HART HOUSE THEATRE
TORONTO - CANADA
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A Description of the Theatre and the Record of its First Nine Seasons,
1919-1928
HART HOUSE THEATRE

An account of Hart House Theatre necessarily involves an explanatory reference to Hart House, the building of which it is a part. This is an institution within the University of Toronto, which seeks to provide for all the activities of the undergraduates’ life which lie outside the actual lecture room. The building, which is for the use of men only and is non-residential, includes, in addition to the Theatre, common rooms, a library, dining rooms, gymnasium, a swimming bath, and accommodation for various other purposes. Hart House was built by the trustees of the Massey Foundation, under the direction of its administrator, Mr. Vincent Massey of Toronto, and presented to the University in 1919.

The Theatre, which is structurally though not in an administrative sense, part of Hart House, is in the sub-basement of the building underneath the quadrangle which is supported by a series of concrete arches of unusual size and great beauty of form. These also form the roof of the Theatre. Both the auditorium and the stage are approached by ramps leading directly to outside entrances. The problem of ventilation was most successfully solved by a mechanical system. The Theatre seats, without crowding, 450. If necessary, about 500 can be accommodated. The architects of the Theatre, and of Hart House as a whole, were Messrs. Sproatt & Rolph of Toronto.
Hart House Theatre was planned and equipped under the close personal supervision of Mr. and Mrs. Vincent Massey, who have given much time to the study of the modern theatre. This institution, as the incorporation of the ideas of its founders, was established by them as an experimental theatre for the use of the University of Toronto and the wider community which it serves. Already amateur dramatics, within the University and its Colleges, had reached a standard which deserved permanent housing on an adequate scale. Serious dramatic work in the University of Toronto, within recent years, had commenced with
the organization of the Players' Club in 1913, an amateur organization which presented two productions before the Theatre was built, using the dining hall of Victoria College for this purpose. The productions were Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* (produced by R. Hodder Williams) and a double bill, *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets* by Bernard Shaw, and *The Pigeon* by John Galsworthy (produced by Vincent Massey).

Management

The Theatre is under the control of a body of four, called the Syndics of Hart House Theatre, which is directly responsible to the Governors of the University.
The Theatre from 1919 until 1921 was under the direction of Mr. Roy Mitchell, who received his first experience in the amateur productions of the Arts and Letters Club of Toronto. Before assuming the direction of the Theatre, Mr. Mitchell was the technical director of the Greenwich Village Theatre, New York. He is an author of note on the subject of dramatic production.

The second Director of the Theatre was the late Bertram Forsyth. Mr. Forsyth had had considerable experience on the profes-
Plan showing relation of Hart House Theatre to Hart House. The Theatre is shown in colour. On an upper story not included in this plan are the Green Room, Directors' office, additional workshops, and other quarters.
sional stage and was the author of several plays which have been produced in London.

The third Director of the Theatre was Mr. Walter Sinclair, who had made a distinguished contribution to the progressive movement in the theatre as the Director of the Amateur Dramatic Club of Hongkong. Mr. Sinclair's stage settings are familiar to the readers of dramatic journals both in Great Britain and the United States.

Hart House Theatre for the current season 1927-28 is under the direction of Mr. Carroll Aikins of British Columbia. Mr. Aikins was the founder of the Home Theatre
in the Okanagan Valley, which has several seasons of important experimental work to its credit. He is also a playwright of international reputation.

**Staff**

The technical staff, with the exception of the stage manager is amateur and is composed almost entirely of undergraduates who have in charge the electrical equipment, the workshops and the property rooms.

**Actors**

The actors and actresses are amateurs, and although undergraduates and other members of the University frequently take part, they are chosen at large, the standard of performance of each individual being the only qualification.
Scene from *The Rivals*

Scene from *Twelfth Night*
About four hundred persons have acted in the productions of the Theatre since its establishment. Of these a number have since appeared on the professional stage, some of them having entered upon permanent theatrical careers in London or New York.

The technical equipment of the theatre is probably as complete as that of any theatre of its size. In electrical apparatus, apart from a light-bridge over the stage, a set of scopticons, and a projection box at the rear of the house, and the usual footlights, floor-pockets and border-lights, both for
fore-stage and main stage, it possesses a switch-board with about eighty switches and dimmers with interlocking devices and master-handles.

All the scenery and properties are made in the Theatre which possesses the necessary accessories for this work. The Theatre possesses a permanent apron stage, or fore-stage, with openings to the main stage, flanking the proscenium on each side. These have been found most useful in production. The main stage is as large as that of most commercial theatres.

The Theatre has a special department under its own permanent manager for the manu-
facture of costumes for its own productions and also for rental for use in masquerades, etc. The theatre possesses a stock of over 1,500 costumes.

The annual season of the Theatre consists as a rule of eight productions. Each production is played for one week, with an occasional extension if the popularity of the play justifies it. A subscription list is opened before the commencement of each season for the benefit of those who wish to subscribe for the plays. The Theatre is open to the general public; students of the University, however, have the advantage of a reduced scale of prices.
Scene from *Paolo and Francesca*

Scene from *The Last Cache*
The Theatre is frequently used by undergraduate dramatic organizations of which there are several within the University.

**The Plays**

By March 1928, the Theatre will have produced 90 plays in addition to six revivals. In the choice of a season’s “bill,” although several plays are always selected from the ancient drama or the English classics, the management endeavours to avoid plays which possess 'educational value' only, or make a purely archaeological appeal. It is felt that audiences dislike being 'instructed', and that plays, whatever their period, must genuinely interest them. A season's programme covers as wide a range as possible.

**Canadian Drama**

The Theatre endeavours in every possible way to encourage the development of the Canadian drama.

The programme each year includes at least one play by a Canadian author. Seventeen of these have been produced already and have been published in two volumes by Messrs. Macmillan under the title *Canadian Plays from Hart House Theatre*.

**Summer School**

Since 1923, the Theatre has conducted a Summer School for those interested in the direction of amateur dramatic activities. Students have attended from various parts of Canada and the United States.

Information can be obtained from the Secretary, Hart House Theatre.
PRODUCTIONS AT HART HOUSE THEATRE
1919-1928

FIRST SEASON 1919-20.

The Queen's Enemies .................................. Lord Dunsany.
The Farce of Master Pierre Patelin (Traditional).
The Alchemist ............................................. Ben Jonson.
The Chester Mysteries of the Nativity and Adoration (Traditional. Arranged by Frank Conroy and Roy Mitchell).
The Trojan Women ....................................... Euripides (Trans. by Gilbert Murray).
The New Sin ............................................... Basil Hastings.
Love's Labour's Lost .................................... Shakespeare.

SECOND SEASON 1920-21.

Matsuo (The Pine Tree) .................................. Takeda Izumo.
Rasmus Montanus ......................................... Ludwig Holberg.
You Never Can Tell ..................................... Bernard Shaw.
The Chester Mysteries (revival).
Alcestis ..................................................... Euripides (Trans. by Gilbert Murray).
The Romancers (Les Romanesques) ...................... Edmond Rostand.
Pierre ....................................................... Duncan Campbell Scott.
The Second Lie ........................................... Isabel Ecclestone MacKay.
Brothers in Arms ......................................... Merrill Denison.
Cymbeline .................................................. Shakespeare.

THIRD SEASON 1921-22.

A Night at an Inn ....................................... Lord Dunsany.
Pantaloon ................................................... Sir James Barrie.
White Magic .............................................. Algernon Blackwood and Bertram Forsyth.
Candida ..................................................... Bernard Shaw.
The Chester Mysteries (revival).
Magic ......................................................... G. K. Chesterton.
Playbills, a Georgian Revue .................. Arranged by Bertram Forsyth.
Rosmersholm .............................................. Henrik Ibsen.
The God of Gods .......................................... Carroll Aikins.
The Tempest ............................................... Shakespeare.

FOURTH SEASON 1922-23.

The Knight of the Burning Pestle .................. Beaumont and Fletcher.
Hippolytus ............................................... Euripides (Trans. by Gilbert Murray).
The Dragon ........................................ Lady Gregory.
Belinda ............................................ A. A. Milne.
The Witch .......................................... Wiers-Jensen (Trans. by John Masefield).
The Translation of John Snaith ................ Britton Cooke.
The Point of View ................................ Marian Osborne.
The Rivals .......................................... R. B. Sheridan.
The Opera: Orpheus and Eurydice .............. Gluck.
Trespassers ........................................ Leslie Reid.

FIFTH SEASON 1923-24.

The Man from Blankley's ....................... F. Anstey.
The Toils of Yoshitomo ......................... Torahiko Kori.
Castles in the Air ................................ Bertram Forsyth.
L'Enfant Prodigue, a Pantomime (Play by Michael Carré fils; Music by André Wormser).
The Hostage (L'Otage) ............................ Paul Claudel.
The Bonds of Interest ............................ Jacinto Benavente.
Three Weddings of a Hunchback ............... H. Borsook.
The Weather Breeder .............................. Merrill Denison.
The Younger Generation ......................... Stanley Houghton.
The Monkey's Paw ................................ W. W. Jacobs.
Great Catherine .................................... Bernard Shaw.

SIXTH SEASON 1924-25.

The Romantic Young Lady ...................... G. Martinez Sierra.
At the Hawk's Well ............................... W. B. Yeats.
The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet .............. Bernard Shaw.
The Younger Generation (revival).
Misalliance ....................................... Bernard Shaw.
The Mollusc ....................................... Hubert Henry Davies.
Gold ............................................... Eugene O'Neill.
Riders to the Sea ................................ John M. Synge.
The Sabine Women ................................ Leonid Andreyev.
Outward Bound ................................... Sutton Vane.
(Produced by Vincent Massey).
The Winter's Tale ................................ Shakespeare.

SEVENTH SEASON 1925-26.

Samson and Delilah .............................. Sven Lange.
(Produced by Jacob Ben-Ami).
I'll Leave It to You .............................. Noel Coward.
The Ship .......................................... St. John Ervine.
Turandot, Princess of China.
Outward Bound (revival).
The Chester Mysteries (Revival).
The Rose and the Ring,
Thackeray's Fireside Pantomime Harris Deans.
The Angel in the House.........Eden Phillpotts and
Macdonald Hastings.

[Autumn Blooming
And They Met Again] ............Fred Jacob.
Man's World
Paolo and Francesca..............Stephen Phillips.
The Silver Box. .................John Galsworthy.
(Produced by Iden Payne).
Good Friday .....................John Masefield.
Advertising April ..............H. Farjeon and
Horace Horsnell.
The Mask and the Face ..........C. B. Fernald.
If Four Walls Told ..............Edward Percy.
(Produced by Kirby Hawkes).
The Toy Cart ....................Arthur Symons.

EIGHTH SEASON 1926-27.

Heartbreak House ...............Bernard Shaw.
S. S. Tenacity ..................Charles Vildrac.
The Man of Destiny ..............Bernard Shaw.
The Rose and the Ring (revival).
T'Marsdens .....................James R. Gregson.
John Ferguson ..................St. John Ervine.
At Mrs. Beam's ................C. K. Munro.
Twelfth Night ..................Shakespeare.
The Last Cache ..................Isabel Ecclestone Mackay.
Come True ........................Mazo de la Roche.
Twelfth Night (revival).

NINTH SEASON, 1927-28.

The Swan .......................Ferenc Molnar.
The Doctor's Dilemma ..........Bernard Shaw.
Alice in Wonderland ..........Lewis Carroll.
(An adaptation from the Alice books)
Rutherford and Son ..........Githa Sowerby.
The Prize Winner ...............Merrill Denison.
The Velvet Muzzle ..............J. E. Middleton.
The Return of the Emigrant ...Mazo de la Roche.
Romeo and Juliet ..............Shakespeare.
HART HOUSE THEATRE
Staff, 1927-1928

Director ...................... Carroll Aikins.
Secretary ..................... Stella van der Voort.
Stage Manager ................ T. Tremain-Garstang.
Manager, Costume Dep't...... Melville Keay.

SYNDICS OF HART HOUSE THEATRE

The Hon. Vincent Massey (Chairman)
Mrs. Vincent Massey
Lieut.-Col. G. F. McFarland (Hon. Treasurer & Vice-chairman)
Dr. George H. Locke

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