

THE SCREEN

'The Constant Nymph,' With Joan Fontaine, Alexis Smith, Brenda Marshall and Charles Boyer, Arrives at the Strand

THE CONSTANT NYMPH; screen play by Kathryn Scola; from the novel and play by Margaret Kennedy and Basil Dean; directed by Edmund Goulding; produced by Henry Blanke for Warner Brothers. At the Strand.

Lewis Dodd.....Charles Boyer
Tessa (Teresa) Sanger.....Joan Fontaine
Florence Creighton.....Alexis Smith
Toni (Antonia) Sanger.....Brenda Marshall
Charles Creighton.....Charles Coburn
Lady Longborough.....Dame May Whitty
Fritz Bercovy.....Peter Lorre
Paula (Paulina) Sanger.....Joyce Reynolds
Kate Sanger.....Jean Muir
Albert Sanger.....Montagu Love
Roberto.....Edward Ciannelli
Marie.....Jeanine Crispin
Miss Hamilton.....Doris Lloyd
Lina Kamaroff.....Joan Blair
Dr. Renee.....Andre Charlot
Kiril Trigorin.....Richard Ryan
Thorpe.....Crauford Kent
Georges.....Marcel Dalio
Concert Soloist.....Clemence Groves

Published in 1925, Margaret Kennedy's moving novel, "The Constant Nymph," has proved itself a hardy tome. It has become a staple on the bookshelves and since its appearance it has been adapted for the stage and twice has been brought to the screen by British studios. Now, the Warners transcription has been delivered to the Strand's screen. And, conceived with a deep sympathy and understanding, the Hollywood effort is a fine tribute to the virtues that have made the book endure.

To be sure, some liberties have been taken. Indeed, the film in several respects even deviates slightly from its cinematic predecessors. But the essential poignancy and strength have been captured. The everlasting conflict between the spiritual and the material, the unbridgable gap that exists between those two worlds and the resulting heartache that comes to those who attempt the crossing, is grippingly portrayed.

The opening scenes depicting the life of the Sanger clan, that pack of rebels living alone in the Tyrol, away from the conventions of society, are nicely handled. The humor, inherent in such a brood, comes across with impish gaiety. It is when Albert Sanger, the broken-down musician, and father of the four girls, dies, that shadows of the inevitable destiny are cast. For, while two of the girls are old enough to take care of themselves, the others still need guidance. An uncle and his daughter arrive to take them to England. Lewis Dodd, a composer and friend of the family, with whom Tessa, one of the youngsters, is in love, is present. He is swept away by the alluring cousin and in a week marries her.

In England he finds himself hemmed in by the prosaic world of wealth and breeding that his wife represents. It is a life alien to his nature. The music he tries to compose fails to come alive. Tessa, who understands him and his needs, also is unhappy in the school to which she and her sister



Joan Fontaine, in "The Constant Nymph," at the Strand.

have been relegated. The two girls run away from the school and return to Dodd's home. Dodd discovers in Tessa his real love, his true inspiration. The two are of one spirit. The tragedy marches inexorably to its appointed end.

Charles Boyer's interpretation of the unhappy musician is played with an understatement that effectively reflects the bitterness and the torment of his predicament. For Joan Fontaine the role of Tessa is another superb achievement. As the delicate little girl, severed from Dodd by the years between them, she wrings from the part all its humor and its pathos. Alexis Smith, launched in her first role of full stature, comes through with an intelligent rendition of the ill-starred wife. Her dramatic scene with Tessa, in which she fights for Dodd, is especially ably done. Everyone else in the cast contributes capably, among them being Charles Coburn, Brenda Marshall, Dame May Whitty, Peter Lorre and Joyce Reynolds.

Finally, Director Edmund Goulding deserves mention for telling a long story (almost two hours) with a pace that rarely wearies. In short, "The Constant Nymph" is a mature and creditable production.

L. B. F.