

SEP 1954

ANOTHER MASTERPIECE BY THE PICCOLO TEATRO

Pirandello's "To-night We Improvise"

TO present Pirandello's "Questa Sera Si Recita a Soggetto" ("To-night We improvise") in Italian in any country but Italy seems on the face of it to be making confusion worse confounded.

Even at an international festival such as Edinburgh's the immediate public for Pirandello in Italian must be fairly limited. On Thursday night the Piccolo Teatro from Milan, presenting the second play in their festival repertoire, successfully enlarged that potential audience.

Sharp Comments

Like "Six Characters in Search of an Author" and "Each in his Own Way," "To-night We Improvise" shows Pirandello pre-occupied with the theatrical illusion. To him the theatrical illusion is the human illusion too, if only we would admit it. The fantastic quality of reality and the realistic quality of fantasy are the subject of his play.

When the pompous little producer, Dr. Hinkfuss, assembles a company of actors to improvise a play from a short story of Pirandello's some sharp comments on the respective importance of the producer and the author in the theatre creep into the text.

The actors, called upon to create their own drama, are impatient of the machinations of the producer and eventually dispense with him altogether.

In the final scene on a bare empty stage the two principal actors play out the climax of the story without make-up or scenery, their only assets being their own passionate understanding of the human drama.

The Piccolo Teatro presented a

considerably cut version of the play, and in Giorgio Strehler's production it moved with an astonishing pace and vitality even through the passages of dialectic given to the producer.

Even for those whose Italian is rudimentary or non-existent the extraordinary intensity of the playing must have made Thursday night highly rewarding.

Climax of Jealousy

Antonio Battistella as Sampognetta handled his ironic death scene with an immense skill—satirical and dramatic by turns—and in the big final scene Tino Carraro and Valentina Fortunato played the climax of Sicilian jealousy with a magnificent passion.

Like Monday's "Arlecchino," this Pirandello play is truly great theatre presented by a company who are unquestionably one of the finest in the world. L.C.