

Students play a spanking hit



Above: Diana Watkins is the story teller in Questors' students production of "The Caucasian Chalk Circle." The six performances of the presentation, being staged at Questors Theatre, will end on Saturday night

Right: The principal role in "The Caucasian Chalk Circle," Azdak, is played by Christopher Ley. With him in this scene are Maggie Brackley and Carol Wiseman

Below: Mick Ellis, a student at Ealing Technical College, plays to Heather Tobis. Mick has written 27 songs for the production. Heather is at Chiswick Technical College





AN EXHILARATING theatrical experience more than half filled the Questors on Sunday evening—a creditable feat considering the counter attractions available.

It was the end of the summer season at the theatre in Mattock Lane, and following tradition, it was a students' production.

It was hard to believe these confident young actors and actresses performing Brecht's "The Caucasian Chalk Circle" had had only two year's training—and in some cases even less.

It is a delightful play, telling a moving and simple story of a woman aristocrat forced to flee her home after a rebellion.

FLIGHT

Forgotten in the haste is her baby, who is left with a peasant girl, Grusha. The first part shows Grusha's flight with the hunted baby, and the second is a court scene in which a judge decides whether Grusha or the real mother should have the child.

Almost all the characters—vulgar soldiers, sneering aristocrats, frightened and selfish peasants, provocative women, and all kinds of cheats and villains—gave the young cast full rein for extrovert interpretation.

The most extrovert and athletic of the lot was bearded and wild Chris Ley, as Azdac, the bottom-scratching vagabond who is elected people's judge.

Judy Lane in the other main part of Grusha was equally effective, gentle, preyed-upon—but with an indomitable will and a fiery temper when roused. Her performance was memorable.

MAGNIFICENT

Two others deserving mention were Nick Ellis and Paul O'Connor, who composed and sang the music which tells the story as the play progresses. They succeeded magnificently in catching the mood of the evening.

Michael Hodell, the producer has worked with students for ten years, and this was his final production before leaving for a post in Sussex.

The great thing about this production was its air of vivacious spontaneity—an effect which needs a disciplined guiding hand as well as youthful enthusiasm. Mr. Hodell held out that hand with marked success.