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Pasquale (His servant) ........... OLAF POOLEY

Miss Bordereau (A recluse) BEATRIX LEHMANN

Assunta (Her maid) ............ NANCY NEVINSON

and

Miss Tina (Her niece) ........... FLORA ROBSON

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NORTH THAMES GAS
THE STORY OF THE QUEEN'S THEATRE

The Queen's Theatre was built by J. E. Vedrenne towards the end of his association with Granville Barker. Though the Vedrenne-Barker management had left the Royal Court and was embarking on a West End season at the Savoy, Vedrenne, much to Bernard Shaw's annoyance, was casting his net into less controversial waters.

The new theatre was designed by W. G. R.Sprague and built on a site adjoining the Hick's Theatre (as the Globe was then called) and whose opening preceded it by ten months. Shaw wrote to Barker, "The papers say he is going to call his theatre the Central, as if it were a criminal court or a railway terminus." Later, when its present name was decided upon, he commented, "he is after a knighthood... it is not for nothing he has called his theatre the Queen's—though why not the Alexandra?"

The theatre opened on October 8th, 1907, with a comedy by Madeleine Lucette Riley called "The Sugar Bowl," presented by Herbert Strehl with his wife, Ellis Jeffery, and Edmund Green in the cast.

It is interesting to see from the first night programme that Percy Fletcher was the musical director and that the manager for the theatre was none other than the veteran Bertie Meyer.

The opening production "failed to attract," which gave Shaw no cause for complaint, as the successful first London production of "The Devil's Disciple" was transferred from the Savoy with Barker himself replacing Mattheson Long as Dick Dudgeon.

In the days when a settled policy for a theatre was still the rule, the new Queen's did not seem able to find its feet—plays and musicals followed with varying success. "The Dairymaids," a revival with Phyllis Dare, "The Belle of Brittany" and "The Persian Princess," both with Ruth Vincent among others account for the first two years of its history. By 1911 Vedrenne had surrendered his lease to H. B. Irving, who produced a succession of new plays and revivals of his father's successes: "The House of Peru," "Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde," "Princess Cramondina," "The Bell," "Louis XI," "Hamlet" and other productions which occupied the years until 1913.

In 1913 "Tango Tays" was instituted, at which patrons could indulge in the latest craze of Tango dancing, watch a Dress Parade, have tea for an inclusive charge of half-a-crown.

It was not until April 14th, 1914, that the theatre found its first long run with "Potash and Perfumerrer," with two able American comedians, Augustus Vortme and Albert Leonard (Ernest Milton was the juvenile), this was to run 683 performances and to be followed by a sequel. From then on no settled success is found until Alfred Butt, who had been the lessee from 1913, joined by Owen Nares, who presented "The House of Peru," "Cinderella Man," and "Mr. Todd's Experiment."

The Guy Fawkes are occupied with "Bluebeard's Eighth Wife," a transfer of "Soup Flirting," with the Astaires, a revival of Barney's "Little Minister," with Owen Nares and Fay Compton, the experimental American play "Beggars On A Back Seat," with A. E. Matthews, "And So To Bed," with Yvonne Arnaud, "Crime" and "Queen High," two only a few productions. Every actor of note seems to have played at this theatre during these years when plays continually transferred from theatre to theatre. Here too London audiences participated for the first time in "The Trial of Mary Dugan."

September, 1928, heralded the regime of Sir Barry Jackson with the Malvern Festival production of Shaw's "The Apple Cart," with Cedric Hardwicke and Edith Evans, but before he was to "settle in" Maurice Browne brought the Old Vic production of "Hamlet" to the theatre, and the West End saw John Gielgud's memorable performance for the first time. The names of the plays both old and new which figured on the posters in the next four years are theatrical history. "The Barretts of Wimpole Street,"

The name of H. M. Tennent is ushered in with "Retreat from Folly," H. M. Harwood's play again starring Marie Tempest on February 26th, 1937. This was followed by Enid Williams' play "He Was Born Gay" ("a brilliant failure"), with the author, Gwen Francon-Davies and John Gielgud in the cast. On September 6th, the same year, Gielgud opened his own season with "Richard III," followed by "The School for Scandal," "Three Sisters," and "The Merchant of Venice," with Peggy Ashcroft as leading lady and supporting cast which now reads like an "all star matinee." Michael Redgrave, Alec Guinness, Anthony Quayle, Leon Quartermaine, Harcourt Williams, George Devine, Glen Byam Shaw, Harry Andrews, Dennis Price, George Howe, Ernest Hare, Richard Attenborough, Gwen Francon-Davies, Angela Baddeley, Athena Seyler, Carol Goodner, Dorothy Green, Rachel Kempson. The last production before the outbreak of war was Dodie Smith's "Dear Octopus," and when the theatres were allowed to reopen, H. M. Tennent's Revue "All Clear" in December, 1939, helped to brighten the blackout.

"Rebecca," by Daphne du Maurier, with Owen Nares, Celia Johnson and Margaret Rutherford, was at the height of its successful run when the theatre was hit by a bomb in September, 1940, since when its doors have been closed until now.

Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson.

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