



The **MOUNTAINEER**

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Scene at Forest Theatre.

—Photo by Mabel Furry

We Play "A Thousand Years Ago"

By BOB NEUPERT

Winter it was yet, and the rhododendron in our Forest Theatre stood shivering and alone, waiting for the first light touch of early spring to awaken them to the beginning of a glorious new season.

Winter it was yet when the first meetings were planned to bring to life a new chapter in the long list of Mountaineers' Spring Plays. At the first organizing meetings, held in February, under the capable chairmanship of Mr. J. M. Fuller, the Mountaineer Players selected Percy MacKay's Chinese fantasy "A Thousand Years Ago." This well-written comedy was chosen to celebrate the silver anniversary of our quaint Forest Theatre, located in a natural glade on our Kitsap Cabin property west of Bremerton. Returning again as director was Mrs. Lois Sandall, who had guided us to success in nearly every play since the theatre's inception in 1923.

The feeble voice of early spring whispered through the tall firs and the rhododendron heard the call to awaken.

Scarcely had the preparatory work been completed when the call went forth for players, veterans and newcomers, to begin the twice-a-week rehearsals that are the breath of life to the dormant pages of the author's script. Rehearsals were faithfully attended, with such problems as everyday jobs, school work, and—yes, baby-sitters—worked out with typical Mountaineer ingenuity. Baby sitting was no problem to some veteran actors as their "babies" had grown up to become talented and useful members of the cast.

It's spring again and the closed buds of the rhododendron begin their growth, preparing for the triumphant days ahead.

As the members of the cast rehearsed, acted and emoted, the production staff prepared its behind-the-scene work. Dorothy Lahr, whose costuming of "The Sleeping Beauty" last year drew so much praise, set out to surpass her previous effort. Using largely the materials from last year's show, Dorothy designed and sewed an authentic wardrobe of Chinese costumes that was considered by many as the best the players have yet enjoyed. A willing stage crew, headed as usual by Norbert Schaal, rebuilt the stage settings so that any Chinese emperor of long ago would have felt quite at home. Art Winder led his theatre reconstruction detail in readying the spacious natural amphitheater, in-

cluding replacement of the many wings on both sides of the stage. Dancers, working under the skilled tutelage of Margaret Tapping, began their practice in preparation for the colorful numbers which have highlighted so many past spring plays.

Late spring has come and the buds begin to open, showing the first hint of glorious colors yet to come.

After ten weeks of practice and rehearsals the entire cast of actors and dancers moved in on Kitsap Cabin for dress rehearsal. Beneath cloudless May skies the entire group of more than fifty joined for the first time and worked through the entire play under Mrs. Sandall's sharp and critical direction. What a steadying support she was when it seemed as if a "thousand years" of effort would be needed before we were ready!

Summertime at last! Rhododendron bloom in numbers as never before, blazing the way to the long-awaited summer.

Clear, warm sunshine greeted the audience of more than 800 at first-curtain time on Sunday, June 6. With the entire cast and choruses tense to cues, the silver anniversary production became a fitting tribute to the many talented Mountaineers through the years who had given the show the unique place it now holds in the artistic culture of the Northwest.

Came July 13! After a gloomy huddle under the dripping eaves of Kitsap Cabin the cast voted to postpone the play until the following Sunday and possible clearing skies. But the luck we had enjoyed in the formation of such a fine production had left us and on June 20, amid a steadily falling rain, we gave our second performance before a valiant band of 200 spectators who stuck it out to the final curtain.

LIST OF CHARACTERS

Calaf, Prince of Astrakhan.....Robt. Neupert
Barak, servitor.....J. M. Fuller
Altoun, Emperor of Pekin.....Ronald Todd
Turandot, his daughter.....Dorothy Petrich
Zelima, her slave.....Ola Todd
Chang, harem guard.....Kenneth Teller

VAGABOND PLAYERS FROM ITALY
Capocomico, leader.....Harriet Walker
Scaramouche.....Blanche Hargood
Pantaloon.....Marion Castor
Punchinello.....Phyllis Cavender
Harlequin.....Mable Furry
Lords of Royal Divan.....Emma Kment,
Arlee Snider
Old Merchant and wife.....John Fincke,
Dorothy Fuller
Soldiers.....Raymond Petrich,
Thomas Kittelman
Priests.....Helen Underhill, Barbara Martin
Peasants.....William Lahr, Dorothy Lahr
Beggar.....Terry Todd

SLAVE MAIDENS

Nancy Bickford Nedra Polk
Bunny Castor Louaine Shrum
Joyce Morgan Janet Slauson
Viola Neupert Mari Snider
Jane Osterhaut

DANCERS

Chinese Spear Dancers.....David Adams, Gordon Pfister

Kitsap Cabin.

There is a cabin in the wooded hills
 Built long since by eager volunteers
Of riven cedar and of rough-hewn sills
 Stout against weather and the passing years.
There have been campfire song and Maypole dance,
 Parties for all the saints that mark the seasons,
Patrick and Valentine and goblin-prance,
 With blessed Santa Claus the best of reasons.
For bringing joy to crippled children's eyes
 Gaily our Christmas garlands still we twine,
While old, sweet carols to the rafters rise,
 Blending with incense of the new-cut pine.
"The world's a stage"; an actor every man,
 Whether in fact or in our ferny woods
Kitsap has been, within its little span
 A glass, reflecting Life's vicissitudes.
Lovers have lived here in each other's eyes
 The old, old story that is always new;
Here once a bridal couple pledged their vows;
 Here once friends met to join in sad adieu.
So, Kitsap, take the measure of our praise,
 Oft may we enter still your welcoming door.
Long may it be until wild winter rains
 Beat down your rafters to the forest floor.

—Patience L. Paschall.

Note: To explain references in stanza V: The funeral of Mr. Remy, brother-in-law of the author's, was held at Kitsap Cabin. Also, Mr. and Mrs. Langley Slauson were married at Kitsap. Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Todd met as make-believe lovers in the first production of Ali Baba, the later spent their honeymoon at Kitsap. Oh yes, Kitsap has nostalgic memories for a lot of Mountaineers!