

'THE AUDIENCE VOTED IT A HIT'

MANCHESTER EVENING NEWS

MANCHESTER EVENING NEWS (10 August) in its Mr Manchester's Diary column reported on the success of *Annie*, the new British musical. It wrote: 'With a proud little flourish they are putting "House Full" notices outside London's Westminster Theatre these days and that means success for *Annie* the musical about Stockport's social reformer Annie Jaeger in the 1930's.

'It may not seem raw material for instant theatrical success, but capacity crowds have thronged the theatre since the opening a fortnight ago.

"A fantastic reception," says production manager Donald Loughman.'

The report then described the big train party being organised from Stockport to London to see *Annie* on 26 August.

What is it that is drawing people?

The *Manchester Evening News* the

following day called it a 'musical with a strong story and lively and lilting songs.'

A senior newspaper reporter said, '*Annie* is one of the simplest and most moving plays I have seen.' It was providing, she said, 'the foundations on which this country rests and on which it will be strengthened.'

The *Glasgow Herald* in its London Letter said about the musical, 'The idea is that old class conflicts of the thirties may teach something about new race conflicts.'

Certainly crowds are coming from the various Commonwealth peoples living in London. An official of one West Indian society said after he had seen the show, 'I would like all our members to have the same experience we had tonight.' He is planning that that takes place.

A hundred Ceylonese are among

the large numbers of overseas students from Asia and the Middle East who have seen it. Nigerians from the many different tribes, including Ibos, Yorubas and Hausas have been to the Westminster Theatre. Some feel that perhaps the peace of warring Nigeria may be established in London.

Railwaymen and their families, totalling over 800 people, have been to the musical. Four of the eight East London boroughs have been represented by their Mayors and Mayoresses. Newspapermen from the Soviet Union and Poland came. One Polish newsman exclaimed after the performance, 'It's smashing!'

To meet the mounting interest stimulated by *Annie* in the world programme of MRA, public meetings are held each Sunday at 11 am in the Westminster Theatre. At 3 pm each Sunday feature films are being shown. On 20 August: *The Voice of the Hurricane* and 27 August: *The Crowning Experience*.

BRITISH CIVIC LEADERS SEND MESSAGE TO INDIAN PRESIDENT

BRITISH CIVIC LEADERS last week wrote to the President of India, Dr Zakir Husain, expressing 'our appreciation for what Mr Rajmohan Gandhi and the cast of *India Arise* have done in our country'.

The letter, signed by 27 civic heads and sent also to the Indian Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, and the Minister for External Affairs, Mr. M C Chagla, said: 'Their colourful and dynamic musical has not only provided great pleasure to many thousands of people from all walks of life; it has touched our hearts and helped us to understand your great nation and the challenge before it.

'At a time when division, bitterness and misunderstanding are so wide-

spread in the world, the visit of these unique ambassadors from India has created strong bonds of friendship and underlined the truth that only a new spirit in men can make a new spirit between nations possible.'

The signatories included Sir Nicholas Garrow, Chairman of the Northumberland County Council, 1952-67; S T Itell, Chairman of the Flintshire County Council; Harold Lambert, Lord Mayor of Sheffield; H E Edmonds, Lord Mayor of Cardiff, 1966-67; F C Vyvyan-Jones, Lord Mayor of Bristol; Jonathan F Burton, Lord Mayor of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1966-67; Denis D Connors, Lord Mayor of Portsmouth; and Norman Hogg, Lord Provost of Aberdeen, 1966-67.

MESSAGE TO PAKISTAN PRESIDENT

THE WORLD ASSEMBLY at Caux, Switzerland, which included Austrians, New Zealanders, Canadians and British sent the following message to Field Marshal Mohammed Ayub Khan, President of Pakistan:

'We salute you and the people of Pakistan on your National Day. We pledge our lives to work with you so that our diverse peoples will together undertake to feed, clothe and house all humanity and give every last man a satisfactory purpose to live for. We believe this is God's vision for the Commonwealth.'

What stirs the 'Annie' makers?

'Annie', the new musical at London's Westminster Theatre has a top cast and production team.

It was directed by Henry Cass.

William Cameron Johnson, set designer, and

Dorothy Phillips, costume designer, were interviewed by R A E Holme on the significance of the Westminster Theatre.

SELFLESSNESS OF SET DESIGN

LAYMEN SEEING STAGE SETS and scenery have little idea of the work involved in getting them up and getting them right.

William Cameron Johnson, resident designer of the Westminster Theatre, had only five weeks from getting a script of the musical *Annie* in his hand to curtain-up time for the premiere. The five weeks meant working every weekend, into the small hours frequently and through a couple of nights.

He says it is a hair-raising business when two days before premiere you see whether your sets, the costumes and the actors all fit stage dimensions and colour schemes. Despite scale-model cardboard cut-outs in black and white first, then colour, despite complex logistics and 'mental gymnastics' with revolving scenes for a fast-moving musical, you can never be sure that all will click.

Fortunately, Cameron Johnson has designed sets for twenty-six plays in London, Switzerland and America, so he knows the ropes professionally. He has also worked as stagehand, so he knows that side of things.

What spurs him to give his considerable talents without salary?

'I have always loved the theatre anyway,' he said when interviewed in London this week, 'but the Westminster is a theatre that can most inspire any designer to work for it.'

One fellow-designer had told him there was so much more point pouring yourself out for a theatre like the Westminster Theatre which cared for its audiences more than for its own self-centred interests.

'Another designer,' said Johnson, 'told me that the Westminster Theatre

plays were the right, contemporary way of reaching the country with creative ideas.'

Johnson said his brother was also a designer but in the aircraft industry. Some of the men in that industry believed that the Westminster Theatre plays had helped to foster greater drive for cooperation in European aircraft construction. The plays gave people a motivation to build up their own country's aircraft industry instead of leaving for other countries where there were better pay and prospects.

'These plays make for an outlook of increase, not decrease, maxi not mini. They could even lead to a more expansive outlook in certain Government departments.'

'These are some of the reasons why I give my services to the Westminster Theatre,' Johnson said.

'As for this particular play, *Annie*, I like it because it speaks to the grass roots man, the pavement man, if you like, because our industrial cities have few grass roots. The people in it are real and solid people—for it is a true story. They are the men and women of the factories, pubs and docks of Lancashire and East London.'

'The play shows how to straighten out homes, answer hates. It spells out the ABC qualities that make this nation sound. It shows how everyone can have them as Annie did and can achieve what she achieved.'

COSTUMES AND CHARACTER

FROM TOPMOST SEAT in topmost gallery a Canadian girl of 16 saw her first performance of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet. 'I am going to design for the ballet,' she said out loud, and passionately.

She went to the ballet mistress, 'worked all weekend like a slave' and two weeks later landed the job. For nine years she designed for this ballet company, which performs in Washington and New York and was seen in London at the Royal Commonwealth Arts Festival. She earned her living by fashion illustration and magazine layout.

Dorothy Phillips still 'works like a slave', but now it is for the Westminster Theatre, without salary but with the same passion. Her latest designs are the costumes for *Annie*.

What makes her tick? What does she see in this theatre and in *Annie*?

'People say they go to the theatre for entertainment,' she said. 'So they should, and they get it in this musical. But many people, though they may not admit it, go for more than entertainment.'

'They go for the human drama being acted before them and draw something from it for their lives. For instance, a person with a closed heart hears Annie (Margaret Burton) sing "Open your heart". They get involved in what the song and the play have to say and it affects their lives.'

'One of my own family got an idea from an earlier play by Alan Thornhill, author of *Annie*: "It's not who's right but what's right." He has applied it in his work for years.'

'Through these plays you lift the life of a person or a community. The Greek playwrights regarded drama as a "catharsis—purging—of the emotions".'

Dorothy Phillips believes, as a background to her work, that 'we are at war'. She says, 'It is a war of ideas against the pedlars of permissiveness in society.'

'A spirit of anti-God abroad in the world wants to dethrone God and enthroned man. Man then becomes the

only source of creative thought, and God is relegated to the dustbin. It's an age-old struggle to have man and God in a balanced relationship. Man must be in his rightful place as a servant and son of God.'

But are theatre audiences, especially West End ones, interested in God?

'They are interested,' Miss Phillips believes, 'to the point of agreeing or disagreeing violently. They are not lukewarm. God is the most controversial, popular subject—ahead of sex and money.'

Working for the Westminster Theatre gives her, she feels, 'a bigger aim than money, position or one person's glory'.

What is this aim?

'It is to unite the whole world.'

Dorothy Phillips explained how she went about her work for *Annie*. 'Since this play is about actual people who really lived, it meant research into the character of the era—the 1930s—and of the heroine, Annie Jaeger. I spoke with her daughter-in-law, Clara Jaeger, who told me, "Annie was neat, gay, simple but not dull. She didn't draw attention to herself."

'I thought about her character and each of the characters in the show.'

Millie, the Lancashire mill girl, for example, caught in the economic depression of the early Thirties, wears the subdued blues and browns of poverty, with a simplicity of style to suit her character.

In the East London scenes that follow, her blue one-colour costume is smarter and aims to show also the depth in her character. When she kicks over the traces and dances the 'Appeasement Parade', the audience sees another side of her character in the swishing pleats of a golden dress—the opposite side of the colour spectrum from blue. Yet, though warm and bright like her character, it is not a blatant colour.

'There is a psychological use of colour which is employed all the time in plays and films, although we may not consciously be aware of it,' she explains. 'But it's an interesting aspect to note the next time you see a show.'

'The essential of good costume design is to portray and project character. At the Westminster we aim that people shall leave the theatre fed through their eyes and ears by the artistry of first-class craftsmanship and stirred in their hearts by the power of what is said.'



Alderman and Mrs A F G Edwards (right), the Mayor and Mayoress of New Ham—birthplace of MRA in 1938—with Mr William Jaeger, an internationally known authority on the trade union movements. The Mayors and Mayoresses of Islington, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest are also among East London civic leaders who have seen the musical.

EIGHTY-FIVE YEAR OLD RAISES MONEY

EIGHTY-FIVE YEAR-OLD Mrs Edith Crossman of West Ham has so far raised £400 from old friends of Annie Jaeger towards the production costs of the musical *Annie* now showing at the Westminster Theatre, London.

Mrs Crossman's home was the first home Mrs Jaeger stayed in West Ham when she came to East London in 1936 from Stockport.

Mrs Crossman told a meeting this month at the Theatre that her first contact with Annie Jaeger was when she came unannounced one Monday morning to visit her. Housework, washing, ironing and shopping kept Mrs Crossman busy, so she said, but they eventually got together on the Friday afternoon. Mrs Crossman at that time gave her life to God and, as

she said last week, 'My whole life became completely different.'

The following Monday Mrs Crossman went out 'on the knocker' with Mrs Jaeger and visited a home on the verge of breakup. The wife had just returned from the Town Hall where she had taken out a separation order. By the end of the morning, however, she had completely changed, said Mrs Crossman. Husband and wife sat down together with the children for lunch. Mrs Crossman from then on regularly worked with Mrs Jaeger.

She said the production of *Annie* was 'very timely' for Britain today. It showed how human nature could be changed. This was why she was raising money for the production of *Annie*. Others, she said, who wished to contribute towards the £7,000 production costs of the musical may send their gifts to her or to the Treasurer of the Westminster Theatre.

Sing-Out Festival action in North America

THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES is arranging a series of performances of the MRA musical *Sing Out Los Angeles* in the parks of Watts throughout August. Watts was the suburb of Los Angeles that was severely hit by riots in 1965.

Task forces of youth from the Sing Out Festival at Fort Slocum near New York have been invited to give outdoor performances of the Sing Out musical in the streets of Harlem, East Harlem, in the housing developments of Lower Manhattan and in some of the tension torn cities of New Jersey.

The cast of *Sing Out Deutschland*, the musical produced by German youth, has been operating in the City of New Rochelle on the invitation of the Council. The German daily newspaper *Mittag* (circulation 300,000), reporting on this, said, 'The City Coun-

cil has declared that the tension between the coloured and white population has already noticeably decreased. As a result this remedy will be further used. A Sing Out group will now go chiefly to those American cities which are most threatened by racial violence.'

Mervyn Leroy, the Hollywood producer, said after seeing a performance of the musical *Up With People*, 'This is the answer to the riots we have been experiencing in America.' He urged Americans to support and finance MRA and said that he wanted to make a film of Sing Out and the whole work of MRA.

At Expo '67

Last week *Up With People* gave a 3-day series of performances at Expo '67 in Montreal. The Mayor of Mon-

treau, Jean Drapeau, received the cast on the terrace where he receives heads of state and distinguished visitors this summer. Audiences totalling 22,000 saw the musical in Montreal.

In New York 500 youth in *5 Up With People* casts from the United States, Africa, Germany, Brazil and Panama staged a half hour musical demonstration in the big Shea Stadium. A crowd of 35,000 at the baseball game between the Pittsburgh Pirates and the New York Mets cheered as a 100-man stage crew erected platforms for the demonstration in sixty seconds.

Senator Jack Miller, Republican, Iowa, praised the initiative of the 1,700 youth attending the World Sing Out Festival. The Festival is attended by delegations from across the USA and from Asia, Africa and Europe.

Freedom shown in Central West of Nigeria

THE MILITARY GOVERNOR of the Central West State of Nigeria, Major D L Bamigboye, last week invited the Councillors, senior civil servants and other dignitaries in the State to see the film *Freedom* which was put on in the open outside his residence.

After the performance the Military Governor said that Moral Re-Armament existed to put right the things that were wrong everywhere, and to build the unity between peoples and races which was essential if peace was to be established throughout the world. He expressed the hope that more films of Moral Re-Armament would be brought to his State.

Freedom was also shown to the police in Ilorin and to their families at the request of N E Onojo, the Chief Superintendent of Police.

EDUCATION MINISTERS REQUEST FILM FOR SCHOOLS

THE MINISTERS OF EDUCATION of Pakistan, Thailand and the Central African Republic were among educational leaders from 21 countries who saw *Give a Dog a Bone* at receptions in Geneva. Many are eager to get copies of the film for their nations. Among others who saw the film were directors and high officials of the Ministries of Education of Malta,

Mexico, Kuwait, Togo, the Philippines, Singapore, Brazil, Kenya, Ghana, the Ivory Coast, Tanzania and Canada.

Give a Dog a Bone is now being shown in 19 countries. On Singapore's National Day it was shown over TV Singapura, the Government TV, immediately after the Prime Minister had given his address.

PLANS PREPARED TO MEET DEMAND

AT AN EDUCATORS' conference in Caux, Switzerland this month plans have been made to provide copies of *Give a Dog a Bone* for the following countries: Denmark, Cyprus, Finland, France, Portugal, Poland, the Dutch West Indies, Indonesia, Gambia, Pakistan, Ceylon, Fiji, Kenya, Thailand, Ethiopia, Austria and Brazil. Copies of the film will be dubbed into German, French or Swedish or subtitled in Arabic, Chinese, Dutch, Danish,

Finnish, Norwegian, Portuguese or Turkish.

British, Dutch and Swedish teachers have undertaken to provide film vans for India.

These teachers and educators earlier raised the £35,000 to film *Give a Dog a Bone*. They are now raising the necessary money to carry out this second stage of making Peter Howard's pantomime available for the children of the world.