

# Critique Holds New Negro Art Theatre Not so Arty After Seeing First Night

## Hemsley Winfield and Singer Rescue Studio Group From Depths of Jazz and "Meller- drammer" at Premier Performance

By THOMAS T. ELETCHER

That "art," as the term is used today, is an elastic word covering a multitude of evils, was again demonstrated Sunday evening with the initial performance of a series projected by the New Negro Art Theatre Studio, in the auditorium of the Urban League, 202 West 136th street.

Every seat in the tiny auditorium had been taken and, with the soft lights falling on the dark velvet curtains, the audience sat expectant. Then a shadowy, almost ghostly figure emerged from the gloom and in solemn tones commanded "all who would climb the heights of Parnassus" to attend.

The humble listeners rather deserved more than they next received, for from the wings came a gay young man who perched atop the piano and sang odd jazz numbers, among them such "artistic" bits as "Bigger and Better Than Ever," and "Come On and Do What You Do So Nice."

Vere Johns, the actor, recited "Mark Anthony's Oration" and a portion of Sheridan's "Rivals." Of the first offering, the least said the better, and in the second, one was impressed only with the perfection of Mr. Johns' diction.

Inez Clough, the actress, presented a comical sketch, entitled "At the Pier," and the somnambulist scene from "Macbeth," portraying, of course, Lady Macbeth.

"The Maniac," a play by Larri Lorear, featuring Inez Clough, Enid Braithwaite, and Hemsley Winfield, was also very disappointing. Aside from violating most of the principles of dramatic art, the play faltered hopelessly on the edge of cheap melodrama with the insane heroine decapitating her physician who was insane enough to fall in love with her.

The only approach to real art was a dance number without musical accompaniment, "Despair," by Mr. Winfield, who is remembered for his delightful performance of "Salome" some months ago, and the singing of DeWitt Spencer.

This performance is the first of a series to be held by the group every Sunday evening at the Urban League.