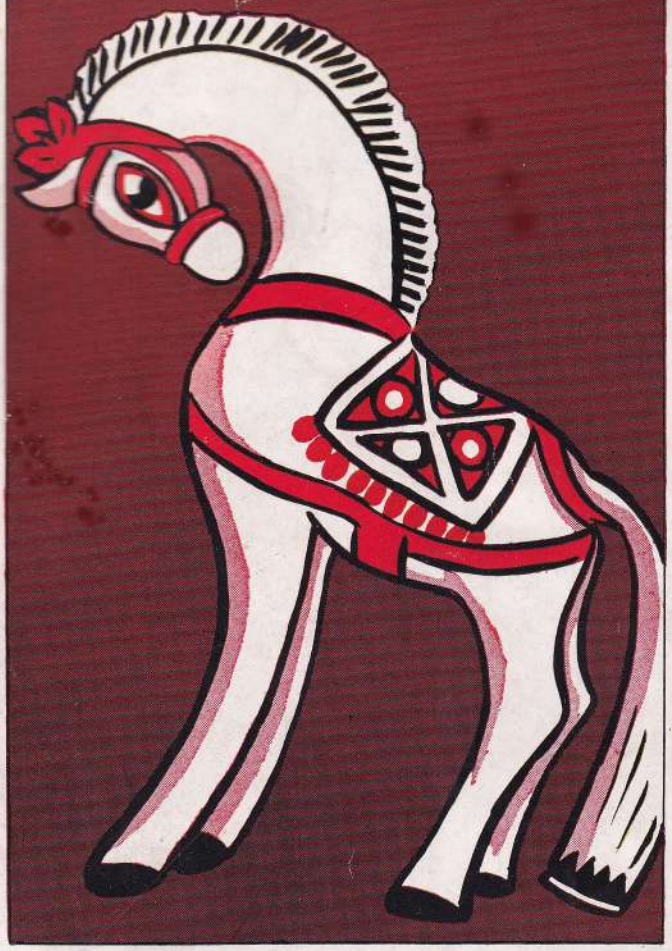


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FOUNDATION

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MAY

Children's Little Theatre •

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# RHYTHMS & RHYMES

MAY 1955



# CHILDREN'S LITTLE THEATRE

registered office :  
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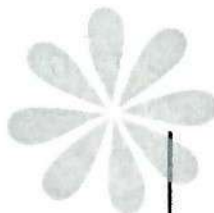
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All our many helpers, too  
numerous to name,  
who enable us to carry  
on the good work.

*Edited by*

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## JUST THREE YEARS OLD !

The Children's Little Theatre enters the fourth year of its existence today.

Three years is not a long span in the life of an organisation. When a few enthusiasts got together after their office hours to evolve a method for training children in rhythm, dancing and play acting, the sceptical public looked askance and smiled. But this group was inspired by the right, selfless spirit, and the approach to the children was direct and full of understanding. The movement aimed at bringing innocent joy to the children, and at spreading more colour and life in the schoolrooms

The first to respond to the appeal of the CLT were the schools themselves, but it did not take long for the public to

shed its scepticism and to come out and applaud the venture. Above all the children, for whom the movement is intended, have shown that they not only thoroughly enjoy but also benefit by CLT's programmes. In three years nearly six thousand children have appeared joyfully, yet with confidence, on the CLT stage, and nearly forty thousand people have watched them from across the footlights, with feelings of lively appreciation tinged with a feeling of sadness at what they themselves missed in their younger days. The CLT has come to stay. It has set a high standard in training and presentation, in music and stagecraft, in technique and stage decoration, and has reorientated the principles of training for young children.

On this Third Anniversary of CLT's inauguration it will be proper to recall some of the salient features in the progress of the organisation during the past year. The highlights of the year were :

\* CLT made a step forward by formally inaugurating a North Calcutta Centre with a full-scale show at the Star Theatre on 30th July, 1954.

\* CLT created history when a group of 45 children, accompanied by musicians, technicians and organisers, visited Delhi during October, 1954, to present CLT's productions to the people of the Capital, and had the privilege of the Prime Minister to inaugurate their programme.

\* The Chief Minister of Delhi State opened the Children's Art Exhibition, sponsored by the Art Section of CLT, which was held in Delhi at the same time.

\* Among the distinguished visitors who attended the CLT shows in Delhi and expressed appreciation of CLT's work were Dr. Keskar, Dr. Humayan Kabir, and Sm. Kamaladevi Chattapadhaya. The CLT came away with a Central Government grant of Rs. 5,000 to assist in furthering its ideals.

\* Miss Mary Fields, the British expert on children's films, visited the CLT's Training Centre in November, 1954.

\* At the end of January, 1955, the CLT celebrated its Third Annual Children's Festival at the Indian Museum, lasting for seven days. The people of the city have come to look forward to this happy annual event with considerable

interest. Among the distinguished visitors we welcomed during the Festival were several visiting Russian Scientists. The outstanding feature of this year was the novel fantasy, "Mithua".

\* On the 10th of February, 1955, CLT had the honour of entertaining two most distinguished guests from the theatre world, Dame Sybil Thorndike and Sir Lewis Casson, who paid a visit to the CLT Training Centre at St. John's Diocesan School and witnessed a special performance of the greater part of CLT's ballet, "Aban Patua".

\* Another step forward in achieving CLT's ideal of helping the schools was made when the CLT's stage in the Diocesan School hall was formally opened by Dame Sybil Thorndike. This is the second stage to be erected by CLT for affiliated schools.

The CLT welcomes into its fold the following schools, which have become affiliated to the organisation during the past year and have been associated with its activities :-

Murlidhar School  
Lake School for Girls  
Scottish Church Collegiate School  
Bethune School  
Batanagar Nursery School  
Andhra High School

The appreciative response of the public has helped CLT through its infancy. Let us hope for further active cooperation in coming years to expand and develop the movement.

Ramkrishnan

Dr. H. C. Mookerjee  
inaugurating the  
Children's Festival,  
Jan. 1955.



## THE THIRD CLT FESTIVAL

### A Parent's Point of View

The Annual Festival of the Children's Little Theatre was given a mixed reception this year. There is, no doubt, loud praise, but there have also been criticisms, and some of these certainly deserve consideration. I shall attempt to analyse these in order to put forward suggestions for the future.

We should remember at the outset that CLT is an organised body with definite aims and objects, a regular system of working and discipline. Their main field of work must be in the schools. CLT started with\* writing rhymes that would appeal to children by their rhythm and subject matter, then set the rhymes to suitable tunes and fitted to them simple traditional dance movements. Rhymes and music are published for the benefit

of the affiliated schools and groups. So, all functions of the CLT, including the Annual Festival, should be judged in this context. Of course money is essential to the running of any organisation, but if money was the primary object, then CLT could have staged many more functions in the year and not only two, as is their usual practice.

Whatever CLT produces, the only criterion with which they are concerned is whether the show will be acceptable to the children on the stage and the children in the audience. The main idea is to entertain children, to inspire artistic sense in them and to stir up the creative faculties latent in their hearts. A peep into the Art Exhibition, which was a part of the Festival, will convince anyone of

what our children can produce under proper guidance.

In any CLT feature subtle psychological conflicts have to be studiously avoided and broader sentiments, which children can appreciate, have to be displayed in the story. This may undermine the literary value of the story for adults, but dance, music, colour and costume make it interesting for the child.

It has been argued—with special reference to “Mithua”—that CLT is gradually taking to background techniques of music, lighting, and costumes, and that the children on the stage are becoming “machine men”. But what might be true to some extent of “Mithua” is certainly not true of “Aban Patua” or “Charui Bhati”, or “Sat Bhai Champa”, or “Rawther Mela”, and if judgment is to be passed on CLT productions, it should be on the basis of all of these taken together. And it must be remembered, also, that “Mithua” is the story of inanimate objects coming to life, for which only mechanical movements would be suitable.

I am glad that CLT organisers have changed the ending of the original story

of “Mithua”. The death of Mithu acted on the stage would have wounded the soft hearts of the children, who should return home happy and gay after witnessing a performance.

The importance of music in children’s performances is often undervalued. It has been found from experience that young children lose interest in dialogues and straight acting, but when dance and music come in they are all attention. There was a special Children’s Corner in the auditorium at the Festival where about a thousand children were admitted daily on a nominal charge, and so, the main object of the organisers being to entertain them, the programme has to be adjusted accordingly.

The programme of the Festival has been criticised by some as wanting in variety and by others as jumbled for want of proper balance. The Festival production is the work of many groups affiliated to CLT, and not CLT’s work alone. With so many groups participating there are bound to be children who drop out at the last moment through sickness, which may alter the



The Great Festival Stage