

Balfour's Inner Self Shown; Can Act, Sing, Or Model

by GENE WATT STOKES

"My mother came all the way from Florida for me to be born in Winston-Salem," Mr. Balfour said, and I knew then that this was to be no ordinary interview.

Balfour is brunette and big—so big in fact, that due to a slight masculine shortage, he makes up one-third of our male freshman class. He smoked extremely long cigarettes ("the short ones get smoke in my eyes") and told interesting stories about himself as we sat in the sun between rehearsals of Liliom. Mr. Balfour has the title role in the play to be given by the Pierettes, but we are jumping ahead. Let us go 'way back when Balfour's stage experience first began.

Mama and Papa Balfour, content that their son first opened his eyes in N.C., went immediately back to Florida as soon as little Bryan could make the trip and there the child remained until time for school.

Grammar was uninteresting but High School was definitely otherwise. Bryan attended a boy's prep school in Michigan where he loathed horses and adored operettas. Since there were no girls attending this school and since Bryan had a lovely soprano voice, he invariably took the female roles in Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. He was great, the audiences were greatly impressed—until one matinee in the



Bryan Balfour

middle of "Little Buttersup" his voice began to change! "My next role," he told me rather sadly, "was that of the pirate prince."

Bryan finished high school in Massachusetts and also in Massachusetts he lost his singing voice. "It's funny," he said, "one day I sang delightfully and the next—no voice at all." Upon contemplating further, he added,

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was glad not to see Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Now a few random notes on the movie: The guards in the opening scene spoke their lines awkwardly. Gertrude seemed really happy at her first appearance. She seemed to change her character from scene to scene. I wonder if it was because Olivier busied himself with individual scenes in that case without getting proper integration with the rest of the play. Hamlet's soliloquies were excellent, particularly "O that this too too solid flesh would melt." Olivier did a good job of getting by the first sentence of the "To be or not to be" soliloquy, although I wish that he hadn't screamed when he got to the lines "perchance to dream." Ophelia's speech to Laertes about him "treading the primrose path of dalliance" wasn't as effective as it

could have been. I wish she hadn't spoken it so seriously. Polonius' advice to Laertes was presented seriously, although Ophelia overdid her sisterly playfulness toward Laertes while Polonius was giving it. Ophelia was presented in a sympathetic manner for the most part. I got the idea that she went crazy because of Hamlet's treatment of her, or at least that that was the main cause. How could anyone not like Ophelia after she spoke those lines describing Hamlet's visit to her just after he was supposed to have gone mad? I do not believe that Ophelia gave Hamlet's letter to Polonius, as Polonius said. Olivier must have meant to give that impression when he shows Ophelia hiding the letter, then has Polonius reading it just afterward.

The entrance of the Ghost was effective. It makes one as dizzy as one probably would be if he had just seen a ghost. In the bedroom scene Gertrude screams too much.

Hamlet overhears the King, Queen, and Polonius plotting to find out the cause of his madness. Ophelia is made out as an unwilling accomplice. I could see that she was unwilling, why couldn't that stupid Hamlet see it too? The "farewell, my mother" scene between the King and Hamlet is presented seriously, not humorously as the Barter Theatre recently did. In the duel scene the Queen seemed to know that the wine was poisoned. How could she have suspected?

I have never seen a picture in which light and dark has been exploited so well. Some of the close-ups of Hamlet reminds me of Rembrandt's portraits. The still life of the actor's equipment was good but it was emphasized too much.

An attempt at integration of the whole play was evident but for the most part it was still confused. Just the same, no one should miss seeing it.

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