

## 'Disappointing' dual production by Questors' students

"THE HOUSE of Bernarda Alba" and "A Resounding Tinkle," dual productions by the Questors Student Group, left me feeling a little disappointed after Tuesday's performance.

Not so much through any fault of the cast, as it was a result of the choice of material.

Federico Garcia Lorca's "The House of Bernarda Alba" appeared to me an immensely subtle work, relying for much of its effect on the heat and repression generated among the cloistered Spanish women in their airless villa.

Although the cast worked valiantly to build up the atmosphere, the tension that should have been created by passion, jealousy, frustration, and the whispering servants, was not quite achieved.

At one or two points, however, the tension that should have been there all the time broke through to the surface.

The most noticeable of these was at the beginning of the third act, when Bernarda Alba and her five daughters sat in complete silence at the dinner table for a long period.

The rather ponderous action of the play was held together largely by Clare Patrick, who did her best to portray the iron-willed Bernarda Alba.

### CONTRAST

Rosemary Parry Jones made an exciting contrast as the passionate and sensual Adela. Margaret Halberstadt made a good effort as the evil-minded La Poncia.

Overall it appeared the material was slightly beyond the scope of the cast, which can only be praised for the way it went about a very difficult task.

The same can be said of the second production, N. F. Simpson's "A Resounding Tinkle." Written in 1956 as a caustic comment on suburban life, I felt it lacked the expert handling needed to make it truly funny today.

Peter Harborne, the only male actor who took part in either production, as Bro Paraddock, and Janice Stanley as Middie, struggled to make their lines come to life, but somehow the inherent humour of the situation was often lost.

A bright spot in the production was provided by Caroline Finch as Uncle Ted. She appeared natural and spontaneous, carrying off her part as if she had played it all her life.

I.N.

72-42-84  
Weekly Circulation

28 JUL 1972

## Versatile students

The Questors Student Group gave two excellent performances last week of Lorca's grim tragedy, The House of Bernarda Alba, and N. F. Simpson's rollicking A Resounding Tinkle in its shortened one-act version. Both plays were admirably directed by Wyllie Longmore. The Lorca piece shows up death as our shadow through life in the person of Bernarda

Alba, the most tyrant of a mother, and her five daughters, immured away from all contacts with the opposite sex.

When one of them is clever enough to have found herself a lover, the Senora promptly shoots him, and the girl hangs herself. She died a virgin is her mother's one gladsome reflection.

Clare Patrick gave this icy monster her full quota of ruthless tyranny, whilst her five suffering offspring were played with full adequacy by Irene Macdonald, Janice Stanley, Mary Gilbert, Maureen Connew and Rosemary Parry Jones.

Equally talented were Margaret Halgerstadt's servant and Caroline Finck's La Poncia.

A Resounding Tinkle was delightfully played by Peter Harbourne as Bro Paraddock. Janice Stanley was enchanting as his wife and Caroline Finch was (wait for it!) Uncle Ted.

The three tripped through Simpson's gay quizzing at the foibles of many a home with the lightest and deftest of touches.

Every delivery was so clear that scarcely a word was lost the whole evening.

STAGE & TELEVISION  
TODAY

29 JUN 1972

Student reunion

Student  
Reunion

THE Questors Theatre, Ealing, is celebrating the completion of the 25th year of the Student Training Course for actors with a Re-union Party on July 22. This will follow the final performance on that evening of the current Second Year Group's production of Lorca's "The House of Bernarda Alba" with the short version of N. F. Simpson's "A Resounding Tinkle." Many ex-students of the Questors are now in the profession and Alfred Emmet, who is still Director of Studies of The Questors Student Group, would very much like to hear from these and hopes to see as many as possible at the reunion.

Rutledge & Keekins  
Richmond Herald

13 JUL 1972

Daughters  
fight for

From July 15-22 The Questors Student Group present "The House of Bernarda Alba", by F. G. Lorca, followed by a short version of "A Resounding Tinkle" by N. F. Simpson. This play by Lorca is a drama about women in the villages of Spain. It is a powerful story of a household ruled by a bigoted and tyrannical mother.

The action takes place inside the house of Bernarda Alba, where her five daughters—ranging in age from 20-39—are fighting to free themselves from the rigid discipline and the stifling sterile atmosphere in which they are forced to exist. The results are explosive and tragic.

It is a play about frustrated passion of rigid social conventions of tradition and pride. Bernarda's household is one of women without men, a household where outward show and an appearance of decency is paramount.

# Quite a contrast between boredom and absurdity

REVIEW BY DAVID LEWIS

THE Questors student group could hardly have chosen two more contrasting plays than those which they have been performing this week at their Ealing theatre.

Whether the choice was the right one, though, is a matter of opinion and, personally, I found the art display in the theatre foyer more interesting than the slow plod of Federico Lorca's sociological study of puritanical Spain, in the shape of 'The House of Bernarda Alba'.

## Not unique

Nor was my feeling of boredom unique, judging by the facial expressions of some of the audience sitting near me.

It would be wrong to assume, though, that the fidgetings and yawns of the audience were in any way due to the individual performances of the students — who each made the most of their parts, particularly Caroline Finch as the lowly Poncia, and Clare Patrick as the tyrannical mother, Bernarda Alba.

But the play itself was written specifically to show the boredom and

hypocritical puritanism of agricultural Spain in the 1930's and in this it was a thundering success.

I suppose it also achieved its aim in providing a stiff test for the students' acting abilities, but it would have been so much better if a slightly more enjoyable play had been chosen.

The plot was insubstantial, though quite complicated — the complication arising more from the inter-relation between the mother and her five daughters, than any actual course of events.

With her husband dead, Bernarda — who believes implicitly in the old traditions of family honour — takes over as head of her household. She has an inbred distrust of men and does everything in her power to closet her daughters within the sterile cell of their home — believing that no man is good enough for them.

Not unnaturally their mother's domineering suppression of their natural desires only leads the daughters to thirst even more for marriage and an

escape from their enforced celibacy.

Matters come to a head when Angustias (Irene Macdonald), the eldest and least attractive of the daughters, manages to land the best-looking man in the village by virtue of her inheritance from her late father.

The jealousy of her sisters grows to fever pitch, particularly in the case of the pretty and salacious Adela (Rosemary Parry Jones) and the ugly, but love-sick, Martirio (Maureen Connew).

## Seducing

Adela even goes as far as seducing the fiance when he comes to visit her sister one evening, and the two become passionate lovers.

Her clandestine affair is discovered, however, and the bitter Martirio reveals all to their mother, who puts an end to it by frightening off the lusty youth with a gun and telling Adela she has killed him.

This is too much for Adela, who commits suicide in despair for her lost love, and the play closes,

not with the mother grieving over her daughter's death, but maintaining her concern for family honour and declaring that Adela shall be buried as a virgin, and that no one be told what really happened.

With the serious part of the evening over, things took a distinct turn for the better with a hilarious performance of N. F. Simpson's 'A Resounding Tinkle'.

There is absolutely no way to describe this crazy, totally ridiculous comedy, which pokes fun at insignificant but pretentious lives of the suburbanites.

Considered very avant-garde when it was first performed, the absurd dialogue in the play bears a very close resemblance to that used in the zany comedies which have since become very fashionable.

Peter Harborne, Janice Stanley and Caroline Finch were all excellent in their dead-pan delivery of their totally inexplicable lines, and it was their performance which, for me, saved what could have been an otherwise rather disappointing evening.