

The Questors Theatre Archives

Questories

11th New Plays Festival

The Stage and Television Today, 25 June 1970

NEW CAMPTON WORK AT THE QUESTORS

THE FINAL PLAY of the Questors new play festival was David Campton's "The Life and Death of Almost Everybody," presented on June 16. This might well prove to be one of the best works of this accomplished and versatile author.

It would be ridiculous to suggest that the theme of man's progress through the accumulating horrors of political religion and religious politics has never been more profoundly treated; but seldom indeed has it been treated with more conceptual originality and apt wit.

The central character is a Sweeper, employed by a theatre manager to keep the stage clear and his imagination under control. But he has learned in the course of his work that theatrical creativity is a matter of the imagination and, against express orders and faced with an actual audience, he is tempted and he falls. After a few experimental sorties in which he creates a rabbit and an elephant to his own satisfaction, he goes too far altogether, and creates Adam and Eve who, after worshipping his godliness, defy him by demanding minds of their own. The whole thing then gets well beyond the bewildered Sweeper's control as more and more characters are demanded of his imagination, leading to consternation and mayhem when one, a kind of universal Aunt Harriet, whom he had not even thought of carrying and invents the Seven Deadly Sins to encourage the world population towards hedonism and orgies in coffee bars.

It would be difficult to find a flaw in the first act of the play, and the things which are wrong with the second act, such as a mime scene which would still have looked contrived even had it been better performed, and some sequences of repetition without development, should not be difficult to remedy; after which Mr Campton may find himself to have created a little masterpiece.

The Questors company showed a lively understanding of the work and among many good performances those of Robert Byrne as the Sweeper, Ann Bevan as Eve and Suzanne Robinson as Aunt Harriet were outstanding.

LGS.