

The Theatre That Closed a Movie

By Subert Turbyfill, '25

DIRECTOR, BALBOA LITTLE THEATRE

MUCH has been said about the movie people closing the theatres, by renting or leasing legitimate stage houses, and then leaving them dark. At least one little theatre can point to a record where it was asked to present at least a few of its plays in a moving picture house, thereby keeping the movie "dark."

The administration of the Panama Canal in October, 1937, approved three dates for the Balboa Little Theatre to present its plays in the Balboa Clubhouse Theatre, which is a commercial moving picture house. The picture show was cancelled for the day and night, and the auditorium and stage turned over to the Balboa Little Theatre.

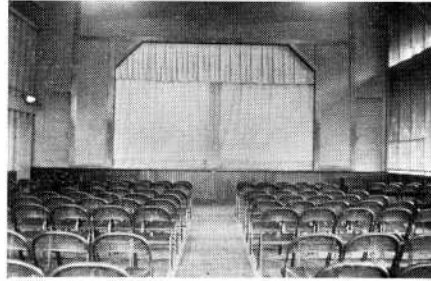
There is no equipment for the presentation of stage plays in the Balboa Clubhouse, but the Balboa Little Theatre is rather completely equipped, and a truck transferred material and equipment for a large part of each day, just before and just after the three plays were given.

Balboa is the largest city of the Panama Canal Zone. It is at the Pacific end of the canal, houses the government offices and administration, and has some ten thousand American citizens for residents.

Only the government employes are eligible to purchase from the government in the Canal Zone, which creates a problem for any self-supporting theatre. Six hundred persons is about the maximum audience, with five hundred as the average. No matter how much interest or ability is displayed, with only a limited number of persons able to buy tickets to the plays, the question of raising enough money to make the theatre self-supporting is a serious one. Some of the play publishers have been understanding about the problem, but our largest expense is for royalty payments.

The Balboa Little Theatre refers both to an organization and to the building used exclusively by that organization. The director of the Balboa Little Theatre also teaches all speech, forensic, debate and drama work in the Balboa High School, and this year, 1937-8, presents a play with students of the Canal Zone Junior College.

The conveniently located building of the Little Theatre was remodeled as a theatre in the spring and summer of 1934, and dedicated by C. A. McIlvaine, Executive Secretary of the Panama Canal, on October 26, 1934. That building



Auditorium, Balboa Little Theatre

stands as a reminder of the insistence of Ben M. Williams, superintendent of schools for the Canal Zone, for more leisure-time entertainment activities of a better nature, for federal government employes here.

The building has an ample entrance, a lobby about twenty-five feet by sixty feet, furnished with comfortable wicker, an auditorium seating two hundred persons, a stage about twenty by thirty feet with a proscenium opening twenty feet wide, two large modern dressing rooms each about twenty feet square, a "Prop" cabinet about ten feet square, and practically all those things necessary for a modern little theatre.

The equipment of the stage is more or less complete. A Ward-Leonard plug-in dimmer board, designed by the director, affords twelve units, and makes possible some sixty different combinations. Concert border, X-ray borders, spotlight, footlights, floodlights, special and extra lights, all are provided.

A complete set of interlocking, interchangeable flats, together with doors, windows, levels, steps, pylons, fireplace, and the like, have been built under the supervision of the director, as have also entire sets of cyclorama drapes, gray, tan, and black in color. A different scene is constructed and painted for each production, in the scene dock and paint shop, which occupies an adjoining building.

The Little Theatre has its own theatre orchestra, composed of eight players, organized and directed by Helen Baker, supervisor of music for the Canal Zone Schools. This orchestra provides appropriate music for all productions.

Plays are given from October to May each year, with ten productions given. With less than 10,000 persons to draw

from, the Balboa Little Theatre has played to a total attendance of some 5,000 persons each year. More than one hundred persons—players, stage hands, actors, managers, and so on—are used each season. The Balboa Little Theatre has been listed in the *National Little Theatre Directory*, in the tributary theatre issue of *Theatre Arts* for all three years of its history.

During its first season the group presented Professor Thomas Clarkson Trueblood, professor emeritus of speech at the University of Michigan. The highlight of this last season was the presentation of Channing Pollock's "The Fool," followed by a visit to the Little Theatre by Mr. Pollock, at which time he talked informally on the drama.



Many Sooners at Southwestern

There are twenty-one Sooners on the faculty of Southwestern State Teachers College, Weatherford, according to Dr. J. C. M. Krumtum, '09, '23ma, '36ed.d., who is head of the Department of Foreign Languages at the college.

The other Sooners at Weatherford include: W. W. Isle, '15, president; Rivers M. Randle, '27ms, director of Placement Bureau, alumni secretary; George P. Wild, '26, '31ma, dean of men and assistant professor of history; Eloise Wheeler, '31, '33lib.sci, assistant librarian; Gordon D. Williams, '25, '27, college physician; Myrle E. Kelly, '37ed.m, professor of art; Dora A. Stewart, '21ma, '30ph.d, professor of history; Myrtle Umphress, '21, professor of home economics; Mrs. Jeanette S. Crosby, '24, '25ma, associate professor of education; Magnolia Gee, '26ma, associate professor of education; Merle Montgomery, '24fa, associate professor of piano; James Calvin Barnett, '31ma, assistant professor of history; Sibylla Andrews, '35, '36ma, instructor in French and German; M. F. Smith, '23, '30ma, instructor in extension work; Ernest Crain, '36ma, instructor in education; Mildred D. Hobbs, '23, supervisor in demonstration school; Myrtle Banks Quinlan, '36ms, supervisor in demonstration school; Rogern Fenn, '29fa, associate professor of instrumental music; Edna Muldrow, '18, '27ma, assistant professor of English; Elizabeth Barrowman, '36, instructor in physical education for women.