Burdette Tunis, assisted by Mr. Bagot. Misses Thorpe, Lewis, Treide, Berger, Hedian and Mrs. Nathan. The color scheme of the stage effects toned from pale lavender to very dark blue, the middle point—the curtain—being a brilliant blue. The curtains are exceedingly beautiful and were made by Mrs. Edward Berge and Miss Kruse. Publicity for the theatre is in charge of Misses Margaret Frank and Janet Graham.

All these David Belasco details were successfully accomplished, but the triumph of the stage-setting centered in a lighting system that was the idea of

J. Carl Fisher and that was installed by Frank Welier, of the industrial fuel and power department of the Consolidated Gas Electric Light and Power Company, Mr. Pentz and Mr. Schelhaue, of the manual training shops at Fort McHenry. By this system Mr. Fisher is able in small compass to provide 32 outlets with a lighting machine attached to a single plug. His device will simplify the lighting for any stage dependent upon a limited number of electric wires.

The cast for the performance was drawn from several sections of the city and included the following characters:

Lucille Perkins.....	Pearl Gwin
Ivy Wilcox.....	Gracie Ortman
Barrett Sheridan.....	H. E. Whitaker
Star Skinner.....	Bernard J. Flynn
Claude Whitcomb.....	C. Norman Stevens
Miss Faxon.....	Mrs. G. E. Chickering
Joel Skinner.....	Henry Bagot
Portia Perkins.....	Hilda Berger
Tomie Preston.....	Theodore W. Katenkamp
Mary Jane Perkins.....	Madeleine Brill
Hiram Perkins.....	Walter B. Swindell, Jr.
Eugene Merryfield.....	J. V. Brooks
Llewellyn Green.....	Sigmund Williams

Mr. Swindell has a well established reputation as an amateur actor. Mr. Sigmund Williams is a brother of Kid Williams, the well-known puglist, and Miss Gwin is a daughter of Mr. Joshua Gwin, of the East End Improvement Association. The play, which was repeated last night and will be given a third time Wednesday night, June 2, is an American comedy, with scenes laid at Gosport, Indiana. It is a wholesome story, interesting throughout and possessing literary value as well as dramatic situations. It was very well played and the initial performance went off without a

single visible hitch in any detail. The very artistic programs were designed by Miss MBargaret Haydock.

Owing to the lateness of the season only one other play will be given in June. This will be "Ralph Roister-Doister," by Nicholas Udell, a British school teacher. It is said to be the first comedy ever written in English and was written by the author for performance by his own students. Next year farces, dramas, comedies and, perhaps, operettas will be included in the season's offerings. Each play will be produced weekly for four weeks.