

JOHN PHILIP SOUSA ON THEATRE ORCHESTRAS

THE conductor, John Philip Sousa, was a 1 speaker at a recent informal club banquet The general topic of discussion was the Status of the modern stage and the famous march composer spoke on the relation of music to the drama.

"The introduction of music into the theatre (I use theatre in contradistinction to opera house) was brought about by accident, " he said " In the beginning there were no reserved seats, no press agents, no critics. Therefore, the audiences had to come to the play to judge for them selves. It was a case of ' first come, first served, ' and consequently there was pushing and shoving, snarling and bickering, and even fighting, which reminds us that we do the same thing today during the rush hours in the subways.

"After the audience was housed the dimness of the candle light and the impatience of waiting a whole hour for the performance to commence would bring about rows and riots, and sometimes the stage itself would be invaded by an unruly mob, ready to demolish anything handy. The managers realized that something had to be done, and the most enterprising of his time solved the problem. He inaugurated preliminary orchestral music before the play.

It was a concert of three numbers, and was known as the first, second, and third music. These musical numbers were played at intervals between the time of the opening of the doors and the rising of the curtain. The second selection was the longest and principal one, and the third was the 'curtain tune.'

" With the development of the orchestra in symphony and operatic performances the theatre is calling more and more on music's help. Even the picture houses have found it necessary to have orchestral equipment of greater than primitive type. Musical comedy and comic operas, romantic and grand operas, and productions depending on music employ more musicians than ever before. Therefore, the progress of music in connection with the drama shows a very healthy growth. " I believe where music is not essential to the spoken drama it is the least interesting part of an evening's entertainment, and therefore never will be missed; where it is essential, it leaves its sister arts far in the shadow.

"Poetry, painting, and music properly mixed have an overpowering fascination for the normal man, and when he sees and hears them in perfect proportion, he feels he is nearer the God that created the poet, the painter and the musician "