

# Theatricals Music Features

## STAGE LURES EDNA THOMAS FROM EXECUTIVE ROLE

"Once a pancake, always a pancake," laughed Edna Thomas as she sat in her dressing room at the Lafayette Theatre waiting for the curtain to rise on the WPA Federal Theatre Projects "Androcles and the Lion" in which she plays the role of Lavinia.

In the screen play of "Imitation of Life" Ned Sparks referred to Louise Beavers as "once a pancake, always a pancake" because she refused to give up her pancake making and live a life of ease. Miss Thomas says that the phrase easily applies to her own story of relinquishing, for the present, her duties as assistant director of the Negro Theatre to play the part of Lavinia in "Androcles and the Lion."

"After being on the stage twenty years or more," said Edna Thomas, "acting becomes such a part of you that you can't easily resist the call. When I was asked to consider giving up part of my work as assistant to Mr. Smith in order to do Lavinia, I secretly rejoiced. Lavinia had always been a fascinating character to me, and not having acted for almost three years, I just couldn't refuse."

While playing with Lenore Ulric in "Lulu Belle," the Theatre Guild asked her to read the part of Bess in "Porgy," a play dealing with Negro life in Charleston. Curiously enough, Miss Thomas was quite unfamiliar with Negro dialect. Although born in Virginia, she was taken to Boston when only a year old, so her background and accent were Bostonian. However, she got the poems of Paul Lawrence Dunbar—all written in Negro dialect—and learned them and went back and read the lines of Bess. She was given a contract.

Miss Thomas was elated. Here, at last was a true Negro play—the play she had always wanted. Then suddenly, tragedy intervened. The Helwands, authors of "Porgy," found her "too refined, too white"—they wanted a "natural." Miss Thomas was offered the part of Clara in the same play, but she refused it, for, after announcing to all her friends that she was going to play Bess, this was a real humiliation.

Lenore Ulric saved the situation. When she heard that Edna Thomas had signed a contract for "Porgy" she was furious. She told her to break it at once in order to travel with her in "Lulu Belle." So, instead of playing Clara, Miss Thomas went on tour with Miss Ulric. Later, however, she did play the part of Clara in "Porgy"—here and in Europe.

Miss Thomas' next Negro play was Hal Johnson's "Run Lil' Chillun," in which she played the role of Ella. "After hearing the plot of 'Run Lil' Chillun' and reading the lines she said, 'I think it would have broken my heart to have played Ella. For despite my Virginia and loved southern-Bostonian background, I was born traditions.'" Miss Thomas' last important Negro role was in the Theatre Union's "Stevadore."

Three years ago Miss Thomas played Lady Macbeth in the WPA Federal Theatre Project's "Macbeth." Now, she is portraying a Christian martyr in Shaw's "Androcles and the Lion."

## ALACHUA TEACHERS IN ANNUAL MEET

Gainesville, Fla., Feb. 9 (ANP)—The Alachua County Teachers Association closed its annual meeting here Saturday with the election of officers. During the ten-day session addresses were delivered by Horace F. Zetrouer, county superintendent of education; Dr. J. D. Haygood, professor of education, University of Florida; Miss Charlotte L. Ford, professor of education, Bethune-Cookman college; Miss J. W. Roberts, instructor in music, Bethune-Cookman college; A. L. Holsey of the AAA, Washington, and R. G. Manchester, city recreation director.

Officers elected were R. T. Smith, president; Mrs. Daffney Duval, vice president; Miss Jesse Neal, secretary; Miss Carolyn Porter, assistant secretary and Mrs. C. V. Mills treasurer.



Edna Thomas, who won Broadway stardom in "Stevadore" and who played Lady Macbeth in the WPA Federal Theatre's play of the same name portrays "Lavinia" in Shaw's "Androcles and the Lion," which the WPA Federal Theatre has revived at the Lafayette Theatre in Harlem with a cast of 100 Negro actors.

## LIKES DRAMA



Prof. M. B. Tolson, Professor of English and director of dramatics and debating at Wiley College, Marshall, Tex., who finds time to be managing editor of The Oracle, organ of the Omega Psi Phi fraternity. Prof. Tolson is a graduate of Lincoln (Pa.) and Columbia, and his writings have appeared in some of the best magazines. (Calvin Service)

## BANS MARIAN ANDERSON D. A. R. IGNORES PROTESTS;

Washington, D. C., Feb. 8—Despite the protest of famous persons in the world of music including stars of the Metropolitan Opera and a strong telegram from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Daughters of the American Revolution voted to uphold its ban against the appearance of Marian Anderson in a concert which was to have been held at Constitution Hall here April 9.

The action of the DAR was taken by its board of directors at a meeting here Thursday. It was followed on the heels of strong protests from Lawrence Tibbett and Kirsten Flagstad, stars of the Metropolitan Opera; Leopold Stokowski, former director of the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra; and Walter Damrosch, famous composer and musician, of New York.

In a telegram to the DAR, sent January 21, Walter White, secretary of the NAACP said:

"May we respectfully urge revocation of the ban on other than white artists appearing in Constitution Hall. Specifically, the refusal to permit Marian Anderson, distinguished Negro Contralto, to sing there in April has shocked musicians, music lovers, and fair-minded Americans, from a building named by the Daughters of the American Revolution 'Constitution Hall,' violates the very spirit and purpose of the immortal document after which the Hall is named.

NAACP attorneys are considering filing a petition to have the tax exempt ruling on the Hall rescinded. The valuation on the ground is \$585,254 and on improvements, \$2,043,000.

Henry Ford is one of scores of internationally famous persons expected to attend the World Congress of the Society of Automotive Engineers, at the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition.

## 'Huckleberry Finn' Stars Rex Ingram



Mickey Rooney and Rex Ingram in "Huckleberry Finn."

## REX INGRAM SENSATION IN 'HUCKLEBERRY FINN'

HOLLYWOOD, February.—A Negro actor today is enjoying the warmest public reception for a motion picture performance that has been accorded one of his race since Louise Beavers became a sensation in "Imitation of Life."

The man is Rex Ingram, probably the finest Negro actor in America today. The role is that of Jim, the runaway slave in Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's filmization of Mark Twain's "Huckleberry Finn" in which Mickey Rooney is starred as Huck Finn.

When Producer Joseph L. Mankiewicz set out to make "Huckleberry Finn," he and Director Richard Thorpe planned to make the high point of the picture the ever-present love for freedom in every man. This theme was centered in Jim, the slave whose life was wrapped up in his desire for a free life, and the understanding of freedom which this great man brought to a river boy.

Since the role of Jim was literally a co-starring one with that of Huck, as played by young Rooney, MGM wanted the greatest available Negro dramatic actor. Rex Ingram was chosen. Ingram, who played "De Lawd" on the screen in "Green Pastures" and did several Broadway plays, was appearing in New York in "Sing Out the News" at the time "Huckleberry Finn" was being planned.

Although not a singer and dancer, he was a hit with the "Franklin D. Roosevelt Jones" song, during which he danced. He was brought to Hollywood for the Jim role and today, as "Huckleberry Finn" is made ready for release around the nation, it is predicted he will be a sensation.

Already, the picture has been previewed twice and it is a remarkable thing that half of all audience reaction cards turned in have praised his performance. Such reaction for a Negro actor has never been experienced in Hollywood before. Meanwhile, Ingram has returned to the Broadway stage to wait until Hollywood beckons again with another fine role.

Professional models and actresses were barred in the contest to select a Queen of all Nations to rule over the "Streets of the World" concession at the 1939 World's Fair of the West.

Every section of California will be included in an industrial accident prevention photographic survey to be exhibited at the World's Fair of the West on Treasure Island.

## WILL ROBINSON HEADS ALL-STAR CAST AT NAACP BIRTHDAY BALL

New York, Feb. 8—Bill Robinson America's Number 1 tap dancing star has added his name to the growing list of stage, night club and radio stars who will appear at the 369th Army here February 11 at the Duke Ellington dance in honor of the thirtieth anniversary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, officials of the Association announced here today.

Other famous stars in the world of stage and musical entertainment who are expected to appear include: Willie Bryant who will be master of ceremonies along with Duke Ellington, Teddy Wilson, of the Benny Goodman aggregation; Fredi Washington, Mildred Bailey, Ivy Anderson, Victor Moore, Alberta Hunter, Henrietta Lovelace, Mercedes Gilbert, the Radio Rouses Billy Banks, Louis Armstrong, W. C. Handy, Cab Calloway, Rosita Tharpe, and many others.

Duke Ellington and his famous orchestra, who are donating their services for the affair, will play throughout the dance, which is expected to attract more than 6,000 persons to make the dance one of the largest affairs of its kind ever held in Harlem.

More than fifty civic, political and liberal organizations have taken boxes for the dance, which is expected to draw an audience from sections of New York State and northern New Jersey officials announced that only ten boxes of the 62 on the first and second tier surrounding the army are left. The entire third tier will remain open to the public without charge.

The Columbus Broadcasting system, will send the music of Duke Ellington over its network for half an hour on that night, in order that NAACP branches throughout the country, who are giving similar dances, may tune in.

The program will be heard over the CBS national hookup from 12 to 12:30 instead of 11:30 to 12 as previously announced.

## NATIVES OF CEYLON KNOW ONLY 3 NEGROES; ASK IF RACE IS PAGAN

Colombo, Ceylon, Feb. 4—By Martin L. Harvey Jr. for ANP) Ceylon, world famous for its tea, is under British rule, from which many benefits and some ills have been received. The tea plantations which we have visited were very efficiently operated, although the workers both in the fields and the warehouses where the tea leaves were cured received pitifully small wages judged by any standard. The idea of organizing labor unions has made little progress because of the oversupply of workers, and the sense of individualism among the poorer classes.

We are amused to note the weird ideas held by many of the people, including the educated classes, about American Negroes. Almost every person with whom we talked knew about three American Negroes: Joe Louis, Father Divine and Bill Robinson. Some of the Christian people asked me if it was true that all Negroes in America were becoming pagans, and when I inquired as to the reason for the question the reply almost invariably was, "Well, we heard that they had stopped following Jesus Christ and were following a new Lord." Bill Robinson was known because of the Shirley Temple pictures which were very popular, and a group of high school students to whom I spoke were amazed when I could not comply with their request to give an exhibition of tap-dancing.

We met with several youth leagues, composed of college students, which were organized for political purposes. The burning question was the achievement of dominion status. Intense nationalism was expressed by many of these students, and I was told that a young man who had received his higher education in England was defeated for a seat in the political assembly because he wore western clothing. It would appear that this turning away from western customs and the rise of nationalism was partly a result of the influence of the Ghandi movement in India.

## JESSIE COVINGTON DENT



A. N. P.

JESSIE COVINGTON DENT of New Orleans, nationally known concert artist, is being presented in three piano recitals in Texas this week. Mrs. Dent, whose playing has been described as "a thing of delight," has been notably successful on the concert stage and has appeared as pianist in practically all of the major schools and colleges of the South.

## NEG ARGUMENT ORDERED IN TEACHER SALARY CASE

Baltimore, Md., Feb. 6—Judge W. Calvin Chesnut, in the federal district court here, has ordered additional argument on February 11 in the suit to enjoin the distribution of the state educational funds on Maryland for Teachers' salaries.

The suit was brought by Walter Mills, a colored principal of Anne Arundel county, representing Negro teachers and principals of the state. Attorneys of the NAACP are acting for Mr. Mills. If the injunction is granted it will hold

under the auspices of the NAACP of Houston on Feb. 8; by the Delta Sigma Theta sorority, of which she is a member at Fort Worth on Feb. 10 and by Tillotson college at Austin on February 13. Later in the month, Mrs. Dent will give a series of recitals in some of the colleges in Alabama, Georgia and The Carolinas. In April she will play a recital at Dillard university as the closing feature of the university's lyceum series. (ANP)

## up all salaries in the state for white and colored teachers. Mills and his lawyers contend that the distribution is unconstitutional because it discriminates against colored teachers through a state statute.

First argument on the injunction was held January 14. Thurgood Marshall, Charles H. Houston and Leon A. Ransom of the NAACP legal staff appeared for Mills.

A typical Norwegian garden will surround the Norwegian sports cabin, housing its display at the 1939 California World's Fair.

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