

Meeting of the Program Committee, the Playreading Committee and members of the Board able to attend, for the purpose of evaluating the performance of "The Bell and the Flow", held at the home of Mrs. Baird, Sunday, May 23, 1954, 2:30 p. m.

Present were: Messrs. Martin, Grunewald, Nugent, Cook, Breasted, Marroney, Solve, Patania and Balazs and Mrs. Painter and Baird; also Messrs. Harold Porter and Sam Fain.

Before the meeting formally started, Mr. Cook presented to Peter Marroney a silver cigarette box embossed with the Bell and the Flow and the Festival symbol made by Mr. Patania, a token of the deep appreciation by his friends on the Board of his continuous, devoted efforts towards realizing the aims of the Tucson Festival.

Dr. Nugent presided, and suggested that Peter Marroney start the discussion with the correspondence from Kermit Hunter. Peter Marroney read excerpts from a letter in which Kermit Hunter stated that he welcomed criticism; that he would be in Tucson in July in order to make suggested revisions with Peter Marroney. Peter Marroney then made the following remarks: 1. He wished he had had more time to perfect the performance. 2. He had hoped that Kermit Hunter would be present during rehearsals so that many revisions could have been made then, as he did not wish to take the responsibility of major cuts and rewriting without Kermit Hunter's consent. 3. The third night was the best performance and had the most relaxed audience, so that the flaws in the play itself became much more apparent then. 4. Additional music is needed, suited to the southwest, for covering the scene changes; musical themes depicting the various characters and conflicts might help to clarify the action onstage. 5. The cast was to be commended; they were most cooperative and easy to work with--and that pattern was set by the very diligent Indian School students who participated with enthusiasm. 6. Wished he had had more material to cast from, as he was well aware that some of the parts were inadequately filled.

Dr. Nugent then suggested that the committee discuss the music before embarking on the longer discussion of the drama, and called first upon Harold Porter to comment on the chorus parts. Harold Porter said that he felt the choral music had worked out well, considering what had been expected. He suggested that in future performances, the chorus should be placed differently, in a stationary position, possibly offstage. Dr. Nugent then asked Sam Fain for his comments on the music. Mr. Fain prefaced his remarks by complimenting the Civic Chorus on their cooperation and knowledge of their music at the first joint rehearsal. As for the music itself, he personally thought it generally effective. He does not feel it necessary to make major changes in the existing score, but additional new music is needed during scene changes to obviate too much repetition. He felt the long sections of dialogue could be improved by background music. Concerning the orchestra, Mr. Fain stressed that a larger orchestra, of more than 20 pieces, is needed to provide a greater variety of sound effects. He pointed out that there were no oboes, bassoons and a minimum of percussion instruments and that the tone qualities of these instruments cannot be replaced by others. Also more strings are needed for background music. He was doubtful that an organ could produce the necessary sound effects, and the committee agreed that the tone of an electric organ (the only type available) is offensive to many people. Mr. Fain also added that both the Indian dance and the Sarabande are too long, and that the latter might not be appropriate

historically. Mr. Marroney said that Kermit Hunter would have provided more music, with a different treatment, had he known how the drama was going to be staged. The original stage had been thought of as a three-level one, outdoors, with no pauses between scene changes.

Dr. Nugent then suggested that, as a method of proceeding with criticism of the drama, he would like to call upon each member present alphabetically.

Mrs. Baird:

The idea of the play is impressive and appealing, but the vehicle needs to be completely revamped. Would like to see an "abstract" treatment, more like a pageant, with a narrator; a minimum, if any, of dialogue; more chorus, like a Greek chorus, and more music and dance, instead of straight dramatic action. (What Peter Marroney later in the meeting called a Pantomimic Drama.) The dialogue very unimpressive and undignified, but some of the major speeches very beautiful and moving and could be retained.

Mr. Marroney said the play is an epic drama, which is what we wanted, but some of the scenes are repetitious--would be more vignettes. Some of the scenes could be treated in a more abstract way, for instance La Paz.

Mr. Breasted:

Play should be cut at least 20%. Dialogue "painfully pedestrian". Left with a sense of confusion about the main conflict. Did not carry a real message. The script should be considered a third or fourth draft, not yet ready for production. The final scene anticlimactic. As for Gerrish's portrayal, both in the writing and the acting of the part, Father Kino never came to life, and lacked the dynamic, energetic quality which he must have had to achieve what he did.

Play should not be presented each year; should be alternated with some other production. If retained in anything like its present form, it should be divided into three instead of two acts.

Play did not take advantage of the drama of the drive of Europe into the new world.

Mr. Grunewald:

Agrees with above comments. Too long and wordy. Should not be given next season, but should be worked over and presented two years from now.

Mr. Martin:

Had it been a Broadway show, it would have played in "Scranton" first and never opened in its present state. Should be revised and tried again in a different form.

Dr. Nugent:

Characterization of Kino weak, as shown in last act when he was "in a dither" over the arrival of his superiors from Mexico. Also, should not have Kino told, when old and at end of his successful career in the New World, "Now you can go to China." Monotonous effect created by four scenes with Mission in background.

Mrs. Painter:

The main conflict, which is one of character, and the deeply spiritual and dynamic quality of Kino, were not sufficiently brought out. Cutting in all directions, including the number of scenes, is a must. Scenery and costumes too realistic. Characterization of Kino too effeminate. He should be so wrapped up in his vision and plans of the future that he does not see himself,

which is not the case. General opinion of friends was that the music was good and suitable. Cliff Goldsmith said that the play could be cut 50 minutes but not to be discouraged by this first attempt. Wants to keep the epic drama form--as the dialogue develops the conflict. Mrs. Painter then quoted excerpts from a letter from Father Celestine, who made the following comments. He felt that this was the best of many epic dramas that he has seen. Would have preferred less realistic scenery, and costumes in earth colors with stencilled designs. Made several detailed comments on religious technicalities. He liked particularly the Gregorian chants. Suggested that Gerrish interpret Kino as more of a fighter and less of a mystic. Visitors "might make a priest of Kino's stature somewhat anxious, but would never throw him into a panic." He also suggested that the play be presented between January 1st and February 15th, when many Catholics visit the Mission and might be good audience material.

Mr. Patania:

Preceding comments covered his point of view and any further remarks by him would be--like the performance--too long.

Dr. Solve:

A one-man play is a precarious undertaking--rarely successful. The problem is how to make it become alive. In this performance, the three conflicts were confused. Gerrish was very tired and gave a tired performance. Believes we should aim to give a revised version this coming season, while interest is still alive, and publicize the changes and improvements. The author would be more interested in revising if he knew that a second performance was scheduled. Historical costumes too literal and in some cases concealed and overpowered the actors.

Dr. Nugent interpolated here that the committee must know by September if revisions can be made so that a second performance can be publicized at that time. Mrs. Painter and Mr. Breasted suggested that a layman committee or liaison man be appointed to assist Peter Marroney with casting and other production details. Dr. Nugent then asked Mr. Thackeray for his comments.

Mr. Thackeray:

Opening scenes weak--the play doesn't get going up until the La Paz scene. The first scene should be gay and active. Kino's entry unimpressive--was "slid" into the scene by author. Indians from different tribes in varied parts of the New World kept following Kino around in the same costumes. As had been said by others, more narration would help and Kino should be portrayed as more of a fighter. Has heard some criticism that play is too Catholic, loaded with religious reiteration. Suggests that the cartographer angle might be played up to offset the religious emphasis. (Restated by Dr. Solve as "too much bell, too little plow.") Kermit Hunter forgot that Kino was where he was because of the power of Spain behind him, neglected the political lay influence. Suggested more Spaniards.

These remarks terminated the individual expressions of opinion of the committee members. Mr. Marroney said that he was well aware that the ending of the play was not what it should have been, that the ideal final curtain has not yet been found. There were a few more comments to the effect that: 1. There was too much emphasis on the overland route to California via the blue abalone shell. 2. Too much time spent in Spain, California and Mexico and not enough in Arizona territory. 3. There could be more contrast between the Old and New Worlds brought out by some device such as that used in Death Comes to the Archbishop.

Following all these comments, the question was raised as to whether the play was worth revising and producing again. The consensus seemed to be that if a substantial revision could be accomplished and a reasonable budget assured for production, and the personnel to work on it recruited, it would be worthwhile considering another performance, during the height of the tourist season, either this coming winter or next. However, as all these conditions are in a nebulous state, Dr. Nugent suggested that it was unwise to try to come to any decision about future performances at this meeting.

Meeting adjourned about 5:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Audrey L. Baird,  
Secretary Pro Tem