

The Questors Theatre Archives

Questories

Sixth New Plays Festival

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ENTERTAINMENTS PAGE

edited by Eric Bourne

THE Questors' festival of new plays opened on Saturday with a most extraordinary study in schizophrenia with the 17-word title "**How Assumed the Role of the Popular Dandy for Purposes of Seduction and Other Base Matters.**"

The author, Derek Marlowe, who trained as an actor with the Questors' students and won the Charles Henry Foyle Award for 1961-62 with "The Scarecrow", has certainly introduced a number of innovations. Set in a mental home he has taken the action to a high platform built above the stage and even among the gantries of the roof normally used only for lighting. He has also brought it forward on a Y-shaped stage with the leg of the Y serving, at one point, as the cabin of an air liner.

Even more revolutionary is his introduction of two characters who at the end merge into one.

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Standing on the high platform, at the level of the back tier of seats of the auditorium a character known as Petra introduces himself in a long, rambling speech as "A", and announces that "B" will soon appear "if he is not here already."

"A" or Petra is a male nurse at the institution and "B", or Perdito, is his patient. Petra is the dandy, attired in immaculate evening dress. Beau Brummel is his hero and model.

There are brilliant shafts of wit on sex and religion. Some of it may shock the purists, but it set the Questors' audience on Saturday laughing merrily. After a time, however, I found it rather wearying as the wild, disconnected sentences flew back and forth like a game of shuttlecock.

The roof gantries are used for a chase after an escaped patient which prompts one of the protagonists to remark on the noisiness and the need for sound-proofing. Padded walls, suggests the other.

At one point visitors, guide books in hand, are shown round.

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PETRA is played with a supercilious flourish and a mellifluous voice by David Gower, while Paul Imbusch uses all his subtlety in portraying the alternately abject and angry Perdito who is actually the other side of Petra's character.

None of the other characters matters very much, although Geoffrey Turner has a bit dressed as a monk to receive Perdito's repentance and Gillian Kerswell has a couple of scenes as a girl whom Perdito rejects.

Alan Clarke has shown considerable skill and ingenuity in the direction.

At the subsequent discussion on Saturday night, led by the critic, John Russell Taylor, Alfred Emmet, who took the chair, raised a laugh when he could not remember the title.

The other plays in the festival are "**The Shed**" by Charles Hatton and "**The Igloo**" by Kon Fraser. The titles of the three plays have provided an alternative title to the late night revue which, in the manner of "Dr. Strangelove", is now called "**Ooh or How I Assumed the Role of a Popular Igloo for the Purpose of Becoming a Shed**"! It is being staged this Friday and Saturday and on the corresponding nights of next week.