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## Mid-Pennine Association for the Arts

28 Back St James Street Burnley 29513

MID-PENNINE NEWSLETTER / 1. December 1969

Editor: Hazel Cooper

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The idea of a newsletter was suggested a very long time ago, and several previous attempts have been made to produce a first edition. The stumbling block has always been the "news" part, since all Mid-Pennine news is pretty completely covered both by our more formal utterances (through the Programme) and by the local press. So the news section of this newsletter is somewhat swamped by two miscellaneous pieces of deathless prose - one by a half-demented assistant arts administrator, the other by an eminent local journalist noted for his capacity.

You have probably got better ideas: in the first place, it might not be a bad thing if we stopped calling it 'Newsletter' and gave it a name of its own. And as for content, you tell us; even better, write it yourself, whether it be opinion, poem, story, idea, philosophy or whatever. Let this be the place where all views can meet and be discussed.

Whether the Newsletter will ever appear again, how frequently, in what form and with what content - it all depends on you. We think it could (and should) develop into a regular and above all lively forum: if you don't write to us and become a part of that lively forum, you'll prove us wrong.

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### Change-about

If you have not yet become acquainted with the news of MPAA's move from an office in Burnley Central Library, no bigger than a dark room, to very pleasant and sizeable premises in Back St. James Street, I would like to suggest that the next time you are shopping in Burnley you drop in some time between the hours 10 and 12 in the morning, or 2 and 5 in the afternoon any week-day.

Why? -- If you happened to glance up at the window above Mark Lane Betting shop, through the greenery of a flourishing tomato plant and complacently spreading grape vine, your eye would glimpse a sudden splodge of colour suspended from either side of the room. The colours are the paintings which have converted an empty room into the MID-PENNINE ART GALLERY, opened by Dame Edith Evans on November 12th.

The new Gallery will continue a policy of holding small one-man exhibitions of a high standard, with works at prices that the ordinary person can afford,

and the second exhibition is now on view until January 3 with paintings and drawings by Blackburn born, Graham Hill, Head of Foundation Studies at Birkenhead School of Art, and Charles Prosser. As you step back from the paintings to get a better look, please do be careful you don't knock one of Harold Thornton's pots (also on exhibition until January 3) flying across the room!

Ringing the changes again, the same room is not only a pleasant place for the monthly meetings of the Mid-Pennine Executive Committee but also the home of the many children who, on a Saturday morning enjoy YOUTH DRAMA WORKSHOP (the other being at the Nelson College, Reedyford).

#### A Note For Kids!

The second series of 10 sessions starts on Saturday, January 10. The registration fee is only 7/6, payable at the first session.

#### Another Move

On Sunday evening, 18 January at 7pm the second session of the Mid-Pennine Film Society opens at its new venue - Unit Four Cinemas, Brierfield. The films, to be announced later, have all been suggested by the present members, and the bar will be open where comfortable chats or violent arguments can be held until normal Sunday night closing hours.

#### Administration An' All!

On my 69th hour of a particular 84 hour week, I can be seen to leave the office clutching two waste-paper bins inscribed 'Completed Questionnaires Please!' 400 survey sheets, 3 books of tickets, one bottle of Bovril, 2 hangers, one blanket-- 69.30 hrs, I arrive at my destination still clutching the said objects. At the hall door a queue is forming. Nobody, when questioned, seems to know who should be selling tickets. At 69.45 the performer, to whom, incidentally, I have been appointed dresser for the week, will arrive and must be duly welcomed. Dropping 2 waste-paper bins, 400 survey sheets and 3 ticket books at the desk, mentally weaving spells for the appointed person to appear and sell tickets, I scurry to the dressing room to place one rug on the floor to keep it warm, place hangers on the pegs and gratefully hand a bottle of Bovril over to a rather surprised person who happens to appear on the scene. 69.38 and I rush on stage to test the lighting area for any shadows... 69.43 I am shifting furniture.....Got the picture?

If you have read Michael Greene's book 'The Art of Coarse Acting' you will of course know that 'behind the scenes' is always far more entertaining than anything viewed by the audience sitting comfortably in front of the performer. The word 'comfortable' may, I admit, give rise to a few raised eyebrows, wrinkled noses, or even a few rude grunts from some readers who have enthusiastically followed Mid-Pennine events to be confronted with hard benches, Church pews, creaking canvass-covered school chairs or to suffer, as in one recent case when the heating failed, turning as blue as the frost-bitten 'behind-the-sceners' without even a soothing cup of coffee in the interval.

However, if you will forgive me, I will stick to the comparison of being 'comfortably seated' with those of us who are -'furniture-shifters, curtain draw..ers, light-switching on and off..ers, nervous-performers calmer-downers, ticket and/or programme sellers, survey hander-outers, money totter-uppers and welcoming committee'; in other words Stage Manager & hands, FOH Manager & hands and some time chauffeur, on occasions,

all at one and the same time. Here, I would like to pause a second to mention that there are, at present, only two full-time members of staff (previously only one) in an association whose impressive growth in activities has astounded many.

So to end my story, I would like to thank all of you who do not see administrators as 9-5 behind-desk-sitters pushing magical buttons, for the uncomplaining and often tiring voluntary assistance in the above-mentioned jobs, who have saved many an event from going down in history as 'The Art of Coarser Presenting'!

Happy New Year.

NB. Anyone interested in offering their assistance in Stage Management or Front of House will be gratefully welcomed at 28, Back St. James Street BURNLEY - 29513.

#### Missing Note

Many's the time, glancing at a waiting audience I have been heard chanting "Where have all the young ones gone".

I certainly cannot answer this question but can only hope you will, one day, fall into conversation with those daring young things who turned up to a Folk Concert and inveigled the two international Folk names to give them a free lesson at their school - to the DaSilva Marionettes where 500 children and adult mouths dropped open as the realms of fantasy were unravelled - to Poetry and Jazz in Concert where a select few, sitting 'on stage' behind the famous Michael Garrick Trio, were invited to improvise on rattles and triangles. They did, and in perfect harmony too!

So kids, wherever you are, remember tickets are specially reduced for you while you are still receiving full-time education. You will have to wait for you Old Age Pension before the same concession comes your way again!

#### New to the North!

Although ballet has often produced much adverse criticism in the ordinary household, this has not daunted Mr. Laverne Meyer, former dancer and choreographer of The Western Theatre Ballet, who, feeling there was a demand for a ballet company based in the North, helped to form NORTHERN DANCE THEATRE, and was appointed Artistic Director of the company which is now the first Regional Ballet company in this country.

The trial run at Manchester University Theatre in March of this year has successfully stimulated new interest in the ballet from Liverpool to Windemere and encouraged excellent press notices.

So don't miss the unique opportunity to see the company when they appear on a Mid-Pennine tour in the latter half of February at the BACUP Empire Theatre, and the NELSON College of F.E., Reedyford. The company will also, during that week, be performing specially prepared Schools' Matinees at Mansfield School, Brierfield; Todmorden's Calder College of F.E. and Accrington College of F.E.

Does the Mid-Pennine Arts Association need a permanent feasibility study?

People scoffed when the idea was first mooted, but as the head feaser pointed out at the time: "Nobody is going to take us seriously until we have a permanent home, the tangible reality of bricks and mortar.

"People will never fill in our forms with sincerity until they can actually see what is being done with them. Just a small centre would be adequate for a start with seating for, say 250 and a modest computer. Lots of the flashing lights and revolving discs, that sort of visual thing, d'you see?"

Initial reactions were mixed. The Association treasurer's reply was largely inaudible and those phrases that could be heard were unprintably unenthusiastic. The secretary, from the back of a camel somewhere in South East Saudi Arabia, intimated that for the time being she had enough problems of her own, thank you very much.

But the issue was swung when the administrator pointed out what a marvellously decorative job the study people had done in their restricted little attic in the Association's headquarters. "Sunday colour supplementish" was how he put it. "Just imagine what they could do with a place of their own, all scatter cushions, sackcloth curtaining, intimate interview areas trendily overgrown with creeping plants, mod drawing boards, the whole shebang".

And so a feasibility study into the feasibility of a permanent feasibility study was set up.

Confidential questionnaires were scientifically drawn up containing all manner of social probing such as "When were you last feased and did it hurt? How did you get there, by car, on foot, by bus, by tram, by jumbo jet, by nuclear submarine, on yak back or other means (please state).

"What would attract you to a feasibility study? Cash, Green Shield Stamps, force, dolly birds (other inducements please state).

A small peripatetic company of feasers was set up initially to visit schools, factories, scrap yards, the BCN bus depot, outlying farms, inlying pubs and so on. And the response was staggering, particularly from the inlying pubs.

It became apparent that feasibility was the new "in" thing. The feasers moved into the main body of the Mid-Pennine's HQ, formed an executive, appointed an administrator, an assistant, a horde of secretaries and an old van.

The Association readily agreed to move, temporarily, into the attic vacated by the Syndicate, to give them their more insidious title. And later they moved again, temporarily you understand, to a small back room in Burnley Central Library whereupon all cat swinging activities had to cease.

"You can't stand in the way of feasibility" an official spokesman explained. "It would be ...well...unfeasible really".

Thanks to the product of a penny rate, a flag day and a quick whip round among the lads, funds were soon sufficient to build a magnificent

Feasibility Centre on the site of the old sewage works at Wood End, generously donated by the Corporation who were more than relieved to get the damned place off their hands anyway.

Opening night was a splendid affair, distinguished by the presence of computer boffins, market research heads, social study professors, management consultants and sundry passing programmers.

Highlight was a performance of a specially commissioned Roberto Gerhard Double Concerto for intercontinental ballistic missiles and nuclear reactor in G flat minor.

As the applause died down, the head feaser was heard to remark "You know, there may be a place for all this arty stuff in this part of the world. I wonder what ever became of that old...what was it... Middle Pendle Library Lecture Society or whatever. Must go into the feasibility of it sometime!"

The Designe Syndicate who have almost completed their Feasibility Study on the proposed Arts Centre for the Mid-Pennine Area, will be publishing a full report to appear in January. Obviously, the need for a 'home' where events and other activities can be suitably housed, parking provided and where the audience can drink their fill during intervals is too large a discussion for a newsletter.

But, all your suggestions, points of view and very valid comments will have a chance to be aired at the public meetings where the report will be presented. The dates of these have not yet been fixed, but will be publicised shortly.

DIARY.....DIARY..... Events Coming.....

ANNETTE WEISBROD, the Concert Pianist who was born in Blackburn, and whose piano playing has been nationally reviewed by the Press, will give a recital at the Haworth Art Gallery, Accrington on Saturday 29 February 1970.....

Another Mid-Pennine event to be presented at the Haworth Art Gallery will be the first major exhibition in this country of the German painter, KORTOKRAKS. This artist has previously had his work exhibited in Germany, Austria, Mexico and New York and has now made his home in London.....

Returning to the Area will be OPERA FOR ALL with performances of : 'La Traviata' at Oswaldtwistle Town Hall, February 11; 'Don Pasquale' at Todmorden Town Hall, February 26 and 'Madam Butterfly' at Barnoldswick Secondary School, March 7.....

ORGAN RECITALS by JOHN BERTALOT, organist of Blackburn Cathedral will be held in January at Padiham, Burnley, Accrington, Oswaldtwistle and Bacup.....

By popular demand, the 1968 Champion Brass Band - BRIGHOUSE & RASTRICK - will be appearing at the Accrington College of F.E. on 6 February and CWS(MANCHESTER) BAND at Todmorden Town Hall on 8 March.....

And classical music enthusiasts will be able to hear THE LANCASTER ENSEMBLE and THE AMADEUS QUARTET at Burnley Central Library in February and March.

We hope you will enjoy the forthcoming programme. For further details, please see our quarterly Events Programme which will be out shortly. If you have any suggestion, offers of help, or anything you wish to have included in NEWSLETTER, which will be issued free to all Associate Members - monthly we hope - write, phone or just drop in when you are passing to 28, Back St. James Street, BURNLEY - 29513.

Yours sincerely

MID-PENNINE ASSOCIATION FOR THE ARTS.