

Alice Riley's Drama Adapts Chinese Mode to American Tastes

"Little New Moon," a play not alien to Chinese ideals, written and produced after the Chinese manner, yet appealing to an American audience, is the unique recent dramatic effort of Alice C. D. Riley to be offered at Northwestern University, the week of Dec. 11.

The trio of performances will be the first to be offered this season by the Playshop of the university. They will also be the first performances under its new order, established with the opening of the university this autumn, wherein it has officially taken over the Playshop activities as a part of its curriculum in its School of Speech.

Local Color from California

Mrs. Riley, who has written many plays for professional and non-professional production, and whose work and personal energies have been the stimulation and inspiration of the Playshop group, has created in "Little New Moon" something entirely different from any of her previous plays. She has written the fantasy with use of local color gained in her part-year residences in California during which she has attentively attended the Chinese theater and adapted its plan and atmosphere to her recent writing. She has this to say in explanation of what she is creating:

"The Chinese theater has this in common with the theaters of all nations: it tells a story sympathetic to the ideals of the audience, by actors with spoken word and bodily action, upon a stage, before an audience.

"Every one of these things is essential to drama in any place and before any people. The methods of projection vary with the conditions under which a people live, and with the ideals of that people. It is natural, for instance, that in the heart of Africa, the subject of the drama shall be the hunt, and that the greatest hunter shall be the hero. In a country of ancient civilization, like China, it is to be expected that realistic actions shall have been dropped long ago, and its place taken by symbols. This gives us what the theater-folk today call 'stylization.'

Another Style of Chinese Warfare

"For instance, when a battle is to be presented on the Chinese stage, each man bearing a banner represents a certain number of men. Thus, ten men on the right, bearing ten blue flags, opposite ten men on the left, bearing ten white flags, might represent to the audience two embattled armies of thousands. The action against each other is represented by each army passing to the opposite side of the stage, through the ranks of the other. Thus the action of the battle resembles the movements of a corps de ballet in an ensemble dance. Sometimes the flag bearers remain stationary and the battle is danced by two men, each representing his entire army.

"An actor who enters with a whip is accepted by the audience as on horseback. When he throws down this whip he has dismounted. If he is killed, he indicates it by lying still for a moment; then he gets up and walks off the stage. His audience accepts his first action as having been that of the character in the play; the last as being simply the person of the actor himself, conveniently removing himself from the stage.

"The advantage of this method is that

Give Him a Hand!



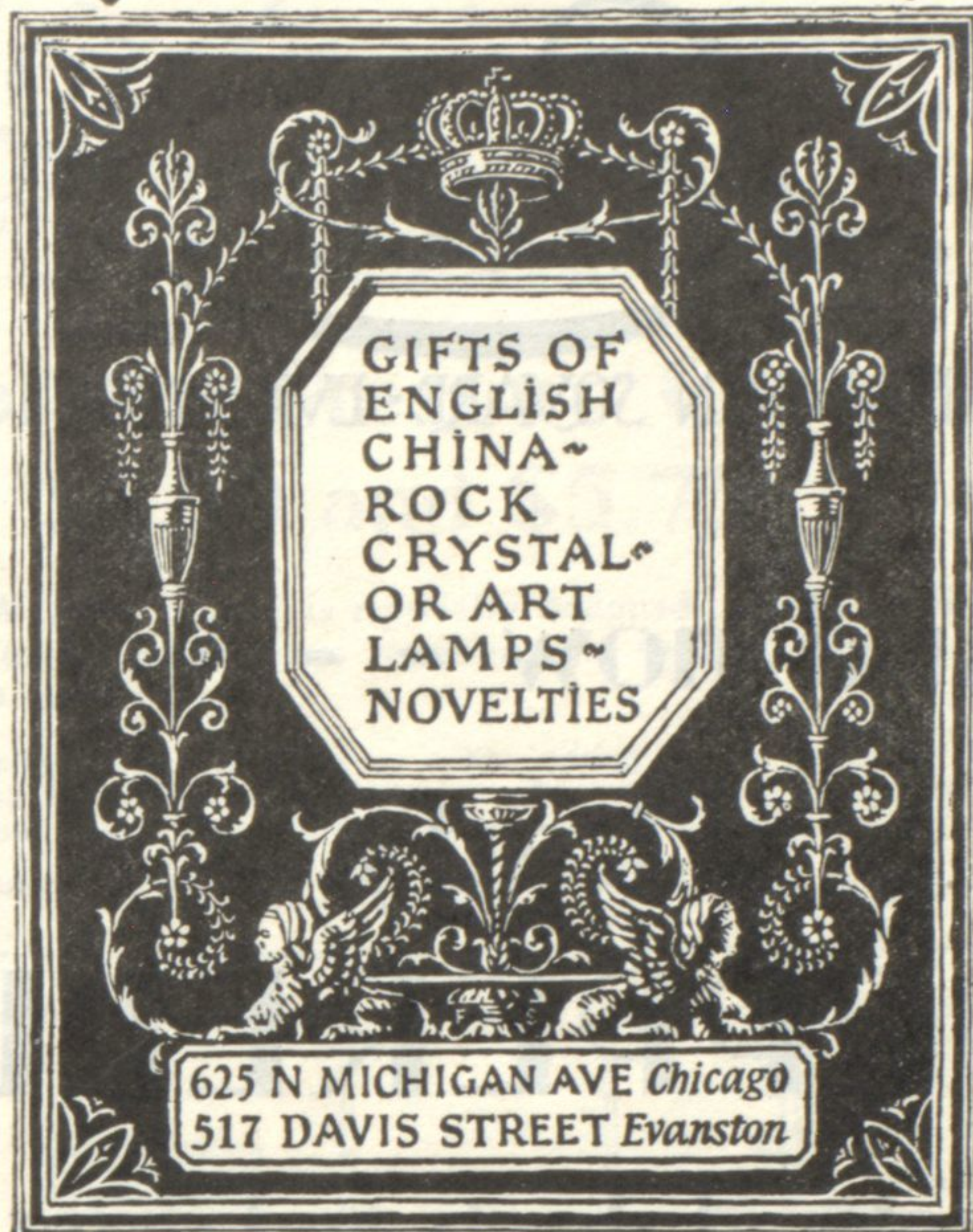
Charles L. McArthur, son of Mr. and Mrs. Norman K. McArthur of 868 Greenwood avenue, Glencoe, was ill on the day the picture of the championship New Trier High school football team, that subsequently appeared on the cover of this publication, was taken, so we hereby accord him the distinction of a solo appearance. "Mac" played in every championship tilt engaged in by the great Green and Gray squad, playing a stellar right guard. Hats off to "Mac"!

it requires the audience to take part in the play. The stage of the Chinese theater makes no attempt at a realistic setting. There is no front curtain. The walls are hung with beautiful draperies. In the back wall of the stage there are two doors. All actors enter by the right and exit by the left of these. Very few properties are used. Most of them are indicated by pantomime. When necessary, they are built before the eyes of the audience by the property man who, by piling up a few boxes, tables and chairs, will make a mountain or a palace very quickly.

"The property man and orchestra are on the stage throughout the entire play, placed in the upper corners. The Chinese audience regards them as invisible during the play's action. All these and a thousand more conventions are accepted without question by a Chinese audience."

Also Appeal to Americans

Influenced to practicable extent by these Chinese traditions, Mrs. Riley has written her play to accord with native ideals, yet to appeal to American audiences. It will be shown upon an open stage with symbolic scenery built up before the audience, with property man and orchestra and properties imagined. There will be interesting incidental music written particularly for the play including the love song, which will be the musical motive, written by Dorothy Riley Brown of Winnetka, Mrs. Riley's daughter.



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