

ON THE AIR

'Barefoot in Athens' Disappointing

By BERNIE HARRISON
Star TV Critic

To tell 'er the truth, I never cared for Maxwell Anderson's "Barefoot in Athens" in its entirety, on stage, and the "Hall of Fame's" abbreviated version of it last Friday on NBC shot off some sparks, but never enough to light up the trial scene that made it worth all the interminable talking and posturing.

Maybe I've seen too many plays lately that rake the ears with talk and no matter how brilliant the words, there develops a craving for something to happen, someone to move the play forward with action instead of a speech.

Anyway, it's obvious that talk shows, Western style, had their genesis in that communication medium known as the agora, and a play about Socrates, of course, scarcely avoid being an exercise in argument and language. But Anderson's approach to the meaning of the teachings of this classic seeker of truth always seemed to me to be too convenient and, last Friday, I felt that Peter Ustinov's interpretation was too clever. The trial scene is the hymn to democracy, the timeless plea from the past to successive generations of book-burners, and it came out as something less, far less. I fully expected Ustinov at one time to break into a gay shuffle and croak something like "The Impossible Dream."

Still, in a TV dominated by comic strip melodramas and comedies, it was a thrill to hear such lines as "it is every man's right to tire of another" (so off-handedly delivered by Socrates at his trial), or to see Ustinov with the great Geraldine Page in their marvelous little scene where she comes to him wearing perfume. Anthony Quayle's King of Sparta was excellent; Shepperd Strudwick struck the right note at the trial. The production, as usual, was presented with the impeccable good taste of its sponsor, Hallmark.

Raintree Revisted

The late Montgomery Clift is one of those actors whom you may remember as giving a bad performance but whose work, on later inspection, turns out to have been much better than you thought, if you follow me. It wasn't Clift who was bad in "Raintree County," which WTOP-9 ran Saturday five years after its theater release, but his role. the script—a sentimental

CHANNEL CHUCKLES

—By Bil Keane



think Clift didn't try a Midwestern accent simply because it wouldn't have helped in the least.

Socrates Needed

I watched nearly an hour of the three-hour marathon WTTG-5 special Saturday, "A Re-examination of the Warrar Commission Findings" by its critics, and a Socratic moderator might have been just the man to bring some perspective to the arguments and theories tumultuously advanced. Jim Bishop was the moderator, although referee is the better word. (Now he knows what Billy Conn was up against in Mexico.) What the program proved, it proved in the first 15 minutes, and what it was proving was something that we have always known, namely, they are still writing books and arguing about the assassination of Lincoln and who was REALLY behind it, and we shall have the same, endlessly, over the Dallas tragedy.

Strike Note

Unless the union negotiators (for American Federation of TV and Radio Artists) and the network officials have reached an agreement, in meetings in New York, it's technically possible there could be a strike affecting network shows beginning at midnight tonight. The

union's four largest and most important locals, Los Angeles, New York, Chicago and Washington, have given their leaders the authority to call a strike in the event negotiations fail. A spokesman for the union said that if such a strike were called, the networks stations would be running nothing except old movies or records. So what else is new?

Hockey Tonight

Channel 20 undertakes its first "live" telecast of ice hockey tonight (8 o'clock, Baltimore vs Buffalo); this is one of the toughest of TV sports for the cameras to follow... A special American Research Bureau coincidental report for election night, by the way, showed Washington's two independent stations, 5 and 20, scoring impressively with movies while the network stations were running the returns... WRC was first, followed by WTTG ("Dark Passage") tied with WTOP, then WDCA ("Two Women"), WMAL and WETA... That upcoming Carnegie

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