

Their Theatre and Ours (1932)

Note

It is vital that the strongest contrast in style be made between the burlesque inset scenes of the capitalist theatre and films, and the serious passages.

(The sketch is planned for six performers but can be adapted to either more or less. The troupe marches on well-disciplined, singing enthusiastically and in well-marked rhythm the following song, with each word well brought out and distinct. The refrain 'We're Worker Players' should be adapted to the name of the group if it can be fitted in. For instance 'We are Red Radio, Workers' Red Radio'. The march-on and song should receive particular care in rehearsal, and if possible should be accompanied by a portable musical instrument. The first impression the audience gets is very important.)

(All players march on, singing resolutely. The tune is given in sol-fa notation.)

| .s | :d.r. | m :m | .s :d.r. | m. :m | .s:d. r.
From mills and workshops we march before you to raise the
| m :s |
workers'

f :m| r| .s :s s. | t :t | .s :s s. | t :t |
voice a-gain Thro' age-long hardships at last they're wak-ing
.s :t. l. | s :f | m :r | d
to boldly smash their slav'ry's chain.

| .s :d.r | m :m | .s :d.r. | m :m |
(Refrain) We're Worker Players, Red Worker Players . . . etc.

From shop and factory
We march before you,
To raise the workers' voice again.
Through age-long hardships
At last they're waking
To boldly smash their slavery's chain.

(Refrain)

We are the Red Front,

The Worker Red Front,
We show you how you're robbed and bled.
The old world's crashing,
Let's help to smash it,
And build a workers' world instead.
Speed-up and wage-cuts
And unemployment,
Have brought starvation to our door.
With stage and film show,
They're always striving,
To hide from you the real class-war.
(Repeat refrain)

ALL: (in line) WORKERS' THEATRE! WORKERS' THEATRE!
WORKERS' THEATRE!

1ST: The theatre of workers like yourselves

2ND: Who play in every town and country

3RD: To workers like yourselves

ALL: WORKERS' THEATRE! WORKERS' THEATRE!
WORKERS' THEATRE!

4TH: We show the life of working men and women

5TH: Their hardships and their hunger

6TH: Their struggles to exist

1ST: We are robbed at work for the profits of the rich!

2ND: They speed us up, and throw millions out of work!

3RD: Three millions of us and more are out of work!

4TH: They cut the dole and put us on the Means Test

5TH: But the landlord gets his rent, or throws us out on the ear.

6TH: The bondholders get their hundreds of millions in interest
every year.

WOMAN PLAYER: Workers' children are robbed of their milk

ANOTHER WOMAN: And the death rate of the workers' children
rises.

3RD: (to audience) Why don't we workers unite and end this
misery, this starvation, this mass-murder?

1ST: Because many workers are still satisfied with their rotten
conditions.

2ND: Because others think that the workers have always been poor
and oppressed and always will be.

4TH: *Because thousands more think that the rich class are too powerful for us to overthrow.*
 5TH: And why do they think like this?
 6TH: Because the capitalist class make you think just exactly what they want you to think.
 1ST: The press
 2ND: The schools
 3RD: The theatres
 4TH: The cinemas
 ALL: Are controlled by the capitalist class.
 2ND: When things get bad, they sing to you at the pictures –
(The group gather round like a chorus on stage or film 'plugging' a 'cheer-up' song. A satirical picture of the way this stuff is put across. Faces ghastly with forced happiness. 2nd leads them in the song:)
 'Happy days are here again, The skies above are clear again'.
(Straight on to:) 'There's a good time coming, So keep your sunny side up, up' –
(All break off singing suddenly and become a worker audience coming out of a show.)
 1ST: *(enthusiastic)* Good show, that!
 3RD: *(wearily)* Not bad.
 1ST: Nice and cheerful!
 3RD: It's about the only thing that is!
 4TH: Don't I know it? I've been out nearly two years. Just lost one of my little ones – couldn't feed her properly.
 5TH: And we're all working short time – and speeded up like mad while we're there.
 6TH: Yes, and by the time you've paid the landlord and the clubs there's nothing left to live on.
 4TH: What we want is a revolution!
 1ST: *(still cheerful)* Cheer up, mate. There's a good time coming!
 3RD: *(laughing sourly)* So keep your sunny side up – ch?
 1ST: *(sings softly to himself)* Sing Hallelujah, Hallelujah, and you'll shoo your blues away.
 2ND: *(breaks into scene; the others go off quickly)* And that's how they do it on you. There's always a good time coming – but the workers never get it.
 3RD: And when in 1914 the bosses drove us to fight their bloody

war for them, to increase their profits – their theatres and cinemas did the dirty work.
 GIRL: *(enters and sings to audience in heavily emphasized music-hall style)* For we don't want to lose you, but we think you ought to go, for your king and your country both need you so.
 ANOTHER GIRL: And one million men who were caught like this never came back but died ghastly tortured deaths for the profits of the capitalist class.
 MAN: And thousands who did come back are tramping the streets – unemployed – unwanted – outcasts – And what do the king and the country care? *(to the music-hall star)* Our miserable disablement pensions are stolen by the Means Test.
 MUSIC-HALL STAR: *(starts to dance [if possible] and sings in sloppy style)*
 I'm singing in the rain, yes singing in the rain,
 What a glorious feeling, I'm happy again.
 MAN: *(continuing ignoring the interruption)* While the royal parasites draw their half a million pounds a year for doing nothing – and are not put on the Means Test!
(One of the players in straw hat or bowler walks round in affected style shaking hands, mumbling and grinning sheepishly)
 VOICE: *(from back through megaphone – as in News Film)* The Prince has a busy day. In the morning he reviewed the Puddleton Boy Scouts and opened the new bridge, which 500 men have been building for two years. We see him being welcomed by the mayor and corporation.
(Player who plays the mayor sticks his stomach out at this – and gravely shakes hands)
 We see him receiving the cheers of the 500 men who finished up today
(Mayor claps his hands faintly)
 who thus express their appreciation of the splendid work he is doing.
(The players representing the workers blow raspberries.)

VOICE: (*continues*) The Prince, though naturally fatigued by his exertions, after a sumptuous lunch provided by the Town Council, reviews a parade of the police force

(*rest of players line up while he 'reviews' them*)

who have distinguished themselves recently by a baton charge against unemployed demonstrating to the Town Council against the Means Test.

(*On this they draw imaginary batons and use them.*)

His day finishes with a ball organized by Lady Thistlethought in aid of unemployed opera singers. (*Dances round*) And thus he sets an example of devotion to duty to the whole nation.

2ND: (*interrupting fiercely*) And many workers are still taken in by this nonsense, and don't see that we're poor because these others are rich and suck our life-blood. When have you seen the workers' life, as you know it – on the stage, music-halls or films?

3RD: They show us palaces, hotels, cabarets, evening dress, bedrooms, bathrooms – a life of luxury and ease where nobody works or is hungry . . .

2ND: Or poverty shown as something beautiful and noble – played by actors and actresses who are getting up to £1,000 a week – more than an unemployed worker would get in 25 years.

GIRL: (*as film actress, runs in and flings her arms round 4th's neck*) (*in languishing tones*) Oh, I want to get away from this terrible wealth and luxury.

HE: (*nobly*) Money's never brought anyone *real* happiness.

GIRL: Oh, to be poor once more, and happy, to get away from the burden of money . . .

HE: How well you understand! Let us go away together!

SHE: (*naïvely*) Do you think my husband would mind – much?

FILM DIRECTOR: (*enters*) That'll do for now, Miss Greater Garbage. And here's the cheque I promised you.

SHE: (*looks at cheque in disgust*) You're a mean skate, Mr Griffiths. Ten thousand bucks is no good to me. I'm having a midnight supper party tonight!!

(*They go off.*)

2ND: They show us the murder, the mystery or the gangster play or film . . .

(*One player comes on, stands with his back to crowd, with his hands extended. Another comes on and hangs his hat on the extended hand.*)

3RD: I'm the gunman they can't catch! The criminal they can't bump off. I'm known to the police on 500 continents, as Dandy Dick, or Footling Philip, or Chicken-Fits. But my most dreaded name is – The Squirt!

GIRL: (*runs on screaming*) Oh! So it's you, the Squirt! Alias the Slosher! Alias Charlie Chaplin! Alias the Archbishop of Canterbury! Give me back my jewels and my honour!

3RD: Say, Cutie, you want a lot. You can't have both!

GIRL: Make it the jewels then. (*He hands over big rope of 'pearls'.*)

6TH: (*jumps up with revolver*) Hey there, stick 'em up! (*They do so.*)

3RD: Snakes and ladders! Inspector Fishface!

6TH: Hah, you didn't know me did you! I've been disguised as a hat-rack.

GIRL: Say, buddy, I'll have the honour too, now the inspector's arrived.

(*She puts her arms round the inspector's neck and pulls his obviously false beard. 6th raises his hand to put back beard, and 3rd takes advantage of this to whip out a revolver and 'shoot' him*)

3RD: That's not Fishface. It's the Snorter himself from Cincinatti!

6TH: (*reeling around dying*) I know who you are. Only one man could shoot as straight as that. You're not the Squirt, or Chicken-Fits. You're the man I've dreaded most all along. And now you've got me – Inspector Fishface! (*dies*)

3RD: I'm sure glad he knew me before he skidded! Fishface! That's a name to be proud of! (*Picks up the jewels.*)

GIRL: You lie, you foul brute. Leave them jools alone! You're not Inspector Fishface.

3RD: How do you know?

GIRL: (*shoots him, as he falls she says*) Because I AM! (*Pulls an idiotic face*) DON'T I LOOK IT?

2ND: All this sort of stuff that is put across to you on stage and film has only one purpose. To take your attention away

from the drudgery of your existence, and above all, away from any thought of struggling against your rotten conditions.

(All run on)

1ST: Murder and blackmail!

2ND: Patriotism and piousness!

3RD: Revolvers and machine-guns!

4TH: Sex-appeal and slop!

5TH: War!

6TH: All those the boss-class theatre and cinema will show you,
ALL: BUT NOT

1ST: The lives, hunger and degradation of the workers in all countries,

2ND: The struggles of the workers against worsened conditions,
ALL: BUT NOT

6TH: The struggle the workers are waging in all countries to overthrow the system that condemns them to poverty and starvation.

1ST: Without stage effects,

2ND: Without curtains,

3RD: Without make-up and costumes,

4TH: Without everything that the boss-class theatre has got,

ALL: THE WORKERS' THEATRE plays to you in every town.

5TH: And we've got something that the boss-class theatre hasn't got,

6TH: And cannot buy.

1ST: The spirit of the working class that is changing the world

2ND: The support of the working class who realize that we are fighting in their battles

1ST: Our Workers' Theatre is YOUR Theatre!

2ND: Worker players

3RD: Worker playwrights and musicians

4TH: Worker producers

5TH: We labour for the cause of the workers –

6TH: Against the capitalists, landlords, exploiters, and their political puppets.

1ST: We show the life of the workers,

2ND: Their struggles in factory, mine and workshop.

(Here insert a few lines of the most dramatic part of a factory, or similar sketch the group has played)

3RD: We show the rotten conditions under which they have to live.

(Here play a few lines from a housing sketch – example from 'Timber Sketch')

2 PLAYERS – MAN AND GIRL: *(declaim together)* We've got a house,
a nice little house, right in the middle of a slum,
We pay heavy rent, and none of it is spent in keeping out
the weather, so we're glum,
We're miserable, so damn miserable, living in a tumble-
down house,
The roof is leaking and the walls are creeping, and the
landlord tells us not to grouse,
The floors fall in, the doors fall out, it's all of a rattle if we
sing or shout,
We're miserable, so damn miserable, living in a tumble-
down house. *(This can be sung to the tune of 'Misery Farm').*

4TH: We showed the truth about the sailors' strike at Invergordon,
which struck a mighty blow against the national starvation
government.

(a few telling lines from the 'Sailors Strike' are played)

5TH: We've shown what the Means Test has meant to thousands
of workers

(short passage from the 'M.U.W.M. sketch')

Note: The above are put in as examples. Each group should
introduce and play short scenes from some of the sketches
they have played.

2ND: The WORKERS' THEATRE in Britain has grown rapidly
in the past two years.

1ST: This is the work we are doing in thirty towns and districts
throughout Britain.

3RD: And this is only a beginning!

4TH: And now we are organizing –

ALL: A WORLD OLYMPIAD OF WORKERS' THEATRES!

1ST: From Germany, France and Belgium
2ND: From Holland, Denmark and Sweden
3RD: From Czechoslovakia and Switzerland
ALL: WORKERS' THEATRE GROUPS ARE COMING -
4TH: From China, Japan and Mongolia
5TH: America, Canada and Argentine
6TH: And also from London, Manchester, Edinburgh and
Dundee!
ALL: WORKERS' THEATRE GROUPS ARE GOING -
1ST: To the capital of the first working-class country in the world
ALL: TO WORKING-CLASS MOSCOW
2ND: There we will learn from our brother organizations in these
other countries
3RD: And see the victories of the Soviet working people in the
building up of socialism
4TH: And the development of working-class dramatic Art.
2ND: *But* for ten British Worker Players to go to Moscow we
need money
3RD: Money that only the working-class will give us!
4TH: Working men and women! We devote our time and energy
without pay to the workers' cause - to *your* cause.
5TH: We are building a weapon!
6TH: A weapon in the struggle . . .
1ST: For the freedom of our class!
2ND: A weapon in the fight against poverty, starvation and war.
ALL: HELP THE FIGHT OF THE WORKING CLASS BY
HELPING THE WORKERS' THEATRE!! SUPPORT
THE OLYMPIAD.
We're Worker Players
Red Worker Players
We show you how you're robbed and bled.
The old world's crashing,
Let's help to smash it,
And build a workers' world instead!
WORKERS' THEATRE!! WORKERS' THEATRE!!
WORKERS' THEATRE!!

TOM THOMAS

Part 3

*The Yiddish-speaking
WTM*