

**PLAYS OF THE 47 WORKSHOP.  
THIRD SERIES; THE  
CROWSNEST, THE HARD HEART,  
MIS' MERCY, THE OTHER ONE**

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Plays of the 47 Workshop. Third Series; The Crowsnest, the Hard Heart, Mis' Mercy, the Other One by Wm F. Manley & M. A. Kister & Louise Whitefield Bray & Arthur Ketchum

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**WM F. MANLEY & M. A. KISTER &  
LOUISE WHITEFIELD BRAY & ARTHUR KETCHUM**

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SETTING FOR "THE CROWSNEST" USED BY THE 47 WORKSHOP

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PLAYS OF THE  
47 WORKSHOP

THIRD SERIES

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THE CROWNEST

*By* WM. F. MANLEY

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THE HARD HEART

*By* M. A. KISTER, JR.

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MIS' MERCY

*By* LOUISE WHITEFIELD BRAY

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THE OTHER ONE

*By* ARTHUR KETCHUM

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NEW YORK  
BRENTANO'S

1922

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**THE CROWSNEST**

**BY**

**WILLIAM F. MANLEY**

## THE CROWSNEST

The setting for *The Crowsnest*, though seemingly complicated, was really cheap and easy to construct.

Two effects are of special importance for this play; first, an illusion of space not only in an expanse of night sky, but in the height of the crowsnest from the deck of the old hooker; second, a feeling of mystery to conform to the mood of the play. As the 47 Workshop stage is very small—the proscenium opening being a scant twenty by eleven feet—it was necessary to gain these effects under difficulties.

The units indispensable for action are: a crowsnest large enough to hold three people; the mast of a ship; two rope ladders; a spar of sufficient strength to bear the weight of the Kid; a ship's lantern; and a sky backing or cyclorama of some sort. For the mast, two ordinary wood columns, obtained from a planing mill, eight feet long and nine inches in diameter, were used. When these were bolted together side by side, they made a very substantial lower section of the mast. As all the strain and action of the play was on and below the spar, which was placed on top of this eight-foot section, the remainder of the mast was a framework of light wood, tapering toward the top, over which canvas was stretched. This section was notched half way through at the bottom and upward for a distance of eighteen inches so that it would fit on the lower section of the mast and give the impression of the two sections spliced together. Two light iron bands held the sections in place. The spar was made from a ten-foot, four-by-six-inch piece of ash, rounded and tapered to the ends. At the center it was bolted to the top of the lower section of the mast. Ropes attached to either end of the spar and guyed to rings at the base of the mast warranted its not tipping when the Kid's weight was thrown on one end. A two-foot iron railing of three-quarter-inch pipe extended around three sides of the crowsnest—the back unprotected—to the



## THE CROWSNEST

rope ladder which, stretched taut, reached on the left from the intersection of the spar with the mast to the three-foot platform at the base of the mast to which it was bolted. Although the crow'snest was but three feet off the floor, an effect of great height was gained in two ways: first, by setting the mast almost against the proscenium arch so that the crow'snest seemed to overhang the audience; second, by introducing, a foot beneath the crow'snest, another spar, seventeen feet long, to which a sail was reefed, very tight at the ends but bulging out in folds to the stage floor near the center. Behind the sail the characters lay concealed until time for their entrance. Then by grasping the lower rungs of the rope ladder and slowly dragging themselves up a rung at a time, with their entire momentum coming from the pull on their arms, the effect was the same as if they had climbed up through a trap door in the stage. A second and narrower rope ladder, five feet to the right of the mast and six feet up stage, extended from the floor, at a slight angle with the mast, out of sight into the flies. This was used by the Kid in getting to the spar. The few guy ropes used to help steady the mast and crow'snest against the strain became, by equipping part of them with fake pulleys, part of the rigging of the ship. The mast and spars were painted in blues and weather-beaten grays, little of which could be discerned except around the lantern. The sail was of dark smudged cloth, very old and tattered.

For a background a cyclorama was used that reached in a prolonged curve from one edge of the proscenium arch to the other, extending not more than twelve feet beyond the arch at the deepest point. This was lighted dimly in deep midnight blue and gave the illusion of limitless space. A box light on the floor behind the mast and directed upward produced this effect. This arrangement prevented any light from striking the floor or any shadows from the rigging on the sky. As all light was directed on the sky, the entire outline of mast, spars, and crow'snest was in silhouette except where a ship's lantern against the mast threw a dull glow over the crow'snest. A small amber spotlight, concealed overhead and directed downward, served to light the characters, faces and seemingly came from a natural source,—the lantern.

When Peterson put out the lantern, the spotlight also went out and the following scene between him and the Kid was strikingly played in silhouette against the sky. The

## THE CROWSNEST

winking of the signal light in the distance was obtained with a pocket flashlight, pressed against the cyclorama from behind so that it showed through faintly, as from a distance. Later, when Jo-Jo was thrown into the sea, all the lights went off just as he was about to go over the rail. His cry, the splash, and the "Ah" from the deck below, came out of total darkness. This not only simplified matters greatly, but strongly appealed to the imagination of the audience. For the effect of dawn, the first border was brought on so slowly and kept so dim that the scene appeared to be in a thick misty fog.

ROLLA L. WAYNE.

*Designer of the Setting Used  
by The 47 Workshop.*

**CHARACTERS**

**THE GREENHORN KID**

**JO-JO, COCKNEY A. B.**

**MR. PETURSON, THE MATE**

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