

Comtesse and the Doctor Like U. S. Drama Schools

By Jay Carmody

The Comtesse d'Alligny of France and Dr. Arthur Bardos of Budapest sat in the sun on the 12th floor terrace of the Statler yesterday and expressed their specialized amazement over what they have found in America.

They are delighted of course, by many things they found; not the least being an Autumn of such beauty that it would melt Schopenhaur or the late John Dillinger.

Nevertheless, their approach to this country is distinct and so necessarily are their reactions.

The Comtesse is a student at Catholic University's drama department, where she is Americanized as Marion Vandal. Dr. Bardos is a guest teacher and drama director, whose affectionate students think of him as a paraphrase of S. Z. Sakall who plays those character roles in Hollywood movies.

Theater, therefore, is their focal point here and what makes them happiest about it is not Broadway, or even "South Pacific," but that this is such a practical country that it teaches theater. In Europe this is not so, except in a general way. There, theater and aesthetic are classroom interests but practical writing, producing, directing and acting courses are unheard of.

The Comtesse and Dr. Bardos are thus having a wonderful time discovering America and learning that all the way from here to Leland Stanford university drama is a workshop proposition. As experienced workers in the drama in Europe, and products of its universities, it is slightly incredible to them to see education and theater dwelling together in such bliss.

They are pretty sure it augurs well for both, but especially the theater, although they are too strange to be certain of this.

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*nyugalmában versetett út
Gulyás Pál, M. irod. II. 422*



Dr. Bardos, a theater professional for 30 years in Budapest where he once produced in as many as three theaters, decided to come here after the Russians decided to come there. He was sure they would not get along and thinks the Russians felt the same way about a man who always had directed Shakespeare, Ibsen, Moliere as playwrights instead of party line dramatists.

The university teaching job here came to him as a surprise, but he finds himself quite at home in it.

He finds himself doing in a shy, apologetic English what he did many times in his native tongue, namely directing "Romeo and Juliet."

"This is most interesting," he says. "I have even a most fine Juliet. Before, of course, I always worked with professional actors and always the Juliets, even the great ones, they are too old. Once I found a young Romeo and in all the actresses in Hungary, I could not find a Juliet except those old enough to be his mother. One Juliet had eight children. I have now exactly the right age Juliet and this is most interesting.

"This is because Shakespeare's play is about young love, innocent love and young people should play it best."

The last time Dr. Bardos directed "Romeo and Juliet" he was one of the most uncomfortable humans in the whole wide world of the theater. The Russians had been in Budapest long enough to make many Budapestians feel they were no longer at home. They had a keen interest in the theater, but not the kind of interest Dr. Bardos ever had worked under before.

He went ahead, however, as best he knew how in a strange, new political scene and the play

finally was offered to the public.

The next day came his worst moment in his long years of providing cultural entertainment. It grew out of a sputtering indignant review that this "Romeo and Juliet" showed a complete ignorance of Communist morality and philosophy. Even when the production ran for 70 performances, a long run for a classic in Hungary's capital, Dr. Bardos decided his work was finished in the city of his long professional life.

He came here and right back to "Romeo and Juliet," this time with no thought of the political content of Shakespeare's romantic tragedy.

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The Comtesse, who is combining teaching with studying drama in this country, is well known in the French theater as a writer, producer and critic. She will direct a later production in the university's Cosmopolitan Season of dramas.

At the moment, she has a scholar's curiosity about the production of "Romeo and Juliet," but speaking frankly, as she does, she is French enough not to be too impressed by this particular bit of Shakespeare.

"For a play about love, it has too many dead people lying on the stage at the final curtain," she says.

She thinks, maybe, this is carrying love too far, but the playwrights of each country to their own tastes.

Besides, she is having too much of a good life here to bother about such things.

