

STORY OF A DETERMINED LADY

By MILTON BRACKER

New York Times (1857-Current file); Jun 7, 1953; ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2005)

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Terese Hayden, Sponsor of New Play Series at Theatre de Lys, Is Undaunted Despite Disappointments in the Past

By MILTON BRACKER

WHEN the Festival Theatre gave up the ghost in the summer of 1950, after putting on three of the four repertory plays it had planned, Terese Hayden, co-producer with Sam Wanamaker, did not sit around and sigh. On the contrary, the young Tennessean, primarily identified with the Equity Library Theatre, rebounded from the Broadway rebuff with stunning self-assurance. The next season, she not only produced but directed "Dinosaur Wharf," a water-front drama by Joel Wyman. It lasted four performances—but it did put Miss Hayden into the archives as one of the youngest female producer-directors on record.

Now, nearing that psychological state of grace that the French have always attributed to *la femme de trente ans*, Miss Hayden is back with a new project. Bolstered by some of the most enthusiastic, talented and un-money-minded players on the scene, she will offer a series of four plays at the Theatre de Lys on Christopher Street, beginning Tuesday. Each will run from Tuesday through Sunday, with matinees on Saturday and Sunday, and the troupe has an option to continue at the de Lys more or less indefinitely.

The series is an inevitable outgrowth of the Festival Theatre. At the time that closed the sponsors were obviously disappointed but steadfast in their faith that the idea had been sound. "Any hopes for permanency," they said in farewell, "will have to be held off for the present. But the producers still have those hopes."

Long-Distance Runner

And in a sense, the intervening three years have been to Miss Hayden a "sort of waiting." Circumstantially, the break came when the Theatre de Lys "got suddenly free; someone failed to put his bond up." Miss Hayden had learned one sure lesson from Festival Theatre; the doldrums on Broadway are particularly deadly on off-beat plays. The big musicals may thrive in summer, but not the stuff of repertory. She felt that such a project would have a much better chance away from Broadway, and in a recently remodeled, air-conditioned house at that. So she started.

"I ran and haven't stopped yet," she recounted. "I went to my union, which is Equity—could they help?" They could, to the extent of allowing her an off-Broadway contract. Her actors will get \$25

a week for acting and \$5 for rehearsing. "That's how much they believe in it," she interpolated, while on the bare stage below, three actors worked out for the first production. "I keep thinking all night that it must be a dream. Then I wake up in the morning and I know it must be so."

For there is nothing dreamy about Miss Hayden in the throes of show-making. She is a neat, efficient dynamo. She went before a fact-finding board and got the unions to cooperate. She is operating admittedly on a shoestring—backers have contributed \$50 or \$100 each, and her sister, Bernice, cashed in a bond to become one of them. But her program now shapes up firmly. The theatre is quivering with life. Green-and-white pennants are flying over the marquee and here is the bill:

June 9-14. "Maya," by Simon Gantillon. Miss Hayden chose this as an internationally famous work, which scored a tremendous success in the course of a three-year run in Paris.

Aline MacMahon played "Maya" on Broadway in 1928, and Miss Hayden acknowledged a great debt to Miss MacMahon as the one who "sponsored me at Equity." But the producer's primary concern was with the play itself; "neither tragedy nor comedy," as she described it. "Just life." The work is episodic, seeking to show how a Marseille prostitute is all things to all the men who visit her. Roger Kay will direct. The lead will be played by Helen Craig. Sono Osato and Kay Medford will be in the cast.

June 16-21. "The Scarecrow," by Percy MacKaye. This was first produced here at the Garrick on Jan. 17, 1911, and has not been done on Broadway since. Miss Hayden said that after the endless references to the "heritage" of the theatre abroad, it made her proud to "suddenly discover"—through "The Scarecrow"—"that the American theatre has a heritage, too."

Frank Corsaro will direct a cast including three youngsters with high current standing: Douglas Watson, Eli Wallach and Patricia Neal.

June 23-28. Richard Brinsley Sheridan's "The School for Scandal." Ethel Barrymore did the last New York production, in November, 1931. Miss Hayden is billing it simply as "School for Scandal," because her research turned up so many conflicting references to "The School," "A School," etc. The producer chose the play not merely because of its style and tradition

as a classic comedy but because she feels it has never lost touch with reality.

Miss Hayden still feels as she did before "Dinosaur Wharf": "I've just got to direct a show; it's the most creative part of the theatre." So she is going to direct this one herself. She will have it done in "good English, instead of good British," to show that an American cast can do Sheridan with a "style and flavor" of its own. Miss Neal will play Lady Teazle, opposite Staats Cotsworth, who was in Nineteen Forty-Nine's "She Stoops to Conquer" with Celeste Holm at the City Center. Another member of the cast, recently honored, will be David J. Stewart, who will play Joseph Surface. For his work as the doomed masochist in "Camino Real," Mr. Stewart won the Clarence Derwent award.

A Million Ideas

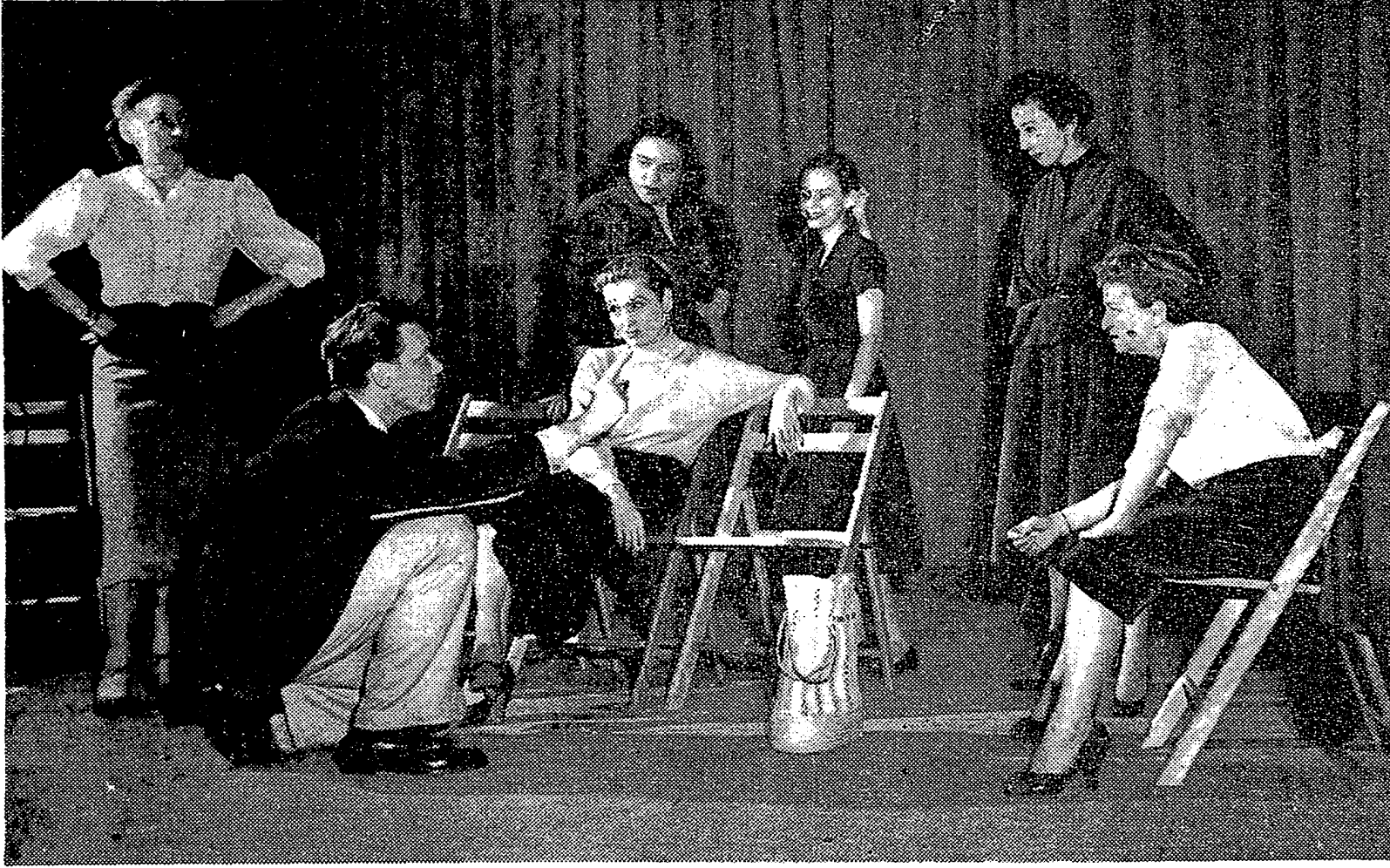
June 30-July 5. "The Little Clay Cart." This is a Hindu fantasy, attributed to King Shudraka, translated from the Sanskrit by Arthur William Ryder. Here Miss Osato, the ballerina who lent unforgettable to "One Touch of Venus," and "On the Town," will play the lead. The male star will be Richard Waring, probably best remembered for his work as the young Welsh miner who wrote a paper with the phrase "The Corn Is Green" in it for a perceptive teacher played by Ethel Barrymore. Edward Greer will direct.

Miss Hayden, who came to the American Academy of Dramatic Art from Nashville, got her first professional job as an understudy for all the women in "Angel Street." Then "I really started organizing," she smiled. With the United Theatrical War Activities Committee, she put on shows for canteens and hospitals here during war time. Besides her leadership in Equity Library Theatre, she has been active with the Players' Guide and the Actors Studio. She actually started directing in 1946: a stock company version of "The Play's The Thing," with José Ferrer. She said it was a "wonderful experience because he takes direction so wonderfully."

Miss Hayden had a "million possible titles down on paper," of which the four emerged. She chose "The Little Clay Cart" after having found a copy on the bookshelves of Joanna Roos, another member of the company. "I had never read it," the girl producer said. "But I fell in love with it because I love fairy tales, and that's how it happened."

Fairy tales do have happy endings.

MAKING PREPARATIONS FOR "MAYA"



The New York Times (by William C. Eckenberg)

The play about the life of a French prostitute will open on Tuesday at the Theatre de Lys. In the foreground, Roger Kay directs

Kay Medford. The other performers are, l. to r.: Florence Anglin, Helen Craig, Susan Strasberg, Sono Osato and Joanna Roos.