

The Questors Theatre Archives

Questories

Fifth New Plays Festival

Press Cutting (Eric Bourne)

HIDDEN MEANING OF NEW PLAY

I SHOULD have thought that any playwright who wanted to say something significant should at least take pains to see that his intentions were made clear. But it seems to be the fashion of modern dramatists to clothe their work under a mass of verbiage which has to be of closely studied before it can be properly understood.

Such a play is Albert Bermel's "**One Leg Over the Wrong Wall**" which opened the **Questors'** festival of new plays on Saturday. To me the author seemed to have taken the story of Charlemagne and the destruction of part of his army in the Pyrenees, put it into modern dress and used it as a commentary on the merits and demerits of autocratic and democratic rule.

On the one hand we have the leader who is able to take an instant decision and act on it. On the other is the committee or cabinet which has to act on a majority decision of its members with all the acrimony to which its debates give rise.

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But, as the discussion which followed the play revealed, a number of interpretations are possible, some no doubt, very far from what the author had in mind.

There is much wit in the dialogue, but there is too much talk for the audience to take in at one sitting. Also there is little depth to the characters. They are just the author's mouthpieces.

Charlemagne himself, called Charles, is represented as an uncouth American in battle dress, Roland, in smart fawn-coloured flannels, is a modern intellectual.

The play, directed by Alan Clarke, is performed "in the round" which means that the actors have constantly to turn their backs on sections of the audience making it difficult for us to hear them.

John Howard and Tony Worth play Charles and Roland, with George Ritchie, Neville Cruttenden, Alan Chambers, David Lorraine and Peter Whelan forming the uniformed committee. Jean Buchanan and Mary Holland are the two girls in the speaking cast.

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MUCH more entertaining is the late night revue, "**Pop**," which followed the discussion on Saturday night and which is being repeated on Friday and next Saturday.

Written by Vincent McQueen and Michael Green and produced by Laurence Nixon, it has parodies on the mods and rockers. TV panel games, royal babies and the Shakespeare quatercentenary. There are also jokes against the Questors themselves, the targets including those "decorative puddles" which are such a feature of the forecourt to the new theatre.

Carla Field has a wicked monologue on the marriage problems of royal princesses and is again uproariously funny reacting to the weather forecast she reads from the Saucy Sutch.

One of the sketches I liked best was "Drama Festival" in which one of a team in a scene from "The Importance of Being Earnest" is supposed to have taken a bribe to lose. Mavis Sage and Carla Field were the two girls with Paul Imbusch as the fumbling butler.

Between the various items Paul Imbusch kept trying to sweep the stage after the play only for himself to be impatiently brushed aside. The two authors also enlivened the proceedings in a variety of capacities.

The other new plays in the festival, to be performed in repertory until next Wednesday, are "Is the House Shut?" by Dannie Abse and "The Surrey Recruit" by Fred Watson.