

The Director: A Blender

When Kaye Britton Handles A Play, She's Strong But Allows Interpretation

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Last Spring, The Observer told how "A Play Is Born." This piece is an outgrowth of the anatomy of a play idea and focuses on the role of a director in a community theater production. Other stories about other key people in production will follow from time to time.)

By SUE SHAUGHNESSY
Entertainment Editor

Taking all the pieces and blending them together into some sort of coherent product. That's the role of the director in any theater production, but it's especially true in community theater.

When the cast is made up of amateurs, the need for strong direction is crucial. Kaye Britton, who directed the Farmington Players production of "Mary, Mary," says it in a different way.

"The role of a director in community theater is different from professional theater.

"In professional theater the director has the actors for eight hours a day. But in community theater it boils down to two-hour rehearsals after a long day.

"I feel like a traffic director at times," she

sighed. "You block the play as fast as you can, and then you start to run the actors through. You let the actors learn their lines and keep them from bumping into each other on stage."

MRS. BRITTON, who has a background as a professional actress, admitted that this form of directing is easier in comedy than in drama because you "don't need to interpret."

While the lady has a background in acting, she likes sitting in the director's chair. "What's so much fun is finding that there is something there that you didn't expect. It's seeing the production play. The actors feel it, too."

This is the fourth production that Mrs. Britton has had a hand in directing for the Farmington group. She also admits that while living in New Jersey she directed "festival type things" for a woman's club.

How did she get into directing? She contends that she does it because "there is a dearth of directors who know theater and what looks good in the community theater movement."

THE METHOD: Is there any special set way to direct? This director says no. "There are no rules," she says. "You do it your own way and it all falls together."

Mrs. Britton bites her nails "only when I'm

directing a play." She uses her hands when she talks, moving them to make a point.

She also takes voluminous notes during rehearsals and estimates that she uses 10-12 pads of paper during each production. She can wear the point down on a pencil in 15 minutes and doesn't have any idea of how many pencils she uses during the production schedule.

Mrs. Britton is not what you would call a "strong director."

One of the actors in the Farmington Players production told us that "Kaye hits the happy medium between trying to interpret a role and give us direction."

"She's easy going," he said, "but when it comes down to the wire there is no doubt about who is the boss."

Her approach is to have the actors work with her. During one rehearsal, she frankly told the cast: "I'm just fooling around with this scene. I may change it back again, but let's try it this way."

The actors complied without a grumble. Indeed, at times during the rehearsals, it was a question of who was the most tired of a scene—the actors or the director—as the repetition went on and on.

"Mary, Mary" is a bright, sophisticated



ILLUSTRATING — Kaye Britton shows an actor the exercises used to tighten face muscles. This action was called for in the script of the play and the director took the time to make certain that it was accurate.

comedy, and Mrs. Britton never lost sight of that fact. She constantly admonished the cast that "this is a laugh line and play it for all it's worth."

About the notes, she says: "I'm sure that the cast is sick of my notes. But I can't let them go on making basic mistakes. If they keep running through the play the wrong way then there's trouble."

THE RESULT: She says that "I have always been pleased with what I've directed. The production has been beyond what I have expected."

The finished production bears tails out. On opening night, the curtain rose with a new leading man and a leading lady fighting a case of laryngitis.

In spite of the difficulties, it was a finished, reasonably polished product.

Mrs. Britton admits that she is always nervous on opening night, though. She says that the opening night jitters for a director are worse than for the actor.

"You always know what you can do," she says, "but not what the others will do."



WAIT A MINUTE — Kaye Britton uses her hands to make a point during a rehearsal of the Farmington Players production of "Mary, Mary."



CONCENTRATION — The director, Kaye Britton, concentrates while Stuart Orman and Kathy Nelson rehearse a scene. Note the pad of

paper on the table for Mrs. Britton's notes. Prompter Joan Stone follows the script at the table.

A Silver Anniversary At Kettle, Bell

By W. W. EDGAR
Observer Roving Editor

Each morning as Adj. Helen Arnold takes her place alongside the Salvation Army kettle in front of the Kroger store on Main Street, she is marking her silver anniversary in Plymouth and carrying on a tradition starting more than 60 years ago.

As each holiday season rolls around, she furnishes one of the first sights of the Yuletide with her kettle and the bell that has appealed for help for the needy through more than half a century.

"I was attracted to the kettle and the bell almost from childhood," she stated the other afternoon as the passersby dropped their coins in the ket-

tle, "and I have been at it ever since."

THE TRADITION of the Christmas Kettle, trademark of the Salvation Army, is one of the most fascinating chapters in the history of charitable work.

According to the legend the kettle had its inception when a large ship was wrecked off the rocky coast of San Francisco on a dark and stormy night in 1894.

Cold, wet and hungry, the survivors were taken to shelter in a nearby Salvation Army building. At the time, the Pacific Coast area was in the depth of a depression and there were few "extras" available for additional visitors who needed help. At the time the Salvation Army was stretching its resources to care for thousands of jobless seamen and it wasn't long until the supply of food was exhausted.

At that moment an idea was born.

An ingenious girl picked up the kettle and dashed out into the cold night air. At the first busy corner she reached she set up a sign, "Keep The Kettle Boiling."

The response was instantaneous and that night there was a sufficient supply of soup for all the hungry.

Word of the successful venture spread across the country in the various Salvation Army quarters and by Christmas of 1895 the kettle was used in 30 sections of the Pacific Coast area.

Success marked the innovation in each area and, according to the legend, the first great afternoon dinner in Madison Square Garden.

spread the story across its front pages in all the world to see.

BEFORE ANOTHER holiday season rolled around two young Salvation Army officers who had shared in the original success were transferred to the eastern seaboard. They took with them the idea of the kettle to help the needy in the annual Christmas appeal.

Boston was the first of the major cities to adopt the kettle and a man named William A. McIntyre prepared the city's Christmas plans around it.

When the time came for his fellow officers to man the kettles, they balked, fearful that they would be making spectacles of themselves. But that didn't stop McIntyre.

He enlisted the services of his wife and sister, set up the kettles in the heart of the city and the success was fantastic. The kettles provided Christmas dinners for 150,000 needy people.

No longer were people afraid of making "spectacles of themselves" and in 1908 the New York World, then one of the country's leading papers, called the Salvation Army kettles "the newest and most novel devices for collecting money" and also noted that "there is a man in charge to see that contributions are not stolen."

THIS PUBLIC ACCLAIM of the kettle resulted in one of the biggest charity dinners of all time when the funds from the "dinovettes" provided the first great afternoon dinner in Madison Square Garden.

And so the legend of the kettle reached its peak. Now, the kettle is used in every Salvation Army corps and many of the kettles are manufactured in state prisons.

Contributions to the kettles enable the Salvation Army to spread Christmas cheer among thousands who, otherwise would be denied the warmth and friendliness of the season.

To those far from home, to the sick, to the inmates of jails and prisons and the thousands of underprivileged children, the Salvation Army's remembrance at Christmas often spells the difference between happiness and misery.

A check of the records reveals that, in a recent year, the Salvation Army gave assistance to more than 1,650,000 persons at Thanksgiving and Christmas.

LIKE EVERYTHING else the kettles have undergone many changes since the utilitarian children was set up on that dark, stormy night in San Francisco. Some of the latest models have such novel attachments as self-ringing bells and come with a Christmas booth, complete with a public address system over which the traditional Christmas music is beamed.

But Adj. Helen Arnold will have none of them.

She still stands at her kettle ringing the bell as she has done for more than half a century and plans to continue for years to come.

She became affiliated with the Salvation Army as a child

in Windsor, Canada, and later entered the nursing training college at Toronto as an officer of the corps.

From Toronto she was assigned to Pontiac and served there for years before coming to Plymouth 25 years ago.

"It seems that I have known nothing else in my life," she smiled, "and I wouldn't change a minute of it."

"When I came here," she explained, "we set up a nursery on Mill Street and we were doing well until the close of World War II. Then, when the boys came home from service they wanted their wives at home and we had to curtail the nursery."

LT. TED DALBERG, head of the Salvation Army Corps in Plymouth, congratulated Adj. Arnold on her silver anniversary and explained that the Plymouth corps works with the needy throughout the year—providing food where needed, and supplying toys for the youngsters and helping out wherever we can.

The Plymouth corps is limited to three kettles in the city, but supervises the activity in most of the other communities in Observerville.

So, when you see Adj. Arnold, or her aides, standing at the famed kettle, they will be continuing a legend that had its inception during adversity of a shipwreck in San Francisco on a cold, dark night away back in 1894.

GOLDEN THROAT

Mickey Lolich has been performing as a singer during the off-season.

PHOTOS: Ralph Evert

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ADJUTANT Helen Arnold at her post.
(Observer photo)