

The Questors Theatre Archives

Questories

8th New Plays Festival 1967

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New Play Festival

THE Eighth New Play Festival opened at the Questors, Ealing, last weekend, the first two plays being interesting, well staged, but, in the final analysis, derivative.

The first of the plays was "It Was Never So Merry, My Lord", by David Shellan, which is centred around an elderly, eccentric scholar and several of his friends. The basic situation is very Joe Orton but the resolution of the play is lifted from Anouilh. The scholar does not believe in books for the teaching of history. His methods involves acting out the crucial scenes in history. Thence the intrusive, Orton type layabout-made-good, is disposed in an Anouilh play within a play scene—Henry VIII's break with Wolsey.

Mr. Shellan has a good sense of the comic. Many of his lines are excellent. Much of his play is very funny. A lot is, alas, tiresome. The third act, which, amongst other crimes, changes at least one character personality completely, does not fit; it freak ends the play.

One is left feeling that the playwright had no idea how to bring his play to a satisfactory close.

The second play, Roy Minton's "Death in Leicester", is a titanic bore. This time the source seems to be Heathcote Williams's "The Local Stigmatic" wedded to "Staircase". The play, a highly verbose two-hander, depicts the dreary, unviewable lives of two decaying queers whose lives centre around a "flutter" on the greyhounds. The writing is too clever, and contrived, by far.

P.W.B.