

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

March 23, 1964

Theatre Program Of 1924

"The Theatre of the Golden Bough," Edward Gerhard Kuster, director; Carmel-by-the-Sea, California; June - Sixth - Seventh, 1924," is printed on the artistic cover of a program announcing "The Mother of Gregory" and "Renaissance" productions.

This program of 40 years ago was sent to me by Miss Elizabeth Hadden of Oakland, the sister of the late Miss Ann Hadden, former Monterey county librarian.

Interpretation of "The Mother of Gregory" explains that It is a ballad play, written and directed by Maurice Browne. Ellen Von Volkenburg took the part of the Mother; Lord Gregory of the Black Crag, her son, was played by George Ball; Annie of Lochroyan by Margaret Marr; and Michael, a serving man by Edward Kuster. Place - a tower in an old castle overlooking the sea; time - long ago; costumes and stage setting by Ross Bogdanoff; song arranged from old British melodies by Dorothy Crawford, and stage settings by George Ball.

"Renaissance," by Edna St. Vincent Millay, was to be interpreted by Dorothy Crawford and staged by Hedwiga Reicher.

The program also announces that through the courtesy of John Jordan, owner and manager of Pine Inn, audiences are invited to a dance at the Inn, on both Friday and Saturday nights, immediately after the close of the performance. The Inn was directly across the street.

In May 1935, shortly after a charming performance of "Candlelight," the beautiful Theatre of the Golden Bough burned to the ground. It was Sunday morning and the lovers of the theater, of whom there were many on the Peninsula, stood about with tears in their eyes and sorrow in their hearts.

Maurice Browne is now at the University of the Pacific where he is director in the drama department. In the summer he directs the students in the historic old playhouse at Columbia in the Mother Lode country. He opened the School of the Theatre of the Golden Bough on Monday, June 9, 1924, with a lecture: "The Theatre of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow."

Thanks, were expressed by Mr. Kuster to Lee Gottfried, general contractor and superintendent of construction

of the theatre. The rolling sky-dome built on a steel angle-frame of original design, was the latest in America and the only one west of New York, according to the publicity for the opening.

Mr. Kuster wrote: "The aim is the intelligent production of significant plays intended for audiences of mature mentality. Whether in comedy, pageantry, or in the very dramatic forms that lie between, the basis of selection and production will remain constant. Behind this working policy lies a broader purpose, namely, co-operation with all other efficient agencies for the cultivation of the imagination of American communities. The profits of the theatre over and above, costs of maintenance and operation are devoted to educational purposes."

Old-timers still miss Ed Kuster and the Theatre of the Golden Bough.