

# ACTRESS WITH A MIND OF HER OWN

By MURRAY SCHUMACH

**N**OT so long ago actors received the heretic treatment when they deserted the "living" stage for the celluloid theatre. By last year, movie performers could attain the same status by emoting in front of television cameras. The other day, actress Eva Gabor pronounced a third heresy. She said she would rather be a television star than a Broadway theatre luminary.

Ordinarily, this would mean that Miss Gabor had no job in the theatre. However, as favorable critical notices attest, the blonde from Budapest has been doing very well for the past year with a fat role in the comedy hit, "The Happy Time." Her pretty face has beamed at every performance to considerable applause. Her shapely figure has turned up in national magazines and a movie she made and forgot is about to be released. Miss Gabor, in short, should be lighting candles to the portrait of Katharine Cornell.

## TV Theory

Instead, she seemed determined to give the theatre a hotfoot if only to illuminate her 15-minute program on television (Fridays, WJZ-TV: 8 P. M.). "All this talk about a Broadway star," she scoffed. She leaned forward on a sofa in her penthouse apartment and brought a fist down on a cushion. "It is television that can make a star today."

Not that Miss Gabor is at the top in television. Apart from guest appearances, her own show consists of interviewing what she terms "the woman of the week" and introducing a few musical bits. She hopes her interviews will not be too trivial and break away from the traditional pattern of gossip and fashions. But even with her shows Miss Gabor has developed a passion for video's audience.

"The audience for television in America is the real audience today," she insisted. "The first-nighters of Broadway, they are not the American audience. I walk into a department store. I ride in a taxi. The counter girls recognize me. The cab driver knows me. Not from Broadway. No. Only from television. The elevator operators in this house are my critics, and my doorman, too. In one night on television my audience can be bigger than a whole year of sell-outs in the theatre."

## Eva Gabor Prefers Video To Stage Performances And Tells Why

Nor does Miss Gabor share any other video peevishness that echo in and around Shubert Alley. She is not, for instance, fearful of forgetting lines in front of television cameras. Once she went up on a line during a video-version of "Uncle Vanya." "I used a different line that meant almost the same," she recalled. "That happened in 'The Happy Time,' too."

The actress has no sympathy with those who say television quality will become steadily worse as the size of the audience increases. She feels that just as television eventually will raise the level of its audience, so the viewers will, in



Eva Gabor.

turn, elevate the standards of the medium. "It will get better and better and I will grow up in it," she predicts.

So far as technique on television is concerned, she thinks it simpler than in the movies. In film, she points out, there is only one camera and the actor has to think constantly about angles. "In television," she explains with a casual shrug, "you have three cameras. They will catch you. They have to catch you. People want to know if one acts differently in television. Acting is always the same. You try to understand and to feel the part and then you act. Even if you stand on your head, acting is acting."

Recently, because she was fear-

ful of missing something, she performed in color television. She learned that on color it is best to keep her hair smooth and a little make-up on her fair complexion goes a long way. "I will know all about television," she vowed with considerable intensity. "I want to know when they need a close-up of a medium shot. I want to know about directing and writing, too. Even if I never have to do those things, I want to know."

## Background

Miss Gabor has a special reason for loving television. For months she had been trying vainly to get a job in the theatre. Then, after a single appearance on television with Burgess Meredith, she was invited to read for "The Happy Time," and became a Broadway success, though short of stardom.

"Without television," she remembered bitterly, "I would still be knocking my head against a stone wall. But when Richard Rodgers sees me once on television, that is enough. The next day his office is on the telephone and my whole life is different. Just once on television and I can do this."

Before television had provided her with a stage, Miss Gabor had tried Hollywood and made three movies. "I finished my schooling at Paramount Studios," she says. That education began in Hungary not too long ago—she reserves the right to let people judge her age by her appearance. As a child, she said, she played hockey to attend dramatic performances. As she grew older she should have been overshadowed by a sister who was Miss Hungary and is now Mrs. George Sanders. However, the Gabors, three sisters and mother, seem to have a special talent for garnering newspaper space on their own.

Eva tried stalking fame briefly in New York before she made tracks for Hollywood. There she tried to improve her English by attending movies. "My English was particularly bad," she recalls, "because when I was a girl I had an English governess. I studied till I was blue in the face."

Miss Gabor still has a Hungarian-British accent, but no longer has time to worry about it. Because of television she averages a fourteen-hour working day. Quite often, after her performance at the theatre, she will sit in her apartment, eating sandwiches, sipping milk and ogling her television set.

GABOR, Eva  
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