

REPERTORY PLAY "Children In Uniform"

In presenting "Children In Uniform" to a Brisbane audience, at the Princess Theatre, South Brisbane, last night, the Repertory Society served well the purposes of the repertory movement, and the form of the drama it is designed to promote. The play has been the subject of controversy in England, on the Continent, in America, and in other States of Australia, and created some sensation in the stage and screen productions, but Brisbane has not had an opportunity to see it until this first of the three nights' season.

It is, as so presented, an English stage version of Christa Winsloe's "Madchen In Uniform." It depicts life in a German school for the daughters of aristocrats and military leaders of distinction. The discipline is of the character to which the word Prussian has been applied, to indicate the strictness.

Manuela, a new girl, turns to an understanding, kind mistress, Frau-lein von Bemburg, for affection. The high-spirited girl meets disgrace through the stern view taken by the school authorities of an escapade, which, it is not understood, is due to the nervous condition produced by the school system. She betrays, incidentally, the bond between her and the mistress, who has secretly befriended her. The punishment is isolation—"sent to Coventry." She ends her young life with a leap from a window.

SKILFUL TREATMENT

No summary of the story can suggest the psychological influences that are so skilfully interwoven with dialogue and action. There is no straining for effect—all is so revealing, yet so simple and becoming to the conditions. It has been declared in controversy on the play that it is founded on fact. There is remarkable strength in the scenes of the iron discipline, wrought to meet the day when Germany will again need "men of iron" and the mothers of soldiers. Each of the mistresses, from the stern, soulless, uncompromising head, and each of the girls, of a dozen different natures, is portrayed as an individual as clear-cut as a cameo.

The ethical problems are probed deeply. The hero-worship, so to speak, of the kind mistress by most of the girls, and Manuela in particular,

girls, and Manuela in particular, touches the human verities, and this phase is equalled by the dramatic force.

EFFECTIVE PRODUCTION

Some of the most effective scenes had authentic foundation in the London production, and the production was a tribute to the insight and deep study by Miss Barbara Sisley. On the remaining nights there might be an acceleration of action in parts, and more animation in the scene of the girls' feast after their play, while the lighting for the wardrobe room scene needs improvement, but these are details that do not detract appreciably, however, from the high level of presentation.

The whole cast of 28 has not a male character—as might be expected. There was great skill in the selection of most of the parts. As Manuela, the very unsophistication of Miss Nancy Rennick's playing until her emotional experiences developed, and remaining to some extent to temper her nervous and temperamental manifestations, was the strength of her acting. Again, the strength of Miss Esther Jones's work was in her reserve, and there was a deep sympathy for the character in almost impossible circumstances that rang true. Miss Edith Rowett well suggested the stern demeanour of the "head."