

# 'Cattle call'

## Actors audition for cast openings

By ETHEL SIMMONS

Mary Callaghan Lynch of Birmingham is just one of the 125 hopefuls who auditioned last week for parts in the Birmingham Theatre's upcoming second season of productions.

Theater Manager Michael Stoneall arranged the auditions in private, 10-minute sessions that kept him intensely busy through the week and weekend.

Ms. Lynch's audition typified the procedure Stoneall had set up. According to Stoneall, "I used to be an actor at one point, and I know how cruel and inhuman the 'cattle call' can be."

When the 34-year-old actress and singer arrived for her appointment, she waited in the lobby until tryout time. Then, she entered the darkened theater where she was greeted by Stoneall. They sat in folding chairs on stage, chatting, as he again looked over her resume.

"I WANT THEM (the performers) to be as relaxed as possible and do a good job," Stoneall explained later.

Each actor auditioning had been asked to choose a dramatic piece to perform. The second half of the audition was to read a part Stoneall se-

lected from a script of one of the four productions slated.

The dark-haired, trim-figured Ms. Lynch announced she planned to do "Patsy" from "Little Murders."

She moved easily about the stage, using many expressive gestures, while Stoneall watched silently from a seat in the audience.

She drew a chuckle from him when she said Patsy's line, "You're the first man I've been to bed with I didn't think was going to get pregnant before I was."

"VERY GOOD, Mary," Stoneall said afterward. He asked her if she was familiar with any of the shows announced for the theater's second season ("Hold Me" by Jules Feiffer, "Veronica's Room" by Iru Levin, "Hooters" by Ted Tally and "Ladyhouse Blues" by Kevin O'Morrison).

"No, not at all," she responded. "That's okay. That's cool," he assured her.

Stoneall asked Ms. Lynch to read the part of a character from "Ladyhouse Blues," explaining the action takes place in St. Louis in 1919.

"She's in Women's Lib... she's a real spitfire."

With Daniela Vitale of the theater staff reading the other character's lines, Ms. Lynch read her own part,

concentrating on the dialogue rather than attempting any movement.

When she finished, Stoneall said, "We will have callbacks in early May when the director comes to town and go into rehearsal in mid-May. I'd like you to come back."

"OKAY. GREAT. Super!" she enthused. With assurance, she added that when they called her, "If I'm not there, I've got a little answering machine."

Stoneall said he was also considering her for the cast of "Hooters."

He told The Eccentric later, "I was very impressed with her talents. I want her to audition for the director of the play. The main thing I'm checking is for any evidence of talent, any experience or training they have had, whether they can project in this theater, and whether they're limber or not."

In the lobby, Ms. Lynch bundled up in her coat, over the leotard and dance skirt. She carried her boots, still wearing the strappy spike-heeled shoes she wore on stage.

"It may sound queer or trite," Ms. Lynch said, "but I'm very at home on stage. I've been performing since the seventh grade."

MS. LYNCH played Sister Agnes, a missionary, in "Detroit!" a play with

music, about the Motor City, and sang a leading role in "Student Prince" with the Michigan Opera Theatre.

She worked at the Auto Show for the first time this year, doing narration for Buick. She sighed, "If one more guy asks me if I come with the car!"

Ms. Lynch teaches voice in her living room at home and gives private acting lessons to high school students. Her husband is a funeral director in the Birmingham area.

Of the Birmingham Theatre's venture producing its own shows, she said, "I hope it goes. There's so much talent here. I think it could become another Fisher Theatre."

She admits to getting a little nervous before she goes on stage. "But that's good. That gives you energy."

HER PREPARED piece from "Little Murders" was chosen, Ms. Lynch said, "because it's very much in my range and age, also by the same playwright as 'Hold Me-Feiffer.'"

Each of the four shows being produced by the Birmingham Theatre has only four or five parts in the cast, to be selected through auditions. The starring role will be played by a movie or television personality, whose names will be announced shortly.



Daniela Vitale (left) and Mary Callaghan Lynch get ready to read from script of "Ladyhouse Blues" during audition.



Actress leaves theater happy she will be called back.

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Theater Manager Michael Stoneall and Ms. Lynch confer after the audition; she was asked to return for another audition with the show's director. (Staff photos by Stephen Cantrell)

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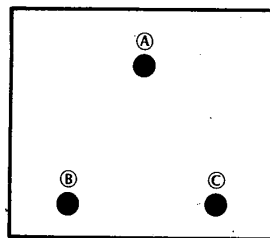
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