

Dear Maxine,

Monday March 21, 1977

Are you planning to see Liv Ullman in "Anna Christie"? After these many years, I still have fond memories of Greta Garbo in this role. Also, Marie Dressler as the ancient alcoholic, and someone else as Anna's father. It was a great movie. I understand that Liv Ullman's performance is being very well received in Washington.

"Dirty Linen" by Tom Stoppard, didn't fare very well with the New York critics. I didn't see the U.S. production. Maybe the English cast was better. Anyway, Alan, Adelaide and I had a most enjoyable evening at the Arts Theater, in London, where this play was put on in a most unpretentious way. The Arts Theatre is in the back of a very modest hotel building. You pick up the tickets in the lobby of this rather shabby commercial hotel. The tiny theatre was very plain. But the cast was superb. "Dirty Linen" is rather trivial, but good fun when well performed. The English company was fantastic — especially the two people in "New Found Land". It was produced by Ed Berman, an American expatriate now living in London. He has a company of actors, called "Dog's Troup". They perform on the streets in run-down London neighborhoods in order to get children interested in theater.

In 1975 or 1976 the National Theater opened with a particularly elaborate production of "Hamlet". The critics didn't care for it especially, and complained that the performance time was much too long. Accordingly, Tom Stoppard prepared a specially edited version of Hamlet with a performance time of 15 minutes. Berman's troupe put on this playlet in front of the National Theater as a sort of street play. They used the concrete entrance to the theatre, with its balcony, as a reasonably good Elsinore castle. Alan, Adelaide and I saw it one evening in August, 1976, just before going into the theater to see a production of Noel Coward's "Blithe Spirit". The "15 min Hamlet" was hilarious. It retained an amazing continuity in spite of its frenetic pace. Incidentally, I note over and over, in New York (over)

reviews, that the critics complain because the exported productions of the better English plays, or the New York productions, aren't as good as the original English productions. After the performance of Hamlet, a fellow with a strong Brooklyn accent went thru the street crowd, hawking 6 piece post-cards. I bought one from him, and realized only later that this was Ed Berman.

Have you seen "Travesties"? "Jumpers"? Have you re-read "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead" lately? I enjoy re-reading Stoppard's plays.

I note that the New York critics raved over "Otherwise Engaged", the play by Simon, the man who also wrote "Butley". Adelaide and I both thought that this was a peculiarly unpleasant play, although it was rather clever and did hold one's interest.

We enjoyed "Autumn Garden". Maybe I mentioned this when I saw you at the recombinant DNA meeting the day after we saw this Hellman play. Comments by Leon McPhee, March 3, 1977.

"I was rather ^{DNA} embarrassed that I couldn't think of anything to say at the meeting, in view of the fact that several hundred dollars were spent by NIH to bring me to Washington, I still can't think of anything original or important to say on this difficult subject, even after several months of service on our Cornell Rec. DNA Committee". The whole thing is a royal pain in the rump. I agree with Phil Handler that it's a kind of "Never-never land" situation, a bit unreal. I felt the way I would feel if I had been selected by an ad hoc committee convened by the Spanish Government to try to evaluate the risks assumed by Christopher Columbus and his sailors, a committee that was supposed to set up guidelines for what to do in case the earth was flat, how far the crew might safely venture to the earth's edge, etc; etc."

Best to Dan,
Sincerely Leon