

THE INCORPORATED STAGE SOCIETY

Founded 1899

Incorporated 1904

CLV: THE SECOND PRODUCTION
OF THE THIRTY-SEVENTH SEASON

SUNDAY, 15th MARCH, 1936, at 8.30

MONDAY, 16th MARCH, 1936, at 2.30

WESTMINSTER THEATRE

Kindly lent by Anmer Hall

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32 SHAFTESBURY AVENUE, W.1

Hon. Sec.: SHEELAGH HARTIGAN

“TOUSSAINT LOUVERTURE”

A Play in Three Acts

by

C. L. R. James

ACT I.

Scene 1: The depths of a forest in the French portion of the West Indian island of San Domingo, August 6th, 1791.

[illegible]

Scene 2 : The Slave Encampment at La Grande Rivière, April, 1793.

[illegible]

ACT II.

Scene 1 : A room in the Government Buildings in Port au Prince, eight years later.

[illegible]

Scene 2 : Bonaparte's apartment in the Tuileries.

[illegible]

ACT III.

Scene 1: The Fortress of Crête-à-Pierrot in San Domingo, March 24th, 1801,
about six o'clock in the evening.

[illegible]

Scene 2: Leclerc's Villa on the outskirts of Cap François, late 1801.

Pauline Leclerc	HELEN WAYNE
Suzanne	LILIAN DAVIES
General Pétion	CHARLES ORIO
General Lemmonier Delafosse	FELIX IRWIN
Leclerc	FRED O'DONOVAN
Toussaint	PAUL ROBESON
An Officer	SAM HENRY

Scene 3 : Toussaint's Cell in a Prison in the Alps, late 1801.

Mars Plaisir	LAWRENCE BROWN
Toussaint	... PAUL ROBESON
Governor Baille... ..	GEORGE CORMACK
A Gaoler... ..	CYRIL HATZFELD
General Caffarelli	HARRY ANDREWS

Scene 4 : Leclerc's Villa on the outskirts of Cap François, May, 1802.

Leclerc	FRED O'DONOVAN
Pauline Leclerc	... HELEN VAYNE
General Lemmonier Delafosse	... FELIX IRWIN
General Pétion	... CHARLES ORIO
Christophe	... JOHN AHUMA
Dessalines	... ROBERT ADAMS
Captain Verny	HUGH CHARLESON

Negro Soldiers, Officials, Guards, French Officers, Negro Officers, Gaolers, French Soldiers.

The Play produced by Peter Godfrey.

Stage Manager Ormiston Miller
Assisted by Audrey Lake and Anne Jenkins

Some of the artists appear by permission of Mr. Ronald Adam, Mr. Anmer Hall, Sir Barry V. Jackson, Messrs. Howard Wyndham and Bronson Albery, Miss Nancy Price, The Daniel Mayer Co., and the London School of Dramatic Art.

The Theatre kindly lent by Mr. Anmer Hall.

The Council acknowledge gratefully the help given the Society by
Mr. Philip Thornton with the musical effects.

AUTHOR'S NOTE :

In 1789, the West Indian Island of San Domingo, a few miles from Jamaica, was owned partly by the Spaniards and partly by the French. French San Domingo was the richest colony in the world, with a population of 30,000 whites, 30,000 mulattoes and half a million negro slaves.

The native Carib population, nearly a million in number, had dropped to less than 50,000 after 20 years of European occupation.

The French Revolution was the starting point of a cruel struggle between whites and mulattoes. The mulattoes could own land and slaves, but were denied political rights and social equality. It was only after seeing their masters torture and murder each other for two years that the slaves began their own revolution. The play is the story of that revolution, and is substantially true to history. The independence so hardly won has been maintained. The former French colony of San Domingo, to-day Haiti, is a member of the League of Nations, and Colonel Nemours, its representative, a man of colour, presided over the eighth assembly of the League. The closest and most cordial relationship exists to-day between white France and coloured San Domingo. The French take a deep interest in a people whose language, cultural traditions and aspirations are entirely French. The Haitians look on France as their spiritual home and many of them fought in the French army during the war of 1914-18. The play was conceived four years ago and was completely finished by the autumn of 1934.

C. L. R. J.

Members of the audience and their friends are invited to a

Discussion on "Toussaint Louverture"

to be opened by Hubert Griffith.,

at Oddenino's Restaurant, 54, Regent Street, W.1.,

on Thursday, 19th March, at 8.30 p.m.

The Author will also speak.

The Shape

19.3.36

THE STAGE SOCIETY.

"TOUSSAINT LOUVERTURE."

On Sunday evening, March 15, 1936, the Incorporated Stage Society produced at the Westminster a play, in three acts and eight scenes, by C. L. R. James, entitled:—

"Toussaint Louverture."

Boukman Orlando Martins
Jeannot Frank Kennedy
Dessalines Robert Adams
Jean-François Hugh Charleson
Toussaint Paul Robeson
Macoya R. E. Fennell
Antoine Charles Johnson
Christophe John Ahuma
Roume Charles Maunsell
M. Bullet Norman Shelley
Gerald Maitland Townsend Whitting
Hédouville Kynaston Reeves
Consul Lear Hugh Butt
Mars Plaisir Lawrence Brown
General Pétion Charles Orio
Leclerc Fred O'Donovan
Pauline Leclerc Helen Vayne
Orderly Eric Roberts
Colonel Vincent Wilfred Walter
Bonaparte Geoffrey Wincott
French Officer Mervyn Blake
Captain Verny Hugh Charleson
Trumpeter John Dennis
Soldier Joseph Pollard
Suzanne Lilian Davies
General Delafosse Felix Irwin
Officer Sam Henry
Governor Baille George Cormack
Gaoler Cyril Hatzfeld
General Caffarelli Harry Andrews
The play produced by Peter Godfrey.

"Toussaint Louverture" deals in episodic fashion with the negro revolt in the West Indian island of San Domingo, now Haiti, and its period of action covers the years from 1791 to 1802. The incidence of the French Revolution and its bearing on Haitian affairs is shown, but the main interest of the play centres in the figure of the famous negro liberator who was the victim of French treachery. It is a page of history all but forgotten.

François Dominique Toussaint, called L'Ouverture, was the negro patriot of San Domingo who freed the island from slavery, released it from the British and the Spaniards, and rendered great services to the French Republic. A decree of Napoleon issued in 1801 declared slavery re-established in the French Settlements, and Toussaint determined to resist it. We see the beginnings of the trouble in a forest in the French part of the island, in a slave encampment, in the Government Buildings in Port au Prince, and in Bonaparte's apartment in the Tuileries, after which there is a battle scene in the Fortress of Crête-à-Pierrot. The final scenes deal with the French occupation of the island, the imprisonment and mysterious death of Toussaint, and the tearing up of the French Tricolour by Dessalines, Toussaint's negro successor, who is also determined to resist slavery.

All this carries with it a certain degree of excitement and movement in picturesque surroundings which might possibly be made more effective through the more expansive medium of the screen. As it is written, however, the play is altogether too propagandist. Propaganda—in this case the cause of the negro races—is all very well in its proper place, but it is not permissible in a play which purports to be substantially true to history. The coloured races have certainly been persecuted by the whites, but the author's bias in their favour would appear to deny the whites a shred of nobility of character or honesty of purpose. In his play the blacks are white and the whites are black.

Paul Robeson gave a fine dignified performance of Toussaint, and sang a little negro spiritual in the prison scene. In fact, his characterisation of the simple, noble-souled negro lifted the whole play to a plane it might not otherwise have obtained. The First Consul Bonaparte, here shown as a mean, treacherous political trickster and as obstinate as a mule, was admirably played by Geoffrey Wincott; while Wilfred Walter put in sound work as an officer cashiered by this stupid Napoleon for speaking the truth. General Leclerc, that incompetent French officer, was cleverly played by Fred O'Donovan, and Helen Vayne did well as Leclerc's wife, Napoleon's sister. Robert Adams, a coloured actor, was at his best as Dessalines when that implacable hater of the whites tore up the Tricolour.

Others who did good work in a cast which included quite a number of coloured players in subsidiary parts were Townsend Whitting (as an English general), Kynaston Reeves (as Hédouville, a French official), Charles Maunsell, Norman Shelley, Lilian Davies, Felix Irwin, George Cormack, Harry Andrews, Hugh Butt, and Lawrence Brown, the last named as Toussaint's coloured servant.

"Toussaint Louverture," which was repeated on Monday afternoon, was well produced by Peter Godfrey. Ormiston Miller was the stage manager, assisted by Audrey Lake and Anne Jenkins. The musical effects were by Philip Thornton. The play was very well received.

Orphée aux Enfers without the music). On the other hand, the translators have been too respectful of the original; they have allowed themselves hardly any modern allusions, and have not even turned *Lysistrata's* great speeches into effective English oratory. (A few years ago in Paris the pacifist speeches in an adaptation of *The Birds* excited such applause that the play was held up for several minutes each night.) The happiest feature of the Gate production is the delightful scenery and costumes designed by Mr. Hedley Briggs. If his collaborators in the Gate Theatre Revue had been given the text of the *Lysistrata* and allowed to attempt a modern equivalent, the result might have been brilliant. As it is, the breadth of the jokes is the chief attraction of the play. It is even more packed with *double entendre* than *Romeo and Juliet*.

New Shabman

Toussaint l'Ouverture, at the Stage Society 21. 7. 36

Most of us know little of Toussaint l'Ouverture except Wordsworth's sonnet to him:

Thou hast great allies;
Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
And love, and man's unconquerable mind.

So we were able to follow with some feelings of suspense Mr. C. L. R. James's chronicle play. The production as a whole was rough rather than ready, but we doubt if the play, respectable though it is, could ever be very impressive. The subject requires a power of imagination which Mr. James does not appear to possess. But he brings out effectively, though without exaggeration, the nobility of Toussaint's character and the treachery of the white men. As Toussaint Mr. Paul Robeson gave a most thoughtful performance: he is one of the most impressive actors alive. Mr. Hugh Charleson as Dessalines was remarkably good, and Mr. Geoffrey Wincott made a brilliant young Bonaparte. The play "ends happily," after Toussaint's death, with the proclamation of Haiti's independence. There is room for another play about the horrors which ensued under the tyranny of Christophe, who here is shown as quite an amiable man.

"The Town Talks . . .," at the Vaudeville

There is something for all tastes in Mr. Charlot's new revue. The star is Miss June, who is as sweetly pretty as her name. She has a very English face and very English clothes, which she wears in a very English way. Then there is Miss Gertrude Musgrove—nothing Dorothy Perkins about her. She can make even a poor line seem as witty as her own face: she is, in fact, an enchanting comedienne, who in fifty years time may be as much admired as Miss Tempest is to-day. In her next show we hope to see her name in electric light. Miss Phyllis Stanley has *cendré* hair, the loveliest figure you could hope to see, and much more talent as an actress than she here gets a chance to display. Mr. Arthur Roscoe's performance seems more Music Hall than Revue (very

Parminster VIL BE BLACK & BETHNIC ARTS ARCHIVE