

'TIME REMEMBERED'

Helen Hayes in a Light Fantastic Comedy Written by Anouilh

By BROOKS ATKINSON

TO people who do not want to be depressed in the theatre (or think they do not want to be depressed, which is not the same thing)—see "Time Remembered," with a cast that includes Helen Hayes, Susan Strasberg and Richard Burton.

It is a romantic masque by Jean Anouilh, the most gifted of contemporary French dramatists. He wrote it as "Léocadia" in 1939. It was put on in Paris a few weeks before France succumbed to Hitler's armies—a desolate event that desolated box offices as well as the nation. In 1954 Patricia Moyes wrote an English adaptation of it for the cultivated Third Programme of the British Broadcasting Corporation. Soon afterward her adaptation appeared on a London stage with Margaret Rutherford, Mary Ure (currently here in "Look Back in Anger") and Paul Scofield in the leading parts. And so to New York, after a sea change that has freshened it considerably.

Describing it as a "romantic masque" requires elaboration. If "Time Remembered" were at

his characters from fantasy to the absurdity of life.

"Time Remembered" is not a play to be acted by rule-of-thumb because the tones are subtle and the humors sly and elusive. Anything literal in the acting or production would destroy it. In England it was well acted and it was enjoyable. But in the opinion of a theatre-goer who has seen both productions, the American version is lighter, gayer and more alive. Miss Rutherford, an amusing woman, played the mad duchess dead-pan, bowling her way through the story by force of personality. She presided over M. Anouilh's follies with regal authority.

Spontaneous Acting

Miss Hayes is by nature a spontaneous actress with a radiant personality. She moves lightly; her comic spirit is quick and buoyant; she is instantly responsive to the other actors. If she did not have a long record of glorious performances in dramas as various as "Mary of Scotland," "Victoria Regina" and "The Glass Menagerie," it would be easy to pronounce her current performance as the finest.

But it certainly ranks with the finest things she has done, and it is wonderfully enjoyable in humanity as well as comic madness. Unhinged though the duchess may be by ordinary standards, she is a consistent, plausible, genial eccentric in Miss Hayes' mercurial playing.

As the decoy to the obsessed prince, Susan Strasberg gives a dainty, glowing performance in a style that does not repeat the performance she gave two years ago in "The Diary of Anne Frank." Apart from her tender personal beauty, she has the instincts and intelligence of a professional. Mr. Burton's grave, handsome, manly prince—drawn between sulkiness and egotism—is ironically entertaining and gives a neat balance to the wayward ebullience of the duchess. There is some very funny acting also by Glenn Anders as a futile, potty, upper-class gentleman, and Sig Arno as a supercilious headwaiter.

In the direction of Albert Marre, the production is immaculately imposing. The lush extravagance of Oliver Smith's scenery, the ostentatious loveliness of Miles White's costumes convey the fastidious luxury of the theme. Everything is just a little too rich to be sensible. For M. Anouilh is on a cautious holiday, cultivating a dream but clinging to reality. "Time Remembered" is a delightful play.

THE OPENINGS

THE COUNTRY WIFE—

Wednesday at the Adelphi Theatre. A revival of William Wycherley's play co-starring Julie Harris, Laurence Harvey and Pamela Brown. Opening night curtain: 8.

LOOK HOMEWARD, ANGEL—

Thursday at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre. A play by Ketti Frings based on the novel by Thomas Wolfe. Anthony Perkins, Jo Van Fleet and Hugh Griffith are co-starred. Opening night curtain: 7:45.

RICHARD III—

Tomorrow at the Heckscher Theatre. A revival by the New York Shakespeare Festival Company. Opening night curtain: 7:30.

A PALM TREE IN A ROSE GARDEN—

Tuesday at the Cricket Theatre. A comedy by Meade Roberts, starring Vicki Cummings. Opening night curtain: 8.

heart the fairy-story that it seems to be on the surface, it would probably be too cloying to be borne. We are not living in the age of "Monsieur Beaucaire." But even in 1939, before the bottom had dropped out of M. Anouilh's world, he was not a true romanticist. He seasoned make-believe with skepticism and wit. Like Giraudoux he could imagine an enchanted world, but he was too realistic to believe in it.

It is the fable of an impossibly rich duchess who is trying to obliterate her nephew's obsession with the memory of a disastrous love affair. Two or three years ago he, a prince, had had three rapturous days with a fascinating ballerina who was inconsiderate enough to die. Being fabulously rich, the duchess has reconstructed her private park the nightclub and restaurant where the prince had entertained the ballerina. As the play opens, the duchess engages a Parisian milliner, who looks like the ballerina, to repeat with the prince the romantic events of the three days in the hope of breaking the spell and returning the prince to reality.

Gallic Discipline

If this were all, "Time Remembered" would be as vacuous as Terrence Rattigan's "The Sleeping Prince" of last season. But M. Anouilh is a theatrical poet; he can incantate a mood. The whole conception of the play is as fantastic as "The Madwoman of Chailot"; it takes off into outer space. And once M. Anouilh has embarked on his imaginative errand, the delicacy of his invention is captivating. His peeps into the never-never land are charming.

But that Gallic instinct for being clear-headed about everything disciplines him. The distinction of "Time Remembered" lies in the skill with which he balances reality and fancy—the humorous backtracking to the stodgy life in the duchess' château, the acid gossip among her servants, the little imperfections in the masquerade that make it look bogus and ridiculous, the satire of riches and social position, the constant disillusionment.

Everything looks grand in "Time Remembered," but everything is really impossible and silly. Although M. Anouilh's wit in this play is gentler than it was in "The Waltz of the Toreadors," it is wit all the same, and it is forever recalling

RE by