

The Questors Theatre Archives

Questories

7th New Plays Festival

County Times, June 1966

A Little Too Much Devotion to Greece?

THE ANNUAL festival of new plays at the Questors has never been the high-spot of this theatre's year: for every worthwhile work, one has usually had to sit through a couple of lesser efforts.

If anything, the level has recently begun to drop. Last year's revels were a distinct frost, and this year has kicked off with two decidedly expendable semi-satirical dramas with a common setting of Crete. Mattock-lane really must get over its obsession with Greece ancient and modern.

Malcolm Quentrill's "What Really Happened To Fidelity Hope?" is an attempt at a modish combination of obscure nouveau roman and spy-proof.

The first act is merely irritating in its wilfully tantalizing plot confusions and its not very amusing or titillating emphasis on fashionable lashings of sadism and sex.

The second act carries both the opacity and the sensationalism to thoroughly off-putting and somnolent lengths, strengthening one's conviction (already firm after "Come Spy With Me") that the cinema handles this territory far more expertly.

LACKS WIT

Compared with Losey's "Modesty Blaise," Mr. Quentrill's piece is neither clear and crisp in narrative, nor witty, sensuous, decorative, or charming.

Whilst Alan Chambers does his best to hide the text's deficiencies through his habitual fluid production style, he allows at least one member of his cast (Richard Seall) to overdo the fussiness inherent in his role.

The rest of the company, too, fill their parts no more than acceptably—expect for Jean Harding who, in a sketch of a chillingly fake-cosy nurse, extracts more genuine black comedy from the writing than the author put into it.

John Hearn's "The Golden Savage" tries ironically to revamp classical legend (in this case the legend of Theseus, Ariadne and the Minotaur) rather in the manner of Durrenmatt's "Hercules and the Augean Stables"; the difference being that the dialogue has little of Durrenmatt's economy.

In addition, Roger Saxton-Howes stresses the script's lack of originality by directing Act one in a tiresomely conventional, "hearty-heroic" way, replete with statuesque poses and gales of inane, manly laughter.

FAMILIAR CAMEO

In the early stages of Act Two things look up a trifle, but perhaps David Gower should now abandon his well-known camp cameo, impeccable and pleasant as it is.

Still, his old-maid presence in monkish tonsure and robe, shuffling lugubriously arms folded, appears welcome enough when set against the increasing verbal padding and empty "purple patches" of the remainder of the second act—followed by the outright superfluity of nearly the whole of Act Three.

Attractive beefcake and cheesecake come from Michael Langridge as Theseus and Susan Jones as Ariadne and Diana Benn, as the notoriously sporty Pasiphae, combines a dowager's delivery with a gown straight out of Ziegfeld's Follies.

DOUGLAS McVAY.