

The Questors Theatre Archives
Questories
New Plays Festivals
12th Festival 1971

THE TWICKENHAM CHRONICLE

SILENCES IN A STRANGE HOUSEHOLD

THE second of the plays in the Questors Festival of New Plays was John, by David Mowat, produced by the author with the assistance of Peter Whelan.

There are five characters in the play, which would seem to be a psycho-analytical study in the inhibitions, and exhibitions, of the mentally deranged. The household of Vince and his two daughters Glenys and Anna, plus John and Charles, is heavy with their eccentricities and singularities.

Unlike The Last Emperors, which was without sex, "John" it is prominent in its worst manifestations. John and Anna have been lovers, before the play opens, but something changed his personality entirely, rendering him impotent.

Anna does her best, and more than her best, to restore his virility, but without success. Glenys, very fond of the boys, comes home one evening, very bedraggled and screaming, with a story of having been raped. In the end Anna goes off with Charles and Glenys rejoices in a proposal of marriage by her assailant, amidst the frozen silence of the other three.

The part of John, played by David Campion, is wordless. For the most part he is splayed out on the sofa, uncomprehending anything going on around him. He struggles to the table where Anna feeds him. Mr. Campion is very effective. But most of the acting honours belong to the two girls, especially Alexandra Gwynne as Anna.

Anna is not only in charge of the mentally unstable household, but is still in the toils of love right till nearly the end. Miss Gwynn, even if her projection was wanting at times, gave a convincing portrait of this strange and attractive character.

Liz Parravicini as Glenys, was all flamboyance and impetuosity; equally impressive in her different character. Her screams were almost memorable.

Stanley Goodchild as Vince and Michael Haines as Charles, played these two sinister types with quiet authority.

The play is very long: three hours less one fifteen minute interval. It seems even longer owing to its sparse dialogue. It opens with a wordless scene which appears to serve no purpose but to bring the characters on and get them positioned. And there are other hiatuses.

Not for London, I guess. The audience the night I was there didn't seem bursting bursting with enthusiasm.