



CHERRIE '24



The Little Theater at Howard

In this day when real drama is at a premium, when the American stage is flooded with second rate plays, the folk theater or little theatre movement over the country is of vast importance. Especially is the movement at Howard University significant for the Negro. This project, fostered by a few art-loving, sacrificing souls, who have a big vision, has for its goal the building of a Little Theatre at Howard University to be the home of Negro drama. It is to be a place where dramas written by, for, and about Negroes will be produced.

The work of the Department of Dramatic Art has been significant and illustrious. The past few years have brought many opportunities, and have seen many plays well done. Youth has come, has caught the vision of the art, and has gone out, bigger, finer, for having had the dramatic experience.

A few of those who have caught the vision and "carry on" are Ottie Graham whose power in acting and dancing bids fair to contribute much to art; Evelyn Lightner, who reached a great degree of perfection in the art of designing costumes and left behind a worthy successor in Alma Thomas; T. J. Hopkins who has done splendid work in the field of stage technique, and Margaret Smith who developed the business management to a marked degree.

Some splendid performances have been given under auspicious circumstances, receiving high and favorable comment. Among them may be mentioned: "Thais"; "The Emperor Jones"; "As Strong as the Hills"; "Simon the Cyrenian"; and "The Pagoda Slave." To behold "Simon the Cyrenian," one of the most distinguished audiences ever gathered to see a dramatic performance was in Rankin Memorial Chapel as our guests: the members of the Disarmament Conference at Washington. But indeed, these are by no means the most significant performances though they may have been the most brilliant.

Since this movement is to foster original Negro drama, and since no race can truly and greatly portray the experiences of a race with an entirely different culture behind it, the "bits" of plays, though modest in composition and sometimes not plays at all, written by Negroes, portraying Negro life, have been the signal steps of progress in the life of the Dramatic Department, making it certain that long and significant strides have been made towards the goal. The first of these pieces is a dramatic episode from the life of Toussaint L'Ouverture called "Genefriede," by Helen Webb Harris, '23. It is a gripping thing full of intense action. The second, called "The Yellow Tree," by De Reath Irene Busey, '18, is a simple study of superstition in a mid-western Negro family, as the Washington Daily News puts it, "excellently made and powerfully written It is the stuff of which tragedy is made." Next in the list comes "The Death Dance," a story of African tribal life written by Thelma Duncan, '24. It is interesting, full of action, gripping, convincing. These are the cornerstones laid for the Negro Folk Theater at Howard University.

Many people, interested in America's contribution to dramatic art, believe that it will come from the Negro. Mr. Raymond O'Neil says that because the white American is of an old race, restrained, by years of training, by his work, by his Puritan traditions, he will never make any great emotional contribution to the art of acting. From the Negro, young in race, free, untrammelled by traditions, will come this rare contribution as it has come from him in music.



When the Negro realizes his opportunity and begins to unite, act, and produce his own plays in large numbers, presenting them to the world for their own value, for their value as they are purely Negro, simple plays of Negro life without propaganda, portraying Negro ideals, strivings, ambitions, longings, sorrows, joys, hopes, it will be the most eloquent of pleas for justice and equal opportunity that has ever been uttered. Art knows no race or creed. When the Negro gets his cause before the world in drama; when the world sees that the Negro's soul is like the soul of every other human, the race problem will disappear.

In a few years the realization of a Little Theater at Howard University and many other great dramatic accomplishments for the art drama of America must come to those who strive so unceasingly; and immortally entwined in the future art drama of this Little Theater, of this race indeed, will be the names of Montgomery Gregory, Alain Le-Roy Locke and Marie Moore-Forrest who have given of themselves so unstintedly.

"FORGOTTEN SOULS"

By David Pinski

Lizzie EhrlichGeraldine Neale
 Fanny SiegelTheresa Cochran
 HindesGeorge Davis

"THE MAKER OF DREAMS"

By Oliphant Doan

PierrotJennings Newson
 PierretteGrace Nash
 The ManufacturerAlfred Smith

"THE DEATH DANCE"

By Thelma Duncan, '24

Kamo—the accused ...Purvis J. Chesson
 Azumana—the maiden of Vai,
 Kathleen Hilyer
 Bumbulu—the medicine man,
 Jos. Nicholson
 Alihu—assistant to medicine man,
 Bernard Walton
 Warriors of Vai....T. C. Hall, P. Helm,
 A. Burke, L. W. Norton
 Natives of Vai...J. C. Young, D. Turpeau
 J. D. Peacox, J. C. Watts, E. M. Morrell

"THE PAGODA SLAVE"

By Charles Keeler

PriestH. I. Hoffman
 Tea MerchantE. Hemby
 The GroomHorace Scott
 The Rangoon GirlEvelyn Lewis
 The Groom's MotherGladys Turner
 The BrideMargaret Lawrence
 The BoyFrank Williams
 The Groom's Father.....August Terence
 The Dancing Girls of the Pagoda,
 Irene Salisbury, Lilla Martin,
 Velma Young, Gladys Peters,
 Hazel Harvey, Mae Harper.

SCENES FROM SHAKESPEARE

"THE MERCHANT OF VENICE"

(Scene from)

PortiaEllen Mills
 NerissaMarcella Dumas
 The same

PortiaGladys Peters
 NerissaArnita Turpeau

"OTHELLO"

(Death Scene)

DesdemonaKathleen Hilyer
 OthelloTheodore Spaulding

"MID-SUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"

(Forest Scene)

OrlandoJ. C. Young
 RosalindMae Harper

"ROMEO AND JULIET"

(Balcony Scene)

RomeoMelvin Green
 JulietDorothy Gillam



SCENE FROM "GENEFRIEDE"



J. W. NICHOLSON,
The Mighty Medicine Man of the
"Death Dance"