

The Questors Theatre Archives

Questories

8th New Plays Festival 1967

County Times, 23 June 1967

PLAY ABOUT A DERELICT SCHOOLMASTER

FIRST play in the New Plays Festival at the Questors Theatre, Ealing. David Shellan's "It Was Never So Merry, My Lord" proved a resounding success before a crowded audience, on Saturday night.

The play deals with a derelict history teacher, Albert, played by Colin Pronger, who feels that his subject must be lived, or at least acted, to be understood.

Various young "hobble-dehays," as Mrs. Trende of the W.V.S., would call them, organise his domestic arrangements and provide him with a cast.

Jacob, a former car-salesman and student of Albert's, but now a wide-boy speculator, swindles Albert out of his house and re-sells it at a vast profit.

Later, when Albert is living in rented accommodation, Jacob—played by Francis Fallon—offers to rehouse him and we feel he is overcome with remorse. But, in fact, Jacob feels inferior to Albert and is out to humiliate him.

HIS MESSAGE

Two young men living with Albert—Henry, an unsuccessful pop singer played by Anthony Barber, and Benjamin, a man with a message, "The earth is flat" played by Kenneth Ratcliffe—are out to defend and protect Albert.

Protection is needed against the matrimonial intentions of Mrs. Trende (Mary Phillips), the compulsory purchase orders of Mr. Crackwilliams, (Tony Worth) and the rent demands of Mrs. Frampeliot (Barbara Hutchings).

All three acts take place in the living room of Albert's rented Victorian house, which is littered with the trappings of history.

The play opens with a bang and moves along at a fair pace, although it occasionally falters. Conceited, cantankerous Albert is beautifully portrayed, his baggy trousers accentuating the pathos of his position.

Other parts were well performed and the super-keen landlady, with her doubtful interests, provided a treat for the audience who applauded each of her all-too-brief appearances.

NOT SO MORBID

THE SECOND play on the programme of the Questors festival of new plays was "Death in Leicester," which had its first performance on Sunday. It was repeated yesterday (Thursday) and will be staged tomorrow (Saturday) and on Wednesday.

"Death in Leicester," written by Roy Minton, a former actor, miner, clerk, waiter, stoker and labourer, is not such a morbid play as the title suggests. The action revolves around two men, played by Don Starkey and Michael Haines, who live in a basement room in London.

ON THE DOG

The men break the boredom of their mundane existence by spending every penny they have on forecasting dog results.

Like Mr. Micawber in "David Copperfield," they are convinced something will turn up—namely a win on the dogs.

What seems improbable happens. They win a considerable amount of money from their gambling escapades and the play, as well as their lives, adopts a sad, but humorous turn.

PLAY ENDS WITH A STRIPPER

A DARING striptease by shapely Charleen Agostini ended the last of three new plays presented during the festival of new plays at the Questors Theatre, on Tuesday.

Charleen played the part of Dado, a tarty teenager in "Private Fires," a macabre comedy written by Fred Watson and directed by Michael Almaz.

The play can be seen today (Friday) and again on Tuesday and the following Saturday.

Composed of two long scenes, with an equally long interval, the action takes place in a crematorium.

The proprietors, played by Lawrence Irvin and Keith Godman, are approached by a gangster (Eric Smith) to dispose of six bodies illegally.

The plot thickens when it is revealed that the secretary (Ffrangcom Whelan) has murdered her father, and the cleaner (Sheila Sorley) had a lover who cemented her husband's body into the foundations of the crematorium.

The striptease comes when the proprietors decide to turn the crematorium into a night club.

Mrs. Teresa Collard, Questors administrator, said attendances for the first week of the festival had increased by 500, compared to last year's festival.