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Questories
[Fourth New Plays Festival 1963](#)

West London Star Goup, 14 June 1963

QUESTORS' FESTIVAL OFF TO A GOOD START

THE festival of new plays presented by the Questors at Ealing continues until Tuesday, June 25. There are seven plays altogether, and the festival also features an exhibition of paintings, poetry readings, jazz, and discussions on the plays.

"The Things" is a full length play which was commissioned by the Questors from Colin Finbow, who is best known as a radio dramatist.

It is a bizarre farce which strains one's credulity past breaking point. The beginning is vivid and promising. A newly-married couple arrive at their lodgings and while the young man is in a romantic, sexy mood, his bride is intent only on demolishing a large meal. At last she finishes and the young man's eagerness mounts but changes into unbelieving anger when he finds she has booked a conjuror to entertain them.

The conjuror, a sponging failure, is made splendidly convincing by Thomas Mercer. He stays the night: stays in fact for seven years or more. Dorothy Boyd Taylor and Tony Barber give their best as the young couple and Martin Ferriday is engaging as the boy who comes to borrow a shilling for the meter, and unwittingly becomes a symbol of something different to each of the main characters. Other parts are played by Susan Taylor, Ralph Cottrell and Ned Gethings, and the play is produced by Barbara Hutchings.

IMMATURITY

There were some good ideas in this play, but their treatment and the dialogue revealed a certain immaturity which the author will have to overcome before he can be called a successful dramatist.

The best of three new one-act plays presented on Sunday was undoubtedly the last one. Entitled "The Pedagogue," by James Saunders, with a cast of one, beautifully played by Lawrence Irvin, it held the audience completely from the first shambling entrance to the thundering blacked-out finale. Set in the year 1973, this is the portrayal of an ageing professor trying to instil faith into his cynical, atom-age pupils whose attitude to life can be summed up as - "nothing matters - we'll all be dead tomorrow."

The familiar comfortable atmosphere of schoolroom humour descends relentlessly into complete tragedy as he realises finally that his own faith has been misplaced. Mr. Irvin gives an unforgettable performance.

REMINISCING

The other play by James Saunders, "Who was Hilary Maconochie", described as an English play for foreigners, can only be considered as a rather poor advertisement for the English. It centres around two elderly widows, who spend most of their time alternately reminiscing about England's greatness and the sexual qualities of their late husbands (who apparently died of exploding hot water bottles). All this while playing, of all things, strip-poker.

The plot is further complicated by the constant popping in and out of the maid, whose asides to the audience, described as 'elucidation of the plot' served only to make it more incomprehensible.

"Don't Wait For Me" by David Campton, set in a working class cafe in a northern town, and heavily spiced with such phrases as "Sit where y'are, y'lump of wet tripe," is a sad little series of flashbacks intended to show how an attractive headstrong girl degenerates into a drunken homeless old woman, simply because the man who loves her is a self-sacrificing humble person, and not the strong dominant type she really craves.