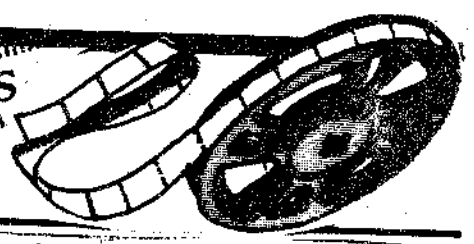


The Reel News

BY EILEENE WINTERS



"Tamara," one of Hollywood's longest running shows ever, has been extended to Nov. 25. The show's co-producer, Barrie Wexler, agrees that the title does not begin to tell what the show is all about. He's described it as a "living movie," but really the mystery play defies description. This new concept in entertainment has the audience following one of the players from room to room in an Italian villa, where the action takes place. The old American Legion Hall on Highland in Hollywood was totally refurbished to play the part of an Italian villa owned by the poet-patriot D'Annunzio in the fascist era between the two world wars. Wexler thinks a more accurate way to describe the entertainment is as an "adult party game." He told me that a search is now under way to find a New York City location for the play, which presents a problem. A posceniun theatre would never do — it has to be set in a house. Wexler and his associates spent nearly eight months looking for the location in Hollywood before they discovered the American Legion.

After New York, what's the life of "Tamara", I asked Wexler. Would it lose its appeal if translated to film?

In fact," said Wexler, "we have an extraordinary idea to put it on television, an idea as naturally revolutionary as the current production. We're all excited about it. It will make broadcasting history."

Barrie Wexler, himself, has had an extraordinary career, for so young. Raised in Montreal, he gravitated to the Greek and of Hydra (my favorite kind, too, I told him). He

taught English there, for four years, to Greek merchant marines. That gave him time to write a few novels. Back in Canada, he had a successful career writing and producing for television. His "I Am A Hotel" won the Golden Rose Award in Montreux, Switzerland. That's the festival that is the television equivalent of the Cannes Film Festival, with the Golden Palm award.

His latest project is truly a coup. He has secured the rights to the songs of an internationally famous celebrity, and you'll never guess who the songwriter happens to be. If I tell you he had to go to the Vatican to arrange the deal, does that give you a hint? You're right — Barrie Wexler is going to film, for MTV, the songs of the Pope!

As for "Tamara," the crowds continue to come. Thirty percent of the recent audience have come back for second, third, fourth and even fifth looks. Six people have bought seats six times. In case you didn't know, the intriguing mystery play has an intermission buffet that is catered by Ma Maison. If you haven't seen it yet, you're in for an unusual and unique evening of theatre.

★★★

How astute of Allan Miller and Laura Zucker to revive "Are You Now Or Have You Ever Been?", the Eric Bentley play that documents the real-life drama of the purge of Hollywood by the House Un-American Activities Committee.

This is a play that should be seen regularly, as a reminder to us of what can happen in America, and of what should never happen again.

It was originally produced in

Los Angeles 10 years ago, when Miller co-produced and played the role of Abe Burrows. The current production, directed by Miller, and produced by Zucker, opened at the Back Alley Theatre in Van Nuys several months ago. It was moved over to the Victory Theater, at Hollywood Way and Victory Boulevard in Burbank, to accommodate the tremendous demand for tickets.

In the play, in which the dialogue is taken directly from the House Un-American Activities Committee hearings, Miller again plays Burrows, a beautiful performance, wherein he captures the physical mannerisms and mental features of the humorist Burrows. A parade of well-known creative people of Hollywood in the late 40's and early 50's are characters depicted or discussed, such as Sterling Hayden, Lillian Hellman, Eli Kazan, Arthur Miller, Jose Ferrer, John Garfield, Edward G. Robinson, Humphrey Bogart, and Lee J. Cobb. Uncovered, like a gaping wound, is the sad conflict of Larry Parks, when he realizes that his career is literally being swept away as he appears on the stand. Parks is vividly portrayed by George De La Pena, whom I saw on Broadway last year in "On Your Toes." Thalmus Rasulala is a powerful Paul Robeson, and Joe George is the bombastic Lionel Stander, a Hollywood name who managed to survive to the present day, as a

principal of "Hart to Hart."

I enthusiastically endorse "Are You Now Or Have You Ever Been?" if you love strong theatre, and Hollywood. Call 780-2240.

Bill Erwin, the lovable North Hollywood actor, steals the show in "Hungry Mother Mountain" at the Megaw Theatre in Northridge, where Bill shakes the roof as a fire-and-brimstone preacher. Hoke Howell etches a convincing portrait of a sensitive man, and Blanche Bronte, Ivy Bethune, and John Otrin lend strong support to the new play by Harold Heifetz. Elaine Moe's direction is intelligent, which is what we've always come to expect from her.

Enjoying the music of Page Cavanaugh at Chez Siam in Sherman Oaks the other night was Fran Allison, one of TV's first stars. She was the 'Fran' of Kukla, Fran and Ollie. The still beautiful Miss Allison told us that she's back on TV, with a show for senior citizens called "Prime Time." You can see her on Thursday, Friday, and Sunday mornings, on KHJ-TV. Fran now lives in Van Nuys. Along with Fran was her good friend Clark Dennis, who owned the popular book store in Studio City. Mr. Dennis was no slouch as a singer, too, not so long ago. Both Fran and Clark have made it a habit to drop in and listen to Page Cavanaugh and his group. The Chez Siam is one of the Valley's fine new dining and entertainment spots.

Winters