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## Calendar of Events February 1939

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Feb. 1939



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Providence, Rhode Island

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# COMMUNITY ART PROJECT



## CALENDAR of ART EVENTS

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"If the fine arts are the best instruments of promoting the best interests of man," writes William Dunlop in his 'History of the American Theatre,' "it is the duty of every good citizen to cherish the memory of those who introduced them." The struggle to transform a wilderness into this nation is not merely the story of embattled farmers at Lexington or of daring and determined assemblymen in Philadelphia. Guiding public taste toward a new architecture and painting was the rugged task of Jeffersons and Stuarts. And the theatre too, had its pioneers — men and women, less spectacular to be sure, than generals and statesmen, whose memory may, nevertheless, be dutifully cherished.

The imagination is pleasantly humored in patching together the near legendary bits of evidence which ascribes a playhouse to Williamsburg in 1716, which locates a Dock Theatre in Charleston in 1736, and which rumors a Philadelphia production of "Cato" by vagabond players — Kean and Murray — in 1749. It is likely that many such footlight romances will never assume the shape of established facts. With the turn of the half century, however, the records become more complete and trustworthy. In the fall of 1752, Hallam the elder arrived from England with a professional company of London players who on September fifteenth of that year entertained the gentry of Williamsburg with "The Merchant of Venice."

theatre near the end of present Third Street. The last performance, a charity for the benefit of the poor, was given on November third. The company, probably richer in this world's goods, returned by ship for a winter season in New York.

Early summer found them back in Newport playing "Othello" under the guise of a "moral dialogue." The program for this June performance 1762 has been preserved. Mr. Douglass was the Moor: Mr. Hallam, the younger, played Cassio and was described in this fashion: "All young men take example from Cassio. The ill effects of drinking would you see, be warned and fly from evil company." Aside from this one playbill there is little to help reconstruct the story of that second Newport season. In July Douglass had traveled north to the then smaller colony at Providence. His arrival had been heralded by a proper letter of introduction to John and Nicholas Brown from his Newport admirers.

The Providence venture opened with a production of "Moro Castle," according to a letter of a certain Mr. Goddard. Providence gentry immediately gave support to the wicked ways to theatre-going. The more daring gentlemen and ladies from Boston furthermore risked reputations and endured a drive by stage coach to applaud the actors "on Meeting Street, east of Benefit." Popular though the players were, the frowns of the conservative town meeting were stronger than the smiles

## The American Theatre by Candlelight



LEWIS HALLAM, JR.  
Miniature from the Theatre Collection  
Harvard College Library

These adventurers who preferred the romantic uncertainty of the new world to the stability of the London playhouses were known as the American Company. Initially under the leadership of Lewis Hallam, senior, and later under David Douglass, this band of actors went barnstorming up and down the Atlantic coast from

of society. One night John Brown frightened off the angry citizens, bent on closing the performance, with a cannon, but he was not powerful enough to kill the bill in the General Assembly, which on August 24, 1762 put an end to theatrical activities in Rhode Island after the Revolution. It is said that Sheriff Paul Tew, arriving at the playhouse to close down the show, enjoyed the program so much on that last night that he failed to read the fatal legislative order until the final curtain had fallen. Whatever his motives, Paul Tew had in his heart a sympathetic spot for the art of make-believe.

The American Company retired from its unsatisfactory New England campaign to the less hostile centers south of Narragansett Bay. For the next dozen years the players roved up and down the seaboard building theatres as well as playing in them, educating the untutored audiences of the new world to the "more refined pleasures" of the London playhouses. In 1767 Mr. Douglass brought to the boards before a Philadelphia audience the first truly American playwright. Thomas Godfrey's "Prince of Parthia" stands a milestone among significant first performances, but, further than that, the performance of this play is a testimonial to the stimulation which this troupe gave to creative endeavor, and the willingness of the company to encourage young dramatists.

The Revolution put a period to professional theatricals in the Colonies. The players went off to Jamaica, but

Charleston to New York for a decade. If the Williamsburg gentry considered them people of "prudence and discretion," Quaker Philadelphia and Dutch New York did not always smile a welcome when the comedians came to town. Public prejudice had to be tempered in these centers before the play could go on. Stage plays were not, perhaps, "the devil's own folly" as the Boston Puritan thought, but thrift furnished an argument against frivolous expenditures beyond the northern borders of the Mason-Dixon line. To combat the opposition required a thick skin. To conquer conservative New England was beyond the actors' powers until after the Revolution, although two unsuccessful efforts were made by the determined American Company. These invasions were both directed at the Narragansett Bay colony which enjoyed a reputation for freedom and liberality of spirit.

In the fall of 1761 David Douglass landed in Newport. He was promptly forbidden to present stage plays even though he came armed with a letter from Governor Dinwiddie of Virginia which gave the players good characters and recommended them "as a company whose behavior merits the favor of the public and who are capable of entertaining a sensible and polite audience." A more powerful influence than the town fathers, however, enabled him to defy the local order against stage plays, and the curtain rose on "The Provoked Husband," September 7, 1761 in a temporary

they were undaunted by this enforced recess in their activities. Mr. Hallam, the younger, reopened a theatre in New York in 1785; shortly after, the remnants of the troupe came from Jamaica with Mr. Henry and soon joined forces with Hallam. The new American Company, which in the next few years was destined to invade New England successfully as far north as Boston, was formed. Theatrical pioneering was nearly at an end. The era of development was about to begin.

Near the old octagonal powder-house at Williamsburg is a site — pointed out to the visitor as the location of the theatre of 1716. There are vague rumors that the old playhouse is to be reconstructed that there may be a Festival company installed there which again "will be capable of entertaining a sensible and polite audience" with plays reminiscent of the Old American Company's repertory. A recent Broadway drama, "The Fabulous Invalid," suggests in its story that those actors who die in service may be permitted to haunt the dark backstage regions which they have loved so much — just so long as Theatre endures. Likely the idea is whimsical, but could one "cherish the memory of those who introduced" America to the theatre art better than by providing playhouses, dedicated to pioneer effort, in which the shades might be assured that the Theatre which they toiled to establish, **does** endure.

Prof. Ben W. Brown



## EXHIBITIONS IN RHODE ISLAND

### Faunce House Art Gallery, Brown University

- Jan. 23-Feb. 4—Reproductions of Wall Paper found in Old American Houses.  
Feb. 6-Feb. 25—Poland Memorial Student Picture Lending Library.

### Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design

- Jan. 6-Feb. 19—Persian Arts.  
Feb. 5-Feb. 28—Contemporary American Painting.  
Feb. 23-Mar. 12—Providence Journal Photographs.

### Rhode Island School of Design School Gallery, 14 College Street

- Feb. 1-Feb. 15—Exhibition of work from the Teacher Training Department.  
Feb. 15-Mar. 1—Freshman Drawing.

### Rhode Island School of Design Research Laboratory

- Jan. 23-Feb. 4—Drawings from the Freshman Composition Class.  
Feb. 6-Feb. 17—Marine and Whaling Etchings by George Gale, Loaned by the Community Art Project.

### Providence Art Club

- Feb. 21-Mar. 5—Water Colors, Oil Paintings, Prints, and Drawings by Lillian Swan, Ann Carmody, and Bernice Jamieson.

### John Carter Brown Library, Brown University

- Jan. 18-Feb. 28—Books and Pamphlets of Early American Printing in honor of the 300th Anniversary of the Press in the United States.

### Armour Gallery

- Feb. 1-Feb. 28—Selected group of etchings by Arthur Heintzleman.

### Tilden-Thurber Gallery

- Jan. 20-Feb. 11—Marine Etchings by C. J. A. Wilson.  
Jan. 20-Feb. 18—Watercolors by Nancy Dyer.  
Feb. 20-Mar. 3—Audubon Prints and Flower Prints.

## EXHIBITIONS OUTSIDE OF RHODE ISLAND

### Andover, Mass., Addison Gallery, Phillips Academy

- Feb. 13-Mar. 6—The Making of a Contemporary Film. (Lent by the Museum of Modern Art.)  
Feb. 15-Mar. 19—Oils and Glass Paintings.  
Feb. 15-Mar. 15—An American Group.

### Boston, Mass., Museum of Fine Arts

- Jan. 24-Feb. 12—Gifts to the Museum from Mrs. Charles Gaston Smith's Art Museum Class.

### Boston, Mass., Guild of Boston Artists

- Jan. 30-Feb. 11—Equestrian and Other Portraits by Howard E. Smith.

### Cambridge, Mass., Germanic Museum, Harvard University

- Feb. 1-Feb. 28—Modern German Watercolors and Drawings.

## CALENDAR

### Sunday, February 5

Gallery Talk by Stephen W. Macomber. "World's Fair Pictorial Art, 1876-1939." Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design, 3:30 P. M.

\*Providence Federal Orchestra presents a program of Mozart, Strauss, and Hyden. Edouard Caffier, conductor. Hope Senior High School, 8:30 P. M.

### Monday, February 6

\*Sock and Buskin presents "Under the Gas Lights." Faunce House Theatre, 8:30 P. M.

### Tuesday, February 7

\*Concert by the N. B. C. Symphony Orchestra, directed by Arturo Toscanini. Metropolitan Theatre, 8:30 P. M. Sponsored by the Junior League.

\*Sock and Buskin presents "Under the Gas Lights." Faunce House Theatre, 8:30 P. M.

Providence Federal Orchestra, Edouard Caffier, conductor. W. J. A. R. 7:30 P. M.

### Wednesday, February 8

Exhibition of drawings by students of the Skidmore College Art Department. Jewelry and Enameled Pictures by Mabel Luther. Providence Plantations Club. Open from 2:00 to 5:00 P. M.

\*The Roth String Quartette, assisted by Madame Avis Bliven Charbonnel, pianist. Providence Plantations Club, 8:30 P. M.

\*Sock and Buskin presents "Under the Gas Lights." Faunce House Theatre, 8:30 P. M.

### Thursday, February 9

\*Sock and Buskin presents "Under the Gas Lights." Faunce House Theatre, 8:30 P. M.

### Friday, February 10

All State Orchestra and Choral Concert. Hope Senior High School, 8:00 P. M.

### Friday, February 10

\*Sock and Buskin presents "Under the Gas Lights." Faunce House Theatre, 8:30 P. M.

### Saturday, February 11

\*Sock and Buskin presents "Under the Gas Lights." Faunce House Theatre, 8:30 P. M.

### Sunday, February 12

Gallery Talk by Elizabeth T. Casey. "Threads of Lace History." Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design, 3:30 P. M. The Providence Oratorio Society presents "The Fall of Babylon," by Spohr. William W. DeRoin, conductor. Plainfield Street Baptist Church, 7:30 P. M.

\*Providence Federal Orchestra, Edouard Caffier, conductor. Hope Senior High School, 8:30 P. M.

### Tuesday, February 14

Providence Federal Orchestra, Edouard Caffier, conductor. W. J. A. R. 7:30 P. M.

### Sunday, February 19

Gallery Talk by Antonio Cirino. "What the Layman Should Know about Pictures." Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design, 3:30 P. M.

### \*Admission charge

Junior Choir Festival. Beneficent Congregational Church, 5:00 P. M. Under the auspices of the Rhode Island State Federation of Music Clubs.

\*Providence Federal Orchestra, Edouard Caffier, conductor. Hope Senior High School, 8:30 P. M.

### Tuesday, February 21

\*Violin Recital by Mischa Elman. Metropolitan Theatre, 8:30 P. M.

Providence Federal Orchestra, Edouard Caffier, conductor. W. J. A. R. 7:30 P. M.

### Friday, February 24

\*The Komians present "The Night of January 16" by Ayn Rand. Alumnae Hall, 8:30 P. M.

### Saturday, February 25

\*The Komians present "The Night of January 16" by Ayn Rand. Alumnae Hall, 8:30 P. M.

### Sunday, February 26

Gallery Talk by Edwin Carter Rae. "Irish Architecture." Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design, 3:30 P. M.

The Providence Oratorio Society presents "Requiem" by Verdi. William DeRoin, conductor. Elmwood Congregational Christian Church, 7:30 P. M.

\*Providence Federal Orchestra presents a concerto evening. Soloists are Emma Winslow Childs, Gladys Mulchahey, Earl Hedberg, and Alexandre Pelouquin. Edouard Caffier, conductor. Hope Senior High School, 8:30 P. M.

### Tuesday, February 28

Providence Federal Orchestra, Edouard Caffier, conductor. W. J. A. R. 7:30 P. M.

### Cambridge, Mass., Fogg Museum of Art, Harvard University

Feb. 1-Feb. 28—French Drawings and Paintings, XIX Century.

Feb. 1-Feb. 28—Graphic Arts of the XV Century.

Feb. 1-Feb. 28—Old Master Drawings.

Chinese and Japanese Paintings, short exhibitions.

### Springfield, Mass., Museum of Fine Arts

Feb. 7-Mar. 6—French Romantics.

### Wellesley, Mass., Farnsworth Museum, Wellesley College

Jan. 19-Feb. 19—Contemporary Mexican Art. Paintings, Drawings, Prints.

### Worcester, Mass., Art Museum

Feb. 24-Mar. 12—Philadelphia Exhibition of Flemish Paintings.

### Northampton, Mass., Smith College Museum of Art

Feb. 13-Mar. 13—Photographs by Walker Evans. (Loaned by the Museum of Modern Art.)

### Pittsfield, Mass., The Berkshire Museum

Feb. 1-Feb. 15—Original Humorous and Political Cartoons by Douglas Borgstedt, Art Editor of the Ledger Syndicate.

### New York, N. Y., The Museum of Modern Art

The Museum of Modern Art will remain closed until the middle of April, when it will reopen in its new building at 11 W. 53rd St., New York.