THE HISTORY OF THE HARTMAN THEATRE

1938 - 1963

DISSERTATION

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By

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* * * * * * *

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PREFACE

The popular, even the scholarly, concept of the American theatre has tended to center about theatrical activities in New York City. Only recently, with increasing emphasis placed upon educational, community, and summer theatre, has there arisen increasing recognition of the theatrical world outside New York. And though the existence of the road has long been acknowledged, a substantial part of that theatre history--made when the theatre's most important personalities in their original roles were criss-crossing America--still remains to be written.

In the professional theatre of the nineteen sixties the road is confined to a relatively small group of larger cities privileged to view Broadway successes and mediocrities. Columbus, Ohio is one of these cities. Over the years Columbus has had many legitimate playhouses (Market House, Comstock's Theatre, The Great Southern Theatre), but the Hartman Theatre, since its opening in 1911, has been the busiest and most important theatre in central Ohio. From its opening until the present except for a period of darkness between 1963 and 1964, the Hartman has made professional theatre available to Ohio audiences.
It is the purpose of this dissertation to examine the history of the Hartman Theatre between the years 1938 and 1963, the period during which it was managed first by Robert F. Boda, and later by his wife Lydia, to gain insight into the character of the offerings at the theatre, their historical significance, the theatre's management and operation, and the public reaction and reception to the entertainment offered. In addition, trends in the quality and quantity of the road productions are also traced. The Hartman Theatre was selected for study in this dissertation because of the availability of materials relating to its history, because of the presence of individuals connected with its operation, and because of its proximity to The Ohio State University. Material for this study was obtained from Columbus newspapers, from a collection of programs, publicity releases, and scrapbooks in The Ohio State University Theatre Collection, and from personal interviews with individuals associated with the Hartman in various capacities. From standard, published works on the American theatre came information treating first dates of production of various plays, and also debuts and general reputations of many of the performers who played the Hartman. The first three of these sources furnished original data on the appearance and reception of productions in Columbus. Within themselves these sources provide checks upon accuracy: the
newspapers were in keen competition, offering a natural check on each other and a check also on information obtained from interviews.

Throughout the twenty-five years discussed in this study the Bodas presented a wide variety of theatrical fare at the Hartman Theatre. This dissertation has attempted to classify each production into one of six major categories—comedy, farce, drame, melodrama, musical, or tragedy. Though any discussion of many forms of dramatic entertainment involves the difficult problem of classification, it is an almost impossible task to attempt any sort of classification of the humorous kinds of productions that appeared at the Hartman between 1938 and 1963. The line between comedy and farce is at best tenuous, and in many cases the division must remain tentative because numerous works lie somewhere between the two forms. Most of the serious plays analyzed in this study are included under the elastic categories drame or melodrama. In order to differentiate between the two, plays with serious themes which escaped the exaggeration of melodrama are classified as drames. Classification was approached in the following manner. Whenever scripts were available, they became the primary indicators of classification. Works on the American theatre were consulted to see how the various plays have been classified there. If nothing was available from these sources, then information
given in advertisements, publicity releases, and local reviews was analyzed.

Because of the many productions presented at the Hartman during the period under study, separate treatment of each of the performances individually would be both pointless and prohibitive. Wherever feasible however, noteworthy productions are selected for extended discussion. Special attention is also devoted to the world premieres, any unique incidents that occurred at the Hartman during the Bodas' management, and to the repertory companies. By this means, the overall picture may be ascertained without centering on needless details which would certainly add nothing constructive to the discussion, and indeed would make the study lengthy and tedious.

Of all the elements that make up a theatrical production, the acting is the most ephemeral. Sets may remain to be examined, and photographs and scripts may be available for study, but the acting is evanescent. It is therefore difficult to study, and thus difficult to analyze without actually having seen it. Since this dissertation is partially concerned with the actors' performances on the Hartman Theatre stage, the critical judgments and reactions to the many acting performances are taken from the reviews of the local dramatic critics. These reviews offer keen insight into acting styles and techniques of the various
performers and the Columbus audiences' reaction to the productions presented.

A history of a theatre would be incomplete without some indication of the character of its audiences. Audience information such as the different strata of society that attended the Hartman, their preferences for certain forms of entertainment, and the overall behavior of Columbus audiences through the seasons was obtained from personal interviews, newspaper articles, and reviews.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Mention must also be made of the encouragement, patience, and help my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Stafford Rodgers, and my wife, Patricia, gave me during my work on this study.
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CHAPTER I

Robert and Lydia Boda - The Theatre

From 1938 to 1963 the destiny of the Hartman Theatre was controlled by Robert F. Boda and his wife, Lydia Wilson Boda. To gain a full understanding of the Hartman's history during the twenty-five years covered in this study, it is necessary to briefly describe several of their personality traits together with certain aspects and practices of their management. The information used in this dissertation pertaining to the Boda's personalities and managerial characteristics was obtained from interviews with Samuel T. Wilson, The Columbus Evening Dispatch dramatic critic; Norman Nadel, dramatic critic for The Columbus Citizen; Mrs. Virginia Trannett, the Hartman Theatre's publicity chief; and from various issues of the three Columbus, Ohio newspapers that were published during the period under study. Robert Boda's first connections with the Hartman Theatre began in 1914 when at twenty-seven he assisted his father, Lee Boda, with the management of the Valentine Company. This operation, which helped break the monopoly of the Shuberts on the road business, was a chain of theatres that
included, as well as the Hartman in Columbus, playhouses in Dayton, Toledo, and Indianapolis. For the next seventeen years the younger Boda continued to help his father manage the theatre, and in 1925 he participated in the formation of the Hartman Stock Company which operated successfully from that date through 1928. In 1931, because of the effect of the depression on the Hartman's business, Robert Boda found other employment which occupied him during the early thirties, but with the death of his father on Friday night, December 17, 1937, Robert once again returned to the theatre, this time as the Hartman's manager.¹

Robert Boda was a unique theatre manager. Well educated and of refined, cultured, precise speech, he differed from the usual flamboyant, rough talking, theatre managers of his day. "Boda was an introverted man who viewed the world with dignified reserve and cool detachment; yet he had a warm human interest in all around him."² Though several of the press agents and managers who visited Columbus often were his card-playing cronies, none became his intimate friend and none was able to take advantage of Robert Boda in a business transaction. Boda possessed one of the necessary attributes of a successful theatre operator—he was a shrewd judge of plays. Knowing what the Hartman audiences wanted and would pay to see, he brought those plays to Columbus. When he was forced to book what he believed a distasteful or sordid production, he unfailingly tried to balance it with a wholesome comedy or an
elegant musical. He also tried to alternate expensive shows with inexpensive ones, knowing that some clientele could or would not pay high prices for two consecutive events. The Hartman's regime under Robert Boda's management was dominated by the rigid routines he employed. He, by and large, followed the patterns established by his father, and the routines never varied.\textsuperscript{3} "These unorthodox practices often irritated the various managers, press agents, and producers who visited the Hartman, but they respected him because he was completely non-partisan in all dealings, never showing any favoritism regardless of friendship or situation. Boda's policy, for instance, of never cashing a check for any member of a theatrical company, no matter how well or how long he had known him, was particularly annoying to many, but they also knew that they could never convince him to break his steadfast rule."\textsuperscript{4}

Advance men were always treated courteously by the Hartman manager, but if one arrived at his office before the time of his appointment, he waited until the designated hour. Boda also observed a hard and fast rule that no press agents could see any dramatic critic in town unless escorted by the Hartman's publicity chief, Virginia Trannett. This unique policy was initiated so that Boda knew in advance exactly what stories and pictures were to be placed in which newspaper, and it was Mrs. Trannett's task to avoid duplication.\textsuperscript{5} Most road theatres of Boda's period operated on a
guarantee basis. Not the Hartman. The manager booked only on percentage, and it is to his credit that, nevertheless, the New York producers were always willing to place their productions in his theatre. They knew him to be a fair, honest man, one they could trust and respect.  

Sam Wilson told this researcher that "though Robert Boda was a genial, soft-spoken gentleman, he was always adamant and was unafraid of the various threats that came his way during the many years he ran the Hartman. He would frequently battle the powerful Theatre Guild, demanding—and getting—substitutes from their subscription list. The Hartman was one of the few theatres in America to show Guild-sponsored plays not on the original Theatre Guild tour—this because Boda insisted on quality merchandise. If he saw a production he thought inferior or unsuited to his theatre and his audience, he would not allow it to be shown in Columbus, and a more suitable play was substituted."  

It took great courage to make demands of the Guild, for in the forties it controlled most of the prestigious touring shows and had it excluded the Hartman from its itinerary, the results would have been disastrous. The fact that the Theatre Guild was actively involved with the Hartman from 1940 to 1963 illustrates Robert Boda's influence as a road manager with New York bookers. His words not only carried great weight in New York, Boda was also sought by neophyte managers and producers who traveled the road circuit. Many
young men benefited from his sage advice and his generosity of spirit.

Often men in a position of authority find it impossible to delegate responsibility to subordinates. This was not true of Robert Boda. While it is true that Boda set policy and made most of the important final decisions, he did not usurp authority once he had given it. "Often it would take as long as a year for him to gain complete confidence in a new staff member, but once an individual proved worthy of Boda's trust, that person was in command of his particular job with negligible interference from the manager."8

Boda, for the most part, enjoyed an excellent relationship with the press. He always reserved two seats for each newspaper critic and refused to yield to pressures from various New York booking offices to sell them at the box-office when a particularly popular attraction was scheduled for the Hartman. Boda did not believe in taking advantage of a situation; and he was too astute a businessman to alienate those with whom he worked everyday.9 "Robert Boda never chastised a critic for an unfavorable review if he believed the writer theatrically qualified and the criticism to be an honest evaluation. But if the critic showed unwarranted personal bias, Boda's anger was aroused, and he inevitably would complain to the editor of the newspaper."10 Boda became particularly incensed when a critic attacked
some physical aspect of the theatre, such as the conditions of the restrooms or the worn upholstery on the seats, for he firmly believed that a reviewer’s job was to give an accurate, unbiased account of what happened on the stage and that anything else was outside the critic’s area of judgment.11

"Excuses were never made for disappointing plays or haphazard productions at the Hartman. The manager believed it his task to present the best plays available, but if a play turned out to be a disaster, Boda thought that beyond his responsibility. He never bemoaned financial losses or mishaps, but forgetting them, prepared immediately for the next event, hoping it would either recoup the losses or be an artistic triumph."12

In charge of the Hartman, the Bodas specialized in personal service for both their performers and their patrons. "Robert arranged for the male actors to use the facilities at the Columbus Athletic Club and several golf and tennis clubs. He also saw that the principal players were comfortably housed in the city’s best hotel."13 Mrs. Boda sent flowers to the leading ladies’ dressing room and always visited backstage to insure that the performers were personally satisfied with operating procedures prior to first curtain. Though she had this contact with the artists, Mrs. Boda was primarily involved with the Hartman’s clientele. The regular patrons knew her well, for she was a familiar
figure at almost every performance, greeting them as they entered the outer lobby. It is interesting to note that when the theatre played a low quality, unseemly production, one with which the Bodas did not wish to be identified, she was discreetly absent from her accustomed post. A large part of the Hartman audience was comprised of prominent families from Columbus' suburbs; consequently, Mrs. Boda purposely became involved with various social activities and joined several women's clubs in the city, and becoming there well acquainted with the Hartman's best clientele, she learned the pulse of the local theatregoing community.  

When in 1940 The Theatre Guild became interested in adding the Hartman to its list of subscribing road theatres, Mrs. Boda, under her maiden name, Lydia Wilson, was appointed Guild Secretary for central Ohio. In this capacity she was in complete charge of all Guild operations at the Hartman until 1963. Her work, recruiting new Guild subscribers and keeping the regular patrons satisfied, was a highly social and personal operation. She was well acquainted with all her subscribers and personally selected their seats with regard to each individual's preference or any physical disability that may have determined where he or she had to be seated. It was said that Lydia Boda knew more about the personal ailments of more influential people in Columbus than any doctor in town. Because of Mrs. Boda's efforts, the Hartman was one of the most profitable of all
Theatre Guild road theatres, with the list of subscribers increasing every season.15

Like most theatre managers, the Bodas, particularly Robert, were somewhat penurious. Some chided him for not repainting the theatre's interior or recovering the seats; but the fact is, neither Mr. or Mrs. Boda owned the theatre, they merely managed it for the Hartman heirs. Boda argued that the Hartman Corporation should be responsible for needed repairs, but the heirs stated that since Boda earned his living from the theatre, he should make necessary physical improvements.16 Thus, a permanent stalemate was reached, and few repairs were made. Nevertheless, the Hartman was considered one of the most beautifully appointed theatres in America. At no time did the Hartman reflect anything but elegant taste, and it was unquestionably the finest equipped theatre in the midwest. Though undeniably, it could have used judiciously applied new paint from time to time, and the theatre would have been brighter if the draperies, carpets, and seats had been refurbished occasionally. One major improvement the Bodas could never convince themselves to make was the installation of an air conditioning system. Though their entire philosophy of theatre management was geared toward personal service and comfort, they consistently refused to consider adding the one major item that would have benefited their patrons far more than any amount of paint they could apply. It was due to the lack
of an air-cooled house that few events were ever held in the Hartman between June and September. The theatre could become unbearably hot.

Robert Boda managed the Hartman from 1938 until his death on November 13, 1958. Following Boda's death, Mrs. Boda took over the management to carry on the policies her husband and his father had established and implemented for forty-seven years. She closed the Hartman after the spring season of 1963. Despite some obvious failings, such as their failure to staff the Hartman adequately for a time when they would no longer be able to manage it, no one can deny that both Robert and Lydia Boda operated a superior organization and devoted themselves totally to bringing the best possible theatre to Columbus. They worked countless hours to accomplish this task, one they considered a public service, and how well they succeeded can be seen in this study.

The Theatre

Though this dissertation is not concerned with the Hartman Theatre before 1938 (see AN EARLY HISTORY OF THE HARTMAN THEATRE 1911-1921, Robert E. Dorrell, The Ohio State University, 1969), a short description of the theatre and how it happened to be built would seem to be an aid to the reader in understanding what Robert Boda inherited.
The Hartman Theatre was built by Dr. S. B. Hartman, a prominent Columbus patron of the arts, for his only daughter, Mrs. F. W. Schumacher, who had carte blanche to furnish what was ultimately called "the most beautiful theatre in America." An intimate house, the Hartman is wide and shallow, with the first floor and balcony fitted with comfortable, well-placed seats. The theatre's seating capacity is 1,684, with room for a possible fifty or sixty additional persons if they are crowded onto the bleacher seats in the top gallery.

The Columbus Evening Dispatch described the interior as follows:

The decorations are harmonious: delicate cameo colors with touches of old ivory and light tan and pink; the upholstery of the chairs is coronation red, having on their backs embroidered ornaments with seat numbers thereon; the front curtain the same shade of velour with heavy gold fringe; the boxes draped with the same material.

The same Columbus newspaper also provided a detailed description of the backstage equipment and facilities:

The switchboard is 15 by 15 feet; of oiled Monson slate two inches thick, the switches controlling the 1600 lights and 33 dimmers for the stage. This is the largest and most complete switchboard in any theatre, and it and the stage are the largest in the country, with the exception of the New York Hippodrome. There are 35 miles of wiring in use and with the "main feed" two inches in diameter, and carrying 5000 lights for house and stage. There are 120 switches and 1200 connections; a signal system for the flymen and on each side of the proscenium arch are boxes containing switches for 1200 additional lights to be used when necessary for spotlights. There are 38 pockets in the
stage for connections for lights, and 240 foot-lights. A steel fire curtain, with air pockets so that it will be far safer to sit still than flee in case of fire inasmuch as the only wood about the front of the house is in the chair arms, has also been installed.

There are 100 ten pound weights and twelve 150 pound weights for the scenery, with 7000 pounds of iron to counterbalance the steel curtain which is raised and lowered by motor.

Sixty thousand feet of rope hangs from the gridiron, and there are 104 set lights; five boarder lights and a ceiling strip.

There are 40 exits from the theatre, and emergency switches in front of the house in case of accidents back stage. There are 30 dressing rooms, nearly all with toilets and outside windows; these being situated in practically a separate building. The entire edifice is absolutely fireproof, the best example of such a structure west of New York.

The stage crew is headed by a carpenter, an electrician and a property man. It requires 10 men to handle the stage for ordinary productions and up to 30 for musicals and large dramatic offerings.19

This, then, was the Hartman Theatre when it opened its doors for the first time at eight o'clock on November 13, 1911 for its initial presentation, The Pink Lady.20 Although minor repairs and alterations were made during the twenty-seven years between its opening and the Robert Boda era, the Hartman's appearance was basically unaltered, and the theatre looked essentially the same when Boda became the manager in 1938 as it did at the 1911 premiere.

For fifty-two years the Boda-managed playhouse provided central Ohio audiences an opportunity of seeing the very best theatre available on the road. It is the last twenty-five years of this theatre that this study will now examine.
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PROLOGUE

Robert and Lydia Boda

1The Columbus Evening Dispatch, November 14, 1958.

2Samuel T. Wilson, private interview, Columbus, Ohio, December 27, 1967.

3Ibid.

4Ibid.

5Ibid.

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8Virginia Hall Trannett, private interview, Columbus, Ohio, February 23, 1968.

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CHAPTER II

The Pre-War Years: 1938-1941

In the early years of the twentieth century the American theatre was more vital and creative than it had been for several previous decades. During the early twenties New York theatres were doing tremendous business, road companies traveled extensively throughout the nation, and hundreds of local stock companies were scattered from coast to coast. Then, in the midst of prosperity came unexpected competition and a nation-wide financial depression. As the twenties drew to a close the growing popularity of radio and motion pictures, plus the financial panic and ensuing depression caused numerous theatres and stock companies to close. Broadway production shrank alarmingly. As Garff B. Wilson states: "legitimate, professional theater suffered a reversal of fortune from which it has never recovered."1 The theatre's decline is vividly illustrated by the sharp decrease in the number of Broadway plays. During the 1927-28 season there were 280 new productions staged. Twelve years later this number had shrunk to eighty. By 1948-49, it was down to seventy, and by 1963-64 it was only fifty-seven, including musicals and revivals of the classics.2
America of the thirties was struggling to recover from the most disastrous economic depression in its history. Those standing in the bread lines and soup kitchens cared little for the cultural advantages of the living theatre. During those dark years uppermost in the average American's mind was survival; mere existence became paramount. The time reserved for entertainment was generally devoted to the free and low-priced mediums of radio and motion pictures. Thousands stayed home to listen to "Amos and Andy" while others flocked eagerly to the latest Jean Harlow or Gary Cooper film. At any rate, the public was avoiding the legitimate playhouses, and the American theatre found itself in a serious crisis.

Toward the close of the thirties, America began slowly to emerge from the nadir of depression, and with active involvement in World War II, the nation enjoyed a new-found prosperity. Professional theatre shared in the new affluence, and though it never again returned to the halcyon days of the twenties, theatre did have a resurgence both in New York and on the road.

Though the country had survived a great depression and now faced an even greater menace in the form of global war, Columbus audiences did not suffer a famine of entertainment during the pre-war era, for between January, 1938 and April, 1941, Robert F. Boda presented seventy professional productions at the Hartman Theatre. Since it was
customary during the late thirties and forties for stars to remain one or two years with a successful production on Broadway and then play on the road for a season, many great international theatrical personalities played the Hartman during this period, and Columbus enjoyed a variety of entertainment ranging across the dramatic spectrum from Hellzapoppin' and The Hot Mikado to The Sea Gull with the Lunts, and Abe Lincoln in Illinois with Raymond Massey. In the main, the plays presented at the Hartman in the early years of Boda's management were noteworthy and historically significant. It is safe to say that the finest drama in America was shown at the Hartman Theatre.

Robert Boda's first season as manager of the Hartman was spectacularly successful. From January through May of 1938 he presented such theatrical luminaries as Maurice Evans, Cornelia Otis Skinner, Helen Hayes, Walter Hampden, John Barton, and Clifton Webb. The artistic highlight of the spring season was the engagement of the Dublin Abbey Players, featuring Barry Fitzgerald, Sara Allgood, F. J. McCormick, Arthur Shields, and Maureen Delaney. January 12, 1938 marked the beginning of the winter season with Maurice Evans appearing in Shakespeare's Richard II. Prior to Mr. Evans' engagement, Columbus was flooded with publicity releases by the noted press agent, Sam Weller, who was determined that the relatively new British actor should become a familiar name to the Ohio audience. Daily one
could read of Evans' theatrical triumphs. Rarely, if ever, had an advance publicity campaign been so successful in Columbus as was Weller's. By the time Evans arrived at the Hartman, his was indeed a familiar name to local theatregoers, and the theatre was filled for all three of his performances. Many came out of curiosity to see the actor the newspapers had described as the finest new talent in the English speaking theatre. They were not disappointed. Samuel T. Wilson, The Columbus Evening Dispatch dramatic critic, said in his review of the production: "Brilliantly staged, brilliantly played, this Richard II is an wholly amazing production."

Maurice Evans was first brought to the United States from England by Guthrie McClintic to play Romeo to Katharine Cornell's Juliet. He remained to appear with her in her revival of George Bernard Shaw's Saint Joan and then left her company to play Napoleon in the ill-fated Saint Helena. As the brief run of Saint Helena drew to a close, Mr. Evans conceived the idea of presenting Richard II on the road. Though he had previously appeared in the play with notable success at the Old Vic in London and in New York, he still had considerable difficulty convincing anyone to help him finance a touring company. Producers Max Gordon, Gilbert Miller, Brock Pemberton, and The Theatre Guild turned Evans down. Finally an anonymous backer contributed $25,000 to the venture, and with this capital Evans was able to per-
suade Eddie Dowling and Robinson Smith to help him co-produce the drama for the road. 5

Columbus audiences were extremely favorable to the star and the tragedy, and from this engagement, Maurice Evans was established as one of the most popular actors ever to appear at the Hartman. His subsequent appearances usually resulted in capacity houses.

Toward the end of January two farce classics, You Can't Take It With You and Room Service, were booked in Columbus. George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart's 1936 Pulitzer Prize winning antic farce was received with "vociferous delight by an almost capacity audience of first nighters." 6 Billed as "George Abbott's Biggest Stage Hit" and "The Show With 463 Laughs", Room Service also did excellent business and was well received by the Hartman audiences. Critic Wilson stated that this work by John Murray and Allen Boretz was "outrageously, sometimes even gruesomely funny." 7 You Can't Take It With You ran January 17, 18, and 19, while Room Service played January 31, February 1 and 2.

On February 8 and 9 Hartman patrons saw Cornelia Otis Skinner in her monodrama, Edna His Wife. In this work Miss Skinner appeared in eight characterizations in eleven scenes dramatizing the novel by Margaret Ayer Barnes. Before taking the play on tour, the actress had won admiration from all the major New York critics for her feat of projecting a full-length drama without the aid of supporting
players. Her Hartman performance brought her additional critical acclaim. Miss Skinner, well-known to local audiences, had frequently appeared in Columbus at women's clubs, building up a tremendous following, so it was not surprising that the same women who had enjoyed her for years in the privacy of their tight-knit organizations now filled the Hartman to capacity for Miss Skinner's local theatrical debut. She and the play were rousingy successful. A major factor in the success of this production, the most ambitious ever undertaken by Miss Skinner, were the elaborately designed settings by Donald Oenslager. He created eleven scenes to aid the actress as she portrayed the changes in a woman's life between 1900 and 1937. Miss Skinner, like Maurice Evans, established herself as a Hartman favorite with her initial engagement, and she has consistently drawn well since her Columbus debut in 1938.

Some of the most imaginative plays of the twenties and thirties leaned heavily on the past and made free use of costume, historical, and biographical material. The British showed special aptitude for this type of drama as evidenced by *Victoria Regina*.

One of the most significant and memorable events of any Hartman season took place on February 24 when Helen Hayes portrayed the title role in this sentimental comedy by Lawrence Housman. Miss Hayes had played Columbus several times before, but news of her February appearance created
such theatrical excitement that this play made local theatrical history, selling out for all performances two weeks prior to opening night. The demand for seats was so great that second balcony seats had to be placed on sale a week in advance of the company’s arrival. Originally scheduled for four performances, because of requests from Ohio Governor Martin L. Davey, Ohio State University President George W. Rightmire, and Columbus Mayor Myron B. Gessaman, Miss Hayes was persuaded to present an extra matinee on Friday. 8

Prior to its road tour, which began on December 26, 1935, Victoria Regina had played on Broadway 517 performances and provided Helen Hayes, with what many critics believe, her finest role. It was after the New York run that the British ban which prohibited theatrical presentation of Queen Victoria was lifted and the Housman play was allowed to be performed in London.

Robert Boda, withstanding pressures by the various New York producers and booking offices with whom he dealt, refused to increase ticket prices, as the New York office strongly suggested, saying that he did not think it fair to loyal patrons who had supported the Hartman during less successful shows to have to pay more for the privilege of attending a hit. Because Helen Hayes was one of Broadway’s leading actresses, and Victoria Regina one of the most
popular plays of the season, box-office prices were raised in every theatre on the tour except at the Hartman.

Two more New York requests were also vetoed by Boda. He did not yield to the producer's demand to raise the balcony prices since he could not be convinced to increase the fare for the entire theatre. Boda, known for his excellent relationship with the Columbus press, also refused to suspend his press list so that the gratis seats could be sold. He thought it unfair and unwise to alienate the press. It is a testimonial to Boda's integrity and high regard for his patrons that he did not succumb to the pressures exerted by New York, and a good indication of his influence with the bookers and producers that *Victoria Regina* played the Hartman despite his meeting none of their demands.

The next attraction of the winter season was the appearance of Walter Hampden in the Owen and Donald Davis adaptation of Edith Wharton's famous novel, *Ethan Frome*. Hampden, a Columbus favorite since his unforgettable portrayal of Cyrano de Bergerac some years earlier, did not however meet with approval during this March 8 and 9 engagement. Sam Wilson commented:

> For convincing projection of the spirit and letter of story and play the Davis piece demands three evenly matched, harmoniously keyed performances of the principal roles. This the present production does not provide. The result is an unfortunate faltering pace in the development of the tragedy, a distortion of emphasis in certain scenes, and a blurring of dramatic lines. Much of this is attributable to the fact that
Mr. Hampden is inclined to play Ethan a shade too much for sympathy. His characterization has too little granite in it, not enough passion. Ethan in his hands is an inarticulate, gentle, bewildered, sorely tried, rather than the cold, hard and later rebellious figure of Mrs. Wharton's novel and the Davis' play.  

Though the play received negative reviews from local critics, it did well at the box-office because of Hampden's previous appearances and his stature as an actor in the American theatre, but it is interesting to note that in a theatre nationally known for its acoustical qualities that "first nighters beyond the middle of the house reported some difficulty in following lines."  

Ethan Frome, castigating New England natives for their parsimony, their repressions, their narrow-mindedness and intolerance and exploring America for something other than quaintness and folklore, exhibits the trend toward realistic regionalism, that new style of the thirties which interested Hartman theatregoers.  

Although numerous realistic plays were being produced in the thirties dealing with some aspect or other of life in America, one of the favorite locales of the writing fraternity was, and is, the deep South, and none proved more captivating for the Columbus audience than Jack Kirkland's southern comedy-drama, Tobacco Road, which opened its first Hartman engagement under Robert Boda's management on March 23, and for the next four days played to capacity houses at each of its six performances. The audience viewing Tobacco Road differed from the usual. Many who came to see
Tobacco Road were accustomed to motion picture theatres, had never been in a legitimate house before, and were unfamiliar with the reserved seating plan employed by the Hartman. Confusion naturally resulted at all performances because, ignoring the specific reserved seats, people filled the theatre on a first come first serve basis. Often those with orchestra tickets found themselves witnessing the production from the higher reaches of the balcony.¹²

It is interesting to note, though somewhat digres-
sive, that during this and subsequent engagements of Tobacco Road, an almost unbelievable sociological phenomenon occurred. Because of the economic conditions of the country and the emotional impact and appeal of the play, many local barefooted "Jeeters" clustered about the Hartman stage door begging to be made members of the troupe and to be allowed to travel with the show. In addition, other sharecroppers, escorted by author Erskine Caldwell's father, Reverend J. S. Caldwell, earned their way to Columbus by picking beans in route, and they, too, wanted to join the company.¹³ Perhaps because of its initial, enthusiastic reception by Columbus theatregoers Tobacco Road has earned the distinction of having played the Hartman more times than any other play. It has been booked into the East State Street playhouse on fifteen separate occasions, with John Barton playing Jeeter Lester during the last ten engage-
ments. Both the play and Barton enlisted an army of fol-
lowers at each performance, and both were regarded as theatrical institutions in Columbus. The Kirkland piece has been unquestionably the most successful show ever presented at the Hartman Theatre.

During the first year of Boda's management legitimate theatre was temporarily interrupted for the last two weeks in April when Mayerling, one of the few motion pictures ever to play the Hartman, was shown. Directed by Anatole Litvak and starring Charles Boyer and Danielle Darrieux, the film received excellent notices during its local limited engagement.

One of the truly great artistic features of the 1938 season at the Hartman was the engagement of the famous Dublin Abbey Players who, from March 4 through 7 presented a repertory of six Irish plays. No dramatic company in the world is richer in tradition than the Abbey Players, whose history is tied up with Lady Gregory, the poet W. B. Yeats, and F. R. Higgins, poet and businessman who served as the company's director during the 1938 tour. There were fourteen actors in the traveling cast, each role being cast with special attention to the actor's fitness for the role. For this reason there were no stars in the company. By 1938 the Abbey Players had been performing as an ensemble unit for almost thirty years, presenting their Irish plays throughout the world.
During the Columbus booking Barry Fitzgerald, F. J. McCormick, Maureen Delaney, Arthur Shields, Ria Mooney, and Michael O’Dea were among the players who presented Far Off Hills, Playboy of the Western World, Rising of the Moon, Juno and the Paycock, The New Gossaon, and The Plough and the Stars. The company won favorable comment from local critics, but unfortunately the audiences were "disgracefully small." This is explainable in part by the fact that Columbus theatregoers were unfamiliar with the plays and the players appearing in them. By and large, in order to assure a large audience at the Hartman the Bodas invariably had to either book a well-known theatrical personality or a very popular play. As far as the Hartman’s clientele was concerned, the Abbey Players had neither. Although Barry Fitzgerald, Arthur Shields, and Sara Allgood later became important motion picture performers, in 1938 they were relatively unknown in Columbus. Sam Wilson perhaps described the local theatrical scene all too accurately when he commented:

This brief festival of plays stands along with Maurice Evans as Richard II and the recent visit of Helen Hayes in Victoria Regina, as among the most notable things the Hartman has brought us in many seasons. It also has been one of the least well patronized to the shame of a town which protests its devotion to the theatre and points with such pride to its amateur theatre groups that presumably bear testimony to this devotion. One is inclined to suspect, on the evidence of the past few
days, that love of the drama among us is mere lip service and goes no deeper than the mere fun found in seeing relatives and friends in motley and in hearing them spout lines indifferently well.15

It may be significant to note the Abbey Players never played a return engagement at the Hartman and to observe, too, that at no time from that date to the present did touring repertory or local stock companies fare well financially at the Hartman. This regrettable situation occurred primarily because the majority of Columbus theatregoers preferred to see famous stars and hit Broadway plays rather than the obscure performers generally found in a touring or local repertory company. In many cases the artistic significance of a notable play made little or no difference to a large segment of Hartman patrons. They wanted big names and popular plays.

Robert Boda's first season as the manager was coming to a close when the only professional musical presented during the first half of 1938, You Never Know, played the Hartman on May 26 and 27. This adaptation from the 1929 comedy Candlelight drew large audiences in Columbus after playing to full houses in Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, D. C., and Pittsburgh during its pre-Broadway tour, and marked Cole Porter's return to the theatre after his two year sojourn in Hollywood composing film scores.16 The production received lukewarm reviews from the Columbus critics, which, as later events show,
proved a forecast of things to come, when even stars such as Clifton Webb, Lupe Velez, Frances Williams, and Toby Wing could not keep the show going for more than a few weeks following its New York opening.

A unique motion picture, *A Birth of a Baby*, was the last event of the 1938 season. Playing the first three weeks in June, it was the first full-length film to show the actual birth of a child as part of the story of maternity. The showing of this film had an unusual provision attached to it: it could not be shown as part of a double feature, and any short subjects to be shown with it should be selected by the American Committee on Maternal Welfare, Inc., the organization producing the picture. Business was phenomenal for the opening days of the attraction with lines of people stretched around the block for each showing. Originally booked for a five day, ten performance run, the movie was held over for three weeks and was shown 168 times, breaking the previous house record for a film showing in the first fourteen days of its engagement. Amateur productions presented during this season were the Grand Opera Club's production of *The Bohemian Girl*, and two dance recitals--*The Marie B. Sands Memorial Revue* and the *Jack Sherick Tap Revue*.

Robert Boda could view his first Hartman season with satisfaction. Artistically, he had brought many recognized stars of the period to Columbus, and for the
most part, the local theatregoers had responded enthusiastically. The road was now flourishing mightily and Boda and his patrons had every reason to look forward to even greater attractions at the Hartman the following season.

The 1938-39 season, one of the busiest in the Hartman's history, opened its autumn program later than usual with the one-day appearance of the Mordkin Ballet on October 30. Although many ballet companies and dance troupes were booked into the Hartman during the thirties and forties, the Columbus audiences did not support them enthusiastically at the Hartman. Used to seeing their favorites perform at Memorial Hall, balletomanes never quite accepted the Hartman as a theatre for the dance. Consequently, to no one's complete surprise, the Mordkin Ballet drew an extremely slim audience, despite the critical acclaim the troupe received. The production, as staged in Columbus, was enormous. Mordkin, who had been the dancing partner of Pavlova and the former master of the Imperial Ballet of Moscow, brought an international company of sixty artists and also carried his own symphony orchestra. Of local interest was the appearance of a Columbus girl, Delores Goodman, with the troupe. She had appeared at the Hartman in many amateur productions, but this was her first professional engagement. Years later Miss Goodman changed her first name to Dody and achieved stardom in television. Though the ballet company proved to be a box-office disaster,
the one day stop-over had repercussions that attracted attention to the next event, *Pins and Needles*. Ballet patrons who saw the Mordkin performances left the theatre crying out against Columbus' apparent lack of appreciation for such artistic endeavors. Those who had not seen the Mordkin dancers countered with the inevitable, "I didn't realize"... "Of course I meant to go"..."If you'd only called me"... and ended with the placatory, "But we certainly intend to see"...\(^\text{19}\) While this was occurring *Pins and Needles* opened on November 3 and attracted those who had been admonishing themselves for not supporting the ballet.

*Pins and Needles* was a unique production because it started as a weekend diversion for the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union members and the performers were not professional actors but garment industry workers. The immediate success of the musical revue caused the New York drama critics to descend on the Labor Stage (formerly the Princess Theatre), and inevitably when the Broadway ticket agencies became involved, *Pins and Needles* became big business.

The Harold J. Rome musical revue did not find favor with local theatre audiences. Though it was highly successful in New York, proving that a revue could be both outspoken and literate and hold as much entertainment as the typical Broadway girl-show with its vulgar, burlesque-type comic sketches, *Pins and Needles* sharply divided the Columbus
audiences. For one thing, its violent, leftist tone was at sharp variance with the temper of a town about to go firmly to the right at an election, and for another, in the opinion of many, it simply failed to qualify as entertainment. According to Sam Wilson Columbus patrons responded to the play in three distinct ways. A large segment of the capacity first-night audience left at the first intermission, while others waited impatiently through the entire production. Others, of course, enjoyed it without reservation. Whatever the reason, be it the political atmosphere of the late thirties in predominantly Republican Columbus, or a lack of sophistication among the Hartman theatregoers, the fact remains that Pins and Needles did not strike an agreeable chord with the central Ohio audiences. It did, however, stir up controversy and comment, and by the time it moved on, the Hartman's name was on many tongues, and all were indeed aware that the 1938-39 theatre season was underway.

Political satire continued to be the fare at the Hartman when the great George M. Cohan appeared in the Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman, Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart musical spoof of the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration, I'd Rather Be Right. Because of the times and its political implications, few plays of the decade had enjoyed so much publicity as this piece, and it provided the final touch needed to declare the Columbus theatrical season
officially open. Unlike the biting Pins and Needles, this
tuneful lampoon of the New Deal was received, for the most
part, with acclaim by Hartman audiences, and even those who
were champions of the Roosevelt administration it so bril-
liantly satirized, applauded lustily the manner the satire
was performed by Cohan and his company.21 The demand for
tickets was so great that prospective patrons were turned
away at the box-office at each performance, making it one
of the most financially rewarding presentations in Robert
Boda's long career.

Following Cohan's engagement, Boda played an oper-
etta favorite and two popular comedies at the Hartman.
Blossom Time, the 1921 musical that presented the life and
music of Franz Schubert, had been a Hartman favorite in
earlier seasons, and while it still had its coterie of
devoted fans in 1938, it did not attract more than half a
house, even with the well-known radio personality, Everett
Marshall, singing the lead.

The play of family life, treated with humor and
sentiment, was finding success on the American stage in
the late thirties. Obviously American family life cannot
be considered complete without children, and many domestic
dramatists preferred to focus attention on them rather than
on their elders. Clifford Goldsmith's What a Life was just
one of a number of farces that capitalized on the antics
of youngsters and their infinite capacities for getting in
and out of insignificant trouble. The George Abbott-directed comedy, starring Eddie Bracken as Henry Aldrich, was well attended in Columbus December 5, 6, and 7, and is perhaps best remembered as the origin of the Aldrich Family series that found long-lasting success on radio and in the movies.

For many years a new attitude toward women—the natural consequence of feminism, Freud, and World War I—had pervaded the United States. The old Victorian view that women are the weaker sex was fast disappearing from the American scene as the thirties drew to a close. Playwrights reflected this attitude. The demoniac traits of women were heavily underlined in innumerable stage portraits, but it remained for a female dramatist to utter the final word on the malicious and insidious aspects of the female sex. Clare Boothe's *The Women*, a comedy with no male characters, played in Columbus December 8, 9, and 10. Fresh from a three-year run on Broadway, the play drew near-capacity houses at the Hartman and stirred up the usually staid society theatregoers as no production (not even *Pins and Needles*) had in many years. Local matrons were not accustomed to Miss Boothe's earthy characterizations or trenchant dialogue, but word of both was quickly spread from one woman's club to another and the Hartman was filled with those who came to see and hear the non lady-like side of the fairer sex wittily exposed.
It was time for a change of pace. After viewing three musical shows and two comedies since the beginning of the fall season, Hartman patrons now had the opportunity to witness the symbolic Irish drama, *Shadow and Substance*. Written by Paul Vincent Carroll, this play was chosen as the best foreign play of the season 1936-1937 by the New York Drama Critics' Circle and visited Columbus with the original Broadway cast of Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Julie Haydon, and Sara Allgood. Largely because of the advance publicity and the critical praise it received in New York, *Shadow and Substance* became the play to see for many Columbus theatre patrons, and proved a tremendous box-office success for the Hartman. Sam Wilson's review certainly did nothing to detract from the production's drawing power when he wrote:

A play possessed of both theatrical and literary distinction, a performance as truly memorable in quality as advanced reports had promised it would be—these were the joint rewards of the audience that saw *Shadow and Substance* on Tuesday evening.23

Significant and successful as the Carroll play undoubtedly was for the Hartman, it was by no means the high point of the 1938 fall and winter season. That event was yet to come. On November 29, 1938, word reached Columbus that the Hartman Theatre had been chosen for an event of world-wide interest in the realms of both drama and literature, the first appearance on any stage of Sinclair Lewis, famed novelist and Nobel Prize winner, in his own play, *Angela Is Twenty-Two*. The play premiered at the
Hartman on December 30, 1938, with the opening marking the beginning of its tour through the midwest preparatory to a New York showing in the winter of 1939.

Though Lewis achieved extraordinary literary status as a successful novelist, he was by no means a complete stranger in the world of dramatic literature and the theatre in general. The author had his initial adventure with drama in 1919, when, as a comparative unknown, he wrote Hobochemia which was produced at the Greenwich Village Theatre. He also collaborated with Lloyd Lewis on a play called Jayhawker in which Fred Stone appeared on Broadway, and his novel, Dodsworth, dramatized by Sidney Howard, proved highly successful in New York. In the summer of 1938 the Cohasset, Massachusetts Theatre presented Lewis' It Can't Happen Here as their major production.

Sinclair Lewis, author of such novels as Main Street, Babbitt, and Arrowsmith, wrote Angela Is Twenty-Two in collaboration with Fay Wray, who gained cinema immortality as the bride of King Kong. The play is a somewhat stilted, romantic love story set in an American city with a population of several hundred-thousand. The leading character, played by Lewis, is a successful physician, age fifty-one, who falls in love with a girl of twenty-two, and despite protests of family and friends, marries her. The newspaper advertisements billed the opening as "The Event of the Season", and to a certain degree they understated the
impact and excitement created by the world premiere. Arriving in mid-December, the company, headed by the author, director Harry Wagstaff Gribble, and producer John Wildberg, rushed to complete arrangements for their opening night. As it happened, more time was devoted to socializing and entertaining than to rehearsing. Lewis held court, almost without fail, every day in his headquarters at the Deshler-Wallick Hotel or at the theatre, and there was a continuous round of parties and dinners throughout the tryouts.24

The premiere itself was a gala affair with a capacity white tie and tails audience. Clearly, it was the social event of the winter season, one no one wanted to miss. Audience reaction was favorable, as The Columbus Evening Dispatch reported on page one:

Unenforced laughter was forthcoming on cue and there was nothing perfunctory about the applause that followed each scene and demanded many curtain calls after the last act.25

In his review Sam Wilson said:

Capacity Audience Shows Liking for Play and Star...Angela Is Twenty-Two is a disarmingly, unpretentious and forthright play. Its strength lies principally in its excellently drawn characters, its well contrived, theatrically effective situations, and the salty humor of many of its lines.26

Commenting on the star’s performance Wilson said:

Mr. Lewis’ acting has, understandably, a tentative quality about it. He is not yet able to take advantage of the opportunities offered him. If most of the way through the comedy his playing was on the inexpert side,
there were moments when it was so absolutely right that it was difficult to believe him a novice. Highest tribute that can be paid to him as a beginner is this—if his performance is uneven it still is never lacking in interest. Before *Angela Is Twenty-Two* has gone far on its tour Mr. Lewis will be doing a rousing good job.  

But Mr. Wilson appears to have reconsidered and later, in a 1967 conversation he told this researcher that Lewis' performance was "extremely wooden, amateurish and generally quite bad." Sam Wilson appears to have been overly generous in his evaluation of the star's performance. Unfortunately, Lewis evidently did not improve as the company traveled through the midwest, and the New York critics gave him unfavorable reviews. Since writing for the theatre has often proved disastrous for established novelists and poets, one wonders why writers in these other areas continue to invade the difficult dramatic field. Lewis gave his own reasons in his curtain speech on opening night:

> I believe the American theatre to be on the verge of such a renaissance as it has not seen before. I have come into it myself because I feel it is the duty of every creative mind in the land to try to make some contribution to it.  

Though *Angela Is Twenty-Two* was something less than a critical and artistic success, the fact remains that simply by holding its premiere in Columbus it focused the attention of the theatrical world on the Hartman. By no mere chance this play and many others had their world
premieres at the Hartman. Boda made frequent trips to New York to convince producers of new shows that Columbus and his theatre were ideally suited to house fledgling productions. He argued that Columbus was enough removed from New York so that critics would not travel the 510 miles to see the tryouts, but that it was located in the center of the midwest with excellent railroad connections to all points on a prospective tour. Of course, most New York producers were well aware of the Hartman's excellent physical facilities, and that was a convincing point in many decisions. Yet the primary reason so many world premières were held in Columbus was that the producers held respect and admiration for Robert Boda. He enjoyed an excellent reputation as a road theatre manager with the New York bookers, and all knew he was a man of his word. Boda remained a gentleman in a business where gentlemen are often difficult to find, and producers enjoyed playing his theatre.

Sinclair Lewis' play was the last Hartman event for 1938, but Columbus audiences could look forward to a spectacular array of personalities and plays during the winter and spring seasons of the new year. The appearance of such stars as the Lunts, Katharine Cornell, Laurence Olivier, John Barrymore, Walter Huston, Ethel Barrymore, and Cornelia Otis Skinner enabled the Hartman to have one of the most financially successful and
artistically rewarding seasons in its history.

Following the semi-annual visit of Tobacco Road, which played to capacity houses January 2, 3, and 4, John Steinbeck's somber character drama, Of Mice and Men opened at the Hartman January 5 for a three-day engagement. Directed by George S. Kaufman and starring Guy Robertson, Edward Andrews, and Claire Luce, this work that won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award as the best American play of 1938, fared well at the box-office and was favorably received by most Columbus theatregoers. Some, however, were only repelled and disgusted by the subnormality, brutality, and violence represented on the stage, and Boda received letters urging that plays containing characters with psychological abnormalities should not be exhibited before Hartman audiences. As aside from the company's excellent acting, the most noteworthy aspect of the production was the spectacular scenery designed by Donald Oenslager. These enormous settings, which took the Hartman stage crew eight hours to install, gave a remarkable illusion of open country stretching for miles behind the proscenium arch and had long-time Columbus theatre patrons marveling at the realistic quality they possessed.

If Of Mice and Men offered audiences the ultimate in full-scale, realistic scenery, the Hartman's next play, Our Town, afforded them little pictorial splendor. Played
on a bare, curtainless stage, the Thornton Wilder Pulitzer Prize winning, philosophical fantasy received excellent notices in Columbus January 17 and 18. Sam Wilson wrote: "A great play, a great performance and an unforgettable theatrical experience are available to those who see Our Town." Like Steinbeck's play, this also received mixed reactions from local patrons; half the audience loved it, the other half hated it. There seemed no middle ground. Many found favor with the piece and thought it the most enjoyable play they had ever seen. Those who did not like it said it was "boring, ridiculous, made no sense and was a waste of time and money." Even so, it drew huge crowds, largely because of a good advance sale, because of the nationwide publicity received from the Broadway run, and because the original New York cast of Frank Craven, Evelyn Varden, Helen Carew, and John Craven headed the touring company.

For the next three and a half months the Hartman stage was occupied by some of the leading female personalities of the era. Ethel Barrymore led the feminine parade appearing in Mazo de La Roche's comedy-drama, Whiteoaks, on January 30, 31, and February 1. Though Miss Barrymore had been a star since the early years of the twentieth century, and had achieved some measure of success in New York and on tour with Whiteoaks, she attracted few Columbus patrons on this visit. This is explained partly
by the nature of the play, a study of a centenarian, and the fact that these years represented a relatively low period in the actress' career; she had had no outstanding theatrical triumphs in several seasons. And Mr. Wilson, when he wrote:

Whiteoaks is a relatively uneventful, old-timey comedy-drama of character...Not too great shakes as a play, Whiteoaks finds its excuse for being in the opportunity it offers the players appearing in it. 35

did nothing further to cause people to seek out the Hartman for an evening's entertainment.

The remainder of the winter season was devoted to three comedies. The first, on February 23, 24, and 25, a revival of George Bernard Shaw's Candida, starring Cornelia Otis Skinner. The work received mediocre notices, but because of Miss Skinner's loyal local following, it was fairly well attended. Susan and God, which Edmond M. Gagey names as Rachel Crothers' "finest work", 36 was next on the Hartman agenda on March 13, 14, and 15. An adroit blend of farce and drama, the play, with Jessie Royce Landis as Susan, was successful in Columbus primarily because Miss Crothers had long been one of the most popular playwrights in America, and many people went to see anything she wrote. Also, it had enjoyed long runs on Broadway and in Chicago, and was a well-known piece to Hartman patrons. Clare Boothe's, Kiss the Boys Goodbye, a satirical account of the search for someone to play Scarlett O'Hara in the movie version of Gone With the Wind, was the final play of the
winter season. Because of Miss Boothe's remarkable success with *The Women* the play drew large crowds during its March 20, 21, and 22 engagement.

The spring of 1939 was one of the most exciting and theatrically significant in Columbus stage annals. Robert Boda stated: "it had been more than ten years since the Hartman had presented such a solid lineup of stars and exceptional plays."37 The play that Sam Wilson called "the peak of the theatrical season",38 *No Time For Comedy*, was the first attraction of the fantastic, final three weeks of the season. Written by S. N. Behrman, the Guthrie McClintic-directed production arrived in Columbus April 6 for a three-day run on a pre-Broadway tour with Katharine Cornell, Laurence Olivier, John Williams, and Margalo Gillmore heading the all-star cast. Though Miss Cornell was one of the theatre's leading dramatic actresses, this was her first experience with an all out comedy, and she was extremely unsure of herself in the difficult comedic role she was trying to master. She was frightened of comedy, particularly since she was having a great deal of trouble picking up her lines after audience laughter forced a break in her reading. To make matters worse, she and the company had received bad notices during their first two engagements in Louisville, Kentucky, and Indianapolis, Indiana, and by the time they reached Columbus, Miss Cornell was ready to cancel the production.
To complicate the unhappy situation even more, Alexander Woollcott, noted caustic wit, critic, and columnist, arrived in town. Because of his influence in the American theatre and the power he possessed through his column, Woollcott was an unwelcome sight to everyone connected with *No Time for Comedy*, but there he was and there was nothing anyone could do about it.

Prior to opening night, Woollcott had dined at the Maramor, favorite restaurant of Columbus theatregoers. While there, finding himself unable to obtain any alcoholic beverage, he loudly denounced the establishment, its clientele, and Columbus in general. Word of his ill-tempered outburst soon reached the already nervous cast at the Hartman, and they prepared themselves for his untimely arrival at the theatre that evening. Because many of the diners at the Maramor who were subjected to Woollcott's diatribe were now seated at the Hartman, it was not too surprising that when he entered and took his front row seat one could feel the animosity directed toward the critic by a section of the audience prior to the first curtain. 39 Despite this obvious obstacle, or perhaps because of Woollcott's presence, the company, for the first time, performed brilliantly and was loudly cheered and applauded at the final curtain. Sam Wilson's glowing review read in part:

Mr. Behrman's play is a gay and witty comedy
of manners, a gallant defense of comedy's place in an agonized world...No Time for Comedy is an actor's play of the first order, although one so extraordinarily well written that its author is never out of the audiences' mind...Miss Cornell plays Linda with all the grace, poise, clairvoyance, warm-humanity, forthrightness and humor the role requires.40

It should be noted that Woollcott was so impressed with the production that he remained in Columbus to see all of the remaining performances. The rest of the No Time for Comedy pre-Broadway tour was a success, and the New York critics made much of Miss Cornell's first appearance in a major comedy role, but the turning point in the Behrman comedy's success was definitely its opening night at the Hartman Theatre. As its star later stated: "If we had failed in Columbus we would have cancelled the tour."41

The sad spectacle of a once truly great actor, now in physical and mental disintegration, was the next feature on Robert Boda's spring schedule. My Dear Children, an antic farce, was written by Catherine Turmey and Jerry Horwin and especially devised for John Barrymore's return to the theatre after an absence of a decade and a half. Equally proficient in the twenties when performing in both comedy or heavy drama, Barrymore, by 1939, was ravaged by numerous physical ills, and his once great talent had been diluted by an almost constant intake of alcohol over the years. His theatrical career had kept pace with his physical condition, and while ten years before his pre-Broadway tour in 1938 an appearance by John Barrymore would have
almost assured a capacity audience at any theatre in America, his engagement for *My Dear Children* drew only half a house at each of its April 14 and 15 performances. Both the play and the star were disastrous. Barrymore wallowed his way through the role, ad libbing lines and blocking as he went, thoroughly confusing not only Elaine Barrie (his co-star and his wife at the time) but the audience as well. His movements and mannerisms were jerky and mechanical and his once powerful voice could hardly be understood as he slurred his words and delivered his lines in an amateurish monotone. It appeared as if he did not, perhaps could not, care about his performance. Only embarrassed laughter was emitted by the obviously uncomfortable audience viewing the unfortunate proceedings on the stage. At the final curtain the theatre was enveloped in a deathly silence until Mrs. Harriet Charrington, wife of H. E. Charrington, publicity director of the Hartman, called "Bravo" and thereby initiated a few tenuous curtain calls.42 Deeply disturbed by the disastrous turn of events, Boda vowed never to play another Barrymore show, and he never had to—this was the great star's final tour.

Toward the end of the thirties (1938) one of America's leading playwrights, Maxwell Anderson, turned for the first time to the musical comedy stage when he and Kurt Weill collaborated on the pseudo-historical fantasy, *Knickerbocker Holiday*. Starring Walter Huston, Ray
Middleton, Richard Kollmar, and Jeanne Madden, the original Broadway cast, the first touring production of The Playwrights' Company was gratefully received at the Hartman only two days after the Barrymore debacle.

Like its two Hartman predecessors, *Pine and Needles* and *I'd Rather Be Right*, *Knickerbocker Holiday* contained considerable political and social satire and commentary. Because of this and because the show's most familiar tune, "September Song," was enjoying immense popularity at the time, the Joshua Logan-directed production drew near-capacity audiences during its local visit. The big business had been accurately predicted in March by manager Boda when he told Sam Wilson: "*Knickerbocker Holiday* is the type of musical Columbus likes; comparable to *Rose Marie*, *The Desert Song* and other works of the golden days of that type of production." 43

Continuing his policy of bringing the greatest names of the theatrical world to Columbus at an almost continuous rate, Boda succeeded in booking Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne for a two-play, three-day run. On April 20 and 21 The Theatre Guild presented Jean Giraudoux's *Amphitryon 38*, one of the brightest comedies in which the Lunts ever appeared; and on April 22 the famous acting couple played two performances of Anton Chekhov's realistic character drama, *The Sea Gull*. Called "38" because Giraudoux pretended to believe that this was the thirty-
eighth version of the story of Amphitryon, Jupiter, and Alcmene, this production presented at the Hartman was an adaptation by S. N. Behrman from Giraudoux' French success and was, even to the smallest role, played by precisely the same company that performed in the 1937 Broadway hit. The supporting players, most of whom had been with the Lunts for five years, included the well-known performers, Richard Whorf and Sidney Greenstreet. Special interest was provided for Columbus patrons by the appearance of Edith King, one-time leading lady with the Hartman Stock Company in the twenties and yet a local favorite. The comedy was extremely well received, and at the conclusion of the performance the company took eight curtain calls before the large audience that accorded them a standing ovation. Sam Wilson said: "Amphitryon is one of the happiest of the many happy Lunt and Fontanne productions of recent years."44

Columbus was one of the few cities on the Lunt's tour to see The Sea Gull since its scenery was difficult to handle in repertory. Both performances were well attended and impressed the Dispatch critic:

In giving us the rare privilege of seeing their revival of the Chekhov play Mr. Lunt and Miss Fontanne have left us with the memory of what is incontestably one of the most provocative and distinctive achievements in the contemporary theatre.45

The Lunt's appearance signaled the end of the regular theatrical season in Columbus, but before the Hartman went
dark for the summer, a special attraction occupied the theatre during the week of May 11. Sponsored by the Franklin County Federation of Churches, the Luenen Passion Play, featuring Josef Meier in the role of the Christus, played the Hartman to extremely small audiences. Mr. Meier had been touring with the play since childhood and was the producer of the work in South Dakota's Black Hills during the summer months. Other events presented during the season were the Princeton Triangle's fiftieth annual musical revue, Once Over Lightly; the Independent Players' production of My Maryland; a piano recital by Aaron Cohen coupled with soprano Mary Pryseski's concert; the Jorg Fasting Ballet; Aquinas High School's revue, Reds in Green; and two movies, The Avenger and Mamele, shown on May 5.

The 1938-39 season was highly significant to manager Boda and all central Ohio theatre patrons. Fully recovered from the relatively bleak years of the depression, the Hartman during this season had enjoyed great financial success, and despite the growing tension over events abroad, the outlook for the coming fall was very favorable. Boda faced the future with considerable confidence.

Though a concert by pianist Alec Templeton was actually the initial event of the 1939-40 season, the Hartman's new theatrical season really was launched on October 23 when the lavish Rodgers and Hart musical comedy,
I Married An Angel, came to town for a three-day engagement. This production, an adaptation from the play by John Vaszary, was physically the largest show to play the Hartman that season, and was in fact, one of the most elaborate in the history of the playhouse. It required the Hartman stage crew an entire day to set up the enormous and complicated Jo Mielziner settings. Starring Dennis King, Vivienne Segal, Karen Van Rynt, and Dan Dailey, this musical fantasy carrying a supporting cast of 101 played to good, though not to capacity houses, and was favorably reviewed by Harold C. Eckert, The Ohio State Journal dramatic critic. Eckert was especially taken with the scenic devices:

When the season’s roll is checked, its certain the one chief point remembered about I Married An Angel will be the many imaginatively devised stage gadgets and treadmill-rolle tricks employed by Jo Mielziner in giving cinema-continuity movement and bright novelty to his show.

Noel Langley’s old-fashioned melodramatic ghost fable, Farm of Three Echoes, failed to draw customers when it was presented on October 30 and 31. This character study of an aged woman of uncanny liveliness provided Ethel Barrymore a vehicle for her continuation of the type of characterization she had delineated as Gran in Whiteoaks. Though the play failed at the Hartman box-office, the pre-Broadway tour was successful and Farm of Three Echoes served Miss Barrymore in New York reasonably well.
On Monday, November 2, one of the finest actors in the American theatre, Paul Muni, visited Columbus in Maxwell Anderson's *Key Largo*. Inspired by the Spanish Revolution, this verse tragedy offers an assault on what the author considered one of the great evils of the modern world—"scientific materialism." The Anderson drama, co-starring Uta Hagen and Jose Ferrer, was produced by The Playwrights' Company and marked Muni's return to the theatre following seven years of Hollywood film making. Columbus was the second stop in a limited pre-Broadway tour for *Key Largo*, and the drama "drew a large, dressy audience," primarily because Muni was extremely well known from his numerous appearances in motion pictures and because Anderson was numbered among the foremost playwrights of the decade.

The month of November was a busy one for both Boda and his Hartman patroňs. Following *Key Largo* Boda brought in *Springtime for Henry*, *Mamba's Daughters*, and *Tonight We Danced*. The first of these plays, written by English playwright Benn W. Levy and starring Edward Everett Horton, *Springtime for Henry*, a farce, was well received by the local critics and by the fairly large audiences that viewed it. Negro life and manners in the South provided material for several writers in the thirties. Among the most successful were Dorothy and DuBose Heyward who followed their popular 1927 *Porgy*, with the melodramatic *Mamba's Daughters*, the second production during November. This drama provided
Ethel Waters, primarily a revue actress and a star of many musicals prior to 1939, her first role in a straight drama. Booked into the Hartman for an entire week's run (the only other show in a number of seasons besides Tobacco Road to play for a week), Mamba's Daughters had a tremendous advance sale and played to near capacity for its eight-performance engagement. Miss Waters proved more than capable as a dramatic star, as Eckert noted in his review:

Ethel Waters received the acclaim of discriminating, show-wise theatregoers last evening for her magnificent, moving portrayal of the powerful, witless Hagar...Her beautiful performance is a portraiture you'll not forget, even in a season of smash hits.50

The Heyward's melodrama, the third play of November, was a sizeable show—in point of equipment comparable to I Married An Angel—and one of the largest productions to tour at any time. Two baggage cars were needed to contain the five complete scene changes, and six men were sent to Columbus in advance of the show's arrival as a technical staff to work with the Hartman stage crew in assembling the settings.51 Tonight We Dance!, a romantic farce starring Ruth Chatterton, won neither audience nor critical approval when it played on November 23, 24, and 25. During the last month of 1939 Leave It To Me, the first successful spoof of the Soviet Union on the musical stage, was the first of three well-known Broadway successes brought to the Hartman by Robert Boda. This Cole Porter musical comedy had a book by Sam
and Bella Spewack and played one year in New York to unani-
mous critical acclaim. Victor Moore, William Gaxton, and
Sophie Tucker, all of the original company, performed to
absolute capacity audiences at the Hartman, and found the
Columbus critics in complete accord with their Broadway
colleagues. Eckert wrote: "Leave It To Me is big, brassy
business—worthy by all Broadway standards. Its tri-
starring alliance received, and rated, what amounted to an
ovation."52 Continuing the trend set by I Married An Angel
and Mamba's Daughters of large, elaborate, touring pro-
ductions, this musical was one of the largest on the road
and contained fourteen different settings. It was also
one of the greatest successes, in terms of popularity with
the audience, the Hartman ever presented.53

American attempts at plays which used historical
and biographical material for their subject matter were
plentiful in the twenties and thirties. Toward the end of
the latter decade many playwrights had all but abandoned
the blood and thunder histrionics of earlier years and
their works became less romantic and tended to become more
scholarly and realistic. This trend toward realism and
contemporary reference appears at its best in Abe Lincoln
In Illinois, a historical play definitely not a romantic
period piece. This 1938 Pulitzer Prize winning drama by
Robert E. Sherwood was the first production to be pro-
duced by The Playwrights' Company and was heralded with
critical praise both in New York and on the road. At the Hartman, as everywhere else, it drew capacity audiences for its regular performances, and because of the historical and biographical accuracy of the play, Boda scheduled a special low cost student matinee showing at three o'clock on Wednesday, December 20. Abe Lincoln in Illinois, providing Canadian-born actor Raymond Massey his greatest success in his long career on the American stage, was favorably reviewed by the Columbus critics, notably Harold E. Eckert, when he wrote:

One of the most compelling, truly provocative biographical plays of the American theatre was performed last night at the Hartman. Starring Raymond Massey, an honest and restrained actor, it becomes the season's most exciting event. Sherwood's portrait of the prairie prophet, contemplating his preparatory period, is deeply stirring and will make a lingering impression upon American culture because it has been composed with breadth of vision and spiritual perception.

The audience's ovation was so great at the final curtain that Mr. Massey came forward to deliver a brief tribute to the playwright and to the Hartman audience. Obviously touched by the warm reception, Massey's voice broke several times during his speech--it was one of the most memorable evenings in Hartman history.

The final play of 1939 was Sutton Vane's 1923 fantasy, Outward Bound. Though critically well received in Columbus and on Broadway during its one-year run, it was one of Boda's most disastrous bookings. The piece did
not draw well, and in fact, played to half-empty houses. This unfortunate situation occurred partially because the play opened in Columbus on Christmas Day and partly because it was well known that its star, Laurette Taylor, was using this play to make a comeback from alcoholism. Patrons remembered all too well the unsavory Barrymore episode.\footnote{58} Also, \textit{Outward Bound}'s subject matter doubtless kept many prospective ticket buyers at home. A nostalgic study of souls after death on board a mysterious ship, the tortures of hearts and minds going to meet their fates, was not the sort of theatre fare that appealed to Columbus theatregoers, particularly during the holidays. \textit{Outward Bound} did succeed in re-establishing Miss Taylor as a major theatrical figure and led her to the greatest dramatic triumph of her career, when in 1945, she played Amanda Wingfield in Tennessee Williams' \textit{The Glass Menagerie}.

The new decade was ushered in at the Hartman with the seventh production of \textit{Tobacco Road}. Opening New Year's Day for a week's run, business was so good the curtain was held up for twenty minutes on several occasions because the lines of ticket purchasers were so long.\footnote{59}

The new winter season was somewhat unique in Columbus theatre annals since Robert Boda played \textit{The Taming of the Shrew} and \textit{Hamlet}. Directed by Harry Wagstaff Gribble from a production scheme conceived by Alfred Lunt and Lynn
Fontanne, *The Taming of the Shrew* emphasized slapstick buffoonery, and featured "midgets, acrobats, a performing horse and a minstrel." As always, the Lunts played before full houses, and this engagement proved to be the most popular event of the Hartman's winter season. Prior to the arrival of Maurice Evans in *Hamlet*, Columbus had the opportunity of viewing Constance Bennett in Noel Coward's satirical comedy, *Easy Virtue*. Hartman patrons failed to take advantage of this showing, however, and the attendance was very thin. *Easy Virtue* was originally scheduled to open February 7, but had to be postponed a day because a smoke stack on top of the Hartman had rusted at its base and was leaning dangerously to one side. The Hartman building engineer discovered the damage while on a routine check of the building and called Safety Director, George Ward, and Chief Building Inspector, Jack Crompton, who promptly cancelled the show. "It's the first time since the theatre opened in 1911 that we've had to cancel a performance," said Robert Boda.

Since the announcement on January 8 that Maurice Evans was bringing his unexcised version of *Hamlet* to Columbus, the engagement had been the most eagerly anticipated theatrical event of the season. Knowledgeable theatregoers were aware that Mr. Evans had the unique distinction of being the first actor-manager to present the complete, uncut version of Shakespeare's tragedy in America, and ticket sales were brisk prior to the play's
opening. The advance sale was also benefited by a heavy publicity campaign conducted by Sam Weller (similar to his campaign for Richard II) informing prospective customers that the Margaret Webster-directed production had run three months on Broadway, attracting a quarter of a million people, had taken a brief fall tour, and was returned to New York for a second Broadway run by popular demand.62

The tremendous crowds that greeted Mr. Evans and his company on February 14 and 15 realized why this production enjoyed overwhelming critical acclaim and audience approval. Eckert wrote:

This vital young actor eloquently interprets the drama's profound philosophy in the simple, direct language used with compelling force and beauty of compassion by the master dramatist... Mr. Evans is 'the' Hamlet of this generation.63

The Hartman audience agreed, and when the final curtain descended the star and his supporting cast received "an ecstatic reception that excited even those audience members used to ovations."64

Because of the length of the play, Boda arranged to have the evening curtain at seven-thirty, one hour earlier than usual and a supper intermission was held between the third and fourth acts. Curtain for the matinee performance was at one o'clock instead of the customary two-thirty.65 Evans' Hamlet was an artistic triumph to match any on the Hartman's distinguished list.
The next event, the world premiere of a play written by a former Columbus resident, held a special interest for central Ohio theatregoers. Andrew Rosenthal, twenty-two year old son of department store owner, Mrs. Fred Lazarus, Jr., saw his drama, *The Burning Deck*, on the Hartman stage, performed for the first time, February 22. Columbus was selected as the site for the premiere because of the author's ties with the city and, more importantly, because when the producer, Jack Small, visited the Hartman as the stage manager of Sinclair Lewis' *Angela Is Twenty-Two*, he was impressed with Robert Boda, the theatre and formed a favorable impression of theatrical conditions in the city.66

The action of *The Burning Deck* takes place in Majorca and shows a group of persons of various nationalities on that Mediterranean island at the time of the outbreak of the European war in the summer of 1939. That the Lazarus Department Store bought out opening night might have influenced the audience's reaction as reported by critic Eckert: "Andrew Rosenthal's *The Burning Deck* passed its first test last night when a dressy, well-disposed audience of fellow home-towners applauded through several curtain calls and shouted for 'Author,' 'Author'."67 The kindest remark Eckert could say about the piece that starred Onslow Stevens and Zita Johnson was: "The play has bright dialog and many a deft characterization."68
Because of Lazarus, the premiere evening was played to capacity, but the subsequent two nights attracted fewer than several hundred curious patrons. Mr. Rosenthal's play opened at the Maxine Elliott Theatre in New York on March 1, 1940, but because of the disparaging critical reviews, closed the next day after a three-performance run.

When Helen Hayes and Philip Merivale reached the Hartman on February 26 in Ladies and Gentlemen, a surprising lack of box-office activity greeted them. Miss Hayes' other recent visit to Columbus, in Victoria Regina, had set Hartman attendance records, but her appearance in the Charles MacArthur, Ben Hecht comedy can be classified as a financial failure.

The final three presentations of the 1939-40 season offered the Columbus audiences extremely diversified theatre fare, and the Hartman patrons responded by giving Boda near capacity houses for every performance. Throughout the years Negro performers have contributed heavily to the development of the American theatre, and toward the end of the thirties they distinguished themselves in a curious but successful form of musical theatre—swing versions of semi-classic musical works. The most popular of these musical travesties was The Hot Mikado, which drew exceedingly good audiences when it played the Hartman on February 29. Produced by Michael Todd and starring the legendary Bill Robinson, the production broke box-office records in nearly
every city on its transcontinental tour, and a special six-
car train was needed to accommodate the original Broadway
cast of one hundred and fifty, the extra musicians and the
numerous lavish settings.\textsuperscript{69} The audience demanded many
encores from Robinson and the company, and "palmed him into
a climactic afterpiece that further embraced gags and most
of his finest mugging."\textsuperscript{70}

Following an unusually long dark period of almost a
month, Katharine Cornell returned to the scene of her
earlier triumph with a post-Broadway engagement of \textit{No Time
For Comedy} on March 29 and 30. Once again she drew good
houses and favorable notices.

Boda ended his theatrical season on a confusing note
with Albert Bein's fantasy \textit{Heavenly Express}. The theme of
death combined with hobo legend and song, with many allusions
to hobo customs and superstitions, was not easily under-
stood or comprehended by the majority of Hartman playgoers.
Because its star, John Garfield, was so successful and so
clearly identified with the motion picture industry, manager
Boda placed ads in the newspapers which read "This Is A
Stage Production—Not A Picture."\textsuperscript{71} Evidently, the com-
bination of the publicity and Garfield's box-office appeal
had the results the manager desired, for the play did ca-
pacity business during its April 8, 9, and 10 run. Ironi-
cally, the tremendous business the drama did on the road
led to its ultimate, untimely demise. Because of the pre-
Broadway tour's financial and artistic success, Kermit Bloomgarden, the producer, cancelled part of the tour and rushed the production into New York where it met with critical disfavor and enjoyed only a brief run. Perhaps if the producer had considered Eckert's criticism of the work the New York fiasco might have been avoided. The Ohio State Journal critic correctly forecast and summed up the play's status and future when he wrote: "Heavenly Express is fascinating--yet it is not commercial theatre." The only other professional event held at the Hartman that spring was the May 11 appearance of the magician, Dr. Harlan Tarbell, who presented his show, Eyeless Vision to audiences made up primarily of school children. Amateur productions for the 1939-40 season were limited to the Jorg Fastin Ballet and Aquinas High School's revue, Ain't Sayin'.

During the nineteen thirties there had been a gradual but definite change in the habits of Hartman theatregoers. Prior to World War II Columbus entertained primarily on Saturday nights, so consequently, theatre business fell off considerably. In years past a Saturday presentation had meant increased box-office activity, but as the thirties progressed, almost any night in the week was apt to be more financially rewarding than Saturday. Plays running Monday through Wednesday generally fared better than those booked for the latter part of the week. The depression years, the increasing entertainment competition,
and the seasons during which legitimate attractions were few and far between are all likely causes for the change in Columbus patron's habits. People who once attended the theatre on Saturday evenings simply switched to bridge parties and club dances, and during prohibition, visited the homes of friends known to be reliable sources of an illegal beverage supply.

By the end of the decade conditions had changed considerably but the newly acquired habits remained, and theatregoers yet devoted Saturday nights to other matters than the theatre. This was true not only of the balcony patrons, where the movies and night clubs made enormous inroads on business, but true as well of the wealthier clientele, who occupied the lower floor.

The situation remained the same until after the United States was actively involved in World War II. Following Pearl Harbor wartime prosperity swept the nation and almost any type of entertainment flourished. The need to escape from the discouraging world news led vast numbers to seek relaxation in any form, and the theatre was just one medium that reaped benefits. During the war years Saturday night regained its former status as the busiest theatrical evening in the week and it continues still to hold that position in the nineteen sixties.74

The years just prior to this nation's involvement in World War II were some of the most artistically productive
and financially rewarding in American theatre history. The Theatre Guild, The Playwrights' Company, and the Group Theatre all were producing plays of significance and quality. While it is true that the theatre never returned to the success of its peak pre-depression era, the decade of the forties brought to it a new prosperity—both in New York and on the road.

Nowhere was this new success more apparent than at the Hartman Theatre during its last pre-war season. Some of the greatest stars in their most notable roles visited Columbus between September of 1940 and April 1941. Though this was one of Robert Boda's finest theatrical seasons, the most significant event—one of long-lasting importance—did not take place behind the Hartman's footlights.

On August 28, 1940, The Columbus Evening Dispatch carried the theatrically momentous news that the Theatre Guild and the American Theatre Society had negotiated with the Bodas to bring six plays into the Hartman for the 1940-41 season. This union was to have a profound effect on all the Hartman seasons thereafter. At the time of the action, Columbus was, by far, the smallest city ever to be included in the Theatre Guild--American Theatre Society series, and it again illustrated the influence that Boda and the Hartman Theatre had on the road theatre business. Subscribers to the Guild series at the Hartman received
choice seating locations and reductions of twenty-five to thirty-three and one-third percent on regular box-office prices, but the major benefit the Guild brought to Columbus playgoers cannot be measured merely by financial savings. Throughout its twenty-three year association with the Hartman Theatre, the Theatre Guild provided central Ohio audiences with some of the finest theatrical endeavors ever produced in America. It would be difficult to overestimate the Theatre Guild's value, significance, and contributions to the Columbus theatre scene.

The response of Columbus theatre patrons after the 1940 announcement was so great that the Hartman enjoyed the most remarkable sale of theatre seats in the history of Columbus. It was ironical that following the tremendous amount of publicity generated by the Theatre Guild's list of plays, the Hartman's subscribers were required to wait until the third engagement of the season to take advantage of the new alliance.

Despite this, the Hartman's new season was launched auspiciously when, on September 26, Tallulah Bankhead invaded Columbus in Lillian Hellman's, The Little Foxes. This compact, realistic drama that offers a thinly disguised, pointed attack on capitalism provided Miss Bankhead with her most memorable role, and played to near capacity houses during its three-day run. It also received local critical acclaim as illustrated by Sam Wilson's comments:
Lillian Hellman’s play came up to expectation both as an admirable vehicle for the star and as an adroit piece of writing for the theatre in its own right. The performance of Miss Bankhead and her company was well on the brilliant side.76

To satisfy those of his audience who found Lillian Hellman’s stark drama distasteful, Boda billed Gertrude Lawrence in Samson Raphaelson’s comedy, Skylark on October 8 and 9. Miss Lawrence, who won the New York Academy Award for the best acting performance by a female in the 1938-39 season for her role in this play, always followed a rule that she would never remain in a play more than two years. Therefore, all her plays were produced for one season on Broadway and a season on the road.77

Skylark was enthusiastically received by Hartman patrons, as Clyde C. Long described in his review:

A capacity house roared its appreciation of the entertainment, and repeated curtain calls brought Miss Lawrence back on stage where she generously and graciously shared the acclaim with her colleagues.78

Absolute capacity houses viewed the Theatre Guild’s eagerly anticipated initial presentation, The Philadelphia Story, when it played a four-day engagement from November 6 through the 9. The original Broadway company, starring Katharine Hepburn, Joseph Cotton, and Van Heflin, having played to more than 600,000 people on a twelve week tour, had the unusually dressy Hartman audience laughing from the first curtain. Philip Barry’s best domestic comedy
which ran two years in New York to critical praise, also found favor with the Columbus reviewers. Sam Wilson wrote:

The Philadelphia Story is sure fire writing for the theatre and first rate diversion. It also provides Miss Hepburn with a role perfectly designed to her personal requirements.

Katharine Hepburn, who had gained fame some years earlier on Broadway, but had spent the majority of her career in Hollywood, was so impressed with Barry's play that she personally bought back her contract from RKO Pictures in order to appear in the comedy. It was one of the most notable roles of her long career.

The initial Theatre Guild production had indeed provided that organization with an auspicious debut in its Hartman premiere, but it was by no means an isolated example of the significant works the Guild brought to central Ohio audiences during its long association with Columbus. One need look no further than the next presentation for another outstanding play on the Guild list.

Since its beginnings the theatre has been a potent weapon in social criticism and in attacking the established mores of the many different cultures in which it has flourished. Nowhere has the technique of debunking been applied with greater force and vigor than in a concerted attack on war and patriotism. Maxwell Anderson's What Price Glory? started the campaign in 1924, and many anti-war plays followed in the succeeding two decades.
Opposition to war was a favorite theme of Robert E. Sherwood, who, in 1940, wrote *There Shall Be No Night*, the first truly anti-war play dealing with events in Europe, to play the Hartman. It served as a portent of plays to come. The Sherwood play, which opened in Columbus on November 25 starring the Lunts, was extremely well attended and sold out at every performance. In 1940, Americans for the first time were becoming alarmed by the disastrous events around the globe, and though isolationism was still popular, particularly in Columbus, the average man was slowly becoming aware of conditions which might threaten his safety at home. The subject of *There Shall Be No Night*, the struggle of force against reason, of mind against physical violence, set in 1939 Finland, appealed to theatre-goers throughout the United States and the play attracted enormous audiences wherever it toured. Originally called *Revelation*, the final title selected by Sherwood is an optimistic prophecy derived from a quotation from the last chapter of the *Book of Revelation*.80

The last month of the year was an extremely active one at the Hartman Theatre. Continuing his policy of diversified theatre fare, Robert Boda scheduled a musical, a murder mystery drama, a free-for-all vaudeville revue, and the ever popular *Tobacco Road*. All but one played to capacity. Beginning the month was the Cole Porter musical comedy, *DuBarry Was A Lady*. Starring the irrepressible
Bert Lahr, the production that ran fifty weeks on Broadway drew exceptionally well in Columbus during its December 9, 10, and 11 run. A successful melodrama followed the Porter musical. "Bravura Performance makes Ladies In Retirement exceptionally Good Entertainment,"81 was the way Sam Wilson capsuled his opinion of the Theatre Guild's third produc-
tion. Starring Flora Robson and written by Edward Percy and Reginald Denham, who based their story on an old French murder mystery, the piece won considerable success for the collaborators, particularly for Mr. Denham, the director.82 Unfortunately for the Hartman box-office, the play was only moderately successful during its December 12, 13, and 14 engagement. Next on Robert Bodah's schedule was a famous farcical revue. Advance publicity described Hellzapoppin as a "streamlined revue designed for laughing"83 and laugh the capacity Hartman audience did when this wild farcical show opened in Columbus on December 16. Sam Wilson des-
cribed the scene:

Hellzapoppin opened at the Hartman last night and proved to be all its reputation had promised. Players run shrieking up and down the aisles, climb over the paying guest, invade the boxes, pelt the audience with eggs and spray it with unbelievable perfume, pass out such items as live chickens, cakes of ice, wash tubs, ladders, whisky and so on, sweep the house clean of customers when the show is over.

In other words, Hellzapoppin is, on the road, substantially what it is in New York, utterly insane entertainment.

Olsen and Johnson are still on Broadway but with Billy House and Eddie Garr as happy substitutes
for them the revue gets by on real comic merit and not on reflected glory or mere reputation. Gags are wildly daffy and very funny. The trim Mr. Garr and the blimp-shaped Mr. House are admirable chief madmen. Costumes and settings are quite all they need to be.

If you want to forget the world and your Christmas shopping for a couple of hours, Hellzapoppin is your money's worth.84

This Olsen and Johnson-conceived production had earlier been one of the most successful in Broadway history, with the longest run of any Broadway play up to 1938.85 The new year, 1941, was ushered in by the annual visit of Columbus favorite, Tobacco Road. It opened on December 30 for its usual week's run. The show did phenomenally good business, and special New Year's Eve and New Year's Day presentations had to be scheduled to accommodate the vast number of theatregoers who bombarded the box-office from the moment the announcement of the play's booking was made. This engagement marked its eighth at the Hartman, which set a record for the number of times it had visited one theatre.86

The second half of the 1940-41 season was exceptionally successful for Robert Boda. From January through April the Hartman manager presented seven productions, all but one of which did capacity, or near capacity business at every performance. The first of these successes ran the week of January 6 and had a very close association with the Columbus area. College life has long offered many playwrights opportunity for humor or satire. Written
by two Ohio State University graduates, James Thurber and Elliott Nugent, The Male Animal, the best of the college plays and one with a strong theme, opened its transcontinental tour at the Hartman Theatre to a formally attired, extremely receptive first night audience. Sam Wilson wrote:

Take The Male Animal as satire on certain phases of academic life, or as witty and compassionate commentary on the irrationally rational behavior of baffled humanity, or again as eloquent defense of scholastic freedom of speech and action with antic trappings and you'll find the play remarkable good going in any instance. It is a many-sided piece and all sides are worthy of attention.

Elliott Nugent's serio-comic portrait of Professor Turner is something all expertness and mirth. Leon Ames is cast most felicitously as Joe Ferguson while Matt Briggs plays with tremendous gusto the red-hating trustee. Elizabeth Love is a charmingly distracted Ellen.

Ivan Simpson is excellent as Dean Damon. Robert Scott, as Michael Barnes, and Don DeFore, as Wally Myers give diverting performances.

Julie Stevens, Eulabelle Moore, Minna Phillips, Regina Wallace, Richard Beckhard and John James complete the cast.

To miss The Male Animal will be to miss one of the best comedies and one of the best companies of comedians seen in these parts in many a day.87

In response to a considerable ovation following the final curtain, Mr. Nugent, also the star of the play, made a brief speech during which he read a telegram from Thurber regretting his inability to be in Columbus at the time.88

Following the Thurber-Nugent college comedy, The Time of Your Life, the first play to ever be awarded both the Pulitzer Prize and the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award, arrived at the Hartman on January 13. Produced by
the Theatre Guild and Eddie Dowling, the William Saroyan comedy drew enthusiastic responses from the large crowds that saw it during its Hartman engagement. After having heard the author lecture on his ideas and theories of playwriting and theatre in general, Mr. Dowling said he wanted to produce anything Saroyan wrote, and obtained the right to produce this play before he had read it because he was so impressed with Saroyan's previous work, _My Heart's in the Highlands_. The company that played the Hartman was the original Broadway cast featuring Dowling, Julie Haydon, Edward Andrews, William Bendix, Fred Kelly (who replaced brother Gene on tour), Arthur Hunnicutt, and Henry Jones. It represented one of the most impressive casts ever to visit Columbus. At the end of the season when Saroyan was offered the Pulitzer Prize money, he rejected it stating that he felt _The Time of Your Life_ was no better than his other work and that it could be put to better use by giving it to struggling young authors.

Legitimate theatre took a brief respite from the Hartman during the week of February 17 to make way for the mystery revue _Sim-Sala-Bim_. Starring Dante (real name Harry A. Jansen), the show had had four world tours, a successful Broadway engagement, and played the Hartman before large audiences comprised mostly of children.

The various aspects of socialized medicine and medical morality are discussed and dissected in George
Bernard Shaw's comedy, *The Doctor's Dilemma*, which played to full houses during its February 24 through 26 run. The company, headed by Katharine Cornell and Raymond Massey, drew critical raves from the local reviewers as illustrated by Sam Wilson's opening comments:

Dazzling Exhibition of Actor's Art To Be Seen At The Hartman...Miss Cornell has assembled a brilliant company of players, the like of which has not been seen in these parts in many a long day.91

After the Cornell-Massey vehicle closed, the Hartman remained dark for five weeks before Alexander Woollcott opened *The Man Who Came To Dinner* for a week's run on the last day of March. This great farcical comedy by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart was the biggest hit of the 1941 spring season and "gave Columbus an uproarious, glimpse of Mr. Woollcott's mercurial personality and temperament."92 The star was well remembered from his previous Columbus appearance at the Maramor in April of 1939, but in 1941 he was being paid to be obnoxiously temperamental.

The sixth and final Theatre Guild sponsored show during its first Hartman season was Margaret Webster's production of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. Though it starred two of the greatest theatrical personalities of all time, Helen Hayes and Maurice Evans, *Dispatch* critic Wilson was unimpressed by the production:

For all its pictorial beauty, derived alike from the settings and costumes designed by Steward
Chaney and the adroit grouping and movement of characters devised by Margaret Webster, this *Twelfth Night* is a familiar revel lacking in wanted variety and contrast.

Little distinction is made between the above and below stairs humors of the piece. Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Maria are a shade too genteel for the kitchen. Olivia's gentle birth counts for naught once she falls in love.

With the comedy out of line it follows there is nothing to set off the poetic quality of the romantic elements of the play, a thing made more serious by the fact that generally prosaic delivery of lines holds some of Shakespeare's loveliest verse earthbound however much it tries to find wings. Charm and brittle gaiety the revival possesses. It lacks full bloodedness and urgent, inner enchantment.93

The play drew capacity houses, largely because the stars were two of the most popular ever to appear at the Hartman Theatre.

The one presentation of the spring that did not fill the theatre was Harold J. Rome's musical, *New Pines and Needles*. Though Tod Raper stated it was:

...head and shoulders over the first *Pines and Needles...*its material is better; the players are now more veteran; the quality of humor has changed from downright digs from the Left to the gentle poking of fun at the passing parade.94

Columbus playgoers have long memories and the unfortunate 1938 production had not been forgotten. They did not attend.

"One of the most poignant and sensitive portraits of Negro life and psychology presented by the Broadway musical theatre in the 1940's,"95 *Cabin in the Sky*, was the final event for the Hartman's last pre-war season. This
musical fantasy by Lynn Root, Vernon Duke, and John LaTouche
drew huge crowds when it appeared in Columbus on April 21,
22, and 23, and provided a fitting climax to one of Robert
Boda's finest seasons. Ethel Waters, Katherine Dunham, Rex
Ingram, Todd Duncan, and Dooley Wilson starred in the George
Balanchine-directed musical. The Jorg Fasting Ballet, the
Independent Players of Columbus' The Vagabond King, and the
Aquinas Athletic Association's two act comedy, Yard Birds,
also staged in the late spring, were the only amateur pro-
ductions during the 1940-41 season.

The pre-war years were important ones for the
Hartman Theatre. From the winter of 1938 to the spring of
1941, Robert Boda presented most of the American theatre's
finest work. During this period, one of the most produc-
tive in Broadway history, the major stars were willing to
tour the hinterlands with their famous plays, and the
audiences west of the Hudson River attended in vast numbers
to view these celebrities in the roles that had brought
them fame on the New York stage. Since Broadway too was
thriving again, following the near-disastrous depression,
the effects on the road were evident. The new prosperity
was definitely felt by Boda, who, since becoming the
Hartman's manager in 1938, had put together three and one-
half seasons of artistically and financially rewarding
theatre fare. By establishing the association with the
Theatre Guild in 1940, Boda culminated his theatre's complete recovery from the early thirties and further proved the Hartman one of the most important theatres outside New York. Though full-scale war was boiling in Europe and Asia and there were definite indications that the United States would soon be in the conflict, Robert Boda and his patrons had every reason to expect a continuation of their good theatrical fortune. Despite December 7, 1941, they were not to be disappointed.
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CHAPTER III

The War Years: 1941-1945

That in the nineteen forties drama was considered a potent weapon for communicating a way of life is quite obvious from the stress placed upon it by totalitarian propagandists. Long before the Nazis came to power, the Russians created a post-revolutionary drama which was highly regarded by the political strategists of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics which made provision for expanding theatre facilities, encouraged the formation of acting groups, and subsidized numerous actors, directors, and playwrights. It would be difficult to deny that patriotic Russian drama seemed to be effective and that through it the Communist way of life was communicated with considerable success. The Nazis followed suit when they came to power. All drama with even a few lines containing freedom of thought was banned. Only the classics, carefully expurgated, were permitted, and new plays were rigorously examined.

The plays of American dramatists during World War II were, for the most part, lamentably weak as propaganda, and few were successful box-office attractions. As Bernard Sobel stated in the special Censorship and Propaganda issue
of The Saturday Review of Literature on March 7, 1942:

...in spite of the fact that the American people are really hungry for timely propaganda and eager to give it a challenging welcome, the response of the dramatists has been incredibly weak.1

Though there was a dearth of successful propagandistic plays produced during the war years, there remain a few excellent examples of the type, notably Watch on the Rhine, There Shall Be No Night, and The Eve of St. Mark. But these were the only bright islands in a sea of mediocrity.

It is ironical, but true, that war, with its horror, destruction, and devastation also brings unparalleled prosperity to those nations escaping the actual holocaust. This was the case in the United States during the nineteen forties. Employment reached an all-time peak, and most Americans had surplus money to spend; thus all mediums of the entertainment world flourished, patronized by a citizenry intent upon escaping the calamitous conditions in the war-torn world. Theatre, motion pictures, dance halls, sports arenas, and night clubs all provided the much needed diversion sought by a war-weary populace. Wartime affluence and the desire for entertainment was reflected, as one might expect, at Robert Boda's Hartman Theatre, where three of the four war-era seasons must be considered successful. While not all of the eighty-three productions presented from September, 1941, through May of 1945 were significant
works of art, the Hartman did, generally speaking, house the best plays offered in the American theatre during this period.

The first half of the Hartman's 1941-42 season can be characterized as undistinguished. It was as if Boda anticipated the attack on Pearl Harbor and decided not to subject his patrons to heavy drama, for from October to February Boda's shows were either light comedies or musicals.

Opening on October 13, the Hartman's first war season production met with critical disapproval and was poorly attended in Columbus. Father's Day, a weak farce by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, provided longtime screen star Charles Butterworth with his first legitimate stage role. Boys and Girls Together, a successful musical revue by Sammy Fain, followed, starring Ed Wynn, played to fair houses for three days at the end of October. Then, playing to capacity audiences on November 3, 4, and 5, My Sister Eileen became the "first smash hit of the season." This slight but continuously entertaining character comedy based on the Ruth McKenney stories written by Jerome Chodorov and Joseph Fields, centers about the escapades and concerns of two girls from Columbus, Ohio who go to New York to make their debuts in literature and on the stage. The play's association with Columbus undoubtedly stimulated the advance sale, but this play was so popular everywhere that three companies were performing it simul-
taneously in New York, Chicago, and on the road. Miss McKenney drew much of her material from her experiences as a student at The Ohio State University and from her work as campus correspondent for The Columbus Evening Dispatch.

November 6, 1941, is a date that many Columbus theatre-goers have long remembered, for on that day the great Al Jolson appeared at the Hartman in the Burton Lane musical, Hold On to Your Hats. This play marked Jolson's return to the stage after almost a decade, and although he was suffering through one of the lowest periods in his illustrious career, he nearly filled the Hartman, and in 1941, as he had done years earlier, "took complete command of his audience." The production marked Jolson's debut as an actor-manager, and it represented also a pecuniary investment on his part of $100,000. Though Hold On to Your Hats was a successful venture, receiving critical praise in New York where it ran for a year, this musical was Jolson's last appearance on Broadway.

The first Theatre Guild subscription play and the last dramatic presentation in peace-time Columbus, The Rivals, followed Jolson to open on November 24. The classic comedy starring Walter Hampden, Mary Boland, and Bobby Clark, drew favorable notices and sizeable crowds for all performances. The day before Pearl Harbor was attacked the Hartman presented Dansation, a dance revue featuring
Veloz and Yolanda, which though it received good reviews, did not draw well.

The final two plays of 1941 presented at the Hartman played a total of 3,792 performances on Broadway. The first, *Separate Rooms*, by Alan Dinehart, was an old-time bedroom farce that ran for 612 performances in New York, but only attracted fair houses in Columbus when it opened on Christmas Day. *Tobacco Road* returned to close out 1941 and usher in the New Year, playing to the usual capacity houses during the week of December 21. The engagement was the ninth at the Hartman and marked star John Barton's fiftieth year on the stage.7

The second half of the 1941-42 season contained considerably more noteworthy theatre fare than had the fall and early winter months. Maurice Evans, Laura Hope Crews, Paul Lukas, Helen Hayes, Dennis King, Ethel Barrymore, and Katharine Cornell, all internationally renowned theatrical personalities, appeared at the Hartman between January and May. Leading the impressive array was Rose Franken's *Claudia*, a realistic and psychological study of human relationships selected by Burns Mantle as one of the ten best plays of 1940. The play was particularly popular with matinee audiences and played to full houses on the first three days of its run during the week of January 5. The last half week was also well attended, though not by
capacity crowds. It is interesting to note that producer John Golden had such an eye for details that he had sent set designer Donald Oenslager through Connecticut to learn the angle at which New England farm houses, doors and window sills and frames sag. The result of Oenslager's observations could be seen in the set, for Claudia's home had doors and windows that were not plumb.

Following Claudia came one of Columbus' favorite actresses, Cornelia Otis Skinner in Theatre. The comedy itself, by W. Somerset Maugham and Guy Bolton, was not favorably received by the local critics, but due to Miss Skinner's enormous popularity with the club women in central Ohio, the play drew large crowds. Her appearance in Theatre marked the first time Miss Skinner had appeared on Broadway in a new play with full supporting cast since she had become a star; with Theatre, which ran for two years in New York and on tour, she temporarily forsook her successful monodramas to play with a complete cast. Continuing the comic trend of the 1941-42 season, Robert Boda's next presentation was Blithe Spirit. This Noel Coward piece featured Dennis King, Anabella, who made her stage debut in this production, and Estelle Winwood in its cast when it showed to nearly full houses on February 5, 6, and 7.

With the outbreak of war in Europe American dramatists increased their efforts to denounce Nazism both at
home and abroad. Yet, as previously stated, few of these plays rose above mediocrity and few, if any, were able to compete with the dramatic sweep of actual world events.

One of the early black and white propaganda plays that enjoyed some measure of success was Maxwell Anderson's *Candle in the Wind*. Presented by the Theatre Guild and The Playwrights' Company, the drama became the first anti-Nazi play to be produced at the Hartman after the United States entered the war. Largely because of its star, Helen Hayes, and its timely content, this theatrical event was well attended during its four-performance engagement in Columbus. Although Katharine Cornell was a star of the first magnitude, she was by no means an automatic draw with the Hartman's theatregoers. This fact was well illustrated during the engagement of Henri Bernstein's drama, *Rose Burke*, a play that met both with apathy at the box-office and with critical disfavor. Sam Wilson stated:

*Neither first rate Bernstein nor an ideal starring vehicle for Miss Cornell, Rose Burke is a mechanically contrived, very slight fable ...The play is one of much dialog and little action.*

The booking was the most disastrous, artistically and financially, of the season.

Since terror and laughter are closely allied emotionally, it is not surprising that many Broadway playwrights have often exaggerated the melodramatic and the
macabre for humorous purposes. Though plays of this type had been popular for several generations, the height of the comic-macabre was not reached until Joseph Kesselring's *Arsenic and Old Lace* was produced in 1941. This comedy, the first play produced by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse, enjoyed tremendously enthusiastic receptions from the capacity audiences who saw it at the Hartman on March 19, 20, and 21. In his review Sam Wilson described the scene: "On Thursday night a capacity audience fairly howled down the Hartman."

Though the comedy itself was a clear success, critic Wilson expressed some negative opinions about the Hartman production:

In the instance of *Arsenic and Old Lace* as it is presented at the Hartman, the play is definitely the thing for the performance is very uneven... Better coordination and smoother blending sharply contrasting and even antipathetic styles of acting might have occupied a shade more of Director Bretaigne Windust's time when he was reading the road company.

In spite of this negative criticism, Laura Hope Crews, Effie Shannon, and Eric Von Stroheim provided Hartman patrons with the comedic highlight of the entire season.

For several years during the thirties Ethel Barrymore had experienced some degree of difficulty with her career, and during that period her Hartman appearances failed to attract audiences commensurate with her talent. All this changed, however, with Miss Barrymore's appearance in Emlyn Williams' best play, *The Corn Is Green*. Produced
by Harman Shumlin, the drama ran for 475 performances on Broadway, establishing a new record for a New York engagement for Miss Barrymore and winning the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for the best foreign play of 1941. The March 23, 24, and 25 Hartman engagement played to full houses and was judged by Sam Wilson the artistic pinnacle of the year:

Ethel Barrymore has achieved one of the most notable successes of her career...The Corn Is Green is one of the things for which the present season will be longest remembered.14

The Williams' drama marked a definite turning point in Miss Barrymore's career. From her appearance in this role until her death she enjoyed many of her greatest successes, especially in the motion picture field.

The most successful of the anti-Nazi, pro-democratic dramas produced during the war years was Lillian Hellman's melodramatic Watch On The Rhine. With Paul Lukas, Lucille Watson, Mady Christians, and Ann Blythe, the drama that won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award as the best American play of 1941 played before capacity audiences at the Hartman on April 9, 10, and 11 and was exceedingly well received. Mr. Lukas was voted the best actor of the year by Variety, and won also a similar honor from the Drama League. Watch On The Rhine was the epitome of anti-Fascist plays produced during the early forties.
With the season rapidly coming to a close, Robert Boda ended a successful year with Margaret Webster's revival of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. This production broke all existing records for the run of the play as well as for attendance when it ran 131 performances on Broadway. Thus, because of its phenomenal New York success and the popularity enjoyed locally by its stars, Maurice Evans and Judith Anderson, the advance sale at the Hartman was tremendous, with lines forming at the box-office each day after the play's forthcoming arrival was announced; the house was filled for every performance. The revival found favor with critic Wilson when he wrote: "The production may be commended for the theatrical excitement, the soaring beauty and the moments of overwhelming horror that it brings to its audience." Unfortunately, not all the Hartman playgoers exhibited acceptable theatrical manners during the opening night's performance. A few in the gallery amused themselves by rolling pop bottles about the floor during the presentation, and the balcony was excessively noisy. This production of *Macbeth* could be said to have had its origin at the Hartman Theatre. In Columbus the previous year with *Twelfth Night*, Mr. Evans had been attempting to decide in which play to appear for his next production. It was Robert Boda who suggested to Evans that *Macbeth* would be a suitable choice—another example of Boda's theatrical intuition—pointing out to him the success of his *Hamlet*, both in New York and
on the road. The actor agreed, and when the Twelfth Night tour ended he began to prepare Macbeth.19

Several amateur productions were presented during the spring season. My Maryland, produced by the Independent Players; the Aquinas Athletic Association’s revue, Gold in the Hills; the Jorg Fasting Ballet; and the Mary Van Gilden spring revue entitled, La Danse, made up the schedule. One of the Hartman’s rare summer events occurred on August 27 when the motion picture, Birth of a Baby played a six-day engagement to large crowds.

Every Hartman season discussed to this point in this study had been an unqualified success. Robert Boda had skillfully brought a renewed prosperity to the Columbus theatre following the near-disastrous early thirties. He had further, formed an alliance with the influential Theatre Guild that strengthened the Hartman’s position as an important road theatre, and he had just completed a relatively satisfying season that had continued successfully despite the outbreak of a major war. This series of notable accomplishments adequately demonstrated Boda’s skill as a road theatre manager.

Unfortunately, prosperity and success, especially in the theatre business, can vanish as quickly as they appear, and the 1942-43 Hartman season was disastrous for Robert Boda. The first dismal season of the Boda era was
marked by an alarming lack of box-office activity, the failure of a local stock company, and a dearth of significant plays and stars.

Boda's ill-fated season began somewhat earlier than usual, on September 17 with John Steinbeck's anti-war drama, *The Moon Is Down*. Despite the popularity of both Mr. Steinbeck and the play's star, Conrad Nagel, the work did not attract good houses in Columbus and received only fair critical notices. On September 30 word was announced that J. B. Bentley, well-known middle west producer, had formed the Hartman Players, a winter stock company, and that the legitimate season was going to be continuous at the Hartman during the fall of 1942. The plan was to have the newly organized Bentley-Hartman Company play continuously at the theatre except on those dates assigned to professional road companies. The plays were to open on Monday nights and have seven evening performances per week with matinees on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays. The Sunday shows were designed especially for defense workers, unable to attend the Hartman at other times. 20 A company of wide repertory experience was assembled by Mr. Bentley. The personnel included Robert Perry, Helene Ambrose, Peggy Wynn, Alfred Porter, Fred Sullivan, Jean Dixon, and several others. Though the Hartman Players presented two productions, *No More Ladies*, the week of October 12, and *George Washington Slept Here*, the following week, to favorable reviews, it
was announced on October 26, 1942, that Mr. Bentley would have to abandon the proposed stock operation. There was no statement concerning the closing from Mr. Bentley or Boda, but *The Columbus Evening Dispatch* said that in spite of slowly building box-office response, the venture had been not immediately profitable enough to encourage holding the company together for an inactive week while two road shows occupied the Hartman stage. The J. B. Bentley Company was the first attempt to form a local stock company at the Hartman since the theatre housed a successful year-around operation during the late nineteen twenties.

Following the collapse of the Bentley-Hartman Players Boda booked three popular plays into his theatre. The first of these, Patrick Hamilton's *Angel Street*, was presented on October 26, 27, and 28. This melodrama is best remembered because it was voted the best directed play of 1941-42 by the New York drama critics. Shepard Traube, the director, had gained his fame in Hollywood, but was relatively unknown in New York prior to *Angel Street*'s 300-performance Broadway run.

Except for topical references World War II left only a superficial mark on American musical comedy. The theme was obviously too grim for the purpose of escapist entertainment. Moved perhaps by the scarcity of young men of military age, George Abbott turned to prep school
for the subject of one of his war-time musicals, *Best Foot Forward*. Written by Cecil Holm, with music by Hugh Martin and Ralph Blane, the show offered pleasant, but not especially novel entertainment when it played the Hartman on the final three days of October. The colorful speech and mannerisms of the Pennsylvania Dutch provided the main attraction of the pleasant, if inconsequential comedy, *Papa Is All*. The Patterson Greene piece was first discovered when scouts from the Theatre Guild saw it produced at the Paper Mill Playhouse during the summer of 1940 and recommended it to Guild executives Lawrence Langer and Theresa Helburn. The 1942 road production, which starred Jessie Royce Landis and Robert Keith, was the first show of the year on the Theatre Guild subscription series and was viewed by small audiences which included Governor John W. Bricker and Congressman John M. Vorys. A comparison between this play and earlier worthwhile Guild presentations, such as *The Philadelphia Story*, *The Time Of Your Life*, and *Twelfth Night*, illustrates the dismal state of the second wartime season at the Hartman Theatre.

Even a return engagement of the previously popular *Watch On The Rhine* failed to stir Columbus playgoers to spend an evening at the theatre. During its second visit, Lucille Watson was absent from the cast on opening night, and her role of Fanny Farrelly was played by her understudy,
Zamah Cunningham, who "succeeded in realizing to the fullest extent the possibilities of the irrepressible Washington matron." It was unfortunate so few were there to witness her theatrical triumph.

_Spring Again,_ the final presentation of 1942, marked Grace George's return to light comedy after having starred in somber dramatic productions such as _Kind Lady_ and _The Circle_. It also marked co-star C. Aubrey Smith's first stage appearance after thirteen years of movie making, as well as his fiftieth anniversary in the theatre. These two theatrical notables had appeared together twice previously, but it was thirty-two years before producer-director Guthrie McClintic re-united them in the Isabel Leighton, Bertram Block comedy for the 1941 Broadway season. Miss George's husband, William A. Brady, a foremost theatrical manager operated his famous Playhouse following World War I, and there Mr. McClintic, employed as the stage manager when she was performing in repertory, had first worked with Miss George. Though Miss George and Smith drew excellent critical comments, the play, like the others preceding it that fall, failed to draw a sizeable audience and must be recorded a financial failure. Of little note at the time was the appearance of a minor actress, Jayne Cotter, who later changed her name to Meadows and achieved stardom in the medium of television.
With the closing of *Spring Again* on December 5, the Hartman ended the first half of its mediocre season. In a column dated December 27, 1942, Sam Wilson tried to rationalize the misfortune that struck Robert Boda's theatre:

The town has let the Hartman Theatre down rather badly this season. None of the six attractions brought to Columbus between September and early December fared well at the box-office and all save *Spring Again* were here before gasoline rationing went into effect. Elsewhere in the state business has been noticeably better for touring attractions.

It may be argued that Columbus is a town that buys stars rather than plays--why else should *Angel Street* and *Best Foot Forward* have come and gone with scarcely a note of recognition from the public? But, then, *Papa Is All* and *Spring Again*, with stars, fared little better. The town's mood is for more serious fare? *The Moon Is Down* and *Watch On The Rhine*, the latter well worth seeing, didn't draw well either.

Operating costs of a theatre these days are almost prohibitively high and lacking support there's no incentive, on the part of the managers, to take risks. If the Hartman is "dark" for the holidays and has no announcement to make for the immediate future, a part of the blame can be laid squarely on the public.26

Whether public apathy or little worthwhile theatre fare was the cause of the misfortune, the Hartman did indeed stay dark for over two months. Not until February 14 were the lights at last turned on again. On that Sunday, Boris Karloff and Josephine Hull opened in a return engagement of *Arsenic and Old Lace*. Though it had been a long time coming, on that date the Hartman had its first hit of the season. The production, and particularly Mr. Karloff, impressed critic Wilson far more favorably than
the company that played Columbus earlier:

Mr. Karloff achieves an incomparably sinister and fey portrait of the homicidal Jonathan Brewster... *Arsenic and Old Lace* is being played all the way, not just in part, up to the hilt at the Hartman this year.27

*Arsenic and Old Lace* was the only presentation, aside from *Tobacco Road*, to do capacity business during the 1942-43 season.

The preadolescent received both recognition and glorification in the Jerome Chodorov, Joseph Fields comedy *Junior Miss*, which played the Hartman the week of March 13. Based on the stories of Sally Benson, this play was the season’s third Theatre Guild presentation and drew well for its week’s run.

When *Tobacco Road* returned for its tenth Hartman visit on March 14, no local drama critic would review it, so Robert Boda assigned his publicist, Virginia Trannett, the task.28 Rather a unique situation to have one of the theatre’s employees reviewing a Hartman presentation. The newspaper advertisements proclaimed the work "Telling A Story The Screen Version Dared Not Tell," and to be "The Holder of More World’s Records Than Any Play in All Theatrical History."29 These dramatic advertisements must have been successful because, as always, *Tobacco Road* played to capacity audiences throughout the week.

Obviously desperate for something to help fill out its series of six subscription plays, the Theatre Guild has sent the Hartman *Cry Havoc*. 
The play scarcely seems destined to quiet the open grumblings of Guild patrons at the fare the once discriminating producing organization has served up on the road this year. It is not a good play.

wrote Sam Wilson in the opening lines of his review, and he clearly voiced the disenchantment felt by Hartman theatre-goers not only with Cry Havoc and the Theatre Guild but with the entire ill-fated Hartman season. The Allan Kenward melodrama seemed to epitomize all the unfortunate productions that had been presented to the Columbus patrons. Needless to say, the play attracted only small audiences, yet of some note was the appearance in Cry Havoc of Jacqueline Susann who in the nineteen sixties became a best-selling novelist.

Though the year had been disappointing to all, the final play of the season, The Eve of St. Mark, enabled Boda to end 1941-42 activities with an artistic success. The Maxwell Anderson anti-war drama was said by New York critics to be "one of the finest dramas to emanate from America's participation in World War II," and it "revealed how far the dramatists had traveled from their erstwhile detachment and cynicism to a positive stand on war and patriotism." The title of the work refers to a date, April 25, being St. Mark's Day, and to the twenty-fourth, as the eve of that feast. In his preparation and research for the play, Anderson had the guidance of Private Marion Hargrove.
The fifth Theatre Guild presentation received good notices from all local critics. As Sam Wilson wrote:

From the standpoint of performance, The Eve of St. Mark, is one of the best things of the winter. John Dall catches the spirit and projects the quality of Quizz West, unpretentious hero of the piece.33

Noticeable among the cast members was Helene Ambrose, leading lady with the short-lived Hartman Players of the previous autumn.

So the unrewarding 1942-43 season closed. Both in quality and quantity the Hartman's year had been the leanest seven months since the depression. It was a season best forgotten. Of the eleven shows presented, only two had filled the house and only one other had done respectable business. It was a season marked by three outright anti-war plays, none financially successful; only one musical; several nondescript dramas; three unimportant comedies; and the failure of a local stock company.

The amateurs occupied the Hartman stage in April and May. Two military personnel productions, Charley’s Aunt and All Clear, were presented by the 97th Players from Lockbourne Army Air Force Base and the First Troop Carrier Command, respectively. The Gateway Players, one of the first of the new local theatrical groups to originate in the forties, presented the Merry Widow, and the Aquinas Athletic Association produced Hearts and Gowns for their annual spring event.
The 1943-44 season was not notably more successful than the preceding year. It was a season that featured revivals, return engagements of successful shows, and several farces, but only two new significant dramatic works.

From September 24 through October 3 the Hartman showed the motion picture, Ravaged Earth. This film, which depicts the atrocities during the Japanese invasion of China in 1937, was sponsored by the Franklin County Council of the American Legion and was well attended. The theatrical season got underway on October 7, when Ethel Barrymore returned to triumph again before large audiences in The Corn Is Green. Then Philip Barry's, Without Love, followed as the first Theatre Guild presentation and also the initial farce of the farce-laden season. Constance Bennett and Steve Cochran played the piece before near-capacity houses and good critical notices. The season's only anti-war play, Tomorrow the World, appeared next. The James Gow, Arnaud d'Usseau drama shifted the anti-war theme to the American scene and wielded considerable influence over its audiences in solidifying opinion against all forms of fascism. An audience of respectable proportions attended the production at the Hartman Theatre. Following a return engagement of Junior Miss, which filled the balcony and gallery, but failed to attract many customers into the higher priced orchestra seats, two successful revivals held the Hartman stage for the first ten days of November. Ann Nichols'
theatrical phenomenon, *Abie's Irish Rose* was the first of these. This comedy, which ran 2,327 times in New York, was favorably received by Columbus critics and audiences.

Starring radio favorite, Everett Marshall, Sigmund Romberg's durable operetta, *The Student Prince*, drew good-sized houses and critical acclaim during its Hartman stand on November 8, 9, and 10. Then followed the second Theatre Guild show of the 1943-44 season, Elena Miramova and Eugenie Leontovich's comedy, *Dark Eyes*. The production appealed to limited audiences, the majority of whom were Guild patrons, despite Sam Wilson's glowing remarks:

> For a couple of hours of right solid laughter, *Dark Eyes* may be highly recommended. And it is played up to the hilt for all the comedy that's in it by an exceptionally fine cast.35

The financial and artistic triumph of the year played on November 25, 26, and 27, when the great 1935 folk opera, *Porgy and Bess* finally reached Columbus. The George Gershwin, DuBose Heyward masterpiece played to capacity audiences for all four performances, with an estimated 2,000 turned away each day.36 During the opening night, Todd Duncan, suffering from laryngitis, had to retire from the performance after the first act, and Porgy was then played and sung by Edward Mattews. Mr. Mattews favorably impressed critic Wilson, as did the entire production: "In its present revival every production value it needs has been accorded it and the result is a memorable evening in the
theatre." Unquestionably, *Porgy and Bess* provided the Hartman with its most spectacularly successful event in two seasons.

Another capacity house greeted Ruth Draper who gave a one-performance program of thirty-six solo dramas for the benefit of Children's Hospital on Sunday, November 28. *The Army Play by Play* followed Miss Draper's successful one night stand. This was a series of variety acts and five one-act plays that originated with a playwriting contest for men in uniform and was produced by John Golden. After the winning plays had been selected, the army decided they deserved public presentation, hence a six weeks run on Broadway and a limited road tour. The revue featured a cast of eighty soldiers and an army orchestra of twenty-five. All the proceeds went to the Army Emergency Relief Fund. Corporal Kurt Kaszner and Private Jules Munshin topped the soldier cast that was enthusiastically received by the large audiences and the local critics when it ran from November 29 through the first of December.

The piece that Barrett H. Clark described as "a fast-moving farce satire," Joseph Field's, *The Doughgirls*, was the last event on the Hartman's 1943 agenda. This broad and bawdy farce was successful in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, but as performed in Columbus, it was a disaster. Sam Wilson said:
This play is no great shakes... The whole thing was served up with small regard for style or taste. The Doughgirls emerged as a badly told, smutty story misleading of as a sophisticated naughty narrative. Columbus playgoers evidently heeded these words, for the play drew sparse crowds.

The first six shows presented at the Hartman in 1944 rewarded Robert Boda in a manner all theatre managers appreciate—each production played to capacity audiences. Porgy and Bess opened a return engagement on January 6, and the comedy sensation of the year, Life With Father, followed on the week of the ninth. This long-running American theatre classic by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse took five years to reach the Hartman, but it had been worth waiting for, and when it finally arrived, overflow crowds attended every performance. Harry Bannister and June Walker co-starred.

Announcements reading:

Finis...Final and Farewell Curtain...The Race Is Run, Translated Into American Terms Last Time! ...Record Breaking Play of All Time Calls It A Day,41

heralded the arrival of yet another engagement of Tobacco Road. These advertisements were somewhat premature however, for not only did the play run the week of January 16, for what was called its "final engagement," it also held forth from March 5 through the 12th for its "positively final run."42 Both engagements drew full houses. A re-
vival of the 1921 Sigmund Romberg, Dorothy Donnelly operetta, Blossom Time, previously seen at the Hartman in 1938, played before capacity audiences during its end of January, first of February run.

The critical acclaim accorded to Sidney Kingsley's The Patriots, emphasizes the paucity of outstanding American plays about our national heroes. This historical piece, based on the life of Thomas Jefferson during his most critical decade, was the first play produced by The Playwright's Company which was not written by a member of that organization, and was the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award winner as the best American play of 1943. The drama which opened on February 7 and was the third Theatre Guild presentation, was the dramatic highlight of the Hartman season, and word quickly passed that it was the event for all Hartman theatre goers to see. Walter Hampden, Julie Haydon, Cecil Humphreys, and Sonya Stokowski headed the cast which found favor with The Ohio State Journal critic, Mary V. McGavran:

With The Patriots, Sidney Kingsley and The Playwrights' Company have brought to the articulate theatre a drama excellent in construction and superb in its presentation.43

Playwright Kingsley was inspired to write this drama after seeing the statue of Jefferson dedicated in Washington, D. C.44
The remainder of the 1943-44 season was comprised of four farces and the return of *Blossom Time*. Phoebe and Henry Ephron's farce, *Three Is a Family* drew many laughs from its large audiences and good reviews from the critics when it played on March 23, 24, and 25. The phenomenally successful *Good Nite Ladies*, formerly *Ladies Nite in a Turkish Bath*, attracted sizeable crowds, and critical scorn during the week of April 16. The Avery Hopwood work, which played two years in Chicago to standing room only, appealed to the same audiences that filled the Hartman on the numerous occasions when *Tobacco Road* had come to town. On April 13 the adolescents were once again featured at the Hartman in F. Hugh Herbert's *Kiss and Tell*. The George Abbott-directed work was enthusiastically received by both audience and critics alike. The season closed with the return engagements of two favorites, *Blossom Time*, this time starring Earl Covert, and *Abie's Irish Rose*. They played to fair-sized audiences when they ran consecutively from May 11 through the 17. Amateur productions for the season were confined to the Gateway Players' *Mlle Modiste*, *The Columbus Firemen's Minstrel Show*, and the Independent Players' presentation of *The Vagabond King*.

It became quite obvious after observing the fare presented at the Hartman during 1943-44, that the war had indeed exerted considerable influence over the kinds of theatrical productions sent on tour. Of the twenty plays
offered to Columbus patrons, only three can be classified as serious drama. The remainder of the season featured farces and musicals, most of which were revivals from the past.

Unlike the pre-war years during which most of the major theatrical personalities were seen on the Hartman stage, the 1943-44 season marked a sharp decline in the number of name stars traveling the road circuit. It is true that Ethel Barrymore, Walter Hampden, Constance Bennett, and Julie Haydon visited the Hartman during the season, but these stars were vastly outnumbered by the multitude of unknowns featured that season. Major personalities have never returned to the road in their pre-war numbers.

The final wartime theatrical season at the Hartman showed a marked improvement over the two previous disappointing years. Two touring stock companies, several important dramatic works, and the tremendous musical success, Oklahoma, were the artistic highlights of the 1944-45 season. Though pianist Alec Templeton presented a concert on September 24, the theatrical year was officially opened on October 9 when veteran movie character actress Zasu Pitts appeared in George Batson's melodramatic farce, Ramshackle Inn. A large audience came to see Miss Pitts play the first stage role of her long and successful career.

October 23 brought the Reginald Denham, Mary Orr farce, Wallflower, to the Hartman. Produced by society band leader, Meyer Davis, the piece drew both good houses
and favorable comments from the critics. Sonya Stokowski played the principal role. Next, capacity audiences applauded Carl Benton Reid's "Father" during a return engagement of *Life With Father*, which opened for a four-day run on Sunday, November 5. During the intermissions of the Tuesday evening performance, the returns of the 1944 Presidential election were announced.

Anton Chekov's *The Cherry Orchard*, starring Eva Le Gallienne and Joseph Schildkraut, was the first Theatre Guild show of the season and received outstanding praise from Sam Wilson:

> It must be said that the close rapport established between players and audience, the clarity and point imparted to the ever pertinent Chekov fable made for a memorably engrossing evening in the theatre.  

Evidently the play also found considerable favor with the Hartman patrons. Mr. Wilson wrote:

> At the play's end the capacity audience applauded the company to the echo. More significant was the tribute of complete, emotion-charged silence accorded play and players at practically all the right moments in the performance. I can't recall as much eloquent stillness having settled down over the Hartman at any other time in the last decade.

This tour coincided with the fortieth anniversary of the play which had had its premiere in 1904 at the Moscow Art Theatre. *The Cherry Orchard* had also been performed during World War II for Russian soldiers at the front lines with Chekov's widow, Olga Knipper, a former leading Soviet actress, appearing in it.
Featuring the famous acting trio of Paul Robeson, Uta Hagen, and Jose Ferrer, Margaret Webster's revival of Othello proved to be the highlight of the Hartman's fall season. Excellent notices and capacity audiences greeted the Shakespeare troupe when it arrived on November 16. Sam Wilson stated:

As a Webster production, Othello bears the hallmark of excellence...This production adds up to the most noteworthy revival of Othello we're likely to see for years to come.49

The train that carried the company to Columbus was three hours late from Indianapolis and delayed the first curtain on opening night "well past the advertised starting time."50 This production of Othello, the second presentation on the Theatre Guild's list, broke all longevity records for any Shakespeare play ever presented on Broadway, and also enjoyed enormous success on its road tour.51

Olsen and Johnson's vaudeville revue, Sona O'Run, following Othello, provided Hartman theatregoers with a complete change of pace when it opened a week's run on Sunday, November 19. This production, featuring a cast of 120 performers and costing $175,000 to produce, was the most expensive musical produced by the Shuberts since the pre-depression days,52 and succeeded in drawing large crowds to the Hartman during its Columbus visit.

Following the vaudevillians, Katherine Dunham and a company of fifty dancers and musicians presented a show
called *Tropical Revue*. Miss Dunham based her dances on studies she had made in the West Indies as an anthropologist while doing research for her Master's degree. Backed by a Rosenwald Fellowship, Miss Dunham traveled through the bush countries of the West Indies, took part in voodoo rites in Haiti, and uncovered rituals in the Caribbean jungles. Her findings are recorded in a book on the Maroon people of Jamaica.53 This Sol Hurok presentation did not draw well, but was warmly received by the small Hartman audiences and the critics who attended on November 26, 27, and 28.

An insubstantial farce written by and starring Ruth Gordon was the next event on the Hartman winter agenda. *Over Twenty-One* came into the Hartman on the last day of November and failed to stimulate much interest among Columbus playgoers. Business was poor and the piece is best remembered as being the first new play to have been released to the armed forces without royalties.54

Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca* had been attracting near capacity audiences everywhere it had played when Robert Boda scheduled it for his theatre on the third anniversary of Pearl Harbor. Unfortunately for Boda, this string of prosperous engagements ended in Columbus, for the work did not attract more than token audiences during the Hartman visit on its pre-Broadway tryout tour. Though Sam Wilson called the play "contrived melodrama," he also found "the present treatment of the story slick enough to be acceptable."55
and had high praise for Bramwell Fletcher, Florence Reed, and Diana Barrymore who headed the cast. Mr. Wilson’s review, however, did not help to increase the attendance, which was slight. *Rebecca* has had a remarkable career. First appearing as a novel and gaining immediate success in 1944 it was ranked as the fourth most popular literary work, in the number of copies printed, up to that time. After *Rebecca* had been made into a highly successful motion picture, the author decided her story would make a good play, so she dramatized it. Though *Rebecca* ran for two years in London before Victor Payne-Jennings arranged for its American presentation and opened it in the spring of 1944 in Cincinnati, its European success was not repeated on Broadway.

Following the flurry of activity during the fall and early winter, the theatrical season slackened around the holidays. The only shows presented were revivals of two popular operettas, *The Merry Widow* and *The Student Prince*, which played in mid-December and mid-January, respectively. Both Shubert-produced shows drew large audiences and favorable reviews. Revivals were popular and plentiful during the winter of 1945, and the Hartman’s next presentation continued the wartime trend. On January 18 Francis Lederer, Lyle Talbot, Jane Darwell, and H. B. Warner opened before a sparse audience and to critical disapproval, in Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*. Sam Wilson commented:
Some revision of text, considerable variation of traditional business and a Hollywood cast were intended to freshen up a classic. Good intention has not come to complete realization. Ibsen's particular application of the central theme needs no brush in the way of contrived production or performance to make its point.57

This play was the first production of the American Theatre League founded by James B. Cassidy. Response was so unfavorable to this presentation that Cassidy never brought another work to the Hartman Theatre.

From Sunday, January 21, through the following Wednesday, the R. H. Burnside Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Company occupied the Hartman stage. During its four-day run the company presented The Mikado, The Pirates of Penzance, Trial By Jury, and H.M.S. Pinafore. Though each production was praised by the Columbus critics, Gilbert and Sullivan was not popular with the Hartman clientele and the audiences were small. The Burnside Company, organized in 1941, had played in every major city in the United States and Canada, including two Broadway runs, but their 1945 engagement was their first appearance in Columbus,58 and because of the apathetic response of Columbus theatre-goers, it was also their last.

Often when playwrights have dealt with the historical past, their plays have contained specific applications to the problems of the present. This practice may be seen in the popular drama Harriet, a play by Florence Ryerson and Colin Clements about Harriet Beecher Stowe that carries a
modern social message. Helen Hayes, who created her most memorable role portraying Queen Victoria, triumphed again impersonating the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Sam Wilson wrote:

> By virtue of a brilliant performance by Helen Hayes, the playing in kind of an excellent supporting company and an exceedingly handsome Gilbert Miller production, *Harriet* is, while one is under Miss Hayes' spell, effective diversion and reasonably palatable polemic. 59

Miss Hayes’ appearance brought some of the pre-war excitement back to the Hartman, and capacity houses were on hand to enjoy each of her four performances, applauding the return of one of the American theatre's most famous stars.

There were two other events for the Hartman during February. The first was the one-performance engagement of dancers Grace and Kurt Graff and folk singer John Jacob Niles. The show was sponsored by the Central Unit of the Columbus Philharmonic Women's Committee to benefit the orchestra, and played to a large audience on the twenty-fifth. On the final day of the month *Good Nite Ladies* paid a return four-day visit to the Hartman and was rewarded by near capacity audiences.

The Hartman's early spring season was devoted to the musical theatre. From March 5 through April 4, Robert Boda presented two operetta classics, a Broadway hit, and a revue featuring military personnel. *Rosalinda*, a modern version of *Die Fledermaus*, initiated the musical parade and received
an excellent notice from critic Wilson:

*Rosalinda* Proves Season Highlight...Possibly not since *The Great Waltz* has the Hartman played host to a comic opera production as beautiful and as elaborate as that of *Rosalinda*. It is a feast for ears and eyes that shouldn't be missed.60

Despite these glowing tributes and despite the fact that the show had been created by some of the theatre's most distinguished artists--Max Reinhardt, George Balanchine, and Oliver Smith--it failed to appeal to Hartman patrons and business for Boda was poor. This unfortunate circumstance occurred, perhaps, because most Hartman patrons were anticipating the Theatre Guild's third show, *Oklahoma*.

The musical play became conscious of the American scene during the late nineteen twenties. *Show Boat* led the way, but the most important influence in the musical play field came from the Rodgers and Hammerstein adaptation of Lynn Rigg's *Green Grow the Lilacs*--the spectacular *Oklahoma*. The reception accorded this work at the Hartman was almost unbelievable. More than 30,000 people filed mail orders to Boda and his staff for the 13,200 seats that were available for *Oklahoma*.61 James Alexander, Betty June Watson, Dorothea MacFarland, Walter Donahue, and David Burns starred in the road version of the 1943 Pulitzer Prize winning musical that drew marvelous reviews and full houses when it finally reached the Hartman the week of March 12. Sam Wilson was moved to comment:
The reception accorded the Theatre Guild hit of hits indicated that to its first local audience all that had been said of the fabulous music show was bourne out in its performance by the national company.62

This show was the most successful production to appear at the Hartman during the war era. Business was so tremendous the production was returned six times during the next several years.

On March 27 and 28, Bastogne Speaks, a combined stage and radio show that was sent on tour by the Radio Production Unit, Fifth Service Command, was booked into the Hartman. The production featured six soldiers of the defense of Bastogne during the German push into Belgium and Luxembourg in December of 1944. The show was presented in Columbus by the Franklin County War Services Board as a salute to ten local industries engaged in producing critical war materials. The production received favorable comments and drew a crowd of approximately 2,000.63

April of 1945 was one of the busiest months in Hartman Theatre history. Two revivals, Blossom Time and Blithe Spirit, occupied the stage for the first seven days of the month. Earl Covert sang the lead in the operetta, and Reginald Denny was featured in Noel Coward's comedy. Next on Robert Boda's crowded schedule was Louis Calhern and Oscar Karlweis starring in the fourth Theatre Guild presentation, Jacobowsky and the Colonel. This comedy, adapted by S. N. Behrman drawn from an original play by
Franz Werfel, was directed by Elia Kazan and was well received by the small audiences it attracted April 9, 10, and 11. Sam Wilson said: "The comedy is made the occasion of lavish production and pyrotechnical performance by an exceptionally well chosen company of players."\textsuperscript{64} Jacobowsky and the Colonel was the only new show to be produced at the Hartman during April, a month dominated by revivals.

Following the appearance of magician Harry Blackstone on April 19, 20, and 21, Robert Boda brought in the San Carlo Opera Company for a three-day, five-show run on April 27. This was the world's largest permanent touring opera troupe. During the early years of the company's organization, Fortune Gallo, founder and director, presented opera at popular prices throughout the poorer sections of New York City. In 1938 Mr. Gallo inaugurated grand opera in Radio City Music Hall where in May of 1944, his seventh season in that theatre, his troupe played to 60,000 people in twelve days. An estimated 25,000,000 people had heard the San Carlo Opera Company by the time it reached the Hartman in 1945.\textsuperscript{65} The success of the company was achieved without subsidies or endowments of any kind, it depended entirely upon its patronage. Much of the success of the operation could be attributed to its policy of trying to satisfy popular audiences rather than those of the musical dilettantes. When opera in English appeared to be in demand, the company presented the opera in English.
When the music lovers stayed away from the English-sung productions, the company restored to the operas the language of the composers. The tour that played the Hartman in the spring of 1945 was the company's thirty-third successful transcontinental journey. Productions presented during the Columbus engagement included: Carmen, Faust, Aida, La Boheme, and Il Trovatore. All received good reviews from Sam Wilson: "The five performances of the past weekend were of a quality to make one want more." But, as in the case of R. H. Burnside's Gilbert and Sullivan Company, Hartman audiences failed to attend the San Carlo troupe and Boda never again booked the opera company into his theatre.

The last play of the month was Martin Vale's melodrama, The Two Mrs. Carrolls. European star, Elizabeth Bergner, made her second American appearance in this work that ran two years on Broadway, and provided Robert Boda with impressive financial, if not artistic, rewards. As usual, capacity audiences filled the Hartman to greet Mae West in Michael Todd's production of Catherine Was Great, the final presentation of the war years. Although the crowds that viewed this farce reacted favorably to the piece, the play drew extremely negative responses from the critics during its May 17, 18, and 19 run.

During the 1944-45 season amateurs occupied the Hartman stage on nine occasions. The most productive
organization was The Gateway Players who presented *The Desert Song*, *The Red Mill*, and *The Firefly*. In addition to these events the Firemen's Benevolent Association produced its annual fall *Minstrel* and the Independent Players returned after one season's absence with *The New Moon*. Other amateur activities included *Murder in a Nunnery* by the St. Mary College Players, The Grand Opera Club's *Rio Rita*, and two dance recitals by the Mary Van Gilder School of Dance and the Stella Becker Ballet. It is interesting to note that 1944-45 was the most active season at the Hartman for both professional and amateur productions during the period under study. During the final war season Boda played thirty-two traveling shows and rented the theatre for nine amateur presentations.

It is obvious from the many productions presented at the Hartman during the war era that gasoline rationing, limited railroad space, and restricted travel necessitated by wartime conditions did not curtail the number of shows on tour, but these wartime travel restrictions, coupled with increasing theatrical expenses, almost eliminated the elaborately set, extravagantly mounted musicals so prevalent on the road during the pre-war years. Broadway itself was suffering through a relatively unproductive period, so both to complete their seasons and to compensate for the lack of significant plays from that source, producers turned to revivals--primarily well-worn musicals and inexpensive
farces from the past. During the war years the decline of the road as an important theatrical force in America began: most of the theatre's most famous personalities refused to perform their Broadway roles west of the Hudson River. Although a few of the great names have continued to tour, the 1943-44 season must be noted as the theatrical year the stars deserted the road; an unfortunate situation that has continued for more than two decades. The unwillingness of the stars to tour has contributed more to the disintegration of the road as a vital aspect of the American theatre than any other single factor. Though there were numerous touring companies throughout the post-war years, few productions compared favorably with the road shows of the late thirties and early forties, and it was indeed an event of special interest when a road theatre could announce the appearance of a major personality.
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CHAPTER IV

The Post-War Years: 1945-1950

The Hartman’s first season of the post-war years brought few changes for manager Boda and the theatre’s patrons. Although there were several significant works on tour during the 1945-46 season (Hamlet, Antigone and the Tyrant, Carmen Jones), the theatrical schedule, by and large, was comprised of tawdry farces, melodramas of little note, and musical revivals. Hartman theatregoers were obliged to wait until 1946-47 for their first truly worthwhile season in several years. One particular change that began during the war era and evidenced in the mid-forties at the Hartman has continued to the present. The resultant prosperity of World War II enabled theatregoers to spend more money for tickets than ever before. Patrons who previously had been content with upper balcony or top gallery seats demanded orchestra reservations; consequently, the upper reaches of the Hartman began to be deserted, and the expensive sections enjoyed a new popularity. Since World War II, only on rare occasions when the Hartman has housed an extremely attractive play have the bleacher seats in the gallery been filled. Lower prices, student rates, and at
times, free admission have all failed to return an audience to the Hartman’s gallery. Most theatregoers yet insist on first-floor or first-balcony seats.

The disappointing trend of the early post-war road theatre is illustrated by Boda’s first three plays of the 1945-46 season. Norman Krasna’s farce, Dear Ruth, opened the new season on September 27, attracting large audiences. Ten Little Indians, the Agatha Christie melodrama which played a year on Broadway to capacity audiences, failed to duplicate that success in Columbus and played to only small houses when it opened at the Hartman the last day of September. Before the return of the popular operetta, The Student Prince, on October 22, 23, and 24, Blackstone, the magician, played a three-day engagement on October 4, 5, and 6. Because of the large crowds which this performer drew in the spring of 1945, all Saturday matinee seats were reserved and thus waiting in line prior to the performance was unnecessary. During Blackstone’s previous Hartman bookings the theatre had operated on a first-come, first-serve basis.

During the final three days of October, the Hartman housed Fortune Gallo’s presentation of Ballet Russe Highlights. Choreographed by Leonide Massine, also the premiere performer, this troupe of eight dancers met with the customary apathy accorded dance companies playing the
Hartman, and business was poor. Yet despite obvious lack of audience support it is to Robert Boda's credit that he continued to provide Columbus with the finest dancers available.

November and December were two of the Hartman's busiest post-war months. The first three days of November were devoted to Philip Barry's comedy, *Foolish Notion.* Tallulah Bankhead, Donald Cook, and James Emery, Miss Bankhead's former husband, starred in this piece, chosen by Burns Mantle as one of the ten best plays of 1944. Largely because of the popularity of Miss Bankhead and Cook (he had been a Columbus favorite since his Hartman Stock Company days in 1926-27), the Theatre Guild's initial presentation of 1945-46 played before near-capacity crowds and received favorable reviews from the critics.

One of the few opulently mounted and costumed musicals that toured following the war was booked into the Hartman on November 5, 6, and 7. Though *The Desert Song* had played Columbus many times, never had the operetta been so extravagantly set or produced with such a large cast. The west coast company that visited the Hartman in the fall of 1945 featured 115 members, including Walter Cassel, Dorothy Sandlin, and the Aida Broadbent Dancers. The Boris Aronson sets were so enormous that two seventy-foot baggage cars were used to accommodate them on the tour. The
Hartman was one of the few theatres to play *The Desert Song* before it settled in Chicago for an extended run.3

Contrary to closing notices announced the previous season, *Tobacco Road* once again played Columbus and as usual, attracted capacity audiences during the week of November 11. Author Jack Kirkland saw the Wednesday night performance which marked star John Barton's twelfth year in the role of Jeeter Lester. Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* which followed provided Hartman theatregoers with a change of pace when the Theatre Guild brought the play to Columbus on November 22, 23, and 24. Starring Henry Daniell, Jessie Royce Landis, and Florence Reed, the revival drew large audiences and excellent reviews. Sam Wilson commented:

> Beguiling settings and costumes, practicably fanciful direction, spirited, graceful playing and intelligent, intelligibly beautiful reading of lines by an unusually comely cast makes this revival of *The Winter's Tale* something that no one seeing it is likely soon to forget.4

No such success greeted Boda's next presentation. *Windy Hill* written by one-time silent screen heroine, Patsy Ruth Miller, proved to be the disaster of the season for both the Hartman manager and his patrons. The play which marked Ruth Chatterton’s debut as a producer, received a scathing review from critic Wilson:

> The subject matter of the play is trite to a degree. Situations are unmercifully forced. Lines are of pre-World War I finishing school brand of sophistication...Kay Francis isn't able to impart either sense or sensibility to her role thanks to the writing.5
Audience reaction was indicated by a prolonged silence following the final curtain, and only when, without any prompting from the audience, the curtain went up again there was belated applause. Mr. Wilson described it as:

...an expression of personal good will, the purpose of which seemed to say that members of the cast were not being held responsible for what had gone on in a play so obviously a refugee from the lower bracket of a double bill at the movies.6

The Hartman had not housed such an embarrassing travesty since John Barrymore's My Dear Children in April of 1939.

Moderate enthusiasm was evinced by the large opening night audience that viewed Dunnigan's Daughter on December 3. The Elia Kazan-directed, Theatre Guild production on its pre-Broadway tour found no favor though, with critic Earnest Cady: "S. N. Behrman's play goes in fits and starts and never really achieves unity in mood, tempo or theme."7 Dennis King, Virginia Gilmore, Arthur Franz, Ann Jackson, and Glenn Anders headed the cast of this unsuccessful work.

The Hasty Heart, listed by Burns Mantle as the best play of 1944-45, arrived at the Hartman on December 17. Written by John Patrick and produced by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse, the fourth Theatre Guild production did excellent business and drew a good review from Sam Wilson:

No Hartman audience this season has reacted more instantly or cordially to any play than the audience did on Monday night...The comedy touched quickly and alike the sensibilities and risibilities of the house in just the proportion with exactly the nicely gauged potency that makes for a satisfactory evening in the theatre.8

Robert Boda's first capacity audience of the season assembled on December 21 to see the premiere of the National Company's production of *Harvey*. Joe E. Brown and Marion Lorne starred in this Mary Chase comedy which won the Pulitzer Prize as the best American play of 1944. Sam Wilson described the Hartman premiere:

The company that producer Brock Pemberton aims to take the country gave its first performance anywhere here Friday night for a capacity audience that found the comedy as delectable a fantasy as report said it was and went all out in approval of its enormously effective performance by Joe E. Brown, Marion Lorne and their associates.9

In response to the ovation and numerous curtain calls, Mr. Brown made a speech in which he paid warm tribute to the Ohio 37th Division, with special plaudits to General Robert Beightler, Division Commander, who was in the audience and who was called down to the footlights by Brown to receive an ovation of his own.10 *Harvey*, the comedy highlight of the season, did such phenomenal business during its December engagement, that Boda booked the play for two return engagements.

Elsa Shelley's realistic drama, *Pick Up Girl*, proved to be the surprise success of the year when it
opened a four-day run on Christmas night. Plays that have opened on that holiday have not fared well at the Hartman. This, in addition to the fact that the play arrived in Columbus with little advance publicity, together with the play's sensational title, kept many regular Hartman patrons from the theatre—an unfortunate situation, especially when it is noted Burns Mantle listed it as one of the ten best plays of 1944-45. Sam Wilson said of the production:

The play is one which presents ugly facts honestly and without the least evasiveness. As a result *Pick-Up Girl* is not any sense of the term easily digested escapist theatre fare.11

The play, with a cast of twenty-five, takes place in a New York Juvenile Court and is based upon an authentic case history of a fifteen year old New York City girl, neglected by her parents and in difficulty with the juvenile authorities.

For patrons who did not appreciate the stark realism of *Pick-Up Girl*, Robert Boda brought next two operetta favorites. *Rose Marie* was the final Hartman offering of 1945 when it played a three-day engagement beginning December 30. Emmerich Kalman's *Countess Maritza* held a one-performance stand on January 2, 1946. Both shows, produced by the Shuberts, were warmly received by the critics and the large Hartman audiences that attended. Two farces, *Suds In Your Eyes*, by Jack Kirkland, and *School For Brides*, by Frank Gill, Jr. and George Carlton Brown, appeared next on
the Hartman schedule. The Kirkland piece, which played the
Hartman on January 3, 4, and 5, was one of the most success-
ful stage productions to tour the Pacific Coast during the
middle forties, but it enjoyed no enthusiastic welcome in
Columbus, Ohio. Business for Boda was poor. School For
Brides starred Helen Twelvetrees, and fared even worse than
the previous play at the box-office and with the critics
when it opened a four-day run on January 6.

Theatrical fare took a decided sweep upward with
the Hartman's next attraction, The Voice of the Turtle.
The Hartman was one of five midwestern theatres to play
this comedy on its limited tour prior to an extended west
coast engagement. The John van Druten play was performed
before capacity audiences at each of its four presentations
that began on January 14 and drew critical praise from Sam
Wilson:

The opening night capacity audience found The
Voice of the Turtle the amazing tour de force of
playwriting it has been represented to be. The
full bodied humorous and charming playing by K. T.
Stevens and Hugh Marlowe, of the original Chicago
company, and of Geraldine Jones, won the vigorous
approval of the house from curtain to curtain.12

The Guthrie McClintic production of Jean Anouilh's
Antigone and the Tyrant proved the major success of the 1946
winter season. The drama was Katharine Cornell's first pro-
duction of a new play in two years and marked the star's
fifteenth offering in fifteen years as America's only
actress-manager. Miss Cornell had seen *Antigone and the Tyrant* in Paris just before the German occupation and decided to use the tragedy for her first post-war production. Critic Wilson, greatly impressed with the play, said:

> Katharine Cornell, Sir Cedric Hardwicke Give Performances of the Decade...Nothing more arresting than the Katharine Cornell-Gilbert Miller production has been brought to the Hartman stage in years. During the past decade few performances given here have matched and none has surpassed in elevation, eloquence and sheer theatrical excitement those of Miss Cornell and Sir Cedric Hardwicke. *Antigone and the Tyrant*, in short, is something for which the serious playgoer must be devoutly thankful.

Despite Wilson's glowing tribute, the play was only a moderate financial success during its January 17, 18, and 19 engagement.

The most successful and significant musical production presented at the Hartman during the first post-war season was Oscar Hammerstein's *Carmen Jones*, a drama which marked the initial appearance of an all-Negro cast in a serious and cultural musical play and drew a good review from Sam Wilson: "This American Negro folk opera version of the Bizet masterpiece," said Wilson, "is rousingly good theatre all the way, and on its own merits deserves most of the praise its judicious admirers have showered on it." Critical acclaim for *Carmen Jones* was especially noteworthy when one considers that few of the cast of 125 had had previous professional acting experience. Capacity houses viewed the production which played the Hartman February 17, 18, 19, and 20.
After the close of Carmen Jones, the Hartman remained dark for seven weeks. This unfortunate circumstance occurred because transportation strikes in Cleveland and Cincinnati prevented the routing of traveling road companies through Columbus. Hartman patrons endured the forced blackout until April 7 when Robert Boda reopened the theatre with a return engagement of Life With Father.

The final legitimate attraction during the 1945-46 season was perhaps the most rewarding event on the Hartman's schedule. On May 20 Maurice Evans presented his "G.I." version of Hamlet. This production, which ran 131 times on Broadway, breaking all records of Hamlet to that time in New York, evolved out of Evans' tour of duty in the Pacific during World War II. In charge of theatrical activities there, he with a group of soldiers presented this version of Hamlet for the armed forces. Michael Todd heard of its success, became interested, and produced the show both in New York and on tour. Sam Wilson said of the presentation:

Hamlet, in Maurice Evans' present acting version, is, to put it mildly a h--- of a swell show. It's something to send the bobby-soxers and their boy friends into a state of excitement undreamt of in their classroom experience of the play. And its freshness of approach, its clarity of design and execution, its honest directness, its emotional intensity and its swiftness of pace make it a production nicely calculated to cause the arteries of the most case-hardened connoisseurs of Hamlet to function as they haven't in years of theatre-going.
Thomas Gomez, Lili Darvas, Harry Sheppard, and Frances Reid co-starred with Mr. Evans. *Hamlet* enabled Robert Boda to end his theatrical season on both an artistic and a financial high note; every performance, except Wednesday matinee when a few gallery seats were empty, was a complete sellout.

The spring of 1946 was a unique season for the Hartman Theatre. In an attempt to recoup the financial losses sustained because of the strikes which curtailed theatrical activity during March, April, and May, Robert Boda booked an unprecedented number of motion pictures into his theatre. From April 17 through June 4, five films were presented by the Hartman manager. These included *Ravaged Earth*, *Blood and Thunder*, *Gaslight Follies*, *Blessed Mother Cabrini*, and *Waltz Time*. No attendance figures are available for any of the films, but it can be noted that the Hartman Theatre showed only one more motion picture during the period under study.

Operettas continued to be popular with the several amateur groups that flourished in Columbus during the post-war era. The Independent Players produced *The Three Musketeers* and *Bitter Sweet*, and in their final season, The Gateway Players contributed *Sweethearts* and *Katinka*. Two new amateur organizations began to present shows during the 1945-46 season. The initial production of the Columbus Light Opera Company was *The Merry Widow*, and *High Jinks*. 
was the inaugural selection of the new Paramount Players company. The annual Firemen's Minstrel Show completed the amateur's season, but absent from the Hartman because of increased theatre rental were the customary spring dance recitals. They never returned.

Despite the fact that the 1945-46 season was dominated by revivals, farces, and a lengthy dark period, Robert Boda was able to provide his patrons with several outstanding theatrical productions. The season was financially successful, and with Broadway enjoying a post-war resurgence of activity Hartman theatrogoers looked forward to the coming season, expecting it to be one of the most noteworthy since the outbreak of World War II. Unfortunately, this was not the case. While it is true that the 1946-47 season was more satisfying than the first post-war year, it cannot be artistically compared to the golden years of the late thirties and early forties when nearly all Hartman presentations were worthwhile, important theatrical events. The 1946-47 season began auspiciously on September 16 with Tennessee Williams' The Glass Menagerie. Starring Pauline Lord, the drama, which had won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for the best play of 1945, The Donaldson Award, and the Sidney Howard Memorial Prize, also found favor with Sam Wilson:

This year it is our own very good fortune to have the Hartman season open with a play of
genuine distinction, a theatre piece of imaginative design and affecting content, written with keen sensibility and staged with exactly the neatness of handling it deserves. 19

In spite of this fine review and numerous awards won by The Glass Menagerie, Hartman patrons failed to attend the production in large numbers and much to Robert Boda's surprise, what had promised to be an outstanding hit was indeed a financial failure. This regrettable situation occurred in part because of the advance information that reached Columbus concerning the playwright and his work. As a rule, Hartman clientele did not like depressing plays of family life, and that is exactly what many Columbus playgoers believed The Glass Menagerie to be. 20 Though Tennessee Williams has been one of America's leading playwrights since the opening of The Glass Menagerie, only his 1947 drama A Streetcar Named Desire proved successful with Hartman audiences.

Following another engagement of Life With Father, Robert Boda brought in Bal Negre, a Katherine Dunham dance revue. Though The Ohio State Journal critic, Mary V. McGavran, said it was "one of the most striking shows to be seen in recent years," 21 the revue, like most dance shows presented at the Hartman, did not draw well. Of interest is the fact that Eartha Kitt was a member of the dancing chorus of this production.

Lute Song, a poetic fantasy with music by Raymond Scott and sets by Robert Edmond Jones, found favor with
Miss McGavran and the large Theatre Guild audience that att-
tended the drama's opening on October 14. Miss McGavran
drew:

*Lute Song* is a hauntingly beautiful, highly
stylized musical that veers sharply from the course
of usual theatrical venture...the most discerning
theatre-goers will find it a fine example of good
theatre.22

Sam Wilson was also impressed with the presentation and told
this researcher in a 1967 conversation: "*Lute Song* was one
of the most beautiful productions I have ever seen in the
theatre."23 The musical, which is an adaptation by Sidney
Howard and Will Irvin of *Pi-Pa-Ki*, a Chinese play about a
faithful wife in search of her lost husband, brought star-
dom to Yul Brynner when he appeared opposite Dolly Haas.

One of the lowest points in Hartman history, an
evening when Mrs. Boda undoubtedly was absent from the
outer lobby, occurred on October 17. On that night the
tasteless farce, *Mary Had a Little*, played to a near-
capacity house, but drew critical scorn. Sam Wilson called
it a "terrible play,"24 and Miss McGavran said: "the play
has been staged every-which-way and mounted shabbily...it
completely ignores the boundaries of good taste."25 Never-
theless, audience reaction was favorable and numerous
farces of this calibre were booked into the Hartman during
the ensuing years.

Three musicals held the Hartman stage from October 21
through November 9. The Shubert's drew fair-sized audiences
for the return engagements of Rose Marie and Play Gypsy Play, the latter formerly Countess Maritza; and Carmen Jones once again attracted capacity houses and extremely favorable audience reaction during its second Hartman visit.

The week of November 10 signaled the end of an era for the Hartman Theatre. After playing Robert Boda's theatre 105 times during its fifteen engagements, Tobacco Road held its final run before near-capacity audiences in the fall of 1946 with John Barton in his familiar role of Jeeter Lester. No play ever enjoyed more success at the Hartman Theatre than Tobacco Road.

A popular musical was next. The tremendous success of Oklahoma! encouraged other playwrights and composers to delve into the American past for their material. Up in Central Park, the last Sigmund Romberg musical produced during the composer's lifetime, tried to capture the romantic atmosphere of New York in the Boss Tweed era. Obviously successful, it played fifteen months on Broadway and was the musical highlight of the Hartman's 1946-47 season. Sarah Mills writing in The Ohio State Journal commented: "The production, beautifully and nostalgically costumed and nicely mounted, offered an engaging evening of song and dance."26 The musical did excellent business and was enthusiastically received by the Hartman audiences during its mid-November engagement.
The inimitable Mae West returned to the Hartman on
November 24 for a five-performance run of her own work, *Come
On Up*. Though the play did not meet with critical approval,
Miss West's fans filled the Hartman and provided Robert Boda
with a profitable booking.

December 1 marked the first—and only—appearance
of the *Grand Ole Opry* at the Hartman Theatre. On that
Sunday Ernest Tubb, Minnie Pearl, Jimmy and Leon Short,
Radio Dot and Smoky, and The Texas Troubadours presented
shows at four, six, and eight p.m. to medium-sized audi-
ences. Following a week of Blackstone which began on
December 2, Robert Boda brought another ballet to his thea-
tre. *Ballet Theatre*, despite critical praise, fared little
better than previous dance productions produced at the
Hartman. This was due partly because there was no advance
publicity for the show, and, as stated previously, audiences
were accustomed to seeing ballet in Memorial Hall and would
not accept a dance presentation at the Hartman. Because
Memorial Hall had a stage that was so high above the or-
chestra seats that it was impossible to see the dancer's
feet from the first floor, the patrons who did go to the
Hartman for the *Ballet Theatre's* performances all demanded
balcony seats. They could not break the habit of always
sitting in the balcony to see dancers, even in a different
theatre.27 Attendance was so poor that co-directors Lucia
Chase and Oliver Smith never returned their company to the
Hartman.
January 1947, was devoted to return engagements. *Oklahoma!*, starring James Alexander, sold out the week of the thirteenth, and Edward Everett Horton played his perennial favorite, *Springtime For Henry*, on January 20, 21, and 22. The week of the twenty-seventh saw the return of the popular *The Voice of the Turtle*.

Walter Houston returned to the Hartman on February 6 in Kenyon Nicholson and Charles Robinson's comedy, *Apple of His Eye*. This was Houston's first stage appearance after a five-year absence, but unfortunately, the play he chose for his return was not critically well-received either in New York or in Columbus. Sam Wilson thought the comedy somewhat stereotyped and he wrote: "Star and supporting players give stereotype performances of stereotype roles in one of those perennially popular stereotype comedies." The highlight of the evening occurred after the final curtain when Houston made a speech recalling his triumphant *Knickerbocker Holiday* and sang, then, to the guitar accompaniment of Roy Fant, *September Song*. The large Theatre Guild audience gave him a standing ovation. After *Apple of His Eye*, *Dear Ruth* was again offered Columbus patrons on February 13, 14, and 15.

One of the most important events in the American theatre during 1947 was the world premiere of Eugene O'Neil's new play *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, produced at the Hartman Theatre on February 20. The opening marked the first time
in fourteen years that the premiere of an O'Neill play had been held outside New York City. The plot deals with a Connecticut tenant farmer's attempt to marry his daughter to his bachelor landlord so he, the father, may be assured of a home and money, and his daughter may have a future devoid of the squalor in which they are currently living.

The news of the O'Neill premiere announced on January 23, caused a flurry of theatrical excitement not experienced in Columbus since Sinclair Lewis opened *Angels Is Twenty-Two* at the Hartman in December of 1938. Robert Boda was inundated with requests for seats weeks before ticket information was available. Led by director Arthur Shields, by Theatre Guild representatives Lawrence Langer and Armina Marshall, and by set designer Robert Edmond Jones, the company began its Hartman rehearsals two weeks before opening night. By O'Neill's order those not directly associated with the production were not permitted to view rehearsals, and under no circumstances was anyone given a copy of the script before February 20. The entire operation was shrouded with mystery.30

The play itself generated a sharp difference of opinion between the critics and many in the capacity audiences which viewed it. Sam Wilson said:

*Eugene O'Neill's A Moon for the Misbegotten* is an arresting and fine play. It is in no sense disparaging to its director, Arthur Shields, or to its
cast to say that its full potentialities will be realized only after repeated performances before any number of audiences whose reactions to the play will be violently divergent.

Developments of narrative, establishment of motivation, definition of character are in the deliberate, painstaking O'Neill tradition. However long drawn out some of this may have seemed the fact remains that none of it is functionally extraneous.

If Thursday night's performance was largely a portent of things to come the work of the players still was consistently of a quality that held the play together and in no way distorted O'Neill's drawing of its people.

J. M. Kerrigan's portrayal of Phil Hogan was the most completely integrated and fully drawn characterization of the evening. He was magnificent. James Dunn is admirably cast as Jim. Some of the most dangerous lines of the play fall to him, lines which the slightest mistake in intonation or emphasis might turn to misbegotten comedy effect at the most appallingly wrong moments. He has this hazard under firm control.

Mary Welch's comedy playing is, at present, insecure and a bit forced. The emotional side of her performance she has essentially in her grasp. She has all the basic qualities the role of Josie requires; stature, voice, intelligence and spiritual awareness.

J. Joseph Donnelly, as Mike Hogan and Lex Lindsey, as T. Stedman Harder complete the cast.

R. E. Jones' setting, the ramshackle Hogan home perched on its wooden blocks, stark and bleak against a vast expanse of sky, is just the background the play requires. His moonlight is properly remote and cold, his dawn as ironically gray as might be desired.31

Numerous Hartman patrons disagreed with Wilson's analysis, and he received many letters and telephone calls from Hartman patrons complaining bitterly about the praise he gave the production. Complaints from irate playgoers were also sent to Robert Boda, admonishing him for presenting such a "disgusting show."32 Evidently the Columbus audiences were
not alone in their assessment of the play, for the following week in Detroit, police closed the production because of its obscenity. A Moon for the Misbegotten never reached Broadway; it died on the road. \(^{33}\) Though most theatregoers abhorred the play, Robert Boda yet must be credited with having brought one of the most important theatrical premieres of the immediate post-war era to the Hartman Theatre. This is another indication of the influence Boda had among New York and road circuit managers and producers.

After the tumultuous O'Neill event, the remainder of the 1946-47 season seemed somewhat anti-climactic. However, Boda had scheduled several impressive productions for the late winter and spring seasons, and, for the most part, Hartman patrons enthusiastically supported the plays. Two days after the O'Neill piece vacated the Hartman, one of the few successful American biographical plays opened at the East State Street theatre. In The Magnificent Yankee, author Emmet Lavery portrayed Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes the man, rather than Holmes, the jurist and philosopher. The play is a romantic and a biographical sentimental comedy, depicting Holmes' ardent and lifelong courtship of Fanny Dixwell Holmes. Stars Louis Calhern and Sylvia Field were applauded by the critics; near-capacity houses attended the fourth Theatre Guild presentation of the 1946-47 season.

Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse's State of the Union, winner of the 1946 Pulitzer Prize and Donaldson
award, found favor with Hartman audiences during its run the week of March 3. Sam Wilson described the audience's reaction on opening night: "Monday night's audience received play and players with an enthusiasm that promises well for the balance of the comedy's run at the Hartman." The fifth Theatre Guild show, which featured Conrad Nagel, Irene Hervey, and Henry O'Neill, drew medium-sized houses at each of its seven performances. On March 27 Maurice Evans triumphed for the third time before large crowds with his interpretation of Hamlet.

The final presentation of 1946-47 was the successful Harold Arlen, E. Y. Harburg musical Bloomer Girl. This play, which ran 654 performances on Broadway, was one of the largest productions sent on tour following World War II, having a cast of eighty and requiring 132 stagehands to assemble and change the nine large sets designed by Lemuel Ayers. During the week of April 28 Bloomer Girl attracted full houses in Columbus as it had done in New York, and Mary V. McGavran, in her review, found the piece delightful theatre fare:

A colorful entertainment bauble which should provide refreshing diversion for those seeking amusement in an airy vein is Bloomer Girl... Last night's performance was remarkable for the spontaneity and enthusiasm so beguilingly displayed by the cast. For the first time in its history the Theatre Guild from April 6 through the 9, sponsored a motion picture on
its subscription list. Sir Laurence Olivier starred in Shakespeare's *Henry V*, the film voted the best picture of 1946 by the National Board of Review and the New York Film Critics' Circle and sent, also, on tour at legitimate theatre prices after the war. Despite the fact that the engagement was financially successful, *Henry V* was the last motion picture ever shown at the Hartman Theatre.

With the death of the Gateway Players, amateur productions were curtailed during 1946-47. The Columbus Light Opera Company presented *No, No, Nanette* and *Naughty Marietta*, while the Independent Players produced *The Vagabond King*. A performance by the Columbus Concert Orchestra and the Firemen's Minstrel Show completed the season.

The 1946-47 Hartman season was a significant improvement over the previous post-war season. Though the schedule contained numerous revivals and return engagements of popular attractions, Robert Boda presented several artistically worthwhile works—*The Glass Menagerie*, *Lute Song*, *Ballet Theatre*—and staged the world premiere of a play by America's foremost playwright. The Boda trend earlier established of integrating a few significant plays into a season dominated by farces and mediocre dramas continued at the Hartman through the nineteen fifties.

The Hartman's 1947-48 season opened on September 29 with *The Fatal Weakness*, George Kelly's domestic comedy of
marriage and divorce. The play, which marked Ina Claire's return to the stage after a six year retirement, was the initial Theatre Guild show, and was well attended. Lillian Hellman's *Another Part of the Forest*, a renewed attack on capitalism in which the Hubbards are represented twenty years before the time of *The Little Foxes*, was the second Hartman attraction of 1947-48. Despite the fact that Patricia Neal had won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award as the most promising newcomer in 1946, along with both the Antionette Perry and Donaldson Awards for the best actress that Broadway season, Columbus playgoers responded unfavorably to the work, and the drama was enacted before small houses. On opening night smoke from a hot iron backstage caused many in the audience to leave during the final act. After a brief pause the play continued without further interruption. The Hellman drama was the second play sponsored by the Theatre Guild.

Two musicals appeared next on Robert Bod's schedule. *Song of Norway* occupied the Hartman stage during the week of October 27, followed by Victor Herbert's *The Red Mill* the week of November 3. *Song of Norway*, based on the life of Edvard Grieg, was written by Milton Lazarus, Robert Wright, and George Forrest, with music adapted from the Norwegian composer. Herbert's operetta, first seen in New York in 1906, was touring following a successful two-year revival on Broadway. Both musicals drew sizeable crowds and received favorable notices from the critics.
John van Druten's ethnic comedy, I Remember Mama, starring Charlotte Greenwood, played before nearly full houses during its mid-November engagement. Theatre executives in New York did not believe this play would be successful on the road so the rights were sold to a west coast company. The New Yorkers were proved wrong in their judgment of the play's drawing power, because after completing two years on Broadway, I Remember Mama toured the United States successfully for one year. Another ethnic play, this one a serious drama, played a two-day engagement on November 28 and 29. Anna Lucasta was originally booked to open on the 27, but a wayward baggage car containing all the company's scenery, properties, and costumes caused a cancellation of the scheduled Thursday evening opening. Philip Yordon's play, a story about a poor Polish family, was first entitled Anna Lukaska when Abram Hill, writer and director for the Federal Theatre project, convinced the author to place his story in a Negro milieu. The play was revised and presented on the stage in the Harlem Public Library in June, 1944, where producer John Wildberg saw it, realized its commercial potentialities, and purchased it for Broadway presentation. It ran 1,000 performances in New York and two years in Chicago before beginning the 1947-48 transcontinental tour. The play, which starred Isabelle Cooley, Warren Coleman, and Roy Allen and featured
Sidney Poitier in a minor role, impressed Sam Wilson: "Anna Lucasta took its first Columbus audience by assault Friday evening; by assault both on emotions and funny-bones." As with many financially successful plays, Anna Lucasta was booked for a return engagement by manager Boda.

Following the appearance of hypnotist Ralph Slater during the first week of December, a revival of Sidney Howard's comedy The Late Christopher Bean, starring Zasu Pitts, opened on Christmas night for a three-day engagement. Though Sam Wilson found both the play and Miss Pitts enchanting, the final play of 1947 was a box-office disaster.

The second half of the 1947-48 season included five return engagements and another ill-fated attempt to operate a local stock company. The Hartman was closed from the end of December to January 18 when Kay Francis' State of the Union met with disappointing reviews. At the Friday evening performance, January 23, Miss Francis was replaced by her understudy, Erin O'Brien-Moore, who, according to Mary V. McGavran, gave "an extraordinarily fine performance." Miss Moore, who had not performed the play in over a year, was flown to Columbus on short notice, and was cued on her lines during the trip from the airport to the theatre. She went on without the benefit of any rehearsal. Miss Francis was hospitalized after taking an overdose of sleeping pills.
Next on the Hartman agenda was *An Inspector Calls*, a melodramatic murder mystery by J. B. Priestley. This production brought Thomas Mitchell back to the legitimate theatre after twelve years of motion picture work. The third Theatre Guild presentation was successful with the critics and the large audiences that saw it on February 2, 3, and 4. Successful return engagements of *Anna Lucasta* (February 5, 6, and 7) and *Harvey* (February 23, 24, and 25) followed the Priestley mystery. The *Anna Lucasta* tour closed at the Hartman after traveling for two years, and producer John Wildberg selected several members of the troupe for the company he formed for an Australian tour. Joe E. Brown and Marion Lorne played *Harvey* to a full house at each performance.

In the course of theatrical history the less respectable phases of theatrical life have not been neglected by the playwrights in search of local color. The popular *Burlesque*, by George Manker and Arthur Hopkins, capitalized on realistic argot and backstage atmosphere while depicting the life of a burlesque comedian. This musical play, first produced on Broadway in 1927, was revived for a year's run in 1948, and provided Bert Lahr with his first dramatic role in the theatre. Though Sam Wilson had extravagant praise for the star, the critic found *Burlesque* "dreary," and the piece was a box-office failure during
its March 4, 5, and 6 run. *Mary Had a Little*, which had played the Hartman in the fall of 1946, recouped some of the *Burlesque* losses when it again attracted full houses on March 8, 9, and 10. Katherine Dunham's *Tropical Revue*, March 15, 16, and 17, was the last new production Robert Boda presented during the 1947-48 season. Revivals and return engagements, and the short-lived Columbia Theatre Stock Company made up the remainder of the spring season. Tallulah Bankhead and Donald Cook performed Noel Coward's *Private Lives*, the Theatre Guild's fourth show, to large audiences and good reviews on April 5, 6, and 7. Commented Wilson:

Thanks to a magnificently uninhibited performance by Tallulah Bankhead and company, *Private Lives* is a wonderful lot of dizzy fun...You'll be missing a riotous time if you don't see Miss Bankhead as Amanda.45

*The Glass Menagerie*, starring Helen MacKellar, was again a financial failure when it played April 8, 9, and 10. The final Theatre Guild presentation was Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan*, featuring Cornelia Otis Skinner and Estelle Winwood. As always, Miss Skinner's Columbus fans supported her admirably, though critic Wilson believed the play dated and called it "a theatrical museum piece."46

director and stage manager, had formed the Columbia Theatre Company, a permanent stock operation located in the Hartman Theatre that planned to present a play a week during April and May, and on all available dates between traveling shows the following season. Prize-winning plays, recent Broadway successes, and plays which had never been shown in Columbus were selected for the company's schedule, and an experienced, highly professional company of actors was hired. Largely because of her successful appearance when she substituted for Kay Francis in *State of the Union*, Erin O'Brien-Moore was engaged as the leading lady. Edward Andrews, who had appeared at the Hartman in *Of Mice and Men* and *The Time of Your Life*, was contracted as the leading man. Others in the company included Anton Diffring, Isabel Price, Edward Harvey, Eleanor Sheridan, James Marrick, Oliver Thorndike, Gregory Robins, James P. Morley, Adnia Rice, David White, Elizabeth Ayers, Anne Arient, and Irene Victor. Robert Henderson, who had served as director of the Detroit Civic Theatre and The Royal Alexandria Theatre in Toronto, was signed in the same capacity for the Columbia Theatre Company. Ben Edwards served as scene designer and Clarence Jacobson as the company's manager. With such an excellent organization, in addition to the fact that post-war theatrical activities were nearing their zenith of popularity, the producers believed that at last a stock operation at
the Hartman would be successful. Unfortunately, they were soon disappointed. Like its predecessor, the J. B. Bentley-Hartman Players Stock Company of 1942, the Columbia Theatre Company’s existence was very brief. Only Elmer Rice’s *Dream Girl* (April 20-25), Sidney Howard’s *They Knew What They Wanted* (April 27 - May 2), and *Design For Living* by Noel Coward (May 4-9) were produced by the local stock company. Robert Boda announced on May 4, 1948, that the Columbia Theatre Company would cease operations following the Sunday, May 9 performance of the Coward comedy. No reasons for the closing were given, but in a 1967 interview Sam Wilson said:

The Columbia Theatre Company was a wonderful operation, but it defied Columbus stock tradition and was not stock as Columbus playgoers knew it. It was too sophisticated, too much an eastern operation. The Hartman’s clientele was accustomed to old-fashioned stock of the nineteen twenties when the company had a beautiful leading lady, a handsome matinee-idol leading man, and a stereotyped villain. The plays were usually melodramas in which good prevailed over evil, or simple, happy comedies and farces that did not tax the intellect of the audiences. While the Columbia Theatre Company presented excellent productions, the organization was ahead of its time to be successful in Columbus, and the plays were not ones that Hartman theatregoers accepted or enjoyed.47

The Columbia Theatre Company was the last stock operation attempted at the Hartman Theatre.

The amateurs enjoyed a busy season producing six shows. The Independent Players presented Jerome Kern’s *Music In The Air*, and the Columbus Light Opera Company
staged *Roberta*. The Paramount Players returned after a one-year absence with *Rose of Algeria*. Two new organizations debuted at the Hartman during the 1947-48 season. *The Student Prince* was chosen by Theatre Productions, Inc. as its initial production, and the *Columbus Junior League Follies* were presented for the first time. *The Firemen's Minstrel Show* completed the amateur season.

Compared with other Hartman seasons, 1947-48 was only mediocre. No new important serious plays were presented, and *Song of Norway* was the one significant musical Robert Boda showed at his theatre during the third post-war year. The 1947-48 season is remembered primarily because of the failure of the artistically successful, financially disastrous, Columbia Theatre Company, the last stock company housed at the Hartman Theatre.

In contrast with its predecessor, the 1948-49 year was one of Robert Boda's most noteworthy seasons. Many of the best dramas and musicals of the post-war era played the Hartman during the season, and Columbus playgoers supported the extraordinary bill in large numbers. On October 22, 23, and 24 vaudeville returned to the Hartman under the title of *The Best Is Yet To Come*. This variety stage revue that was assembled in Hollywood and sent on a coast to coast tour featured Skitch Henderson and his orchestra and ten vaudeville acts. There were no reserved seats for the shows that
were presented at 7:30 and 9:30 p.m. Though the vaudeville show was the first event of autumn, the 1948-49 theatrical season actually began on November 8, when Rodgers and Hammerstein's highly acclaimed musical play *Carousel* opened a week's engagement. This work which won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award as the best musical of 1945 was also received favorably too by *The Columbus Citizen's* drama critic Norman Nadel:

*Carousel* is the logical successor to *Oklahoma!* like one king following another to a throne... As the Barker (Billy), Stephen Douglass sings with warmth and virility, with his acting almost as convincing as his music. Iva Withers (Julie), on the other hand, plays her exquisitely expressive part to perfection, but sacrifices conviction when she sings. 45

Carousel had a series of elaborate scenes that required Robert Boda to hire twenty extra stagehands to mount the show. But most outstanding in the first act was the $20,000 carousel that was shown while the entire company sang and danced the "Carousel Waltz". The clambake, with its mountain fires, the prow of a ship, and the views of heaven were impressive. Jo Mielziner designed the settings. It took four baggage cars to carry this production, with sixteen trucks to unload the scenery and properties for cartage to the theatre. The company numbered eighty-five, and four sleepers were used to house the cast and staff. Twenty-two extra musicians were engaged and a ten-hour musical rehearsal was held at the Hartman prior to opening
night curtain. The initial Theatre Guild presentation, which ran two years on Broadway, was one of the most popular musicals ever to play the Hartman, and capacity audiences attended each performance during its seven-day run.

Following another week of Blackstone (November 15-20), Robert Boda engaged Garson Kanin's hard-boiled comedy, *Born Yesterday*. The play, starring Lon Chaney, Jr. and Jean Parker, drew well during the week of November 29, and impressed Mr. Nadel:

*Born Yesterday* is a comedy with guts. It is lusty, uproarious and every line has a sledge hammer blow behind it. This piece is more than froth. It tackles a whale of a big topic and hits you between the eyes with it...It is priceless.

Return engagements of two of the most popular musicals of all time, *The Desert Song* and *Oklahoma!*, were the only traveling shows presented by Robert Boda from mid-December to mid-January. Both were successful at the box-office and with the critics.

On January 17 Maurice Evans returned to the Hartman, this time in George Bernard Shaw's comedy *Man and Superman*. The piece which marked Mr. Evans' first departure from Shakespeare in his dual career as actor and manager was one of the outstanding successes of the 1948 Broadway season. It established a new record for box-office receipts by any Shaw play produced anywhere. *Man and Superman* played 205 performances in New York and grossed more than $1,200,000.
The play was also one of the highlights of the 1948-49 Hartman season. Norman Nadel wrote:

With a splendor of crystal in bright, white light Man and Superman last night brought brilliance to the current theatre season in Columbus. Maurice Evans' portrayal of John Tanner has the arrogance, the supreme assurance and the full-blown vocabulary of Shaw himself.52

The first serious drama of the season played on January 24, 25, and 26, much later than usual, but was well worth waiting for and provided one of the two dramatic pinnacles of 1948-49. Nadel wrote:

Judith Anderson's Medea A Milestone in Drama... The long-anticipated Medea arrived Monday evening to grip a capacity audience with one of the most potent tragedies in stage history. Even those familiar with the story of Medea could not have anticipated the overwhelming face of Judith Anderson's portrayal. Historians have expressed the opinion that the play has never been presented more vividly in its life of almost 2,400 years.53

The 214 performances which Miss Anderson acted Medea in New York in 1948 represented the longest continuous run a Greek play had ever achieved anywhere.54 Ben Edwards, scene designer for the Columbia Theatre Company, served in the same capacity for this production.

Following the tragedy Medea, Robert Boda announced two of the most popular and successful musicals the American theatre has ever known. Annie Get Your Gun combined the talents of several of the most important theatrical personalities to ever collaborate on one production. Produced by Rodgers and Hammerstein, with music by Irving
Berlin, this Joshua Logan-directed musical comedy appeared 1,147 times on Broadway and marked the greatest box-office success of Mr. Berlin's career. The play did capacity business at the Hartman the week of February 21, and received a good review from critic Nadel:

*Annie Get Your Gun* has been worth waiting for. The long-heralded comedy, vigor and robust charm of this semi-historical musical are represented generously in the large company that has brought it here...Billie Worth gives the role of Annie everything it needs, and a few delightful extra flourishes...Taggart Casey, with his stature and resonant voice is an impressive Frank Butler.55

The large company of 115 and the nine Jo Mielziner sets necessitated a special twelve-car train to transport the production.56

During the week of March 7 the Hartman hosted the Alan Jay Lerner, Frederick Lowe musical fantasy *Brigadoon*. Though the play received high praise from Nadel: "the most completely enchanting musical of many, many seasons,"57 and would have undoubtedly been, under any circumstances, a financial success, without question box-office activity was spurred because of the appearance of a Columbus girl, Susan Johnson, in the role of Meg. Miss Johnson, well known to Hartman theatregoers from her appearance in numerous amateur productions, earned applause that was more than a mere demonstration of civic pride. Nadel wrote: "She brought down the house, by her comedy, her vivacity and her full-bodied and expressive singing."58 *Brigadoon*
made theatrical history when, in 1947, it became the first musical to receive the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award as the best musical play of the year.

During the remainder of March and April Hartman clientele saw a new comedy, a return of a previously successful comedy, and the revival of one of the most important musicals in the annals of American theatre. Terrence Rattigan's *O Mistress Mine*, starring Sylvia Sidney and John Loder, came to the Hartman on March 17, 18, and 19, and despite good critical notices, was a box-office failure. *Harvey* returned with the original Broadway star, Frank Fay, on March 26, 29, and 30 and while it did less than capacity business, attendance was good. Except for the final week, April was a dark month at the Hartman Theatre. The only professional event was the engagement of the Jerome Kern, Oscar Hammerstein immortal musical *Show Boat*. Full houses greeted the play which drew unanimous raves from the three Columbus drama critics. The 1949 revival was produced by Rodgers and Hammerstein and ran for sixty-one weeks in New York before beginning its tour.

The only financially rewarding Tennessee Williams play ever to be presented at the Hartman was *A Streetcar Named Desire*. From May 9 through the 14, Uta Hagen, Anthony Quinn, Mary Welch, and a superb supporting cast presented the drama to capacity audiences at each performance. *The Glass Menagerie*, the only other Williams play to previously
appear at the Hartman, had done poorly during two engagements, and one might have expected *A Streetcar Named Desire*, with its depressing characters and sordid situations to have repelled Columbus playgoers, but this was not the case. Advance publicity about the fine performances, and the fact that this play was the first to win the Pulitzer Prize, the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award, and the Donaldson Award accounted for the surprisingly large crowds. Attendance was also good because the play was the third Theatre Guild show and received praise from Norman Mcel: 

> It is brilliant theatre. In the entire contemporary drama, there are few plays which can match the Tennessee Williams piece... *Streetcar* offers an unforgettable and vivid segment of life.

*A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Medea* were, then, the two dramatic highlights in a season dominated by musicals.

*High Button Shoes*, the Stephen Longstreet, Jule Styne, Sammy Cahn musical comedy was staged at the Hartman the week of May 15 and was the final event of 1948-49. Eddie Foy, Jr., Jack Whiting, and Audrey Meadows headed the cast that was favorably reviewed by the critics and warmly received by the large audiences that attended the production.

The amateurs, with eight productions, had one of their busiest Hartman seasons. Theatre Productions, Inc. presented *Babes In Toyland* and *Blossom Time*, while the Columbus Light Opera Club staged *Good News*, and the Paramount Players did *The New Moon*. The Independent Players'
production of *Song of Norway* was the first presentation of the musical by a non-equity company in this country. Two musical revues were held in January. *All in Favor* was the Princeton Triangle Club’s show, and *Inside Ohio* was presented by the Young Business Men’s Club of Columbus. The *Firemen’s Minstrel Show* was the only other amateur event of the year.

Assessing the season, Robert Boda undoubtedly felt great satisfaction. He had presented a year of varied theatrical fare, and Hartman patrons had responded in excellent fashion. Although many of the attractions were not performed by the original Broadway stars, any season during which Boda offered Maurice Evans, Judith Anderson, Sylvia Sidney, Frank Fay, Uta Hagen, and Anthony Quinn to his clientele must be considered one of the most important years of the post-war era. Though the number of productions was reduced by six from the previous season’s twenty, the quality of the presentations was superior, and it was only reasonable that Boda and Columbus playgoers assumed 1949-50 would be a continuation of their good fortune.

The final season in the immediate post-war era saw some of the finest theatre ever produced at the Hartman, and for a year at least, major personalities were again on tour. The new season was launched in spectacular fashion on October 17 with the opening of the musical revue *Inside U.S.A.* starring Beatrice Lillie. To say that Miss Lillie's
first Hartman appearance was exceedingly successful would be a considerable understatement. As Sam Wilson wrote:

Inside U.S.A. is the biggest, handsomest revue to hit town in a decade. And thanks to Bea Lillie nothing more joyous has happened along, either...The near-capacity house gave her such an ovation as audiences hereabouts almost never indulge in. She's super and colossal. Miss Lillie doing anything on stage is uproariously funny.61

Despite the fact that the revue played to large crowds at each performance, the cost of mounting the production was so great that Robert Bode lost $300 for the engagement. He had, however, opened the season with an artistically worthwhile presentation, a run that Mr. Wilson called "one of the most spectacular shows ever seen at the Hartman theatre."62

Following Blackstone's annual autumn appearance the week of October 31, the Hartman played Maxwell Anderson's poetic Anne of the Thousand Days. Though the play received excellent reviews from the Columbus critics, the drama starring Rex Harrison and Joyce Redman attracted small audiences, largely Theatre Guild subscription patrons, during its showing on November 14, 15, and 16.63 Two more dramas, both financially unsuccessful, completed the November schedule. On the 17, 18, and 19 of the month Susan Peters revived Rudolph Besier's The Barretts of Wimpole Street. This was the first stage venture for Miss Peters who was achieving stardom in Hollywood when a hunting accident paralyzed her legs. The John Kenley production was not received
favorably by Columbus critics. As stated earlier, plays by Tennessee Williams, with the exception of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, had been unpopular with the Hartman's clientele, so it is not surprising that *Summer and Smoke*, though it was the second Theatre Guild show, failed to draw more than minimum audiences during its November 24, 25, and 26 engagement. The remainder of 1949 was devoted to three comedies. Thomas Heggen and Joshua Logan's outstanding hit *Mister Roberts* appeared next on the Hartman agenda. Originally written as a series of stories by Heggen during his service in the Navy, then combined as a novel, *Mister Roberts* was dramatized by the author and Mr. Logan. Sam Wilson admired the work and wrote:

A brilliantly designed and executed theatre piece... The play is aptly written. John Forsythe brings quiet humor, nice emotional accent and over-all dramatic verisimilitude to his performance in the title role. Jackie Cooper is droll amusing as Ensign Pulver.64

Hartman patrons were fortunate to be able to see this play because it was on a limited tour and Columbus was only one of twenty-five cities to show *Mister Roberts* in 1949.65 Business was so good that Robert Boda returned the comedy twice more. *Light Up the Sky*, Moss Hart's moderately successful Broadway hit of 1948, was the second in the series of three comedies. Dispatch critic Dean A. Myers, overwhelmed with the production, wrote:

Not since *Born Yesterday* have I seen a comedy done with such broad strokes, almost in farce
style. This is the laugh hit of the Hartman season.66

The play, starring the New York company of Sam Levene, Glenn Anders, Lynn Bari, and Margie Hart, was well attended during its mid-December booking. Ecstatic praise and capacity business were the order of the day on December 26 when Katharine Hepburn returned to the Hartman in Shakespeare's comedy *As You Like It*. For Sam Wilson, it was the show of the year:

A company headed by Katharine Hepburn won an ovation of locally almost unprecedented span and noisy fervor...Make no mistake about it, this was a magical evening. Everything about the production in the way of settings, costuming and lighting proved beyond cavil...Miss Hepburn was made for the part of Rosalind...To miss *As You Like It* is to let slip by you a great and memorable theatre experience.67

The third Theatre Guild production enabled Robert Boda to end the turbulent decade of the nineteen forties with a phenomenally successful presentation.

The Hartman was dark the first month of 1950, and it was not until February 2 with the return of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, that Columbus playgoers had the opportunity again to enjoy legitimate theatre at the East State Street playhouse. This production starred Ralph Meeker, Judith Evelyn, and Jorja Curtwright and attracted sizeable, though not capacity, crowds.

During the week of February 20 one of the most significant plays in the annals of the American theatre was billed at the Hartman. Arthur Miller's highly acclaimed
Death of a Salesman played to capacity houses and received excellent critical notices during its Hartman run. Sam Wilson said:

Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman is remarkably engrossing and deeply moving theatre... The writing is brilliantly contrived and the wonderfully fluid staging of the piece against one of Jo Mielziner's most imaginatively apt settings together with powerful and lucid performances carry things on in compelling fashion. Thomas Mitchell's portrait of Willy spares nothing. His is a great piece of acting. June Walker, as Linda, plays with honest intensity. Paul Langton brings Biff to the completeness of anguished life, and Darren McGavin, as Happy, is exactly right for the assignment.68

This drama which won the Pulitzer Prize in 1948, the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award, the Antionette Perry Award, the Theatre Club Award, and the Front Page Award, was extremely popular with Hartman audiences and was one of the most successful dramatic productions ever to appear at the Hartman Theatre.69

Providing a complete change of pace from the two serious dramas that preceded it, the 1928 farce Diamond Lil came to the Hartman March 5, 6, 7, and 8. As usual, Mae West drew full houses, a circumstance that caused critic Norman Nadel to sarcastically write:

Culture-conscious Columbus turned out in force to greet Mae West, star and author of the 22-year-old melodrama, and it appears that the crowds will continue to come.70

The most memorable feature of this production, aside from the star, was the elaborate setting that reportedly cost
$35,000. Miss West, like Tobacco Road, was something of a theatrical institution in Columbus, and no performer ever enjoyed greater popularity with the Hartman audiences (if not with the critics) than Mae West.71

Brigadoon, the musical that won twenty-seven theatrical awards, opened before a capacity house and to rave reviews when it returned for a three-day run on March 30. Columbus's Susan Johnson appeared again as Meg, with Hayes Gordon and Virginia Oswald playing Tommy and Fiona.

Through the years Katharine Cornell, one of the most illustrious actresses to appear at the Hartman, provided Columbus playgoers with some of the most rewarding theatre produced at the East State Street playhouse. Unfortunately, her 1950 appearance in Kate O'Brien's melodramatic That Lady cannot be numbered as one of the actress's major achievements. Though critic Nadel was favorably impressed by Miss Cornell, Henry Daniell, Torin Thatcher, and Joseph Wiseman, he did not like the play and said: "Out of a fascinating 16th century romance in the Spanish nobility, Kate O'Brien has fabricated a play that lives only in moments."72 The drama was poorly attended, illustrating once again that despite Miss Cornell's status in the theatre, she was never an automatic draw at the Hartman.

The final two events of the post-war era were return engagements of previously successful productions. Oklahoma!
opened its fourth Hartman booking on April 17 for a six-day run and for the first time a Columbus critic voiced negative comments. Mr. Nadel wrote:

Oklahoma! appeared frayed around the edges. It was not uncommon to see a performer make a piece of stage business look like a piece of stage business. Even some of the principals (Ridge Bond, Patricia Northrup, Sara Dillon, Henry Clark) let their standards slip.73

Despite these derogatory remarks, the musical drew large crowds at each performance. The final play of the post-war years, The Man Who Came to Dinner, provided a sharp contrast with the tiring Oklahoma! production. Norman Nadel reported:

The Man Who Came to Dinner has never had a better cast than the one which opened last night at the Hartman Theatre. With the possible exception of Mister Roberts, there hasn’t been such an evening at the State Street playhouse since the season was launched last fall. Monty Woolley heads the visiting company as Sheridan Whiteside, and although Mr. Woolley originated the role, he couldn’t have been any more enthusiastic in it than he appeared last night.74

This was the first national tour with Woolley playing Whiteside, the role he had played on Broadway for two seasons, and Hartman patrons attended the performance (April 26-29) en masse. The Man Who Came to Dinner provided a successful climax to an especially noteworthy Hartman season.

Amateur activity was limited to four presentations; half the number of the previous season. The Independent Players produced The Great Waltz, while Bloomer Girl was staged by the Paramount Players. The Firemen’s Minstrel Show and The Young Business Men’s Club Show were the other events.
The early post-war seasons at the Hartman Theatre were generally undistinguished. Though some worthwhile plays were presented (The Winter's Tale, Harvey, Antigone and the Tyrant, Carmen Jones, Hamlet, The Glass Menagerie, Lute Song), the majority of the fare was comprised of tasteless farces, popular revivals, and nondescript melodramas. Numerous farces were booked by Robert Boda because there was a scarcity of worthwhile productions available for the road immediately following World War II. There were many producers, also, attempting to return to the theatre business after military service, and the good stage properties available were generally too expensive to produce as an initial venture. Farce revivals provided a new, inexpensive beginning for returning and neophyte producers. Boda knew also that when he billed a farce at his theatre he was almost always assured of a good house. 75

The last two post-war seasons (1948-49, 1949-50) were unquestionably the most significant years discussed in this chapter. Several of the American theatre's most important works, acted by some of the most distinguished performers of the stage, played the Hartman during these two seasons. Carousel, Born Yesterday, Man and Superman, Medea, Annie Get Your Gun, Brigadoon, A Streetcar Named Desire, Mister Roberts, As You Like It, Anne of the Thousand Days, and Death of a Salesman are but a few of the outstanding-
ing works Robert Boda offered his Hartman patrons from the fall of 1948 through the spring of 1950. The quality of the presentations staged at the Hartman during these two years was on a par with the productions that characterized the great pre-war touring seasons, and Columbus theatregoers, for the most part, took full advantage of the artistic triumphs Boda brought to his theatre. Great diversity is the hallmark of the immediate post-war theatrical years at the Hartman Theatre, for during that period Columbus audiences had an opportunity to view almost every type of theatre on the dramatic spectrum from the most tawdry farce, *Mary Had A Little*, to the loftiest of tragedies, *Medea*. Though theatrical activity decreased somewhat during the next decade, the quality of the Hartman productions remained on that high level of excellence attained during the late post-war seasons.
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CHAPTER V

The Final Years of Robert Boda: 1950-1958

Robert Boda opened the doors of the Hartman Theatre for the first theatrical season of the new decade on Monday, October 16, with the Cole Porter, Sam and Bella Spewack musical, *Kiss Me Kate*. This show, one of the outstanding box-office successes in the history of the Broadway stage, proved equally successful with Hartman audiences and played to capacity houses during its six-day Columbus engagement. It was also an artistic triumph which *The Ohio State Journal* critic Mary McGavran Koebel found exceedingly worthwhile:

*Kiss Me Kate* is a bright and sparkling package of entertainment which is zestful from start to finish. It is handsomely mounted, colorfully costumed and played to the hilt by a cast (Robert Wright, Frances McCann, Betty George, Marc Platt) which establishes instant rapport with the audience, and then proceeds to show everybody a wonderful time.¹

Another musical, *Lost in the Stars*, followed next on the Hartman's fall schedule. The Maxwell Anderson, Kurt Weill piece, in contrast with the popular Porter musical, drew poorly during its October 24-28 run, despite its being the initial Theatre Guild presentation and the excellent review by Mrs. Koebel:

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Precious few experiences to be derived from the theatre are as memorable and completely overpowering as that found in Lost in the Stars. For here indeed is one of the finest evenings to be found in the theatre. Every facet of the musical is of the highest calibre.\textsuperscript{2}

Box-office apathy may be explained, perhaps, by the fact that a musical tragedy involving tolerance and human understanding between the white and the Negro races did not appeal to most Hartman patrons. The original New York company headed by Todd Duncan, Inez Matthews, and Herbert Coleman presented the unusually large production at the Hartman. A special train was required to transport the twenty scene production along with the fifty-two cast members, musicians, and stage crew.\textsuperscript{3} An unfortunate accident occurred during the opening night performance. Mark Kramer, a Columbus native dancing in the show, fell during one of his dance routines and fractured his leg.\textsuperscript{4} Lost in the Stars was one of Robert Boda’s greatest artistic bookings, but unfortunately, it was one of his most financially disastrous presentations.

The only non-musical of the fall season, Sam Spewack’s Two Blind Mice, directed by and starring Melvyn Douglas, opened at the Hartman for a three-day visit on the sixth of November. Mr. Douglas had been a Columbus favorite since the late nineteen twenties when he had been a leading man for the Hartman Stock Company, but even his popularity and drawing power could not attract more than
half-filled houses during the run of this farce. It was another box-office setback for Boda.

\textit{Brigadoon} returned to the Hartman for the third time on November 9. Of special interest to local playgoers was the appearance of three Columbus natives, all of whom had previously appeared at the Hartman in amateur productions. Susan Johnson, James Schlader, and his wife Winifred Ainslee were members of the 1950 \textit{Brigadoon} company.\textsuperscript{5} The final professional traveling show of 1950 played the Hartman on Sunday, November 12. \textit{Borscht Capades} of '51 was sponsored by Bina! Brith as part of its mid-century fund-raising project. Originally scheduled to be a one-night event in Los Angeles in 1948, this English-Yiddish revue lasted six months there, then toured the midwest, playing six weeks in Chicago. The cast featured Mickey Katz, his son Joel Grey, Dave Barry, Bas Sheva, Don Tannen, Jack Hilliard, and the Burton Sisters.\textsuperscript{6} The revue drew large crowds at both its matinee and evening performances.

Five of the six plays presented at the Hartman between January and March of 1951 were revivals or return engagements. \textit{Mister Roberts} (January 8-13) starring Tod Andrews, and \textit{Diamond Lil} (January 25, 26, 27) with Mae West, enabled Robert Boda to recoup some of the financial loss he suffered during the fall. The only new show of the winter and spring seasons was S. N. Behrman's comedy \textit{I Know My Love}--which opened on the last day of January. This second
Theatre Guild show starred Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne, and while he had reservations about the play, critic Norman Nadel praised the famous acting couple:

The near capacity audience which saw the Lunts last evening witnessed not only a brilliant pair of stars, but a skillfully engineered play which made up in Gallic wit what it lacked in depth. As far as the Lunts are concerned, there were no shortcomings.7

Following a return of A Streetcar Named Desire (February 8-11) this time featuring Phillip Kenneally, Barbara McCoy, and Ellen Davey, Robert Boda brought to the stage a revival of Fernac Molnar's The Guardsman. This production marked the first time the famous acting couple Jeanette MacDonald and Gene Raymond had worked together in the theatre. The piece did fair business during its February 26, 27, and 28 run despite Mr. Nadel's negative review:

The years have failed to dull the keen wit of Fernac Molnar's sophisticated comedy. The revival is timely. Jeanette MacDonald and Gene Raymond are thoroughly pleasant people, and each is an experienced performer. The fact remains that neither gives an outstanding portrayal in the comedy. The stars simply do not possess the fine points of acting skill that their roles demand.9

One of the few dance presentations to play before capacity audiences at the Hartman was performed on Sunday, the fourth of March. On that date The Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo presented "Swan Lake", "Nutcracker Suite", and "Graduation Ball" at matinee and evening performances. Robert Boda was at last financially rewarded for presenting ballet at the Hartman Theatre. The 1950-51 season ended
with the return of Oklahoma! from March 26-31. The musical established a record for the Hartman when it played its fortieth performance during this engagement. No other musical had been presented that number of times at the East State Street theatre. ¹⁰

There were only four amateur productions at the Hartman during 1950-51. The Princeton Triangle Club presented their revue Too Hot For Toddy, and the Young Business Men's Club show was Forget Your Worries. The annual Firemen's Minstrel Show was produced during the fall season. The only musical play of the season was the Theatre Productions, Inc. presentation of Sweethearts.

The 1950-51 Hartman season was mediocre and generally unrewarding. Aside from the two musicals, Kiss Me Kate and Lost in the Stars, and the appearance of The Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, Hartman theatre-goers were provided with several undistinguished new plays and a variety of return engagements. It was by no means one of Robert Boda's finest years.

In contrast with the disappointing 1950-51 season, 1951-52 saw some of the American theatre's most notable performers playing the Hartman. From October through May such stars as Sylvia Sidney, Katharine Cornell, Brian Aherne, Fredric March, Florence Eldridge, Edward G. Robinson, Olivia de Havilland, and Ethel Waters were brought to Columbus by Robert Boda. The return of The Ballet Russe de Monte
Carlo on Sunday, October 7, was the opening event of the new season. As in the spring, the production was enthusiastically received and well attended. The dramatic year was launched the following evening (October 8) when Leslie Storm's melodramatic Black Chiffon opened before a sparse audience. Sylvia Sidney and Henry Daniell starred in the work that Norman Nadel said:

...is an extra-ordinarily sensitive drama that makes demands of the audience as well as the actors...Black Chiffon is a play of exceptional merit. It deserves to be seen.11

Be that as it may, few Hartman theatregoers heeded the critic's words, and the engagement was not financially rewarding.

The premiere of the pre-Broadway tour of W. Somerset Maugham's The Constant Wife, starring Katharine Cornell, Brian Aherne, and Grace George was held at the Hartman November 14-17. The comedy appealed to Boda's clientele and business was excellent. So was critic Nadel's review:

Any audience will warm to the pleasant stage offering now at the Hartman. It combines a cleverly written play; a polished cast, obviously enjoying itself and Guthrie McClintic's impressive job of staging. All this assures a high order of entertainment. The Constant Wife is just that.12

Following the third engagement of Death of a Salesman on November 22, 23, and 24, the Hartman billed one of the best and most successful musicals of the American theatre. From December 10-15 capacity houses viewed the Frank Loesser,
Jo Swerling, Abe Burrows musical fable of Broadway, *Guys and Dolls*. This engagement was one of the most successful weeks at the Hartman Theatre, ranking with other post-war triumphs such as *Oklahoma!*, *Brigadoon*, and *Kiss Me Kate*. It also impressed Sam Wilson:

To be cautious and maybe to understate matters—*Guys and Dolls* is a fabulous show. The book, lyrics, score, settings and costumes, company of singers, actors and dancers couldn't be better.¹³

Allan Jones, Pamela Britton, Julie Oshins, and Jeanne Bal headed the large company. Originally scheduled to play the Hartman later in the winter, Boda demanded the New York booking office change the date of the show's appearance in Columbus to December 10 to compete with *Der Fladermaus* being presented at the rival Loew's Ohio Theatre.¹⁴

The first play of the new year was *The Autumn Garden*, a drama by Lillian Hellman. Though it starred Fredric March and Florence Eldridge, and was the initial Theatre Guild offering, it failed to attract Columbus playgoers and box-office activity was slight because many Hartman regulars refused to see a play that examined the decaying gentility of the deep South. That subject had been presented by Tennessee Williams earlier, and a vast number of Boda's clientele found the theme too depressing to view again.¹⁵

Encouraged by the two successful engagements of *The Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo*, Boda presented the *Ballet Theatre* on January 11 and 12. Unfortunately, theatregoers did not attend in large numbers.
Sidney Kingsley's drama *Darkness at Noon* was the second Theatre Guild play of the season. Starring Edward G. Robinson, making one of his infrequent stage appearances, the piece that won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award was extremely well received by the Hartman audiences when it played January 21, 22, and 23. Sam Wilson wrote:

The applause at the end of each act and the solidly sustained ovation at the end of the play led the actors to state that Columbus had provided *Darkness at Noon* with its most alertly responsive and enthusiastic first night audience to date on the tour.  

A revival of George Bernard Shaw's *Candida* followed the Kingsley play. Olivia de Havilland played the title role, and both play and star found favor with Norman Nadel: "*Candida* is sound drama, and will merit the thanks of people with taste. Olivia de Havilland is deft, mature and graceful." The 1951-52 transcontinental tour was the result of Miss de Havilland's successful appearance in *Candida* in the summer theatres. She first performed this comedy at the Theatre Guild's Country Playhouse in 1946.  

Despite the critical acclaim Miss de Havilland's first Hartman appearance on February 4, 5, and 6 did not draw large crowds into the theatre.  

Tremendous business supported F. Hugh Herbert's comedy *The Moon Is Blue* when it arrived for a three-day run on Valentine's Day. Rumors in advance of the opening circulated the news that the piece was titillating, sexy, and
slightly off-color; consequently, the Hartman was sold out for every performance. Marcia Henderson, James Young, and Hiram Sherman starred in the play that Mr. Nadel found amusing:

F. Hugh Herbert has turned out a particularly delightful evening of theatre in this buoyant comedy about a girl who talks about anything, including her virtue and the forces that assail it. 19

Those audience members who attended solely in the hope of seeing something risque found the third Theatre Guild play a major disappointment. February 18-23 marked the return of *Oklahoma!* Once again the durable musical drew large houses and good critical reviews.

The dramatic highlight of the season should have been February 28, 29, and March 1 when Carson McCullers' *The Member of the Wedding* played the Hartman. Unfortunately, a large segment of the audience could not hear the actors who were playing too far upstage; much of the impact and power of the play was therefore lost. 20 The work that won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award and the Donaldson Award was well attended despite the auditory problems. Ethel Waters ("her performance not only enriches the play, but also the lines of those who watch her") 21), Betty Lou Holland, and Robert Mariotti headed the cast.

*Bagels and Yox* a Yiddish vaudeville revue drew near-capacity audiences when it played the Hartman on Sunday,
April 27. Featured in the show were Lou Saxon, Larry Alpert, and Rickie Layne and Velva. The production that was written by Sholom Secunda and Hy Jacobson was given at matinee and evening performances. The final event of the year was the return of Mister Roberts, again with Tod Andrews. Fine crowds greeted the play that had grossed more money than any non-musical show in Broadway history prior to 1952.22 The Independent Players' production of Song of Norway, the Firemen's Minstrel Show, and the Young Business Men's Club's revue Look Before You Leap were the only amateur presentations of the year.

Though numerous stars played the Hartman during the 1951-52 season, Robert Boda had only five successful shows in the Hartman schedule of fourteen events. The Constant Wife, Guys and Dolls, Darkness at Noon, The Moon Is Blue, and The Member of the Wedding provided manager Boda and his patrons excellent theatrical fare. The 1951-52 season was superior to its predecessor, a trend that continued through the next year.

1952-53 was one of the most interesting Hartman seasons during the nineteen fifties. Opening the new year on October 2, 3, and 4 was the Alan Jay Lerner, Frederick Lowe musical Paint Your Wagon. Burl Ives, Ellen McCowan, and Edward Chappell acted the principal roles before fair-sized crowds. The Hartman opening marked the road company's
premiere for its coast to coast tour. Sam Wilson said of the show:

*Paint Your Wagon* is a melodious, slight fable of gold rush days, diversion fuller of color and atmosphere than of arresting action, or meaningful story or richness of characterization. Its biggest climaxes are choreographic. Its most moving moments are spelled in terms of song.  

The second musical of the season, *Call Me Madame*, proved far more attractive to Columbus playgoers than had *Paint Your Wagon*. From October 27 through November 1 the Irving Berlin, Howard Lindsay, Russel Crouse production played to no more than a few empty seats. Business was phenomenal. The first Theatre Guild show drew favorable comment from Sam Wilson: "*Call Me Madame* is just as fine diversion on tour as it was on Broadway."  

Elaine Stritch, David Daniels, and Kent Smith starred in the highly successful engagement.

One of Columbus' old favorites returned for a three-day run the third of November. Cornelia Otis Skinner was back, this time in a solo-revue called *Paris '90* which critic Wilson called "a fascinating theatre experience."  

As usual, the actresses' loyal supporters nearly filled the Hartman Theatre. Following Miss Skinner, the *Ballet Russe* *Stare* performed to dismally small audiences on November 11 and 12. The premiere dancers included Mia Slavenska, Frederic Franklin, and Alexandra Danilova. Hartman patron's support for the dance was indeed short-lived.
The final three days of November were devoted to the American Savoyards, Inc. who presented two Gilbert and Sullivan operettas—*The Mikado* and *Patience*. Both productions played before nearly empty houses despite critical acclaim. Wilson said: "*The Mikado* was a wholly beguiling play from one and all standpoints,"26 and Ray Evans, Jr. wrote: "The performance of *Patience* Saturday afternoon was lively and fresh, and beautifully staged."27 The final play of 1952 was John van Druten's comedy, *Bell, Book and Candle* and marked Joan Bennett's return to the theatre following several years of Hollywood film work. Zachary Scott co-starred in this box-office success.

The first month of 1953 was a busy one for Hartman patrons. During January Boda presented five productions, all financially successful. *The Shrike*, 1952 Pulitzer Prize winning drama, began the fruitful month when it opened for three days on New Year's Day. Joseph Kramm's drama drew an excellent review from critic Wilson:

*The Shrike* is a play so ingeniously contrived, so aptly staged and is given so brilliant a performance that its current run at the Hartman is a theatre event of major importance. It should be a 'must' for all save the unreconstructed 'sweetness-and-lighters'.28

This play was star Van Heflin's first appearance on stage since 1941 when he played opposite Katharine Hepburn in *The Philadelphia Story*. Mr. Heflin was writing his Master's
thesis entitled *The Techniques of Acting in the Four Mediums of Screen, Stage, Radio and Television* while on the tour. Doris Dalton, Simon Oakland, and Kendall Clark also appeared. The Jose Ferrer-directed play was the second Theatre Guild show of the season. During the week of January 5 the Hartman Theatre hosted Henry Fonda starring in *Point of No Return*. The Paul Osborn comedy, the third Theatre Guild presentation, fared well at the box-office, largely because of Mr. Fonda's appeal and Sam Wilson's review:

> The comedy has been given opulently tasteful production, has been directed with consummate adroitness and is played to perfection. Henry Fonda gives a finely detailed and histrionically engrossing performance.

Leora Dana, Frank Conroy, and Colin Keith-Johnston supported Mr. Fonda.

January 15, 1953 is one of the most memorable dates in the history of the Hartman Theatre, for on that date the world premiere of William Inge's drama *Picnic* was held on the Hartman's stage. An event as auspicious as any previously held at the Hartman, this premiere ranks with Sinclair Lewis's *Angela Is Twenty-Two* and Eugene O'Neill's *A Moon for the Misbegotten* in theatrical importance. From the day the premiere was announced, December 30, 1952, Boda's office was besieged with requests for tickets. A week before the opening the cast along with playwright Inge, director Joshua Logan, designer Jo Mielziner, Armina
Marshall, and other representatives of the Theatre Guild arrived in Columbus for intensive rehearsals. These rehearsals ran very smoothly, especially the final dress, and in contrast to the mystery-shrouded, secretive O'Neill rehearsals, Mr. Logan invited all the Columbus dramatic critics to the advance preparations. After each rehearsal the director asked various audience members their opinions about the show. A great deal of attention was focused on Columbus actress Eileen Heckart by the newspapers during the tryout week.31 She had been seen numerous times in Ohio State University productions and in several local amateur plays and was well known in Columbus theatrical circles. Picnic was her first important Broadway play. The drama received favorable reaction from both the opening night audience and Sam Wilson. He wrote:

Play of Absorbing Quality Unveiled In Auspicious Premiere at the Hartman.

Mr. Inge's play is a comedy in the most Balzacian sense of the term. In matter of plot, the piece is elementally simple but the balance and counterbalance and interrelationship of narrative and incident are psychologically complex and emotionally compelling in the deftness of their exposition. Character is swiftly established and gains quick, compassionate development. This is a play of wide dimensional quality, of immediate theatrical effectiveness.

Physically, Ralph Meeker is perfectly suited to the role of Hal Carter, and the tragically disorganized nature of the youth is admirably suggested in his present, necessarily still somewhat tentative characterization. Janice Rule is altogether lovely as the inflamatorily nubile Madge.

Eileen Heckart has had an acting plum of the primest kind handed up to her and she knows exactly what to do with it. Her comedy touch is sure and
her emotional scenes are powerfully turned out. Peggy Conklin is infinitely touching as Mrs. Owens, and Kim Stanley gives a vividly turbulent account of Millie. Paul Newman plays Alan with sensitively precise understatement.

Ruth McDevitt paints a richly humorous portrait of Mrs. Potts. Arthur O'Connell's Howard is the perfect foil for Miss Heckart. Reta Shaw and Elizabeth Wilson make telling things of minor roles. Morris Miller gives sharp point to the very small role of Bomer, the newsboy.

Mr. Logan's direction may be called a superb piece of dramatic orchestration which exploits to the last nuance character timbres in any and every combination. The one possible false note in the entire job is the extra-bloody makeup of Hal in the last act which injects a bit of spuriously souped-up melodrama into the proceedings.

Of Jo Mielziner's wonderously realistic setting, all I can say is 'it must be seen to be believed'. It's that fabulous.\textsuperscript{32}

During all four Hartman performances Mr. Logan continued his policy of seeking numerous patrons' reactions to the production. He continually questioned as many people as possible throughout the intermissions and at every final curtain.\textsuperscript{33} Several months later, after \textit{Picnic} had become a New York triumph, Mr. Logan praised Sam Wilson for his constructive suggestions and criticism during the tryouts and in his opening night review. The director said he and the production owed much of their success to critic Wilson. This praise is especially noteworthy in view of the fact that Joshua Logan was voted the best director of the 1952-53 Broadway season for his work in \textit{Picnic}, and that the play was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in drama for the same year.
The next event on the Hartman's impressive winter agenda was the presentation of Clifford Odets' character drama *The Country Girl*. Starring Sidney Blackmer, Dane Clark, and Nancy Kelly, the Lee Strasberg-directed fifth Theatre Guild play drew medium-sized houses and good reviews on January 22, 23, and 24. The only play marring an otherwise significant winter and spring schedule appeared at the Hartman the week of January 26. During these six days *Good Nite Ladies*, a cheap, tasteless farce by Cyrus Wood and Avery Hopwood played before near-capacity crowds, once again proving that a farce, no matter how bad, generally fared well at the Hartman box-office.

The remainder of 1953 was devoted to three worthy comedies and the initial Hartman appearance of Jose Greco and his dance troupe. The first of the comedies, *I Am A Camera*, played February 19, 20, and 21. The John van Druten play which won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for 1951-52, starred Julie Harris and Charles Cooper and was exceptionally well received by the large audiences that attended the engagement. Jose Greco's shows on March 17 and 18 did not draw well, but he impressed Norman Nadel:

Senor Greco and his troupe, in little over two hours, managed to bring to life the excitement and gaiety of Spain in a way which was unique, thrilling and realistic. Jose Greco and his company must be seen to be appreciated. And once seen, they won't be forgotten.
A revival of *The Male Animal*, starring Martha Scott and Buddy Ebsen did not draw well despite a good review from Gene Grove: "The comedy is even more timely today than when it first appeared in 1940. It's a wonderful play, and the present company is excellent." The final regular traveling production of the season was *The Four Poster*. Written by Jan de Hartog and featuring Hume Cronyn and Jessica Tandy, the Jose Ferrer-directed comedy did excellent business and received high praise from Norman Nadel when it visited the Hartman the week of April 21:

> Right now *The Four Poster* is one of the happiest dramatic pieces ever to play Columbus. Last night I listened to that sound that is so often sought and seldom achieved in the theatre—the murmuring laughter of an entire audience, unanimously content with the proceedings.

*The Four Poster* provided a fitting climax to a highly significant and successful theatrical season. On May 14, 15, and 16 a musical revue called *The Hormel Caravan* played the Hartman. It featured sixty-five members of the grocery trade singing, dancing, and playing instrumental music. The show was open only to people who were employed in the grocery business. Amateur theatrics were confined to The Independent Players' production of *Kiss Me Kate*, the Young Business Men's Club Show, *Circus Daze*, and the final presentation at the Hartman Theatre of the *Firemen's Minstrel Show*. This revue had been an annual event since 1943.
The 1952-53 season was one of the Hartman Theatre's best years. Of the sixteen presentations offered, only Good Nite Ladies drew critical disdain, and most of the events were financially successful. It was a year when the world premiere of a major drama was held at the Hartman, and many important stars (Burl Ives, Cornelia Otis Skinner, Joan Bennett, Zachary Scott, Van Heflin, Henry Fonda, Ralph Meeker, Janice Rule, Sidney Blackmer, Dane Clark, Nancy Kelly, Julie Harris, Martha Scott, Hume Cronyn, and Jessica Tandy) performed for Hartman theatregoers. The quality of the productions billed in 1952-53 was, for the most part, of the highest order, unsurpassed in the nineteen fifties. Unfortunately, this standard of excellence did not continue into the following season.

The 1953-54 season was unquestionably one of the poorest years of the Boda's management. Of the nine plays presented, only four can be called worthwhile, and two of those were return engagements. Undistinguished farces comprised most of the schedule. The world premiere of F. Hugh Herbert's A Girl Can Tell opened the season on the first of October. The first Theatre Guild play of the new year failed with the Hartman audiences and with Sam Wilson who wrote:

A Girl Can Tell, which had its first performance anywhere on the Hartman stage, is about a girl--giddy, late teenage damsel whose native habitat is the parlor sofa. She doesn't occupy
it alone for long at a time. And again and again and
again her tolerant papa stalks in to the acute dis-
comfort of several suitors at amorous play. This
is about all there is to the plot of the piece.
Janet Blair is extremely decorative as Jennifer,
the teenage daughter, and brings warmth and personal
charm to the role. The males of the troupe are finely
established in their clearly drawn assignments. Paul
McGrath makes the incredible father a nearly beguiling
soul. The various suitors, Tod Andrews, Marshall
Thompson, Dean Harens and Barry McGuire couldn't be
better. Donald Symington, Alexander Clark, William
Kester are excellent in supporting roles.
Eulabelle Moore, Natalie Trundy, Lulu Mae Hubbard
and Joan Wetmore complete the cast.37

In a 1967 interview Mr. Wilson described the farce as a
"terrible, inept sprawling play."38 Because Actors Equity,
the theatre union, would not sanction pay cuts proposed by
the producers and accepted by Janet Blair and Paul McGrath,
A Girl Can Tell closed on December 19, 1953 before reaching
New York.39

On the evening of November 4 The Slavenesk-Franklin
Ballet Company presented a one-performance recital for an
extremely small audience. Mia Slavenaska and Frederic
Franklin were the featured dancers of the program that in-
cluded "Concerto Romantico", "I Laughed at Spring",
"Nutcracker Suite", and "A Streetcar Named Desire Ballet."
Claire Parrish's Maid In the Ozarks, presented the week of
November 9, was the first of the tasteless farces that domi-
nated the 1953-54 season. The play is something of a thea-
trical phenomenon because despite unanimous bad reviews from
every stop on its tour, the piece set attendance and box-
office records across the United States. Only Oklahoma1
South Pacific, and Good Nite Ladies had more performances than Maid In the Ozarks. Columbus proved to be no different from the other cities visited by this play—near-capacity crowds were in the Hartman all week, and Sam Wilson made some scathing comments about the production:

The aim of Maid In the Ozarks is salacious rowdiness. It succeeds in being witless, pointless, only tepidly off-color fare that makes no pretense at literacy and acknowledges the existence of not even so much as a least common denominator of taste either in script or in presentation.

During the run of the play a questionable business enterprise was operated when producer John Kenley sold program books featuring lurid photographs of naked models on the sidewalk in front of the theatre. Following Maid In the Ozarks, Jose Greco and his troupe played a one-day engagement on November 22.

On the last day of November Melvyn Douglas returned to the Hartman in Ronald Alexander's farcical Time Out For Ginger. The show was a hit at the box-office and found favor with Sam Wilson: "If entertainment, of unabashedly broad kind, is what you want, that's exactly what you'll find at the Hartman." Edith Atwater, Nancy Malone, and Barry Truex played feature roles. Steve McQueen, who achieved motion picture stardom in 1960, had a minor part in this second Theatre Guild show. The final presentation of 1953, and the only musical of the fall and early winter season, Little Jessie James, was billed at the Hartman
during the week of December 7. The production drew unfavorable reviews from the critics and audience reaction was cool and unenthusiastic. Mimi Kelly, daughter of actor Paul Kelly, was the leading lady. The 1953 version of *Little Jessie James* was not a revival of the production that was popular in 1923. The script was modernized and new songs were added.\(^{44}\)

The return of *The Moon Is Blue*, with Edward Andrews, Jacqueline Holt, and Michael Lipton, was the first show of 1954, and drew favorable notices during its January 7, 8, and 9 run. A revival of the 1914 hit *Twin Beds* was the last farce of the season. This Margaret Mayo, Salisbury Field play pleased critic Clyde D. Moore and the large crowds that viewed it. Mr. Moore wrote: "The time-aged bedroom farce, *Twin Beds*, was uncorked again with hilarious results."\(^{45}\) It played the week of January 19. Following the return of Blackstone (March 3-6), Robert Boda presented Frederick Knott's mystery drama *Dial M for Murder*. This play was the high point of an otherwise bleak theatrical season, and turn-away crowds attended every performance. Sam Wilson said: "Ingeniously turned plot is backed up by a performance of remarkable suavity and as stylishly clever as they come."\(^{46}\) Maurice Evans, playing the leading role in *Dial M for Murder*, was one of the few stars who continued touring during the decline of the road. Following his arrival in the United States in the mid-thirties, he has
played 165 weeks on Broadway and 219 weeks on tour as of March 28, 1954. *Dial M for Murder* ran 552 performances in New York providing Mr. Evans with his longest Broadway engagement.\(^47\) It also was the actor’s last appearance at the Hartman Theatre. Margaret Phillips and J. Patrick O’Malley were also cast members of the third Theatre Guild production that held the Hartman stage on April 12, 13, and 14.

Large crowds turned out for *An Evening With Beatrice Lillie*, the fourth Theatre Guild show of the season, when the revue came into the Hartman for a four-day run on May 19. Clyde D. Moore was enthusiastic and commented:

An *Evening With Beatrice Lillie* was a smorgasbord of hilarity, with laughs coming in all shapes and sizes. Miss Lillie and Reginald Gardner produced an evening which will be happily remembered by everyone who was present.\(^48\)

The revue grew out of a tour of summer theatres in 1952. Originally booked for five weeks in New York, it played eight months before touring. The 1953-54 season ended with the third Hartman engagement of *Porgy and Bess*. Starring Cab Calloway, Irene Williams, and Leslie Scott, the musical was applauded by critic Moore:

The fifth Theatre Guild offering we believe to be the crowning event of the theatrical season. All performers acted and sang their roles to perfection.\(^49\)

This production, which played the week of May 24, was one of the most demanding the Hartman ever offered. It took forty stagehands twenty hours to assemble the elaborate
settings. Twenty-one musicians were hired to augment the Hartman's regular orchestra, and a fifteen hour musical rehearsal was held prior to the show's opening. The production was fairly successful at the box-office. There were only three amateur productions during 1953-54. The Independent Players presented *Call Me Madame*, the Young Business Men's Club staged *Hit Parade of 1954*, and the Princeton Triangle Club's musical was entitled *Malice in Wonderland*.

Robert Boda and his patrons could not look back over 1953-54 with much satisfaction, for it was a season in which few stars appeared (Melvyn Douglas, Maurice Evans, Beatrice Lillie) and fewer new plays of merit (*Dial M for Murder*, *An Evening With Beatrice Lillie*) were presented. 1953-54 was a dismal season at the Hartman Theatre.

This unfortunate condition changed radically, however, with the announcement of the bill for the following year. Nine of the ten plays staged at the Hartman in 1954-55 were successful, worthwhile events. Only the farcical *Getting Gertie's Garter* detracted from the high calibre of shows booked by Robert Boda. The season had an auspicious opening on the first of November with George Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan*. The initial Theatre Guild attraction, starring Jean Arthur, George Macready, Frank Silvera, Sam Jaffe, and Paul Richards, was favorably reviewed by Sam Wilson.
The revival of Saint Joan is a toweringly great play in an exciting and challenging performance that has been arresting directed by Harold Clurman, set by Mordecai Gorelik, costumed and lighted. Jean Arthur is the perfect embodiment of Joan.51

Large audiences attended the play during the first of the week, but after the Theatre Guild subscribers were accommodated, business was only mediocre.52

Two Rodgers and Hammerstein musicals followed on the fall schedule. The King and I, with Patricia Morison, Leonard Graves, and Suzanne Lake, did capacity business the week of November 15, and drew excellent comments from critic Wilson:

I’d admired a performance of The King and I which I had seen in New York. But the one I saw last night at the Hartman was better balanced, more spirited, more affectingly played, and better sung. Considerably greater justice was done one of the most distinguished musical plays of our time.53

This musical gave Robert Boda one of the most successful weeks in his years as Hartman manager. Oklahoma!, still drawing good crowds, played the Hartman for the seventh and final time November 25, 26, and 27. No other musical played the Hartman as many times as this Rodgers and Hammerstein classic.

Getting Gertie’s Garter and The Teahouse of the August Moon completed activities for 1954. The former was an updated version of an old farce by Wilson Collison and Avery Hopwood, and was well attended the week of November 29. The opening of the west coast company of The Teahouse of the
**August Moon** provided Hartman theatregoers one of the major events of the season. The comedy held its premiere performance for the tour prior to opening an extended engagement in Los Angeles. St. Louis and Kansas City were the only cities, besides Columbus, to see the play before it reached the west coast. The **Teahouse of the August Moon** was one of the most acclaimed plays of the decade winning the Pulitzer Prize, the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award, the Antionette Perry Award, the Donaldson Award, and the Theatre Club Award. It also did capacity business at each performance of its December 16, 17, and 18 Hartman engagement and was praised by Sam Wilson:

> As solid a hit as anything on the contemporary stage. The comedy is wonderfully diverting in every respect. Hard to imagine a more felicitously conceived and dextrously executed impersonation of Sakini than is achieved by Burgess Meredith. Just a brilliant piece of acting.

Scott McKay, Victor Sutherland, and Barnard Hughes played important roles. Prior to the opening producer Howard Lindsay gave a speech about the play at a press night dinner. Audience reaction was so favorable to the John Patrick comedy that Boda returned the play the next season.

Katharine Cornell's final Hartman engagement took place on January 6, 7, and 8 when she co-starred with Tyrone Power in Christopher Fry's *The Dark is Light Enough*. This play marked Miss Cornell's twenty-fourth season as a producer and was the twentieth play directed for her by Guthrie
McClintic. It was the seventh Fry play to be presented in America. The title of the play comes from the lines written by the French etymologist, J. H. Fabre, describing the flight of a butterfly. The Dark is Light Enough was not warmly accepted by the Hartman audiences, largely because the play was very confusing and difficult to understand. Columbus playgoers attended the production in large numbers because of the interest in the two leading performers, but most patrons left the theatre bewildered about what they had seen on stage. This state of perplexity is explained by Norman Nadel:

There was some misunderstanding in the audience at the Hartman Theatre where Christopher Fry's play in verse opened last night. Those expecting a comedy, it had been advertised as a 'winter comedy', were not quite prepared for a philosophic excursion, a story of war, cowardice, courage and tempers, even all this is brightened with adult humors.

But action never is more than an accessory to this play, and there lies one of its failings. It weighs philosophical ideas, and it offers the brightness of stars and the wit of a clever playwright to make its philosophy palatable. Nevertheless, a play must move, and this frequently pauses too long while an idea is aired, or a fine phrase unfolded. At such times it becomes static, and loses its audience.

Katharine Cornell, as always, lends warmth and conviction to her part. Fry gives her some of his cleverest humor, and she never fails the playwright in interpreting what he has to say through her. Tyrone Power's role is not a sympathetic one, which makes it difficult to play. Even making an allowance for that, however, I think he fails to penetrate it. There seems to be more urgency than honest emotion in his style.

Capable players support these two principals. William Podmore, Donald Harron and particularly John Williams give their scenes movement and spirit.
Marian Winters is a bit stoic, but otherwise suitable. There is good stature to Christopher Plummer's portrayal, and Arnold Moss draws full meaning from his role. Paul Roebling's characterization is a sensitive one.

Oliver Messel's sets and costumes do as much for the play as many of its characters.58

This play, the third Theatre Guild production, was on a pre-Broadway tour, and was not successful in New York receiving mediocre reviews and audience reaction similar to those recorded in Columbus.

George Axelrod's comedy The Seven Year Itch provided a complete change of pace for Boda's clientele. Playing the week of January 10, the production sold out for every performance. Eddie Bracken, Ann Kimbell, and Howard Freeman starred. The dramatic pinnacle of the season was achieved February 7, 8, and 9 with Robert Anderson's Tea and Sympathy. This production, directed by Elia Kazan, featuring Deborah Kerr, Don Dubbins, and Alan Baxter, did capacity business and impressed Sam Wilson: "Tea and Sympathy is a most adroitly fashioned and absorbing writing for the stage. Just that rare thing--an all the way well fashioned play."59 The success of Tea and Sympathy brought about the election of Robert Anderson to full membership in The Playwrights' Company and provided that organization with its longest-running success in its eighteen-year history.60

The Anderson work, the final Theatre Guild selection of the year, was the most successful drama presented during the 1954-55 season.
The Solid Gold Cadillac, Howard Teichmann's first play, was well received by large audiences during the week of March 21, Wilson said:

The Solid Gold Cadillac can go down in anyone's book as being a fabulously funny comedy. Ruth McDevitt is wonderfully engaging and incredibly amusing. Loring Smith comes on late in the first act, but when he does tremendous new comic impulse is given the play.61

The 1954-55 season closed on a highly successful note with the April 18-23 engagement of The Pajama Game. The George Abbott, Richard Bissell, Richard Adler, Jerry Ross musical did excellent business and was favorably reviewed by Sam Wilson:

For once the term 'smash hit' has most particular meaning as it may be applied to this show. Larry Douglas and Fran Warren give first rate account of their full-bodied roles; look and sing well, act with conviction.62

The Pajama Game provided a rousing conclusion to an excellent season. For the first time under Robert Boda's management only one amateur play was produced during a theatrical year. The Independent Players presented the Jerome Kern musical Music in the Air.

Unlike the disappointing 1953-54 season when trivial farces comprised the majority of the Hartman schedule, during 1954-55 Robert Boda presented his patrons with a variety of excellent theatrical attractions, all of which were box-office successes. High quality productions continued throughout the remaining three seasons of Boda's career.
The return of a popular comedy, two successful musicals, a dance troupe, and a world premiere were shown at the Hartman Theatre during the fall and the early winter season of 1955-56. The Teahouse of the August Moon, featuring Larry Parks, Thomas Coley, and John Alexander, drew well when it opened the week of October 5. The first Theatre Guild show of the new season was Kismet, which played for a week beginning the twenty-fourth of October. The Robert Wright, George Forrest, Charles Lederer, Luther Davis musical was very successful both at the box-office and with the critics. Earle MacVeigh, Martha Errolle, and Margot Moser headed the company. Following Kismet, Carmen Amaya and her company of twenty Spanish dancers played a one-performance engagement on Tuesday evening, the first of November. The tour was Miss Amaya's first appearance in the United States since 1945. The Hartman audience was small but enthusiastic. The second musical of the season, the Cole Porter, Abe Burrows show Can-Can did excellent business and impressed Norman Nadel when it opened a week's engagement on November 14:

There are more than two hours of buoyant enchantment in this lovely show. One of the special qualities of Can-Can is that all the dancing, the romance and the comedy is lusty without being vulgar, sexy without being shady. The cast is excellent. Rita Dimitri is wonderfully zestful, John Tyers sings and acts handsomely, Ferdinand Hilt imparts more flourish and style to the role of the art critic than it had in the original company. Can-Can deserves to play to capacity every night this week.63
This musical was one of the most expensive shows to tour during the nineteen fifties. It had seventeen scenes and more than 24,000 pounds of steel were needed for counterweights. It required over 1,000 manhours to hang the elaborate scenery and to set the lighting.\footnote{64}

The Hartman Theatre was selected by the Theatre Guild for the world premiere of the Henry Denker, Ralph Berkey Korean War drama \textit{Valour Will Weep}. This play, whose title was changed to \textit{Time Limit} before reaching New York, did only fair business during its December 1, 2, and 3 Columbus engagement despite the fact that it opened as a world premiere and despite the critical acclaim accorded it by Sam Wilson:

A blockbuster of a play in matter both of its powerfully affecting theatrical quality and of the explosive cogency of the moral problem it poses and of the ethical and legalistic questions it presents for searching consideration by every member of its audience. Emotions and conscience both are subject to fairly overwhelming assault in the course of the three acts.

Mechanically the play is most shrewdly contrived. Characters are well drawn, all important discussion of ideas is supremely well integrated into the personal dramas brought to stage.

Thursday night's first performance anywhere, was generally most effective. Arthur Kennedy's Colonel Edwards is the determining factor in the pacing and tensile strength of nearly every major scene and is responsible for the secure building of the main line of the drama. Character development and every other duty he owed the play were supremely well taken care of by Mr. Kennedy.

The torment of Major Cargill was most sensibly disclosed by Richard Kiley. Thomas Carlin gave really forceful emotional account of the role of Miller, and Harvey Stephens was beyond cavil as
General Connors. Patricia Benoit played with
greatest poignance her one scene. Allyn McLerie
was excellent as Jean Evans. Frank Aletter
handled with lightness and tasteful discretion
the comedy role of Technical Sergeant Baker.
John Connell was first rate as Captain Joseph
Connors, Jr.

Al Sanders, Mark Weston, Jerry Morris, Lionel
Ames, Robert Drew, Kai Deei and Ch' Ao-Li complete
the cast.

Ralph Alswang’s setting is spectacularly good.
Last night’s audience, which gave the cast an
almost unprecedented (for us) half dozen clam-
orous curtain calls, seemed to feel it can’t miss
on Broadway. Can’t figure a miss myself.65

The opening night audience and Mr. Wilson were correct.

Time Limit opened at the Booth Theatre in New York on
January 24, 1956, to favorable reviews. The lack of at-
tendance at the Hartman may be explained by the fact that
the playwrights were scarcely known by Columbus theatre-
goers and that there was very little advance excitement or
publicity concerning the premiere or the production itself.66

This was the last world premiere staged at the Hartman
Theatre under Robert Boda’s management.

Bue Stop, William Inge’s character comedy, was the
first presentation of 1956. Starring Peggy Ann Garner,
Albert Salmi, and Glenn Anders this third Theatre Guild
selection was a box-office success during January 19, 20,
and 21. The return of Tea and Sympathy, featuring Maria
Riva, failed to attract the large crowds the drama had drawn
during its previous engagement. There were no matinee pre-
sentations of this play during its January 26, 27, and 28
run; instead performances were held at 7:00 and 9:40 on
Saturday evening. Moderate box-office activity was created by the fourth Theatre Guild show, *Anniversary Waltz*. The comedy by Jerome Chodorov and Joseph Fields received favorable, though not exceptional, notices from the Columbus critics. Andrew Duggan and Augusta Roeland played the principal roles.

One of the two dramatic successes of 1956 opened on February 9 for a three-day run. Maxwell Anderson's drama, *The Bad Seed*, the fifth Theatre Guild play, received high praise from critic Nadel:

*The Bad Seed* is a stunning play, brilliantly executed. While the play is melodramatic, it is not superficial. The playwright probes deeply into the nature of human behavior. Nancy Kelly originated the role of the mother in New York. Last night she played it with an intensity, a devotion to detail and an eloquence that were markedly greater than on my first exposure to her in this part. The good company includes little Kimetha Laurie as the lethal offspring. An engaging youngster, she succeeds in being thoroughly hateful.67

In terms of Broadway longevity, *The Bad Seed* was the most successful work of Maxwell Anderson's thirty-two play career. It ran on Broadway 334 performances and was included among the ten best plays of 1954-55.68

The second successful drama of 1956 was Marcelle Maurette's *Anastasia*. The final Theatre Guild presentation, starring Viveca Lindfors and Eugenie Leontovich, was applauded both by the Hartman audiences and by Norman Nadel:
There is a grand tradition in the theatre—a rare kind of acting that blends absolute authority with impeccable craftsmanship. It is so elusive as to be thought obsolete from time to time until one play, or one part of a play, reaffirms this grand tradition. Last night it happened in Columbus.

The Alan Schneider-directed work played to large crowds the week of April 11. Robert Boda ended his noteworthy season with Sandy Wilson’s musical *The Boy Friend*. This play was one of the most popular attractions of the year, and according to Sam Wilson it provided an excellent conclusion to a profitable season.

If the Hartman’s present season is ending with *The Boy Friend* no one, but no one, could ask for a livelier, funnier, more generally inspired lot of entertainment than is provided by this fabulous British parody of the musical comedies of the 20’s.

This play was the first musical show of British origin to succeed on Broadway since 1937 and was theatrically significant because it began the steady stream of British imports that have been so successful in New York since 1954. The music of *The Boy Friend*, played in the style of the nineteen twenties, was so popular that impromptu concerts were presented at the conclusion of each performance on Broadway and on tour. This musical, featuring Jo Ann Bayless, John Hewer, and Ruth Altman, closed the Hartman’s 1955-56 season the week of April 18. For the second consecutive year there appeared at the Hartman only one amateur event. The Independent Players presented Rodgers and
Hammerstein's *Carousel* during the spring season.

1955-56 was a noteworthy year for Boda since most of the plays presented by him were both financially and artistically successful. Only *Valour Will Weep* (*Time Limit*) and *Tea and Sympathy* failed to attract large numbers of theatre-goers into the Hartman. Columbus patrons had been provided a wide variety of entertainment—three hit musicals, three good comedies, four significant dramas and one excellent dance troupe, and the Hartman's clientele supported Boda's theatrical events in large numbers.

The 1956-57 season was one of the Hartman's best during the nineteen fifties. Four outstanding dramas and a worthy musical highlighted the theatrical year. *Inherit the Wind*, starring Melvyn Douglas and Leon B. Stevens, launched the new schedule playing before large audiences the week of October 15. Sam Wilson approved of the initial Theatre Guild production:

An adroitly fashioned and brilliantly staged play based on the Scopes' trial of 1925, the piece is full of challenging ideas powerfully presented and of tremendous theatrical drive and impact. Melvyn Douglas, as Henry Drummond, gives as cogent and as individually arresting account of the character as did Paul Muni at the start of the play's engagement on Broadway.

Before heading the road company Mr. Douglas played in the New York production when Muni was forced out of the cast by an eye operation. New York critics praised Mr. Douglas' per-
formance, and he took on new stature as a dramatic actor. Previously, he had been regarded, on the basis of his performances, primarily as a highly skilled performer in the field of light comedy. With a cast of sixty-five, Inherit the Wind was one of the largest dramatic productions ever staged at the Hartman Theatre. So many lights were used, including both shadow lights and shifting spots, that the Hartman had to increase its voltage by 3,000 amps prior to each presentation.72 The only comedy of the season, Carolyn Green’s Janus, appeared as the second play on the Theatre Guild’s subscription list for 1956-57. Medium-sized audiences saw Joan Bennett, Donald Cook, Jerome Cowan, and Romney Brent perform the piece. Excellent business was stimulated by the appearance of Vivian Blaine, Mark Richman, Frank Silvera, and Harry Guardino in A Hatful of Rain. Sam Wilson, however, did not like Michael V. Gazzo’s drama:

Here’s a play designed primarily to subject audience sensibilities to unrelenting tension and to shock after shock; a dispersed dramatic composition which never achieves central point of view, is vague in motivation and none too tidy in either statement or resolution of main and minor narrative themes.73

The third Theatre Guild play originated as an improvisational exercise in the Actor’s Studio in New York City. Playwright Gazzo expanded and dramatized the improvisation into this full length play. It proved very successful at the Hartman during its November 8, 9, and 10 engagement.
Following the return of The Pajama Game on November 22, 23, and 24, the Hartman played the third dramatic production of the fall and early winter season. Despite an excellent review by Sam Wilson Enid Bagnold's The Chalk Garden drew poorly during its December 20, 21, and 22 run. Mr. Wilson wrote:

First rate theatrical caviar delectably served up to appeal to the most sophisticated playgoers' palates is available at the Hartman. The delightful fable is brilliantly played out by a company headed by Judith Anderson as Miss Madrigal. Here is a completely fascinating and warmly persuasive performance.74

Audience attendance was slight because many Hartman patrons found the play confusing to them and difficult to understand. Their reaction to this play was similar to that following The Dark is Light Enough. Disparaging remarks among Columbus playgoers caused the fourth Theatre Guild production to be a financial failure.75

Only two events were billed at the Hartman Theatre during the winter of 1957. Tennessee Williams' dramatic Cat on a Hot Tin Roof opened on the final day of January for a three-day run and drew the following comments from The Columbus Citizen's William G. Moore:

A brilliantly written competently acted play about some completely disgusting people opened at the Hartman Theatre. Cat on a Hot Tin Roof is a brutal, harsh in spots, vulgar play. But the sheer emotional impact of Williams' writing paralyzes an audience that under other circumstances would bolt for the exits. Cat is typical Tennessee Williams--violent, emotional, stomach-churning.76
As mentioned earlier, Tennessee Williams' plays, aside from *A Streetcar Named Desire*, did not draw well at the Hartman, and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, as could be expected, did only mediocre business. Thomas Gomez, who had appeared at the Hartman several times with the Lunt's acting company, Marjorie Steele, Alex Nicol, and Madeline Sherwood starred in this Elia Kazan-directed production. This drama won the Pulitzer Prize and the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for being voted the best play of the 1955-56 season.

The final play of the short season, *Damn Yankees*, was performed before large crowds during the week of February 11. Norman Nadel wrote:

> New or old, *Damn Yankees* continues to be a festive show that packs the customers in and sends them home happy. It has a good book, an antic pace, wit, style and fantasy.

The George Abbott, Douglass Wallop, Richard Adler, Jerry Ross musical was the sixth Theatre Guild show of the year and featured Bobby Clark, Sherry O'Neil, and Ralph Lowe.

The amateurs staged a comeback during 1956-57, producing four shows. In addition to the Independent Players' *Plain and Fancy* and the Princeton Triangle Club's *Take a Gander*, Hartt College of Music produced *Miranda and the Dark Young Man*, and the Columbus Lyric Theatre presented Puccini's *The Cloak*.

The 1956-57 season marked a sharp decline in theatrical activity at the Hartman Theatre. Only seven pro-
ductions were presented between October, 1956 and February, 1957. There was no spring season. The shortage of available touring productions was partly responsible for the Hartman's diminished schedule. Also, Robert Boda was aging and did not want to handle more than a few shows each season. Though the number of events had decreased, the quality of the various 1956-57 presentations was of a high calibre, a situation that extended through the 1957-58 theatrical year.

Robert Boda's final full season as the manager of the Hartman Theatre began on October 24 with Jean Anouilh's *The Waltz of the Toreadors*. For the second time in as many years, Melvyn Douglas starred in the Hartman's opening production and received an excellent notice from Sam Wilson:

Melvyn Douglas gives a bravura performance as General St. Pe. His broad comedy tears laughs from the throat; his moments of seriousness bring with them a power and a truthfulness that tear one's emotions to shreds. *The Waltz of the Toreadors* opens the Hartman's new season with all the dazzling distinction any theatre manager could hope for on such occasion.

Despite critical acclaim and a well known cast headed by Mr. Douglas, Paulette Goddard, Lily Darvas, and George Macready, the comedy was not a box-office success, with Theatre Guild subscribers comprising the majority of the audiences. This work, which won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award as the best foreign play of 1956, marked Melvyn Douglas's last appearance at the Hartman Theatre. The second
comedy in a series of three that opened the fall season arrived in Columbus for a three-day run on November 11. *The Happiest Millionaire*, by Kyle Crichton, starred Walter Pidgeon in his first stage role in twenty years. This Theatre Guild show, which co-starred George Grizzard, drew well and pleased the Columbus critics. Capacity audiences viewed *No Time for Sergeants*, the third comedy of the season, when it played the week of November 18. Ira Levin's play featured James Holden, King Calder, and Louis Beachner and pleased Sam Wilson:

> It had Hartman first-nighters fairly whooping it up from first curtain to last. The script is enormously funny and theatrically smartly devised. Performance has exactly the slap and dash and comic accent and drollery the comedy demands.80

Columbus was one of twenty-two cities to see the third Theatre Guild attraction on its eastern and midwestern tour.

Paddy Chayefsky's *Middle of the Night* was the first drama presented at the Hartman during 1957-58. Good crowds attended the week of November 25 to see Edward G. Robinson, Mona Freeman, June Walker, and Martin Landau in the play that marked Mr. Robinson's return to the Broadway stage after twenty-five years in Hollywood. The Joshua Logan production was approved by the critics. Sam Wilson said: "*Middle of the Night* is an admirable attraction for theatre-goers."81
The 1955-56 Pulitzer Prize and New York Drama Critics' Circle Award winner, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, was the only event of the 1958 winter season. The fourth Theatre Guild play attracted near-capacity houses and good reviews during its January 13, 14, and 15 run. William Fulwider wrote:

Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett have finely dramatized Anne's Diary, losing none of the mental torture as well as the humor that abounded despite the hopelessness of their subjects' futures. The play itself is deliberate. Yet you can't help but feel the power of its final tragic explosion gradually building up.82

Joseph Schildkraut, Abigail Kellogg, and Steve Press headed the touring company. Following *The Diary of Anne Frank* a period of nearly two months elapsed before the next attraction was billed at the Hartman Theatre. During the week of March 10 one of the most successful engagements Robert Bode ever booked occupied the Hartman stage. Playing to full houses at every performance, the Jerome Lawrence, Robert E. Lee musical *Auntie Mame* was the most popular presentation during the 1957-58 season and one of the most successful productions shown at the Hartman in the nineteen fifties. Constance Bennett, Dorothy Sefton, Bernice McLaughlin, Dulcie Cooper, Arthur Barnett, and Kendall Clark starred in the fifth Theatre Guild show of the year.

The final event of 1957-58 provided Hartman audiences their first opportunity of seeing a Eugene O'Neill
play since the ill-fated *A Moon for the Misbegotten* in 1947. On the last day of March the dramatic *Long Day's Journey Into Night* opened a three-day run to sparse audiences despite critical acclaim. Sam Wilson wrote:

> Played with all encompassing understanding, with sometimes muted, sometimes wide open passionate intensity, with vast tenderness and with unsparing pitilessness, Eugene O'Neill's autobiographical *Long Day's Journey Into Night* was presented at the Hartman last evening.

> The play is a dissection of hearts and minds in torment, gives description less of events of a single day than of the family contacts of a day which lay bare the tragic relationships of four people bound together by ties of love and hatred, sympathy and bitter mutual resentment, sense of hopeless communal frustration.

> Full realization of its theatre value is dependent on the performance given it. Last night's was far more compelling and sentimentally moving than the one I saw in New York. Fay Bainter gives a genuinely magnificent account of the enormously difficult and crucially important role of Mary Tyrone. As sustained characterization her achievement is beyond describing. Her last scene is a veritable acting miracle.

> Anew McMaster leaves no facet of the character of James Tyrone, Sr. unexplored, or under or over exposed. He's everything O'Neill demanded the actor playing the flamboyant, penurious, humanly appealing and aggravating James should be. Chet Learning, as the sensitive, ailing younger son, gives a richly detailed, infinitely touching performance. Roy Poole is ideally cast as the wastrel, James. Liz Thackston, as Cathleen, makes the small role of the maid one of considerable merit.

> Anew McMaster was one of Ireland's leading actors. He was Mrs. Patrick Campbell's leading man at seventeen years of age, playing Shakespeare and Ibsen. Mr. McMaster, who was known in Ireland as "The Great Mac", also performed in the companies of Sir Joseph Beecham and Sir Herbert Tree.
He also had the distinction of being the first Hamlet at the New Memorial Theatre at Stratford-on-Avon. Prior to Long Day's Journey Into Night, the Irish actor performed a repertoire of Shakespeare, Oscar Wilde, and Ibsen and appeared in Winterset with Burgess Meredith and Paulette Goddard in his native country. The O'Neill drama, which marked Mr. McMaster's American debut, won the Pulitzer Prize, the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award, and the Antionette Perry Award, plus the added distinction of being selected as the representative American play at the Paris Drama Festival in the summer of 1957.  

Long Day's Journey Into Night was written in 1940 but it was not until 1946 that O'Neill admitted he had written it. He stipulated at that time that the work could not be produced until twenty-five years after his death. When the author died in 1953, there was a renewed interest in his life's work, and in 1956 his widow, Carlotta Monterey, consented to have the play produced. Amateur activity for 1957-58 was limited to one production. The Pajama Game was presented by the Independent Players during the winter season.

Except for the first three shows produced during the early 1958-59 fall season, 1957-58 was Robert F. Boda's final season at the Hartman Theatre. Following an illness of two months, Mr. Boda died of a heart ailment on Thursday
evening, November 13, 1958. Ironically this was the forty-seventh anniversary of the Hartman's opening night. The seventy-one year old manager had been in failing health for some time and during the last several months of his career had been working from his home. Boda had been in charge of the Hartman since January, 1938 and had presented 334 traveling professional attractions for Columbus theatregoers during his twenty years as the Hartman's manager. He was responsible for bringing the best of Broadway to Columbus, and as a result of his efforts, the Hartman was the scene of several world premieres, and his opinions were highly regarded throughout the theatrical profession. For thousands of central Ohioans the name Robert Boda was synonymous with legitimate theatre. His death left a void that has never been successfully filled. Eulogizing Boda The Ohio State Journal commented:

In Robert F. Boda there was that essential mixture of artistic appreciation and business acumen that mark the most successful theatre managers. Boda was recognized in New York and throughout the country as one of the leading impresarios of the American stage. He was more than a merchandiser, he was like a curator of a museum of the lively arts, making a solid contribution to his community at the same time that he delighted, entertained and stimulated several generations of theatregoers. His contribution to his community was a solid one, his place in the history of Columbus is unique.

Wrote Norman Nadel:

Robert Boda was a cut above the traditional theatre manager. For one thing, he had the culture and good breeding more apt to be found
in a university president. He was a meticulous
gentleman—quiet, conservative in his tastes,
gracious in his manners. He spoke softly. For
another, he was a bit more sentimental than the
ordinary person, in or out of theatre. He was
clear-headed about business, but not tough. The
most glowing tribute to Boda living (and it will
be no different now), was to hear New York pro-
ducers, managers and press agents speak of the
Hartman’s manager. Each could recall some cour-
tesy, beyond that usually extended a visiting
actor, director, or stagehand. Invariably they
would describe the wonderful co-operation they
had received while visiting the Hartman, and
wind up with: 'Say hello to Bob Boda for me.'
Boda was considerably more than a local per-
sonage. From the Lambs Club just off Times
Square (he was a member of that distinguished
theatrical brotherhood), to the J. J. Shubert
office, to every theatre professional, they all
asked about Bob Boda.88

Two days after her husband’s death Mrs. Lydia Wilson
Boda announced:

The Hartman Theatre will go on as before.
The lease provides that the theatre shall be
operated by 'heirs and assignees' of Mr. Boda,
in the event of his death. That means me.89

She added that she had learned a great deal about theatre
operations over the years of helping her husband. The Bodas
were married fifty years, and most of that time she had as-
sisted in the office or box-office. Mrs. Boda regularly
made play-booking trips to New York with her husband and was
known by many Broadway producers and managers.90

"Tell the people of Columbus not to worry," she said.
"They'll have the Hartman, just as it has been all these
years, for a long time to come."91
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CHAPTER VI

The Final Years of Lydia Boda: 1958-1963

Although Robert Boda's death did not occur until after three productions had been presented at the Hartman in the fall of 1958, his illness had confined him to his home for two months, so for all intents and purposes, Lydia Boda was actually managing the Hartman for the entire 1958-59 season.

The final five years of the Hartman Theatre under Lydia Boda's management differed little from the seasons during the nineteen fifties. Mrs. Boda continued her husband's managerial policies, and the trend established during the 1953-54 season of a reduced schedule but high-quality productions continued. Although the last five seasons contained no more than nine shows each, most of the presentations were significant, worthwhile events. The Theatre Guild continued its association with the Hartman, and by and large attendance during Mrs. Boda's regime was satisfactory.

Lydia Boda began her first year as the Hartman Theatre's manager on October 13 when the Norman Panama, Melvin Frank, Gene de Paul, Johnny Mercer musical Li'l Abner
opened a three-day engagement. This was the first tour for the show which was planned originally as a motion picture preview. After its 1956 Broadway premiere the stage production was so successful that the film plans were delayed three years.¹ Norman Nadel said of the road company production:

*Li'l Abner* looked better at the Hartman Theatre last night than it did in Manhattan a couple of seasons ago. The visiting company, made up of both original cast members and talented replacements, could hardly be improved upon.²

Robert Kaye, Patricia Northrup, Dean Dittman, and Charlotte Nolan headed the cast that performed the musical before large crowds at each performance.

The initial Theatre Guild play of the new season, John Osborne's, *Look Back in Anger*, caused controversy and consternation among Columbus theatregoers. During each of its performances many audience members left the theatre, and several cancelled their Guild subscriptions for the remainder of the season. The taut, heavy drama was entirely too shocking for numerous Hartman patrons.³ In this drama, which won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award as the best foreign play of 1957, playwright Osborne has spoken for England's "angry young men," a group similar to the "beat generation" which flourished in the United States during the nineteen fifties. Exactly what these young men were angry about is difficult to discover; their anger seemed
concentrated on the alleged lack of opportunity in the world. They were also bitter about society, sex, government, lack of communication among men, and most anything else which comes to mind. Look Back in Anger depicts one of these angry men in his duel with desperation. Kenneth Haigh, Diana Hyland, Al Muscari, Elizabeth Hubbard, and Jack Livesey appeared in the drama which had prompted Norman Nadal to write:

This is heavy drama that may shock the socks off some people, disgust others. It doesn't make a valid point, but it certainly is vivid. It is taut from start to finish, and there can be no discounting its nose-in-the garbage realism. Look Back in Anger may not do much for your soul, but it is astringent theatre, expertly played.4

Box-office activity was slight during the play’s October 23 through 25 run.

The final event presented at the Hartman Theatre during Robert Boda’s career was Ballet: U. S. A. This show was created by Jerome Robbins for the Festival of Two Worlds at Spoleto, Italy, in June, 1957. It attracted so much attention and broke so many records at the Maggio Festival in Florence, Italy, and at the Brussel’s World’s Fair that it was brought to New York where it played to capacity houses at the Alvin Theatre before beginning a nationwide tour.5 Despite critical acclaim, the second Theatre Guild presentation drew, as usual when ballet was performed at the Hartman, small audiences from November 5 through the 8.
The closing of *Ballet U. S. A.* marked the end of a theatrical era for Columbus playgoers. For the first time in nearly twenty years the Hartman Theatre was officially under new management. Lydia Boda's initial presentation, *Romanoff and Juliet*, opened on November 20, seven days after Robert Boda's death. The comedy, written by and starring Peter Ustinov, received good reviews and was well attended during its three-day engagement. Henry Lascoe, Humphrey Davis, and Marianne Deeming were also in the company of the third Theatre Guild play of the season. Good business and mediocre reviews greeted the last play presented at the Hartman in 1958. *The Warm Peninsula*, a comedy written by Joe Masteroff, starring Julie Harris, visited Columbus on December 15, 16, and 17 on its pre-Broadway tour. This play was the fourth selection on the Theatre Guild's subscription list.

The only other event of the abbreviated 1958-59 season was William Inge's drama, *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*. Starring Barbara Baxley, George Smith, and Sandy Dennis, the Elia Kazan production drew large crowds and favorable notices during its March 18 through 21 run. Abe Zaidan wrote:

> In *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs* William Inge has given us a deceptively confined domestic drama in which truth speaks softly but carries a big stick...It would be a great disservice to everyone concerned if the Hartman is not jammed for the remainder of the week.6
The Independent Players’ production of *Brigadoon* was the single amateur presentation of the year.

Despite the fact that one play aroused the ire of numerous Hartman patrons, and only six shows, the fewest in the Hartman’s history, were produced during 1958-59, Mrs. Boda’s first season must be considered successful. Four of the productions proved popular with both the critics and audiences alike, as Mrs. Boda demonstrated her managerial ability during her inaugural year. Her success continued in 1959-60 when she staged one world premiere and three other excellent plays at the Hartman Theatre.

Dore Schary’s biographical *Sunrise at Campobello* opened Lydia Boda’s second season earlier than usual when it began a four-day run on September 16. The Columbus engagement marked the initial performance of a limited six-city national tour, and capacity audiences filled the Hartman for every performance. The first Theatre Guild presentation also impressed the critics and Sam Wilson wrote:

*Sunrise at Campobello* is a play based on factual circumstances and happening in themselves so dramatic and historically, as time has proved, so momentous that astute selection of material and stagewise arrangement of this material have turned into rousing good theatre fare. It has been most knowingly directed and is brilliantly played. Ralph Bellamy’s characterization of Franklin D. Roosevelt is genuinely a technical tour de force.

Ann Shoemaker, Russell Collins, Michaele Myers, and Alan Bunce supported Mr. Bellamy. Despite the objections of the
New York booking office who said that Columbus theatregoers would not pay the additional fare, Mrs. Boda raised ticket prices for the last half of the engagement, and capacity business proved her judgment correct.  

Two unsuccessful farces followed *Sunrise at Campobello* into the Hartman. *Hilary*, Don M. Mankiewicz's piece, starring Joan Fontaine and Tom Helmore, opened a three-day engagement on November 12 to critical disfavor and small houses. Next came Nancy Kelly and Polly Rowles in *A Mighty Man Is He*. This Arthur Kober, George Oppenheimer play received the same response as *Hilary* had during its November 18 through 21 visit. Both productions were on the Theatre Guild's subscription list. The final play staged at the Hartman Theatre during the nineteen fifties and the fourth Guild attraction of the season, was Friedrich Schiller's *Mary Stuart*. The work was well attended during its December 16 through 19 run, and received high praise from critic Wilson:  

Powerfully acted, sumptuously costumed, imaginatively set and lighted this National Phoenix Theatre production of Friedrich Schiller's greatest play is enormously exciting theatre. In fact nothing as theatrically compelling, in kind, has been seen on the road in many years past.  

This Tyrone Guthrie production featured Signe Hasso, Muriel Kirkland, and Staats Cotsworth in the principal roles. Miss Kirkland replaced Eva Le Gallienne when the latter was taken to a hospital in Cleveland with pneumonia prior to the Hartman opening.
The first of three world premieres produced at the Hartman under Lydia Boda's management was the initial presentation of the new decade. A Thurber Carnival had its first showing anywhere on January 7, 1960 when Tom Ewell, Paul Ford, Peggy Cass, John McGiver, and Alice Ghostly performed the revue before a capacity house with standing-room-only. The production involved unusually complicated stage machinery. A moving treadmill and three revolving stages were needed to show the twenty sketches which comprised this unique revue. A special stage crew arrived several days in advance of the show to hang the newly designed scenery and to insure that the mechanical equipment would function properly. Author James Thurber, a Columbus, Ohio native, was so pleased with the plans for the production that he wrote three times the number of sketches originally planned for the show. The presentation of A Thurber Carnival marked the first time that Thurber's cartoon characters had ever been presented on a stage. Although the production was quite lengthy, lasting almost until midnight, Sam Wilson found the show delightful:

Ingredients for the assembling and serving-up of a rich and savory theatre-gourmet's feast were plentifully displayed on the stage of the Hartman Theatre during the world premiere performance of A Thurber Carnival.
Burgess Meredith's idea of a staged anthology of the published works of James Thurber could prove to have been an inspired one—is, in fact, already proved even though its full promise is not ideally realized at the present moment. Such realization may be expected only when the extremely complex machinery of the revue's staging is operating with utmost precision and when the virtuoso company of players appearing in it becomes wholly acclimated to working on three frequently and swiftly turning revolving stages and a treadmill.

A Thurber Carnival hits unique highs with such things as Tom Ewell's superb solo delivery of "The Night the Bed Fell on Father" and "Tribute to a Dog."

Memorable highlights, too, are "Mr. Preble Gets Rid of His Wife," played to the comic hilt by Paul Ford and Peggy Cass. "The Departure of Emma Inch" is affectingly turned out by Mr. Ford and Alice Ghostly. "Gentlemen Shoppers," with Ewell, Ford, John McGiver and Wynn Miller, is wholly hilarious. "The Unicorn in the Garden" is still another major delight.

The incidental music composed by Don Elliott and played from a stage box is brilliant jazz fare, is wonderfully opposite to every requirement of the show, and the performance given it is fairly of show-stealing quality and kind. Decor and costuming are beyond cavil.

Shouts for the author failed to get Mr. Thurber out on stage after last night's final curtain. Nor did Mr. Meredith put in an appearance. Too bad. The big demonstration belonged in major part to them."

Because of Thurber's association with Columbus and because the elaborate machinery was so difficult to install and dismantle, Mrs. Boda wanted to book the show for a week's run, believing that Columbus patrons would support the revue for that duration. Thurber, however, thought that no one in Columbus would remember him and that the show would not draw well, so he allowed it to be shown for only three days.
The large number of ticket requests and the capacity houses for each performance indicated the play could, indeed, have run successfully for a week. *A Thurber Carnival* provided Lydia Boda with one of the most rewarding engagements during her five years as the Hartman's manager.13

Unquestionably, the dramatic highlight of 1960 was Archibald MacLeish's Pulitzer Prize winning drama *J. B.* The Elia Kazan-directed work drew critical praise, and Sam Wilson wrote:

> This modern, great poetic play which, in his own words, Archibald MacLeish has constructed 'inside the ancient majesty of the Book of Job' is incontestably one of the most challenging and powerful dramas of modern times.14

Largely because of the publicity campaign staged by Norman Nadel in his daily newspaper column, sell-out crowds attended the January 14, 15, and 16 visit. During the Hartman engagement star Basil Rathbone became seriously ill and his understudy replaced him for the last three performances. Rathbone remained in Columbus to recuperate for several weeks.15

"Genius at work...you can't afford not to see Carol Channing in *Show Business.*"16 Despite this critical appraisal by Sam Wilson, the Charles Gaynor musical revue was a box-office failure during its April 20 through 23 run in Columbus, and caused Mrs. Boda's second Hartman season to end with a financial misfortune. Amateur activities for the
year included a piano recital by Philippa Schuyler and the Independent Players' presentation of the George Abbott, Bob Merrill musical *New Girl in Town*.

The 1959-60 season had been relatively successful for Mrs. Boda and her Hartman patrons. During the year she had provided Columbus theatregoers with a world premiere of a worthwhile comedy and three notable dramas. Only *Hilary*, *A Mighty Man Is He*, and *Show Business* failed to appeal to the Hartman's clientele, and prospects for a rewarding decade during the nineteen sixties at the Hartman Theatre indeed were bright.

The second world premiere of a new play produced at the Hartman Theatre during Lydia Boda's management opened the 1960-61 theatrical year. On September 21 *Invitation to a March*, a comedy written by Arthur Laurents, opened a four-day run. Sam Wilson wrote of the new work:

For all its recourse to carefully contrived devices aimed at giving it novelty of presentation, *Invitation to a March* is rather a conventional comedy. In essence it simply debates familiarly the theatrically thrice familiar question of whether, in choosing a mate, a young girl ought to follow the dictates of her heart, at any and all costs, or whether it is better that she fall in line with those who hold that propriety and security offer all she needs for a good life.

The play is long on dialog, short on action. The action line has nothing unexpected to offer, and the dialog, though it has frequent crackle, offers little original in ideational content. However one may feel about the comedy, in its own right, there's no gainsaying the fact that it offers opportunity for some very showy
acting. Shelley Winters gives warm and graceful account of Camilla. Eileen Heckart has a comic field day with the eccentric Deedee. Madeline Sherwood is all romantic lilt and also hard as nails as Lily. James MacArthur makes wholly charming and generally believable the role of Aaron, and Tom Hatcher scores solidly as Schuyler.

As Mr. Laurents has written her, Norma has little entity as a realistic character. That she seems credible at all is wholly due to the beguiling, intelligent impersonation given her by Jane Fonda. Richard Derr is excellent as Mr. Grogan. Jeffrey Rowland plays the moppet to a fare-ye-well.

The two settings are strikingly handsome and atmospheric and all the other production details are of exemplary kind. If only the play lived up to its cast and trappings.17

In spite of the fact that this was the premiere engagement of a play that featured a nationally known cast, Invitation to a March, the first Theatre Guild show of the season, drew, because of the lack of advance publicity and the unseasonably hot weather, only medium-sized audiences during its initial presentation.18

Paul Osborne's melodramatic The World of Suzie Wong was the only other play on the Hartman's 1960 autumn agenda. Attendance was merely fair during its run the week of October 3.

A large-scale publicity and promotional campaign preceded Once Upon a Mattress, the Hartman's first show of 1961. Starring Columbus native Dody Goodman, Buster Keaton, and Harold Lang, the musical by Mary Rodgers, Jay Thompson, Marshall Barer, and Dean Fuller attracted large crowds the week of January 16. Sam Wilson said:
For lively, uproariously funny, tuneful and, goodness knows, colorful diversion, I give you *Once Upon a Mattress*. It's a delightful show any way you want to look at it.19

This musical was Dody Goodman's first Hartman appearance since she played the theatre as a member of the *Mordkin Ballet* in 1938. Leonard Spigelgass' comedy *A Majority of One* came next on the Hartman's winter schedule. The play starring Gertrude Berg and Sir Cedric Hardwicke was the Theatre Guild's third attraction of the season, and it pleased both the critics and the theatregoers alike the week of February 8. Sam Wilson wrote:

> It seems most likely that the 1960-61 theatre season in Columbus will be longest and best remembered for *A Majority of One*. Gertrude Berg gives a fairly fabulous account of the role of Mrs. Jacoby. Cedric Hardwicke gives a matchingly remarkable performance as Mr. Asano. These two point lines both for laughter and for significance in bravura style.20

The Hartman's 1961 spring season began on April 19 when Judith Evelyn and Guy Spauld starred in *Five Finger Exercise*. Though the drama received excellent reviews, it was not a financial success for Mrs. Boda. Following the Hartman engagement, which closed the play's national tour, producers Frederick Brisson and The Playwrights' Company gave the Oliver Smith-designed sets to Mershon Auditorium located on The Ohio State University campus.21

One of the most extravagant promotional campaigns undertaken for any Hartman production heralded the three-day
run of the 1960 Pulitzer Prize, New York Drama Critics' Circle Award, and Antionette Perry Award winning musical *Fiorello!* Both before and during the May 4 opening producers Martin Tahse and C. Edwin Knill arranged for thousands of handbills to be distributed throughout Columbus and held several fire engine parades around the State Capitol Building. On opening night two fire trucks, with searchlights blazing, were parked before the Hartman.22 The fire engine promotion was designed to relate with Mayor LaGuardia's penchant for answering and following fire calls in New York City. The promotion was successful, and the George Abbott, Jerome Weidman, Jerry Bock, Sheldon Harnick musical played to large audiences at the Hartman. Sam Wilson liked the show and reported:

First nighters received *Fiorello!* the brilliantly fabricated and staged show, with acclaim. Not surprising since the musical, to almost understated cases, is nothing more nor less than great theatre...Bob Carroll scores solidly in the title role, gives a performance both temperate and dynamic.23

Jen Nelson, Carlotta Fairchild, Zena North, and Ohio State University graduate Paul Lipson had featured roles in this fifth Theatre Guild production.

The Hartman's 1960-61 season closed following the May 25, 26, and 27 booking of the 1960 New York Drama Critics' Circle Award winning *A Raisin in the Sun*. Playing primarily before Theatre Guild subscribers, the drama was favorably reviewed by critic Wilson:
A Raisin in the Sun is an wholly absorbing, deeply moving study of family life and also a social document of penetrating kind. It is a message play which stays well away from the soap-box. As theatre it is tremendous. Claudia MacNeil is magnificent as the mother, playing the heroic role with fabulous subtlety of nuance and with tremendous power. Douglas Turner gives virtuoso account of the role of Walter, and Diana Sands is excellent as the daughter.  

The success of A Raisin in the Sun is unique in that it was the first play written by Lorraine Hansberry, Negro housewife. Its director, Lloyd Richards, was the first Negro ever to stage a play on Broadway, and Philip Rose and David J. Cogran, the producers, never had done anything in the theatre before. All this added up to a combination of "firsts" that made theatrical history. The Princeton Triangle Club's musical A Mid-Summer Night Screamer was the only amateur presentation of the year.  

Once again Mrs. Boda had provided Columbus with a variety of worthwhile theatrical fare. During the 1960-61 season she had presented two comedies--one a world premiere--two successful musicals, and three good dramas. Though there were but seven productions presented at the Hartman in 1960-61, the season must be regarded as successful because of the high calibre shows produced. With the possible exception of The World of Suzie Wong, the Hartman's 1960-61 bill contained some of the best plays the American theatre was producing during the early nineteen sixties.
The 1961-62 season was the busiest year at the Hartman during Lydia Boda’s management. The theatrical year, which contained nine productions, began on October 5 when William Gibson’s The Miracle Worker opened a three-day engagement. The Columbus Citizen-Journal critic Ron Pataky wrote:

The Miracle Worker is a simple, beautiful story of a young girl’s battle to surmount the problems of a child in a sightless, soundless world. The play utilizes a beautifully balanced combination of humor and heartwarming drama to tell its story. It is a message of hope, told with a minimum of melodramatics. Those who see The Miracle Worker will remember it for its powerful drama.25

Unfortunately, despite critical approval, the play drew poorly. The Miracle Worker was one of Mrs. Boda’s most disappointing bookings during her five years at the Hartman.26 Advise and Consent, the second of three dramas that dominated the Hartman’s fall schedule, played to good houses and mediocre reviews on October 19, 20, and 21. Farley Granger, Chester Morris, House Jameson, and Royal Beal starred in Loring Mandel’s political drama. The first Theatre Guild attraction of the year, Toys in the Attic, was the third serious play of 1961-62. The Lillian Hellman drama, which won the New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award for the best play of 1960, featured Constance Bennett, Ann Revere, Patricia Jessel, and Scott McKay on its 1961-62 twenty-three-city tour. Primarily because of the play’s subject matter and Sam Wilson’s derogatory comments,
box-office activity was extremely limited. Mr. Wilson said:

The play as a whole is really just adroitly contrived, lurid commercial melodrama pretending to be an objectively penetrating sociological and psychological document. The sensationalism gets so out of hand that at times going gets almost ludicrous. 28

During the week of November 27 the Hartman hosted the first musical of the season—La Plume de Ma Tante. Written and directed by Robert Dhery, the show starring Robert Clary and Liliane Montevecchi, received high critical praise and played to large crowds during its Columbus run, but unfortunately for the second time in her managerial career Lydia Boda had brought a play to the Hartman that offended many of her clientele. Following the opening night performance and throughout the engagement, Mrs. Boda received numerous letters and telephone calls from patrons complaining about the indelicacy of the French musical. Many of the Theatre Guild subscribers found the production too suggestive and off-color to be presented to Hartman audiences. 29 Paddy Chayefsky's comedy-drama The Tenth Man became both the third Guild show of the season and the final Hartman event of 1961. Medium-sized audiences and excellent notices greeted the work during December 11, 12, and 13.

Sam Wilson commented:

The Tenth Man is superb theatre. It is a play that takes quick possession of your mind and heart and never loosens its grip on either.
To see it is to have a rarely rich playgoing experience, one of benefit to the soul. Jacob Ben-Ami, Anatol Winogradoff, Martin Wolfson, Maurice Shrog, Truman Gage, and David Vardi give memorable account of principal members of the community. Risa Swartz is brilliant as the possessed girl.30

More letters of complaint were received by Lydia Boda following the first play of 1962, Shelagh Delaney's A Taste of Honey. Several of the Hartman's patrons found the romance between a Negro sailor and a white girl extremely objectionable and in very questionable taste.31 However, the drama which was named the best foreign play of 1960-61 by the New York Drama Critics' Circle, was fairly successful at the Hartman box-office and impressed Sam Wilson:

This play mangles the sensibilities as, with relentless candor, it unfolds a tale of appalling happenings in the life of an 18-year-old girl in a Lancashire industrial town. The tragedy is brilliantly played. Frances Cuka gives almost unbearably poignant account of the role of the daughter. Hermione Baddeley makes the mother the wholly unsavory and witchy character she is. Bobby Dean Hooks plays with utmost tactfulness, yet compellingly, the role of the sailor. There's excitement to be gained by a visit to the Hartman--also lots of heavy heartedness.32

A Taste of Honey was the fourth Theatre Guild presentation of 1961-62.

Following a two-month dark period, theatrical activity resumed at the Hartman the last three days of March with the billing of Maxwell Anderson's Elizabeth the Queen.
Starring Eva Le Gallienne, Faye Emerson, and Scott Forbes, the fifth play on the Guild's list drew fairly good houses and fine reviews. The most successful production of the season, Meredith Willson's *The Music Man*, played before capacity audiences the week of April 17. Featuring Harry Hickox, Dianne Barton, and Art Wallace, the musical was the only event to attract full houses during 1961-62. Gore Vidal's *The Best Man*, the second political play of the season, appeared as the final Hartman attraction of Lydia Boda's fourth managerial year. Business and reviews were fair for the sixth Theatre Guild show which featured Don Porter, Scott Brady, and Tom Gorman in principal roles. Amateur productions during 1961-62 included the Independent Players' presentation of *Carousel* and the musical revue *Marry-Go-Round*, presented by the Childhood League of Columbus.

Although Lydia Boda had presented a bill of nine artistically worthwhile attractions, 1961-62 was not a successful season for the Hartman manager. Two of the plays had been unusually offensive to a number of Hartman theatregoers, and only *The Music Man* attracted capacity houses at each performance. Despite the fact that a wide variety of theatre fare was available during the year, Columbus patrons did not support the Hartman Theatre in large numbers. This unfortunate situation continued throughout 1962-63.
The Hartman Theatre opened on October 11, 1962 for its final season under Boda management. The feature for that night and the following two evenings was Jack Sher's farcical comedy *The Perfect Setup*. Starring Gene Barry, Jan Sterling, and Angie Dickinson, the play did little business and received mediocre reviews. William Fulwider wrote:

*The Perfect Setup* based on the tried and tested love triangle theme, with a new twist, starts sluggishly, but gradually picks up steam. It never boils over, however. 33

Special turntables had been constructed to speed up the play's changes of locale, but unfortunately, a truck carrying much of the scenery broke down en route to Columbus, preventing the completion of the complicated settings for opening night. 34 The first Theatre Guild show of the last season, and the only other event on the Hartman's 1962 fall agenda was Jean Kerr's *Mary, Mary*. The comedy attracted large crowds and drew excellent critical comment during the week of October 15. Sam Wilson said:

No funnier play than *Mary, Mary* has come along in years. Just call the comedy a unique, hilarious delight and let it go at that. The humor of the lines makes this play downright glorious diversion. 35

Lee Bowman, Patricia Smith, and John Lasell headed the cast of one of the most successful productions of the 1962-63 season.

After a hiatus of three months, the Hartman opened its winter season January 24, 25, and 26 with *A Shot in the
Dark written by Harry Kurnitz. Annie Farge, Robert Burr, and Joel Thomas starred in the second Theatre Guild play that found favor with Wilson:

A Shot in the Dark is a most ingenious and an exceedingly diverting comedy. Unlikely that any member of the large opening night audience will say it is less than a major delight of the season.36

Opening a three-day engagement on the last day in January, Take Her, She's Mine provided Mrs. Boda with her biggest hit of the year. The Phoebe and Henry Ephron comedy starring Tom Ewell, Joanna Pettet, and Audra Lindlet played to near-capacity houses and received favorable reviews. "A more amusing and more endearing comedy won't be by again for a long time. Don't miss this one," said Sam Wilson. Though Take Her, She's Mine, the fourth Theatre Guild show of the year, did excellent business during its Hartman run, the comedy was not financially successful for Mrs. Boda because the complicated stage equipment (two large jackknife stages) proved very expensive to install and to operate at the Hartman.38

On the evening of February 28, 1963, the last world premiere staged under Boda management opened at the Hartman Theatre. Sophie, Phillip Pruneau and Steve Allen's musical depicting the life of Sophie Tucker, received a mediocre review from critic Irvin Scheibeck:
All the ingredients of a 'hit' are contained in Sophie. But some of them will have to be re-arranged, a few eliminated, and perhaps a few more added if the production reaches its full potential before its New York opening, May 9. Sophie has quite a few things going for it—a book which is generally adequate although a bit too draggy and episodic in the first act; a satisfactory score and a cast which generally succeeds in catching the 'jungle' atmosphere of the theatre as it existed in Sophie's day and probably still does.

Two of the biggest items on the credit side are Libi Staiger and Rosetta LeNoire. Miss Staiger performs the impossible task of being brash, loud, robust and subtle at the same time. Libi's biggest asset is her voice which is strong and true. Miss LeNoire's interpretation of the cynical, worldly-wise maid is flawless.

Art Lund enacts the role of Sophie's pianist, and later her husband, with aplomb and finesse. His voice is equal to the tasks assigned to it. Phil Leeds contributes a satisfactory enactment of Sophie's agent, and Berta Gersten makes a properly apprehensive and later, very proud mama. The ensemble generally turns out polished background performances for the smooth and varied production numbers.

It isn't often that any audience cheers stage settings, but that was the case Thursday night. Although there were a few moments when things got a bit noisy backstage, the massive sets were manipulated with great skill and finesse. It must have been quite a job.

Like all new shows, Sophie needs quite a bit of work. Some of the dialogue could be sharpened and some of the scenes could be shortened or cut entirely.39

Sophie had its premiere at the Hartman largely because Steve Allen had heard of the theatre's unusually fine acoustics, and the author wanted his songs to be first presented in the best possible surroundings.40

Only two events remained on the final spring schedule. On March 11, 12, and 13 Tallulah Bankhead returned to the
Hartman starring in *Here Today*. Written by George Oppenheimer, the play billed as "A Comedy of Bad Manners" was not financially successful despite Sam Wilson’s approval:

That was no ahead-of-schedule equinoxial storm that hit town last night. It was Tallulah Bankhead blasting into the Hartman. With her is Estelle Winwood and between them they made an inconsequential play a theatre piece of uproarious amusement. Miss Bankhead is fantastically funny as she roisters through the farcical what-sit in magnificent style and with no restraint. Miss Winwood, all fluttery confusion, matches Miss Bankhead at every turn.42

*Here Today* was the Theatre Guild’s fifth presentation and marked Miss Bankhead’s first Hartman appearance since *Private Lives* in April, 1948. Medium-sized audiences attended *Carnival*, the final play presented by Lydia Boda at the Hartman Theatre. This show, which won the New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award for being the best musical of 1960, featured Elaine Malbin and David Daniels in principal roles and received a good review from Sam Wilson:

*Carnival* is a charming, imaginatively staged and appealingly played out musical as it is being presented at the Hartman. And it is that rarity in the lyric theatre of the moment, a romantic musical.43

The closing on April 6 of the engagement of the Bob Merrill, Michael Stewart, Helen Reutach musical, marked the end of Lydia Boda’s career as the Hartman’s manager and concluded a fifty-two year theatrical era for Columbus patrons of the Hartman Theatre. A lecture by Robert Welch entitled "Menace
of Communism," the presentation of *The Columbus Civic Ballet*, a musical production featuring *The Sounds of Ed Montgomery*, and the *Merry-Go-Round* produced by the Child-
hood League of Columbus were the amateur events at the Hartman during Mrs. Boda's final year.

The 1962-63 season was not one of Mrs. Boda's most rewarding years. Of the seven attractions presented only *Mary, Mary* and *Take Her, She's Mine* played to near-capacity houses, and the world premiere of *Sophie* was very disappoint-
ing from every point of view. By and large, business during the final season was mediocre, an extremely re-
grettable situation in view of the fact that this was the last year in the long managerial career of the Boda family.

Although for several months prior to the close of the season Mrs. Boda had considered retiring because of her age and her failing health, a bitter dispute with the Theatre Guild hastened her decision to make 1962-63 her final year at the Hartman Theatre. In the spring of 1963 the Guild announced that it would give its subscription list for the hit musical *How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying* to an out-of-town producer. 1962-63 had been a weak Theatre Guild season in Columbus, and Mrs. Boda needed this popular play to strengthen her mediocre year. But the Guild executives refused her request, stating that the musical was to be presented in Veterans Memorial
Auditorium, a house with an infinitely larger seating capacity than the Hartman. Mrs. Boda believed that the Guild, after a compatible twenty-three year relationship between that organization and the Boda family had been grossly unfair in its dealings both with her and with the Hartman's clientele, and she decided to suspend activities at the Hartman. During the summer of 1963 Lydia Boda announced the Hartman Theatre would not open for the fall season.
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CHAPTER VII

Epilogue

The closing of the Hartman in the spring of 1963 terminated the Boda family's association with the East State Street playhouse. During the twenty-five years that Robert and Lydia Boda had managed the Hartman they had provided the audiences of Columbus with 377 professional traveling productions and ninety-six amateur presentations for a total of 473 events staged between 1938 and 1963. These included a wide variety of endeavors and nearly every type of entertainment in the theatrical spectrum was offered throughout the Bodas' managerial careers.

The early years of Robert Boda's management were the most significant years of the road as an influential theatrical force in America. They were the glorious years of the road. When Boda became the Hartman's manager in 1938 the most important performers of the Broadway stage were touring the nation with their original New York successes, and few, if any, theatres outside Manhattan showed more of these stars and plays than the Hartman. Between 1938 and 1943 internationally famous stars such as Helen Hayes, Katharine Cornell, Maurice Evans, Alfred Lunt and Lynn
Fontanne, Walter Hampden, Clifton Webb, George M. Cohan, Cedric Hardwicke, Ethel and John Barrymore, Laurence Olivier, Walter Huston, Paul Muni, Ethel Waters, Raymond Massey, Laurette Taylor, John Garfield, Tallulah Bankhead, Katharine Hepburn, Van Heflin, Joseph Cotton, Bert Lahr, Eddie Dowling, Al Jolson, Paul Lukas, Ed Wynn, and Dennis King performed some of their most memorable roles at the Hartman Theatre. During Robert Bodie's early managerial years virtually every notable theatrical personality appeared at the Hartman in the finest plays produced in the American theatre. Almost every show presented by Boda during his first six years as manager was a noteworthy theatrical event. The great seasons featuring excellent plays with renowned stars continued at the Hartman until 1943. It was during the middle years of World War II that the road began the decline that has lasted to the present.

Following the 1942-43 season the majority of prominent entertainers have refused to go on the road—an extremely unfortunate situation that has, more than any other single factor, led to the near demise of the road as an important aspect of theatre in this country. During the final years of World War II Boda's theatrical schedule began to deviate from the highly impressive pre-war seasons and his bill-of-fare was dominated by propagandistic anti-war dramas and numerous revivals of popular old-time operettas. This occurred primarily because Broadway was suffering through
a relatively unproductive period, so road theatre managers turned to the revivals to complete their seasons and to compensate for the lack of significant new plays. Absent from the Hartman were most of the famous pre-war performers, many never to return. World War II also brought with it a wave of new economic prosperity that enabled Robert Boda to record the busiest year in the Hartman's history when thirty-two professional productions and nine amateur events were staged during the 1944-45 season. Wartime affluence enabled many patrons to attend the Hartman Theatre on a regular basis.

Following the war, during the years between 1945 and 1950, the Hartman played host to many of the finest post-war drama available to a road theatre. *Carmen Jones, The Hasty Heart, Harvey, The Voice of the Turtle, Antigone and the Tyrant, The Glass Menagerie, Lute Song, Up in Central Park, Bloomer Girl, Song of Norway, Anna Lucasta, Carousel, Born Yesterday, Annie Get Your Gun, Brigadoon, A Streetcar Named Desire, Mister Roberts, Death of a Salesman, and Anne of the Thousand Days* were some of the outstanding theatrical achievements presented by Boda during the post-war era. Unfortunately, in addition to the worthwhile events, a series of tawdry farces, primarily cheap revivals, appeared frequently on the Hartman's agenda. These revivals were produced because of the continued scarcity of notable pro-
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produced because of the continued scarcity of notable pro-
ductions available for the road (rising costs kept numerous plays from touring) and because there were many producers attempting to return to the theatre business after military service and good stage properties were generally too expensive to produce as an initial venture.

Great diversity is the hallmark of the immediate post-war theatrical years at the Hartman Theatre, for during that period Columbus audiences had an opportunity to view almost every type of theatre from the most unsavory farce, *Mary Had a Little*, to the loftiest of tragedies, *Medea*. It was also during the post-war years that one of the most significant changes occurred at the Hartman. From 1938 to 1948 Robert Boda had presented an average of twenty professional productions at the Hartman each season. After the 1948-49 season however, the number of productions decreased so that from 1948 to 1958 the Hartman showed an average of only twelve events per season. During the final five years under Mrs. Boda's management, the Hartman was lighted only seven times a year. The reduced schedule was largely due to the lack of quality attractions and well-known performers, together with the increase in operating costs of the Hartman Theatre. Though the quantity of the productions declined during the decade of the nineteen fifties, from 1955 (following the death of the farcical revivals) until 1963, the quality of each production that was presented was generally commendable.
Although not every season from 1938 to 1963 was financially successful for the Bodas, generally Columbus patrons supported the Hartman Theatre in excellent fashion. Throughout the years of the Boda’s management Columbus audiences showed a marked preference for musicals, farces (no matter how uncouth), comedies, and melodramas. A large segment of the Hartman’s clientele (primarily the Theatre Guild subscribers) were very conservative and plays that dealt with the depressing aspects of family life, sexual, social, or racial conflicts usually did not appeal to numerous Hartman patrons. This conservative attitude and feeling accounts for the irate letters both Robert and Lydia Boda received following the bookings of Of Mice and Men, The Glass Menagerie, Autumn Garden, Toys in the Attic, A Taste of Honey, and Look Back in Anger. All of these plays were unsuccessful at the Hartman. Contrasted to the failure of these serious problem plays was the spectacular success enjoyed by Tobacco Road. No road theatre in America played this piece more times than the Hartman, and it was standing room only at nearly every performance. Cheap, tasteless farces such as Good Nite Ladies, Mary Had a Little, School For Brides, Maid in the Ozarks, Twin Beds, and Getting Gertie’s Garter also played to capacity or near capacity at every Columbus visit, and Mae West’s appearances in Diamond Lil, Catherine Was Great, and Come On Up attracted
phenomenal business, proving that a farce, no matter how bad, generally fared well at the Hartman.

Clearly the Hartman attracted two distinct audiences throughout the years. The first was comprised chiefly of affluent, conservative society theatregoers who enjoyed musicals, comedies, and dramas without overwhelming serious problems. These patrons were easily aroused and angered if their sensibilities were offended by anything they felt was unseemly, depressing, or shocking on the stage. The second type of Hartman playgoer was drawn to the theatre anytime an off-color, slightly sexy, suggestive play was presented. Rarely, if ever, did a play attract or appeal to both audiences, which accounts for the fact that the Bodas never received any adverse mail following Tobacco Road or a vulgar farce. The people who attended these plays simply had nothing to complain about; they saw what they paid to see.

Traveling repertory companies and local stock organizations never fared well financially at the Hartman. The Abbey Players, the R. H. Burnside Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Company, and the San Carlo Opera Company were unsuccessful despite exceedingly fine critical reviews. And when two stock operations were tried at the Hartman (The Bentley-Hartman Company in 1942 and the Columbia Theatre Company in 1948) the results were identical—both groups failed. The reason for failure was simple. The majority of Columbus
theatregoers preferred to see famous stars and hit Broadway plays rather than the obscure performers (to Columbus audiences) usually found in a touring or local repertory company. In many cases the artistic merit of a notable play made little or no difference to a large segment of Hartman patrons. But a popular play or the appearance of a well-known personality often assured the Bodas a profitable evening. Hartman theatregoers demanded, through their attendance, current successes or a major star, that is the principal reason repertory companies were never successful at the Hartman.

During the Bodas' management many plays were brought to the Hartman for repeat performances. The most frequently presented work was *Tobacco Road* which Robert Boda booked ten times between 1938 and 1946. Runner-up was *Oklahoma!* with seven engagements; followed by *Life With Father* and *Blossom Time* which were presented on four occasions. Appearing three times were *Porgy and Bess*, *The Student Prince*, *Good Nite Ladies*, *Hamlet*, *Harvey*, *Brigadoon*, *Mister Roberts*, and *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Numerous plays appeared twice, and Blackstone the magician played the Hartman six times, more than any other non-theatrical event.

One of the most remarkable feats of the Bodas' management was their ability to convince New York producers to premiere their new productions at the Hartman Theatre.
Among the 377 attractions presented during the period under study, nine world premieres were held in Columbus. The practice of opening a new show at the Hartman began when Robert's father, Lee, managed the theatre and continued through 1963. Both Robert and Lydia Boda made frequent trips to New York in order to attract world premieres to the Hartman. They argued that their theatre was far enough away from New York so that the critics would not travel the 510 miles to see the tryouts, but that it was located in the center of the midwest with excellent railroad connections to all points on a prospective tour. In addition, most New York producers were well aware of the Hartman's excellent physical facilities, but the primary reason so many world premieres were staged at the Hartman was that the producers had a great respect for the Bodas. Both Robert and Lydia enjoyed excellent reputations as road theatre managers, consequently, more world premieres were staged at the Hartman than any other theatre in the midwest.

For a quarter of a century Robert and Lydia Boda provided the citizens of Columbus with the finest works in the American theatre performed by some of the greatest talent in the theatrical world. During the years of the Boda's management there was a family atmosphere at the Hartman, an aura that made the theatre seem much more like a civic tradition than a commercial enterprise. For years
almost every professional performer beyond the novice stage had been on the road, and for more than fifty years the road included the Hartman and the Bodas. First Lee, who opened the theatre in 1911; then Robert, who joined the operation in 1912 and became the manager in 1938; then Lydia who managed the Hartman from Robert's death on November 13, 1958 through the 1962-63 season. Their contributions to the cultural growth and development is inestimable. For many years the Hartman was the only source of legitimate theatre in Columbus, and no other institution offered central Ohioans more cultural advantages and opportunities than did the Hartman Theatre. During the last two decades several summer theatres have flourished in Columbus, and the Hartman was re-opened under new ownership and management in 1964, but no theatrical enterprise has equalled the particular charm of the Hartman during the Boda's era. Unquestionably, the Hartman Theatre in Columbus, Ohio, was one of the most representative, important, and significant road theatres in the nation during a period when the road was a vital and influential aspect of the American theatre.
APPENDIX A

PROFESSIONAL TRAVELING PRODUCTIONS
1938 - 1963

1938

January 12, 13
January 18, 19, 20
January 31,
February 1, 2
February 8, 9
February 24, 25, 26
March 8, 9
March 14, 15, 16
March 23-28
May 4
May 5
May 5
May 6
May 7
May 7
May 26, 27
October 30
November 3, 4, 5

Richard II
You Can't Take It With You
Room Service
Edna His Wife
Victoria Regina
Ethan Frome
You Can't Take It With You
Tobacco Road
The Far Off Hills
The Playboy of the Western World
The Rising of the Moon
Juno and the Paycock
The New Gossoon
The Plough and the Stars
You Never Know
Mordkin Ballet
Pins and Needles
November 7, 8, 9  
I'd Rather Be Right
November 28, 29, 30  
Blossom Time
December 5, 6, 7  
What a Life
December 8, 9, 10  
The Women
December 13, 14  
Shadow and Substance
December 30, 31  
Angela Is Twenty-Two

1939

January 2, 3, 4  
Tobacco Road
January 5, 6, 7  
Of Mice and Men
January 17, 18  
Our Town
January 30, 31,  
Whiteoaks
February 1
February 23, 24, 25  
Candida
March 13, 14, 15  
Susan and God
March 20, 21, 22  
Kiss the Boys Goodbye
April 6, 7, 8  
No Time For Comedy
April 14, 15  
My Dear Children
April 17, 18, 19  
Knickerbocker Holiday
April 20, 21  
Amphitryon 38
April 22  
The Sea Gull
May 11-17  
Luenen Passion Play
October 19  
Alec Templeton in Concert
October 23, 24, 25  
I Married An Angel
October 30, 31  
Farm of Three Echoes
November 2, 3, 4  
Key Largo
November 6, 7, 8
November 13-18
November 23, 24, 25
December 14, 15, 16
December 18, 19, 20
December 25, 26, 27

Springtime For Henry
Mamba's Daughters
Tonight We Dance!
Leave It To Me
Abe Lincoln in Illinois
Outward Bound

1940

January 1-6
January 15, 16, 17
February 6, 7
February 14, 15
February 22, 23, 24
February 26, 27, 28
February 29, March 1, 2
March 29, 30
April 8, 9, 10
May 11
September 26, 27, 28
October 8, 9
November 6-9
November 25, 26, 27
December 9, 10, 11
December 12, 13, 14
December 16, 17, 18

Tobacco Road
The Taming of the Shrew
Easy Virtue
Hamlet
The Burning Deck
Ladies and Gentlemen
The Hot Mikado
No Time For Comedy
Heavenly Express
Eyeless Vision
The Little Foxes
Skylark
The Philadelphia Story
There Shall Be No Night
Du Barry Was a Lady
Ladies in Retirement
Hellzapoppin
December 30-
January 4

Tobacco Road

1941

January 6-10

The Male Animal

January 13, 14, 15

The Time of Your Life

February 17-22

Sim-Sala-Bim

February 24, 25, 26

The Doctor's Dilemma

March 31-
April 4

The Man Who Came to Dinner

April 7, 8, 9

Twelfth Night

April 17, 18, 19

New Pins and Needles

April 21, 22, 23

Cabin in the Sky

October 13, 14, 15

Father's Day

October 27, 28, 29

Boys and Girls Together

November 3, 4, 5

My Sister Eileen

November 6, 7, 8

Hold On To Your Hats

November 24, 25, 26

The Rivals

December 5, 6

Danaion

December 25, 26, 27

Separate Rooms

December 29-
January 3

Tobacco Road

1942

January 5-10

Claudia

January 26, 27, 28

Theatre

February 5, 6, 7

Blithe Spirit

February 9, 10, 11

Candle in the Wind
March 2, 3, 4
March 19, 20, 21
March 23, 24, 25
April 9, 10, 11
May 18, 19, 20
September 17, 18, 19
October 26, 27, 28
October 29, 30, 31
November 5, 6, 7
November 26, 27, 28
December 3, 4, 5

Rose Burke
Arsenic and Old Lace
The Corn Is Green
Watch on the Rhine
Macbeth
The Moon Is Down
Angel Street
Best Foot Forward
Papa Is All
Watch on the Rhine
Spring Again

1943

February 14-20
March 8-13
March 14-20
March 22, 23, 24
March 29, 30, 31
October 7, 8, 9
October 14, 15, 16
October 17, 18, 19
October 21, 22, 23
October 31-
November 6
November 8, 9, 10
November 18, 19, 20
November 25, 26, 27

Arsenic and Old Lace
Junior Miss
Tobacco Road
Cry Havoc
The Eve of St. Mark
The Corn Is Green
Without Love
Tomorrow the World
Junior Miss
Abie's Irish Rose
The Student Prince
Dark Eyes
Porgy and Bess
November 28
November 29, 30, December 1
December 8-11

January 6, 7, 8
January 9-15
January 16-22
January 31, February 1, 2
February 7, 8, 9
March 5-12
March 23, 24, 25
April 16-23
April 30-May 6
May 11-14
May 15, 16, 17
September 24
October 9, 10, 11
October 23, 24, 25
November 5-8
November 9, 10, 11
November 16, 17, 18
November 19-25
November 26, 27, 28
November 30, December 1, 2

Ruth Draper
The Army Play By Play
The Doughgirls

Porgy and Bess
Life With Father
Tobacco Road
Blossom Time
The Patriots
Tobacco Road
Three Is a Family
Good Nite Ladies
Kiss and Tell
Blossom Time
Abie's Irish Rose
Alec Templeton In Concert
Ramsackle Inn
Wallflower
Life With Father
The Cherry Orchard
Othello
Sons O' Fun
Tropical Revue
Over Twenty-One
December 7, 8, 9
December 10-16

Rebecca

The Merry Widow

1945

January 10-13
January 18, 19, 20
January 21 and 24
January 22
January 23
January 23
February 19, 20, 21
February 25

The Student Prince
A Doll’s House
The Mikado
The Pirates of Penzance
Trial By Jury
H.M.S. Pinafore
Harriet

Grace and Kurt Graff, John Jacob Miles

February 28 - March 3

Good Nite Ladies

March 5, 6, 7
March 12-17
March 27, 28
April 1-4
April 5, 6, 7
April 9, 10, 11
April 19, 20, 21
April 27
April 28
April 28
April 29
April 29

Rosalinda
Oklahoma!
Bastogne Speaks
Blossom Time
Blithe Spirit
Jacobowsky and the Colonel
Blackstone
Carmen
Faust
Aida
La Boheme
Il Trovatore
April 30, May 1, 2
May 17, 18, 19
September 27, 28, 29
September 30 - October 3
October 4, 5, 6
October 22, 23, 24
October 29, 30, 31
November 1, 2, 3
November 5, 6, 7
November 11-17
November 22, 23, 24
November 29, 30,
December 1
December 3, 4, 5
December 17, 18, 19
December 21, 22, 23
December 25-29
December 30, 31,
January 1

The Two Mrs. Carrolles
Catherine Was Great
Dear Ruth
Ten Little Indians
Blackstone
The Student Prince
Ballet Russe Highlights
Foolish Notion
The Desert Song
Tobacco Road
The Winter's Tale
Windy Hill

Dunnigan's Daughter
The Hasty Heart
Harvey
Pick-Up Girl
Rose Marie

January 2
January 3, 4, 5
January 6-9
January 14, 15, 16
January 17, 18, 19

Countess Maritza
Suds In Your Eyes
School For Brides
The Voice of the Turtle
Antigone and the Tyrant

1946
February 17-20 Carmen Jones
April 7-10 Life With Father
May 20, 21, 22 Hamlet
September 16, 17, 18 The Glass Menagerie
September 19-22 Life With Father
September 30, October 1, 2 Bal Negre
October 14, 15, 16 Lute Song
October 17, 18, 19 Mary Had a Little
October 21, 22 Rose Marie
October 23 Play Gypsy Play
November 6-9 Carmen Jones
November 10-16 Tobacco Road
November 18-23 Up in Central Park
November 24-27 Come On Up
December 1 The Grand Ole Opry
December 2-7 Blackstone
December 12, 13, 14 Ballet Theatre

1947

January 13-18 Oklahoma!
January 20, 21, 22 Springtime For Henry
January 27 - February 1 The Voice of the Turtle
February 6, 7, 8 Apple of His Eye
February 13, 14, 15 Dear Ruth
February 20, 21, 22 A Moon for the Misbegotten
February 24, 25, 26
March 3-8
March 27, 28, 29
April 28 - May 3
September 29, 30, October 1
October 6, 7, 8
October 27 - November 1
November 3-8
November 12-15
November 28, 29
December 1-7
December 25, 26, 27

The Magnificent Yankee
State of the Union
Hamlet
Bloomer Girl
The Fatal Weakness
Another Part of the Forest
Song of Norway
The Red Mill
I Remember Mama
Anna Lucasta
Ralph Slater
The Late Christopher Bean

1948

January 18-24
February 2, 3, 4
February 5, 6, 7
February 23, 24, 25
March 4, 5, 6
March 8, 9, 10
March 15, 16, 17
April 5, 6, 7
April 8, 9, 10
April 12, 13, 14
October 22, 23, 24

State of the Union
An Inspector Calls
Anna Lucasta
Harvey
Burlesque
Mary Had a Little
Tropical Revue
Private Lives
The Glass Menagerie
Lady Windermere's Fan
The Best Is Yet to Come
November 8-14  Carousel
November 15-20  Blackstone
November 29 - December 4  Born Yesterday
December 13, 14, 15  The Desert Song

1949

January 3-8  Oklahoma!
January 17-20  Man and Superman
January 24, 25, 26  Medea
February 21-27  Annie Get Your Gun
March 7-12  Brigadoon
March 17, 18, 19  O Mistress Mine
March 28, 29, 30  Harvey
April 25-30  Show Boat
May 9-14  A Streetcar Named Desire
May 15-21  High Button Shoes
October 17, 18, 19  Inside U.S.A.
October 31 - November 6  Blackstone
November 14, 15, 16  Anne of the Thousand Days
November 17, 18, 19  The Barretts of Wimpole Street
November 24, 25, 26  Summer and Smoke
November 28 - December 3  Mister Roberts
December 15, 16, 17  Light Up the Sky
December 26-31  As You Like It
1950

February 2, 3, 4  
A Streetcar Named Desire

February 20-25  
Death of a Salesman

March 5-8  
Diamond Lil

March 30, 31,  
Brigadoon

April 1  
That Lady

April 10, 11, 12  
Oklahoma!

April 17-22  
The Man Who Came to Dinner

April 26-29  
Kiss Me Kate

October 16-21  
Lost in the Stars

October 24-28  
Two Blind Mice

November 6, 7, 8  
Brigadoon

November 9, 10, 11  
Borscht Capades of '51

November 12  

1951

January 8-13  
Mister Roberts

January 25, 26, 27  
Diamond Lil

January 31,  
I Know My Love

February 1, 2  

February 8-11  
A Streetcar Named Desire

February 26, 27, 28  
The Guardsman

March 4  
The Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo

March 26-31  
Oklahoma!

October 7  
The Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo

October 8-11  
Black Chiffon

November 14-17  
The Constant Wife
November 22, 23, 24  Death of a Salesman
December 10-15  Guys and Dolls

1952

January 3, 4, 5  The Autumn Garden
January 11, 12  Ballet Theatre
January 21, 22, 23  Darkness at Noon
February 4, 5, 6  Candida
February 14, 15, 16  The Moon Is Blue
February 18-23  Oklahoma!
February 28, 29, March 1  The Member of the Wedding
April 27  Bagels and Vox
May 8, 9, 10  Mister Roberts
October 2, 3, 4  Paint Your Wagon
October 27 - November 1  Call Me Madame
November 3, 4, 5  Paris ’90
November 11, 12  Ballet Russe Stars
November 29, 29, 30  The Mikado
December 1  Patience
December 11, 12, 13  Bell, Book and Candle

1953

January 1, 2, 3  The Shrike
January 5-10  Point of No Return
January 15, 16, 17  Picnic
January 22, 23, 24  The Country Girl
January 26-31  Good Nite Ladies
February 19, 20, 21  I Am a Camera
March 17, 18  Jose Greco and Company
March 19, 20, 21  The Male Animal
April 21-25  The Four Poster
May 14, 15, 16  The Hormel Caravan
October 1, 2, 3  A Girl Can Tell
November 4  The Slavenska-Franklin Ballet Company
November 9-14  Maid In the Ozarks
November 22  Jose Greco and Company
November 30,  December 1, 2  Time Out For Ginger
December 7-12  Little Jessie James

1954
January 7, 8, 9  The Moon Is Blue
January 19-23  Twin Beds
March 3-6  Blackstone
April 12, 13, 14  Dial M For Murder
May 19-22  An Evening With Beatrice Lillie
May 24-29  Porgy and Bess
November 1-6  Saint Joan
November 15-20  The King and I
November 25, 26, 27  Oklahoma!
November 29 - December 4  Getting Gertie's Garter
December 16, 17, 18

January 6, 7, 8
January 10-15
February 7, 8, 9
March 21-26
April 18-23
October 5-8
October 24-29
November 1
November 14-19
December 1, 2, 3

The Teahouse of the August Moon
1955

The Dark Is Light Enough
The Seven Year Itch
Tea and Sympathy
The Solid Gold Cadillac
The Pajama Game
The Teahouse of the August Moon
Kismet
Carmen Amaya and Company
Can-Can
Valour Will Weep

1956

January 19, 20, 21
January 26, 27, 28
February 2, 3, 4
February 9, 10, 11
April 11-14
April 18-21
October 15-20
October 22, 23, 24
November 8, 9, 10
November 22, 23, 24
December 20, 21, 22

Bug Stop
Tea and Sympathy
Anniversary Waltz
The Bad Seed
Anastasia
The Boy Friend
Inherit the Wind
Janus
A Hatful of Rain
The Pajama Game
The Chalk Garden
1957

January 31, February 1, 2

February 11-16

October 24, 25, 26

November 11, 12, 13

November 18-23

November 25-30

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof

Damn Yankees

The Waltz of the Toreadors

The Happiest Millionaire

No Time For Sergeants

Middle of the Night

1958

January 13, 14, 15

March 10-15

March 31, April 1, 2

October 13, 14, 15

October 23, 24, 25

November 5-8

November 20, 21, 22

December 15, 16, 17

The Diary of Anne Frank

Auntie Mame

Long Day’s Journey into Night

Li’l Abner

Look Back in Anger

Ballet: U.S.A.

Romanoff and Juliet

The Warm Peninsula

1959

March 18-21

September 16-19

November 12, 13, 14

November 18-21

December 16-19

The Dark at the Top of the Stairs

Sunrise at Campobello

Hilary

A Mighty Man Is He

Mary Stuart
1960

January 7, 8, 9
January 14, 15, 16
April 20-23
September 21-24
October 3-8

A Thurber Carnival
J. B.
Show Business
Invitation to a March
The World of Suzie Wong

1961

January 16-21
February 8-11
April 19-22
May 4, 5, 6
May 25, 26, 27
October 5, 6, 7
October 19, 20, 21
November 16, 17, 18
November 27-December 2
December 11, 12, 13

Once Upon a Mattress
A Majority of One
Five Finger Exercise
Fiorello!
A Raisin in the Sun
The Miracle Worker
Advise and Consent
Toys in the Attic
La Plume de Ma Tante
The Tenth Man

1962

January 25, 26, 27
March 29, 30, 31
April 17-21
April 26, 27, 28
October 11, 12, 13
October 15-20

A Taste of Honey
Elizabeth, the Queen
The Music Man
The Best Man
The Perfect Setup
Mary, Mary
1963

January 24, 25, 26    A Shot in the Dark
January 31,          Take Her, She's Mine
February 1, 2
February 28,          Sophie
March 1, 2
March 11, 12, 13      Here Today
April 3-6             Carnival
APPENDIX B

HARTMAN THEATRE STOCK COMPANY PRODUCTIONS

The J. B. Bentley-Hartman Players Company

1942

October 12-17  No More Ladies
October 19-26  George Washington Slept Here

The Columbia Theatre Company

1948

April 20-25  Dream Girl
April 27 - May 2  They Knew What They Wanted
May 4-9  Design For Living
APPENDIX C

WORLD PREMIERES
1938 - 1963

December 30, 1938  Angela Is Twenty-Two
February 22, 1940  The Burning Deck
February 20, 1947  A Moon for the Misbegotten
January 15, 1953  Picnic
October 1, 1953  A Girl Can Tell
December 1, 1955  Valour Will Weep (Time Limit)
January 7, 1960  A Thurber Carnival
September 21, 1960  Invitation to a March
February 26, 1963  Sophie
APPENDIX D

AMATEUR PRODUCTIONS
1938 - 1963

1938

May 19  The Bohemian Girl; Grand Opera Club
May 23  Marie B. Sands Memorial Revue
June 24  Jack Sherick Tap Revue
December 29  Once Over Lightly; Princeton Triangle Club

1939

March 30, 31  My Maryland; Independent Players of Columbus
April 9  Recital by Aaron Cohen, pianist and Mary Pryseski, soprano
April 16  Jorg Fasting Ballet
May 5  The Avenger; Bexley Art Theatre
May 18  Reds In Green; Aquinas Athletic Association.

1940

April 27  Jorg Fasting Ballet
May 15  Ain't Sayin'; Aquinas Athletic Association
1941

April 26      Jorg Fasting Ballet
April 28, 29, 30  The Vagabond King; Independent Players of Columbus
May 23      Yard Birds; Aquinas Athletic Association

1942

February 4  You Can Defend America
April 26       My Maryland; Independent Players of Columbus
May 22       Gold In The Hills; Aquinas Athletic Association
May 23      Jorg Fasting Ballet
June 21      La Danse; Mary Van Gilder spring revue

1943

April 13, 14  Charley's Aunt; 97th Players from Lockbourne Army Air Force Base
April 15-18   All Clear; First Troop Carrier Command
May 29       The Merry Widow; Gateway Players of Columbus
May 30       Hearts And Gowns; Aquinas Athletic Association
October 10   Mlle Modiste; Gateway Players of Columbus
December 16-19  Columbus Firemen's Minstrel Show

1944

May 25, 26, 27  The Vagabond King; Independent Players of Columbus
September 29, 30, October 1
The Desert Song; Gateway Players of Columbus

October 26-29
Columbus Firemen's Minstrel Show

1945

January 5, 6, 7
The New Moon; Independent Players of Columbus

January 29
Murder in a Nunnery; St. Mary College

February 2, 3, 4
The Red Mill; Gateway Players of Columbus

April 8
Ballet Musicale; Mary Van Gilder School of the Dance

May 6
Stella Becker Ballet

May 12, 13
Rio Rita; Grand Opera Club

May 25, 26, 27
The Firefly; Gateway Players of Columbus

October 19, 20, 21
The Three Musketeers; Independent Players of Columbus

October 25-28
Columbus Firemen's Minstrel Show

December 7, 8, 9
Sweethearts; Gateway Players of Columbus

1946

March 29, 30, 31
The Merry Widow; Columbus Light Opera Company

April 12, 13, 14
Katinka; Gateway Players of Columbus

May 17, 18, 19
Bitter Sweet; Independent Players of Columbus

May 25, 26
High Jinks; Paramount Players of Columbus
October 4, 5, 6  No, No, Nanette; Columbus Light Opera Company
October 24-27  Columbus Firemen's Minstrel Show
November 17  Columbus Concert Orchestra

1947
April 1  The Vagabond King; Independent Players of Columbus
May 9, 10, 11  Naughty Marietta; Columbus Light Opera Company
October 9, 10  Columbus Junior League Follies
October 23-26  Columbus Firemen's Minstrel Show
December 28  Hansel and Gretel; Columbus Opera Club

1948
January 30, 31, February 1  Roberta; Columbus Light Opera Company
February 13, 14, 15  The Student Prince; Theatre Productions, Inc.
February 28, 29  Rose of Algeria; Paramount Players of Columbus
April 2, 3, 4  Music in the Air; Independent Players of Columbus
October 28-31  Columbus Firemen's Minstrel Show
December 17, 18, 19  Babes in Toyland; Theatre Productions, Inc.

1949
January 1  All in Favor; Princeton Triangle Club
January 14, 15  Inside Ohio; Young Business Men's Club
January 21, 22, 23
Good News; Columbus Light Opera Company

March 26, 27
The New Moon; Paramount Players of Columbus

April 7, 8, 9
Song of Norway; Independent Players of Columbus

June 3, 4, 5
Blossom Time; Theatre Productions, Inc.

October 27-30
Columbus Firemen's Minstrel Show

1950

January 13, 14
Young Business Men's Club Show

March 11, 12
Bloomer Girl; Paramount Players of Columbus

March 24, 25, 26
The Great Waltz; Independent Players of Columbus

November 2-5
Columbus Firemen's Minstrel Show

December 28
Too Hot For Toddy; Princeton Triangle Club

1951

April 20, 21
Forget Your Worries; Young Business Men's Club

May 12, 13
Sweethearts, Theatre Productions, Inc.

October 25-28
Columbus Firemen's Minstrel Show

1952

March 7, 8
Song of Norway; Independent Players of Columbus

April 25, 26
Look Before You Leap; Young Business Men's Club
November 14, 15, 16  Columbus Firemen's Minstrel Show

March 12, 13, 14  Kiss Me Kate; Independent Players of Columbus

April 10, 11  Circus Daze; Young Business Men's Club

1954

January 2  Malice in Wonderland; Princeton Triangle Club

April 1, 2, 3  Call Me Madame; Independent Players of Columbus

April 30, May 1  Hit Parade of 1954; Young Business Men's Club

1955

March 31, April 1, 2  Music in the Air; Independent Players of Columbus

1956

March 8, 9, 10  Carousel, Independent Players of Columbus

1957

January 3  Take a Good Look; Princeton Triangle Club

March 7, 8, 9  Plain and Fancy; Independent Players of Columbus

April 30  Miranda and the Dark Young Man; Hartt College of Music

April 30  The Cloak; Columbus Lyric Theatre
1958
February 20, 21, 22  The Pajama Game; Independent Players of Columbus

1959
April 2, 3, 4  Brigadoon; Independent Players of Columbus

1960
February 5  Philippa Schuyler, pianist
March 17, 18, 19  New Girl in Town; Independent Players of Columbus
December 27  A Mid-Summer Night Screame; Princeton Triangle Club

1961
March 23, 24, 25  Carousel; Independent Players of Columbus

1962
May 18  Merry-Go-Round; Childhood League of Columbus

1963
March 23  The Columbus Civic Ballet
April 26  The Sounds of Ed Montgomery
May 4  The Menace of Communism; Lecture by Robert Welch
May 10  Merry-Go-Round; Childhood League of Columbus
APPENDIX E

MOTION PICTURES
1938 - 1947

April 16-30, 1938

Mayerling; Author: Claude Anet;
Directed by: Anatole Litvak.
Cast: Charles Boyer and Danielle Darrieux

June 2-23, 1938

Birth of a Baby; Cast: Eleanor King, Richard Gordon, William Post, Jr., and Ruth Matterson

May 7, 1939

Mamele; Cast: Molly Picon

August 27 - September 2, 1942

Birth of a Baby

September 24 - October 3, 1943

Ravaged Earth; Filmed by Mark L. Moody; Narrated by Knox Manning

April 17-23, 1946

Ravaged Earth

April 24-30, 1946

Blood and Thunder; Cast: Paul Lukas and Kathleen Kelly

May 1-7, 1946

Gaslight Follies; Produced by Joseph E. Levine and Maxwell Finn

May 8-12, 1946

Blessed Mother Cabrini; Produced by Roma Pictures

May 29-June 4, 1946

Waltz Time; Directed by Paul L. Stein. Cast: Carol Raye, Peter Graves, and Richard Tauber

April 6-19, 1947

Henry V; Author: William Shakespeare;
Directed by: Laurence Olivier. Cast: Laurence Olivier, Robert Newton, Felix Aylmer, Renee Asherson, and Leslie Banks
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November 30, 1948.
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January 18, 1949.
February 10, 1949.
March 8, 1949.
May 10, 1949.
March 6, 1950.
April 11, 1950.
April 18, 1950.
April 27, 1950.
February 1, 1951.
February 7, 1951.
February 27, 1951.
March 28, 1951.
October 9, 1951.
November 15, 1951.
January 15, 1952.
February 5, 1952.
February 15, 1952.
February 29, 1952.
April 9, 1952.
March 18, 1953.
March 20, 1953.
April 22, 1953.
November 15, 1955.
January 25, 1956.
February 10, 1956.
April 12, 1956.
February 1, 1957.
February 12, 1957.
September 17, 1958.
October 12, 1958.
October 14, 1958.
October 24, 1958.
November 14, 1958.
November 15, 1958.
March 19, 1959.
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October 6, 1961.

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January 13, 1938.
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February 20, 1938.
March 9, 1938.
May 7, 1938.
May 9, 1938.
May 10, 1938.
June 3, 1938.
June 16, 1938.
November 13, 1938.
December 9, 1938.
December 14, 1938.
December 31, 1938.
January 2, 1939.
January 5, 1939.
January 18, 1939.
January 31, 1939.
March 19, 1939.
April 7, 1939.
April 9, 1939.
April 21, 1939.
April 24, 1939.
February 7, 1940.
September 16, 1940.
September 18, 1940.
September 27, 1940.
October 9, 1940.
November 7, 1940.
November 17, 1940.
December 2, 1940.
December 13, 1940.
December 27, 1940.
December 31, 1940.
January 7, 1941.
January 12, 1941.
February 25, 1941.
April 1, 1941.
April 8, 1941.
April 18, 1941.
October 7, 1941.
October 22, 1941.
November 4, 1941.
December 11, 1941.
December 30, 1941.
March 3, 1942.
March 20, 1942.
March 23, 1942.
April 8, 1942.
May 19, 1942.
September 30, 1942.
October 22, 1942.
October 26, 1942.
November 22, 1942.
November 27, 1942.
November 29, 1942.
December 27, 1942.
February 15, 1943.
March 10, 1943.
March 11, 1943.
March 23, 1943.
March 30, 1943.
November 14, 1943.
November 19, 1943.
November 26, 1943.
November 28, 1943.
December 9, 1943.
January 4, 1944.
January 13, 1944.
February 21, 1944.
October 26, 1944.
November 1, 1944.
November 7, 1944.
November 8, 1944.
November 14, 1944.
December 8, 1944.
January 5, 1945.
January 19, 1945.
February 20, 1945.
March 6, 1945.
March 8, 1945.
March 13, 1945.
March 28, 1945.
April 4, 1945.
April 8, 1945.
April 10, 1945.
April 30, 1945.
September 30, 1945.
October 17, 1945.
November 23, 1945.
November 30, 1945.
December 4, 1945.
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May 1, 1946.
May 21, 1946.
September 27, 1946.
February 7, 1947.
February 21, 1947.
March 4, 1947.
April 15, 1947.
October 7, 1947.
October 21, 1947.
November 24, 1947.
November 28, 1947.
November 29, 1947.
March 5, 1948.
April 6, 1948.
April 13, 1948.
October 18, 1949.
November 28, 1949.
November 29, 1949.
December 16, 1949.
December 29, 1949.
February 21, 1950.
November 5, 1950.
November 10, 1950.
December 11, 1951.
January 27, 1952.
October 3, 1952.
October 28, 1952.
November 4, 1952.
November 29, 1952.
December 1, 1952.
December 21, 1952.
January 2, 1953.
January 6, 1953.
January 16, 1953.
October 2, 1953.
October 21, 1953.
November 10, 1953.
November 13, 1953.
December 1, 1953.
December 17, 1953.
March 17, 1954.
April 13, 1954.
November 2, 1954.
November 14, 1954.
November 16, 1954.
December 16, 1954.
December 17, 1954.
December 24, 1954.
February 8, 1955.
March 22, 1955.
April 19, 1955.
November 8, 1955.
January 3, 1956.
April 19, 1956.
October 16, 1956.
October 21, 1956.
November 9, 1956.
December 21, 1956.
October 25, 1957.
November 19, 1957.
November 26, 1957.
January 14, 1958.
March 16, 1958.
March 17, 1958.
April 1, 1958.
November 14, 1958.
September 17, 1959.
December 10, 1959.
December 14, 1959.
December 17, 1959.
January 8, 1960.
April 21, 1960.
September 22, 1960.
February 9, 1961.
April 18, 1961.
May 2, 1961.
May 26, 1961.
November 17, 1961.
December 12, 1961.
January 26, 1962.
October 12, 1962.
October 13, 1962.
October 16, 1962.
February 1, 1963.
February 17, 1963.
February 19, 1963.
March 1, 1963.
March 12, 1963.
April 4, 1963.

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October 23, 1939.
October 24, 1939.
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January 16, 1940.
January 26, 1940.
February 10, 1940.
February 15, 1940.
February 20, 1940.
February 23, 1940.
March 1, 1940.
April 7, 1940.
April 9, 1940.
February 8, 1944.
October 1, 1946.
October 15, 1946.
October 18, 1946.
November 19, 1946.
April 29, 1947.
January 24, 1948.
September 28, 1950.
October 17, 1950.
October 25, 1950.
October 26, 1950.
January 20, 1954.
May 20, 1954.
May 25, 1954.
November 15, 1958.