

The Questors Theatre Archives
Questories
10th New Plays Festival 1969

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Cliches lead to a disappointing appointment

The second new play in the current Questors festival is *The Appointment*, by Malcolm Quantrill. It could equally well be called *The Disappointment*.

To me it was a cliched amalgam of past plays, with stock characters, contrived situations, and painfully slow and unwitty dialogue.

There are two scenes of action—the Hyde Park home of a "tramp," and an office and boardroom of a Preservation Society.

The tramp's home is a bench, from which he watches the comings and goings of society's stay-ins. If passers-by do stop to talk to him his conversation is enigmatic.

In the Preservation Society offices a young secretary consoles her ageing boss, who has sent in his annual letter of resignation. In the boardroom an assortment of eccentrics—a vulgar woman, a kinky priest, a blind man and the ageing boss—interview applicants for the ageing man's position.

Three people are interviewed, a stereotype army officer, a bright young cynical man, and the tramp. Finally the job is given to the blind man.

Meanwhile the bright young man and the secretary return to the park to ask the tramp questions about life. And the ageing boss crawls up to the tramp in his long johns asking him something about paradise.

Then, led by the blind man, the stay-ins march round the park while the tramp laughs like a maniac.

Presumably the author is making some point about society drop-outs, the establishment, and reactionary forces.

Personally I found the whole thing so dreary that I felt no inclination to work out its significance.

Others would disagree. At the discussion afterwards many theories were put forward. Some said the tramp was a drop-out, others that he was God, and the author said it was plain that he was in fact the establishment.

Five minutes was spent discussing why the vulgar woman, Mrs. Quandary, scratched her bottom so ostentatiously. People said it disturbed them.

While everyone seemed very concerned about the significance of bottom-scratching, and about the meaning of the play, few at the discussion group were prepared to discuss whether it was a good play.

A play may have a stunning message and still be dramatically uninspired. A message can be typed out and stuck on a wall—but a play, to my way of thinking, should not only hit people intellectually but emotionally. They should feel involved.

To me Mr. Quantrill's characters weren't people—they were puppets with personality identification cards slung round their necks.

The production, as we have come to expect from the Questors, was good, and the cast performed very well within the limited scope allowed them.

P.C.