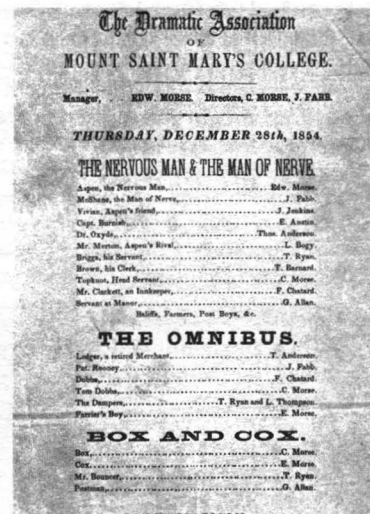


175th ANNIVERSARY

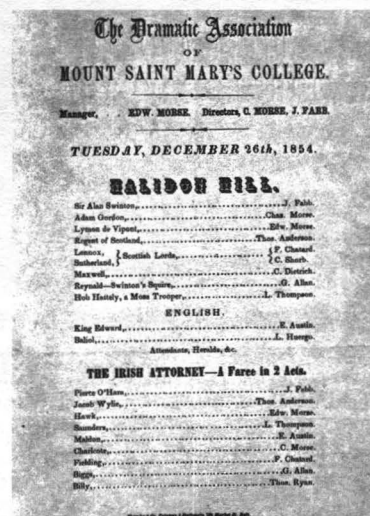
Theatre at the Mount:



The earliest picture of a Mount production is of this one, *The Confederate Spy*, presented by the class of 1891 on November 26, 1890.



Playbills of some of the Mount's earliest productions.



by Wayne E. Hamilton, Associate Professor of Theatre

In this issue, the Briefing continues its prelude to the Mount's 175th anniversary celebration by recalling an extensive theatrical tradition.

In the summer of 1978 as I began to research the history of theatre at Mount Saint Mary's, I had no idea that the topic would be as extensive or as interesting as it has proven to be. The work was begun in Purcell Hall (see "The Ghosts of Purcell Hall," *Briefing and Mount Alumnus*, November, 1978) as a study of plays performed there in the first half of the 20th century. In seeking answers to questions raised in that study, it has been possible to organize and document a theatrical tradition at Mount Saint Mary's. That tradition, which is 155 years old, speaks eloquently for the importance of a strong theatrical program in a liberal arts college.

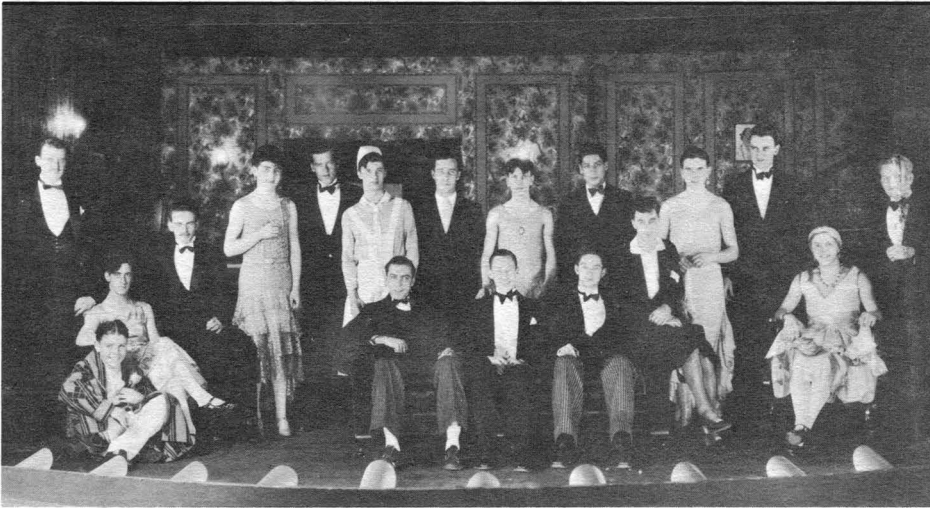
Although a great deal of information exists about the Mount's theatrical past, there has been no effective way to study that past and

give it the attention it deserves. However, the college archives now contains two copies of a historical index to theatre at the Mount. The index begins with a play performed in 1827 and ends with *She Loves Me*, performed in November of 1981. Cards for each play are in chronological order and cross-referenced to other cards listed alphabetically by title. This index provides easy access to a wealth of theatrical information which until recently was scattered around the campus. Interested parties can see original programs from 1854 productions as well as pictures of plays performed here as early as 1890. The index also guides the user to articles and other materials concerning the plays.

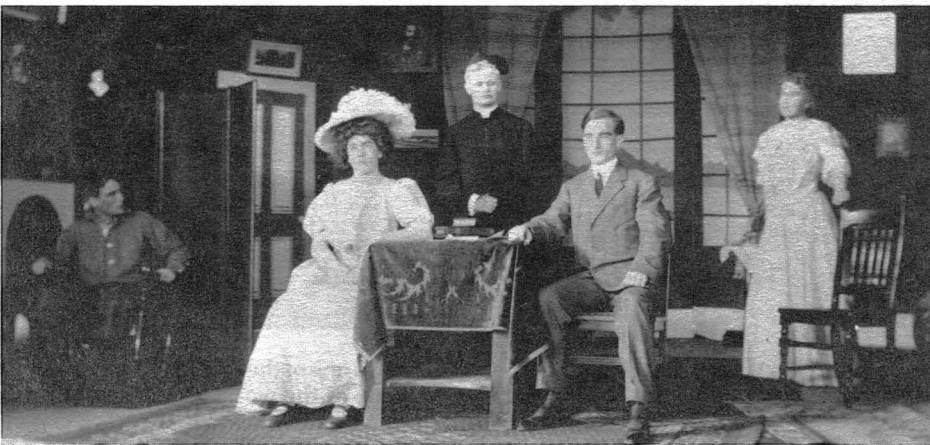
The most puzzling period in the Mount's theatre history lies between 1827 and 1890.

There is ample documentation of regular theatrical productions in the last decade of the century, but prior to 1890 there are only six evenings of theatre documented. Records of those six evenings were discovered in July, 1981, while I was doing research at the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore. Their library has two original programs of Minstrel shows performed by Mount students during the Civil War. The students called themselves the "Mount Saint Mary's Ethiopian Opera Troupe." Reproduction of those programs are now in the college archives. We may assume that there were other performances given in those "mystery years," but we have no evidence to indicate that plays were produced, although Mounties regularly studied classical plays in their courses.

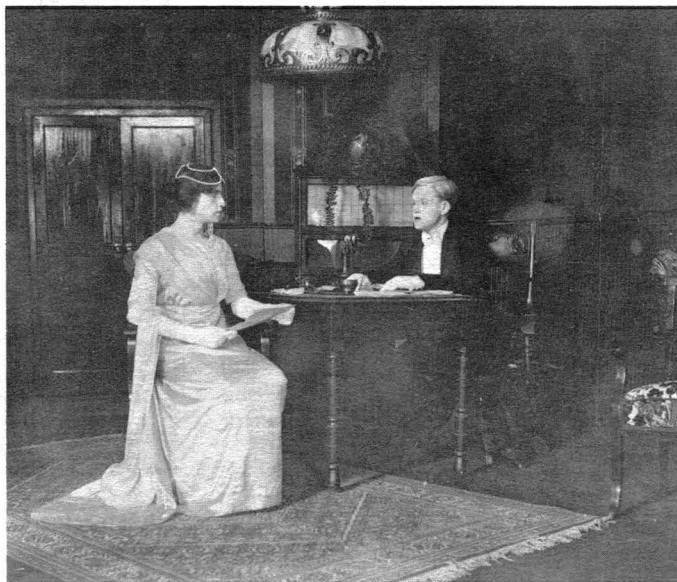
a long and proud tradition



The very young man seated on the floor in the bathrobe at the left of this picture is Mr. Leo Barry, 1981 Brute Medal recipient. The play was called *Is Zat So?* and was performed in 1930.



This 1909 play, *The Parish Priest*, is a good example of the attention given to settings. This play had several different sets, and each was decorated quite well.



Another well-furnished set. Note the tiffany lamp, the expensive-looking furniture and the carpet. This was *The Lion and the Mouse*, produced here in 1912.

An interesting legend reaches us from early 19th century theatricals at the Mount. The story concerns the first play, *Montezuma, or the Conquest of Mexico*, produced in 1827. *The Story of the Mount* tells us that the entire campus community greatly applauded the efforts of the playwright, Father Charles C. Pise, and those of the young men who performed the play. Despite this account regarding the play's reception, the legend persists through the years that the play was *not* liked by the students and that theatrical activity was frowned upon by most of the faculty. The legend goes on to say that shortly after the play was performed the students left the campus for a brief holiday. When they returned, the students who had worked on *Montezuma* discovered that their manuscripts, provided by Father Pise, had mysteriously disappeared from their dormitories. Who removed the scripts, and why, is unknown, but no copy of the play survives.

Some graduates of Mount Saint Mary's transformed their participation in college plays into successful careers as performers. Hugo Winterhalter (C'33) played his famous saxophone in the orchestras of the Mount's musical entertainments. The Morey twins, Daniel and Donald (C'24) who played football here, performed in one of the first films about football, *Brown of Harvard*. By far the Mount's most famous actor, however, was Thomas Bell Meighan (C'02), a star of silent films. Mr. Meighan began his New York stage career even before he had completed his education at Mount Saint Mary's, performing during summer vacations both "on the road" and in New York City. He eventually turned his talent toward film and made at least 38 full-length features.



The Mount's own matinee idol, Tom Meighan, who has been called "the Valentino of his day."



Mr. Hugo Winterhalter, saxophone in hand, is seated in the back row, just to the right center. The show is one of the popular Mount "Merry Minstrels" of November 15, 1927. Winterhalter, following graduation, was to go on to become one of the world's best-known band leaders.

In November of 1924, Meighan was elected "Shepherd of the Lambs," leader of The Lamb's Club, a theatre club in New York City. He was the first screen actor to be elected to this position. Meighan also served as President of the Catholic Motion Picture Actor's Guild of America. In 1928, Meighan signed a contract with Caddo Films for seven pictures, for which he was paid one million dollars. Meighan is said to have attributed his ability as a "quick study" to the punishments which were meted out to him at the Mount. Students were punished in those days by walking around the terrace until they had memorized a passage from a classical play or some other piece of literature.

Everyone connected with the Mount can take pride in what has been accomplished by its students through participation in the arts. Such participation, and the knowledge gained from it, should be a central part of education at a liberal arts college. It is my sincere hope that an interest will continue to be taken in adding to our knowledge of the Mount's theatre

history. Programs, posters and photographs from present-day productions should be deposited in the archives; research should continue to shed additional light on the mysteries of our rich theatrical past.

Our present holdings have been organized with invaluable assistance from Professor Kelly Fitzpatrick, Monsignor Hugh Phillips, and Miss Mary Katherine Will (C'81). Mount alumni have been another source of assistance in compiling, documenting, and centrally locating information from our theatrical past. Calls for donations and information from alumni have been published in previous editions of the *Briefing*, and the response has been most gratifying. Pictures, programs and published information came to us from a number of individuals, including Dr. Frank Kennedy (P'30 C'34), Mr. Paul Lieb (P'25 C'29), Mr. Jack Morgan (P'25 C'29), Mr. Bernard Mahoney (C'39) and Dr. Dick McNichols (C'21). Future donations and information will be enthusiastically accepted by Professor Kelly Fitzpatrick, Director of Special Collections. □



Orchestra leader Hugo Winterhalter, whose band appeared at the Mount after his graduation.