Sweat, Courage and Humor Help Put Theatre Activities High in City Organizations

With sweat and courage as the prime ingredients; with a liberal sprinkling of humor and tolerance, adding the needed joy and pique to the undertaking, the Lafayette Little Theatre, Inc. today rightfully enjoys a definitely established position in the community.

The Little Theatre idea was originally conceived by the City Recreation Commission, in an attempt to make provision within its program for some form of adult recreation. Particularly instrumental in forwarding the idea were Miss Inez Neyland, Miss Lois Walter and Mickey Domingue.

With realization that such a project would involve a great deal more expense than the commission was able to appropriate the plan was turned over to a group of citizens, who, in the meantime, had become interested in seeing the idea become a reality. A constitution was drawn up, by-laws were written, officers elected, and in the early part of 1946, the Lafayette Little Theatre came into being.

Heading that organization in its infancy was Mrs. John Scott as president; Miss Mario Mamalakis secretary and Miss Anita Mouton, treasurer; all charter members of the group.

Standing chairman elected included Mrs. J. Boyes Jardine, membership; Miss Lucille Coutes, play reading; Jack Sanders, set designer and head of construction; Beverly Broward, stage manager; Mrs. J. Boyes Jardine and Calvin B. program chairman and Miss Laurraine Goreau, chairman of the Radio Workshop, which went into production in the late spring, giving one broadcast a week over Station KVOL.

Mr. Hasty volunteered to direct the first play, "Second Fiddle" which was presented in the early spring. Through the cooperation of the school board and J. A. Anderson, principal of N. P. Moss, the group was allowed to present their plays and hold meetings during the first season, in the N. P. Moss auditorium. Membership after the first drive reached almost 200, and by the end of the season attained the 300 mark, a gratifying figure for a budding organization.

In the fall of their first year, the Little Theatre presented the comedy farce, "A Widow In Green" by Lea Freeman, under the direction of Miss Laurraine Goreau, and the following spring "Love In A Mist" by Amelie L. Harlow, under the direction of Howard Wade.

The usual flood of difficulties, obstacles and complications which thrust themselves upon such a group in its first year, prevented the organization from offering its members more complete programs, and the season closed with a gala supper meeting and election of officers. Elected at this time were Mrs. Dorothy Cox, president; L. E. Foxworth, vice-president; Mrs. Anne Doty, secretary, and Anita Mouton, re-elected treasurer.

When, at the opening of its second season, it was found that the N. P. Moss auditorium would not be available, the school board, with J. H. LaDue as spokesman, approved the idea of renting a place. As soon as the safety of the building and auditorium was confirmed, brooms, mops, brushes, rags, soap and water went to work, plus hammers, saws, and measuring tapes to increase the size of the stage, and by some miracle, laboring days, nights, and weekends, the auditorium appeared whipped into shape for the presentation of Patrick Hamilton's Victorian thriller, "Angel Street." The night before dress rehearsal is one that will never be forgotten by those who were there. In the middle of a tense, emotional scene, or a tender, sympathetic one, pictures were being nailed on the wall, ladders dragged across the stage, scenery hung everywhere, and when thrown down from the balcony, back-stage men heedlessly stomping across the floor, blackout every now and then, light connections were made—and through it all five characters near screaming and pulling their hair, persisted doggedly from line to line and scene to scene.

In the end, however, the play scored a major triumph for the Little Theatre in acting, staging, and directing, as well as production. "The Little Theatre felt it was set for good, and sat back a minute to heave a sigh of relief and joy."

It should be mentioned here that the temporary acquisition of a place "own" was not the only stimulus to "greater things". The Little Theatre found itself the recipient of even more good fortune, in the person of W. H. Gardner, who volunteered to direct not only the first play, but all of them—thereby removing the constant problem of finding young theatre groups. Having proven himself to the satisfaction of the board of directors, he was elected as director during the remainder of the season, successfully staging the old melodrama, "The Drunkard," the Hart and Kaufman comedy, "George Washington Slept Here," the S. S. S. favorite, "Tennessee Williams' Drama Critics award-winner The Glass Menagerie."

Since its last season, the Little Theatre has become an incorporated organization, operating under a board of directors. This consists of its four officers elected in the spring, L. E. Foxworth, president, Mrs. J. Boyes Jardine, vice-president, Miss Lucille Coutes, secretary, Rufus Marin, treasurer, and five additional members elected at the annual meeting of the board of directors, which may be done at a general meeting called by the special written request of any 25 members, or at the annual meeting held in May.

Standing committee chairman for the year are Mrs. Henry Heymann, membership chairman; Wm. C. Schmidt, play reading chairman; Mrs. Anne Doty, program chairman; Mrs. M. L. Moore, social chairman; Delia Garza, set designer and makeup chairman; Jack Sanders, lighting; Malcolm Burleigh, stage manager; Mrs. Albert Peterson, publicity; and Miss Iris Day, radio chairman.

At the threshold of its third season, the board of directors and active members feel that the Little Theatre has stood the test, held its ground, and is here for good. "We who are in office now, some of us with a few who have worked with the Little Theatre from the beginning," stated L. E. Foxworth, president, "know the credit that must be given to Mrs. John Scott and those who worked with her in getting the organization started and carrying it through thick and thin during its first year, and to Mrs. Dorothy Cox and those who worked with her to supplement those foundations and see the successful completion of a full second season. We are also exceedingly grateful to all members of the Little Theatre for continuing to give their support and encouragement to it. Without them the Little Theatre could not exist at all, and I sincerely hope we can continue to justify their support of it. We know that there are still difficult years ahead, but we believe that we are at least 'over the hump.' If the enthusiasm, interest, and cooperation continue to grow as they have, on the whole, this past year, we can meet those difficulties with little trouble, and become a truly vital part of the cultural, entertainment, and recreational life of Lafayette."

"It must be remembered," he added, "that a few people cannot do it alone. The Little Theatre always welcomes new active members. You need no experience. Most of us were completely green two years ago. During production of a play rehearsals are held five nights a week for a month at the Southside auditorium, and we work on the stage on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. Come out and help us."

The Little Theatre is opening its 1949-50 season with Anita Loos' hilarious comedy, "Happy Birthday," to be presented approximately during the last week of October. Its present membership drive, under the direction of Mrs. Henry Heymann, will be closed two weeks before the play opens. Membership is open to anyone interested in any phase of theatre work, or anyone just interested in meeting people and having fun, or merely seeing plays, which number from between four and five a year. "We are all amateurs," stated W. H. Gardner, director. "We want to have fun and give our members their money's worth in good entertainment and drama. And we always welcome new faces."
One of the most successful plays presented by the Lafayette Little Theatre was "Angel Street" with a noted upswing in interest evident after its appearance. Appearing in the play were (left to right), Mrs. Betty Jardine, G. Allan Yeomans, Miss Laurraine Gorean, Steve Lemann and, standing, Bill Gardner, Little Theatre director and Mrs. A. H. Peterson. In bottom photo are Lewis Darnell and Jean Jones, who appeared in the cast of "Little Old New York", another of the Little Theatre's successful presentations.