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Radio Plays for Young People to Act by Rose Schneideman
(review)

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actors, directors, designers, and others working within his framework would develop a wide range of ability, a set of more consistently fresh and apt approaches, than those trained in The Method, without any sacrifice in quality in those areas in which The Method has proved itself valuable.

Saint-Denis says: "I believe that a classical discipline equips you with sharper instruments with which to penetrate to the depth of realism." Not only that; it also equips you to perform the classics, in the English as well as the French sense of that word. Most American actors and men of the theater lack that equipment.

Henry Knepler

Illinois Institute of Technology

RADIO PLAYS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO ACT, by Rose Schneideman, New York, E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1961, 219 pp. \$3.95.

People concerned with the broad field of children's drama characteristically greet the publication of a new book on the subject with enthusiasm and hope. Certainly the dearth of good plays for young folks to act points to a pressing need, one that ought to be filled by scripts sparkling with imagination and seasoned generously with knowledge of dramatic technique as it applies to children. An eminent teacher in this book applies her experienced hand, and the result, unfortunately, is more "educational" than "dramatic."

While no specific mention is made of the applicable age group, one assumes that the plays themselves are geared variously to upper elementary and perhaps junior high school students. Each of the eleven scripts is associated with a particular occasion such as Education Week, United Nations Day, or Be Kind to Animals Week. They could all be classed more as "documentaries" than dramas. They tend to be didactic in tone, carrying a specific message rather than stressing any entertainment value. The messages are stated directly and frequently. The Announcer is used invariably as an expository device, occasionally speaking in rhyme. The characters are generally bland and factual, possessing little life or reason for their actions. The plots, with few exceptions, suffer the faults usually associated with documentary form and a didactic approach. The reader does not become emotionally involved either in the progress of the story or in the plight or stated purposes of the characters.

Miss Schneideman asserts her major premises in the "Preface for the Cast" and the "Preface for the Director." The plays are to be used as a tool in the teaching of reading. Based on the logical assumption that learning will take place if students are interested in what they do, the plays are to provide an unusually structured framework for motivated practice in vocabulary building, sentence structuring, and expression of emotion through the voice. Lists of difficult words are appended after each script, together with the placement of accent markings, to stress the application of the texts to the development of reading skills. The two prefaces comprise the book's main strength, filled as they are with practical production suggestions regarding casting procedures, construction of sound effects, and rehearsal techniques, as well as with theoretical truths.

Jed H. Davis

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KAREL CAPEK, by William Harkins, Columbia University Press, New York, 1962, 192 pp. \$5.00.

The author, Associate Professor of Slavic Languages at Columbia University, tells us that his book is the first published study of Capek's life and major works