

contribution. The Palace Girls and the Winstanley Babes provide the dancing, which is staged by Daphne Kiermiller. The Lady Mayo's banquet and the terrace of the Sultan's palace are amongst the most impressive of the scenes, which have been designed by Charles Reading.

#### 'PUSS IN BOOTS'

A NEW version of Perrault's 'Puss in Boots', by Nicholas Stuart Gray, is having an anti-week season at the Library Theatre. Mr. Gray sticks closely to the familiar story, and in the process devises some entertaining scenes, especially when Puss and the Ogre are on the stage. For, of course, it is largely a battle of wits between the two before feline cunning wins the day and the Ogre becomes a caged mouse.

Peter Lambert, the resident company's productions director, plays the part of Puss with the help of a clever mask which allows his own features to have play. He brings to it a feline approach which swings between a purring unctuousness and an easily offended dignity. On the opening night the part of the Ogre was played by William Driver because of the illness of Brendan Barry. Despite the handicap of a pair of giant boots which were not made for him, he made a fearsome figure.

Eileen Moyers is the wiseome Princess Isabel whom the Ogre's spell has robbed of an ability to laugh, and Jeremy Brett plays effectively as Gerard, owner of the cat which brings him home. A good deal of fun comes from Bernard Warwick as an antique Chancery and John Saunders as a not so brave General Digory. Geoffrey Wearing plays the old shoemaker, who has an effective sideline in magic, and Pat Lowi plays the part of Dandy, the young self-appointed bodyguard to the Princess. One feels that more could be made of this character. Other parts are well handled by Robert Stephens as the King, Joan Heath and Noel Walliker.

The show would gain much by the addition of some music and perhaps a simple dance routine, but David Scarce, who directs, makes the best use of his material, and there are some attractive settings by Sally Jay.

#### 'WHEN KNIGHTS WERE BOLD'

WITH a limited number of seasonable plays available the Salisbury Arts Players might have done much worse than select that now venerable comedy, 'When Knights Were Bold', for their Christmas production at the Playhouse. It gains from some refurbishing and the addition of some witty songs. These things give to the old play something of the air of an intimate revue with a plot. But in an age which knows more about bebop than bad barons the company have to work hard to conceal the joints still left in the armor. It is a tribute to the versatility of all concerned that they can convert themselves so smoothly into successful revue artists.

In this adaptation by the company's director, Geoffrey Edwards, and Michael Darbyshire, the light-hearted Sir Guy dreams his famous dream on Christmas Eve, and the dream itself is ushered in by a carol. The Dean becomes a "black-marketer," disposing of supplies left over from the Crusades, and other little touches remind one of "1066 and all that." There is even a chorus song for the audience to join.

Michael Gover, the company's leading man, who only recently played an Ibsen role, blossoms out in the light comedy tradition with a Sir Guy cast in the mould of Ralph Lynn in an Aldwych farce. He suggests that there may be infinite possibilities for the company if they care to venture far into that thicket. Mr. Gover, with his notable zest, gives a first-class lead to his colleagues. Helen Jessop plays successfully the successful and romantically minded Lady Rowena. George Cooper is first-rate as the self-made manufacturer—his song, "I'm a Millionaire," is well handled—and Richard Hart and Brenda Saunders are well teamed as the couple who laugh only at each other's jokes. Christopher Hancock, Avril Conquest and Keith Anderson are good as the domestics, especially when they lapse into the tongue of 1300, and the other parts are "capably" handled by Joyce Giant, Myles Rudge (who wrote the lyrics), Graham Squire, Patricia Blyton, Elisabeth Paget and Douglas Denipster, not forgetting the fore and hind legs of the elephant. The music was composed by Stella Young, and John Dinsdale is responsible for an attractive set.

#### BOLTON

##### 'ALADDIN'

A SWITCH from screen to stage is always welcomed by theatre-lovers, and thus Jack Taylor, in producing 'Aladdin' at the Royal, gets off this Christmas on the right foot. The house lends itself to such productions and the manager, W. Leslie Hush, is surely at his happiest when catering for playgoers. 'Aladdin' is presented by Mr. Taylor in collaboration with Josef Locke, whose fine voice is heard in the rôle of the Emperor. Mr. Locke is especially memorable in "Hear My Song." Jon Boden's intonation and vocal technique as Abanazar enable him more to score heavily. This pantomime has a feminine Dancer, Hylda Baker, who is here amongst her own people, for she was born in Farnham. Deliberately a little brusque at times Miss Baker nevertheless knows how to appeal to the heart. With Beryl Selton as Aladdin, Pat Carr as the Princess, Glasgow-born Alex Munro and an admirable supporting cast, the pantomime should be a big success. The senior dancers are highly competent.

#### EDINBURGH

##### 'DICK WHITTINGTON'

ON December 10, at the King's, this Howard and Wyndham pantomime was presented by Stewart Cruickshank, with book by David Croft, décor by Reg Allen, costumes designed by Irene Segallo, dances arranged by Peter Glover and Lionel Blair and production devised and directed by Froddie Carpenter, under the personal supervision of Stewart Cruickshank.

Once again Freddie Carpenter is to be warmly congratulated on his skilful, imaginative production. The story is closely followed in one of the most enjoyable pantomimes seen here for many years. There is plenty of fun, notably in Fitz-warren's shop and in the ship's cabin, a rollicking scene in which Jimmy Currie's water apparatus plays an important part, soaking the comedians as the ship rolls and water gushes in from every available hole. The effective stagecraft of the burning of the ship and the spectacle of the scene under the sea are memorable, and the Christmas Ballet is a sheer delight.

With the fun in the capable hands of Harry Gordon as dame and Jack Radcliffe as Idle Jack, laughter is assured. This is the first time these two popular Scots comedians have worked together in pantomime, and the partnership is highly successful. There is freshness in their scenes together, each proving a perfect foil for the other. Harry Gordon's richly humorous studies in an amusing array of costumes never fail to delight the audience, and Jack Radcliffe's individual style makes his Idle Jack a joyous performance.

Olga Gwynne is surely the ideal principal boy. She gets the part of Dick with warm sincerity and admirable poise, and Ruth Clark, as Alice, is a delightful principal girl.



Olga Gwynne in 'Dick Whittington' at the King's, Edinburgh

Both sing well and their voices are heard to full advantage in songs and duets which include "We'll Soon be Rich," "Alice in Wonderland Christmas," and "I Speak to the Stars."

An outstanding hit of the show is Terry Doogan's sprightly Puss, and Morgan Davies is successful as King and as Neptune. John Holmes makes a brief but telling appearance as the Sultan of Morocco, and Diana Taylor is a dainty Fairy Bowbells. Billy Dick, Jack Holden and Helen Norman help the fun along in fine style, and the specialty by the Trio Morlidor, in which the rubber-boned Gollwog is something to marvel at, is heartily received.

There is an attractive hard-working chorus, and the orchestra is under the skilful direction of Bobby Pagan, who is also responsible for some of the original music.

##### 'RED RIDING HOOD'

AT the Gaiety, Leith, on December 13, this pantomime was presented, written and produced by Claude Worth. It is a bright, entertaining show, with colourful costumes and scenery, popular songs, and plenty of fun in the traditional style.

Jimmy Wallace as Simple Simon is a likeable comedian, whose cheery manner gets him on friendly terms with the audience from the start. Roslyn Gaye is a lively dame who works hard and successfully throughout. She has some amusing scenes with Mr. Wallace, and they make a fine success of the sheet-song, "Do You Love Old Santa Claus." Heather Logan as Red Riding Hood scores with her singing of "Secret Love," and her duets with the principal boy include "When You Spread a Little Happiness" and "Holiday of the Toys."

Jean Elliot, the principal boy, has a fine appearance and a powerful singing voice, her rendering of "If There is a Mountain" being outstanding. Nicky Ricarro, as Will Scarlett, put in some bright work, his clever accordion-playing calling for special mention. The McKinnon Sisters, as Jill and Jean, are an attractive pair, and Helen Adrian, as Fairy Silverleaf, sings well. Her songs, "When You Wish Upon a Star" and "Count Your Blessings Instead of Sheep," are notable features of the show.

Peter Dean is an effective Wolf,

and Bel Argy's clay-modelling speciality act is warmly received. Dale Warren's work as Baron de-serves mention, and others are Wally Johnson, Johnny Carr and George Gibson. The Moxon Girls contribute to the show and Dolly Ranson is a capable musical director.

##### 'PHANTOM RETREAT'

ON December 20, at the Princes, Edinburgh Play Club presented the East Wind Players in a new play by John Craig.

In this light, entertaining comedy we are taken behind the scenes in a ghost-train ride at a fairground, where the hired "ghosts," with masks, flowing white robes, skeletons and long-clutching hands, rush from window to window to "haunt," scare and horrify the people in the passing trains. We soon learn that each of the assistants engaged for the Christmas rush is running away from something, to hide in the seclusion of this "backstage" retreat. The appearance of a detective to keep an eye on things brings the various stories to light.

The dialogue is topical and amusing, with neat touches of sentiment, and the zest of the players helps to make the entertainment thoroughly enjoyable.

Peter Sims dominates the scene with his delightfully boisterous performance as a light-fingered Joe Kettle. Elaine Newell's excellent portrayal of a timid spinster could not be bettered, and Kenneth Earl as a gangling student, Una Victor as his fiancée, Jennifer Lewis as a bright young artist-student, and John Matthews as Inspector Dalby all deserve praise. Christine Orr's clever production, in its bizarre setting, keeps up a good pace, and the happy, friendly atmosphere of this new, intimate little theatre is firmly sustained.

##### 'MARGOLD'

AT the Gateway the Edinburgh Gateway Company present a new musical version by Robert Kemp, with music by Cedric Thorpe Davie, of the play by L. Allen Harker and F. R. Pryor.

Produced by Peter Potter, this charming old Scots play has a well-known story of the sweet young heroine who runs away from the manse in the country to her soldier lover, Archie, stationed at Edinburgh Castle, to see the procession and State Visit of Queen Victoria. In face of strict opposition from her stern father and even sterner Aunt Valencia, she has her understanding Auntie Maggie to help to make things come right in the end.

In this new musical version, Robert Kemp's admirable adaptation deserves high praise, his neat lyrics are witty and cleverly apt, while Cedric Thorpe Davie's music, in the Victorian style, is utterly delightful. There are 29 songs in this musical comedy, tuneful, spirited and with a simple charm which captivates the audience.

In the famous jam-making scene at the manse there is a delightful ensemble, "The Jeely Jeely," leading to a lively dancing of "The Jeely Reel." An outstanding number in the second act is "The Haddington Tally-Ho," cleverly sung and acted by Margold, Archie and two of his fellow officers. This is one of the big hits of the show.

Jean Carrol is an enchanting Margold, her delightful acting and excellent singing making her performance a memorable one, and she is well partnered by Tom Criddle, who gives an attractive portrayal of Archie Forsyth.

Jean Taylor Smith is just right as Mrs. Pringle, the sympathetic Auntie Maggie, while Lennox Milne is a vivacious Madame Marly and Marilyn Gray is cleverly amusing as Beenie, the servant at the manse, while others calling for mention are John Uncomb, Iain Robertson, Liam Hood, Edith MacArthur, George Davies and Douglas Storm.

Perhaps the only jarring note in Peter Potter's otherwise excellent production is the unnecessary appearance of Queen Victoria at the final moment of the play. This might not have been so bad if Marilyn Gray, who had scored an outstanding success with her performance as the comic maid in the first act, had not been chosen to appear in the walk-on parts of the Queen. No doubt this will be altered as the reaction of the audience showed slight disappointment at the finale after having been so warmly enthusiastic throughout the entire evening.

The music, under the direction of Walker Cameron, is attractively played by the "orchestra" consisting of piano (Walker Cameron), violin (Waldo Channon) and clarinet (Georgina Dobree).

#### LINCOLN

##### 'THE OLD WOMAN WHO LIVED IN A SHOE'

FRIENDLY northern accents are to be found in Tom E. Bradley's Christmas presentation, "The Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe," at the Royal.

Rep and enthusiasm are never far away from the hard-working company of some 30-odd artists, and Tom Bradley himself scores a personal success as Simple Simon, delighting both children and adults alike with his gay humour and clever sense of timing.

Scenes such as "The Village School" have a wide appeal, and here, as in several other scenes, Terry Elton (as the Old Woman) adds greatly to the gaiety of the situation. Ben McLeod (as Baron Hardheart) has a good part and enjoys himself thoroughly.

Bright settings, colourful dresses, and good dance-routine ensembles all help in making this show an ideal family production, and the songs include a vocal arrangement of Johann Strauss's "Tritsch-Tratsch" Polka, "Good-night, Sweetheart" and "Sing a Song in the Rain."

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