

The Middlesex County Times
28 July 1962

**QUESTORS BREAK.
UP FOR THE
SUMMER HOLIDAY**

STILL persevering with Pirandello, the Questors have closed their present season with a student production (which ends tonight) of "Liola."

This is one of those earthy Mediterranean sagas of lust, compounded of pride, peasant roundelays and periodic familiarities, interspersed by an occasional plea to the Holy Virgin.

It takes, like Richard Murdoch's radio sets, a very long time to warm up; and even then one suspects that only a Lorca could really have brought it to proper boiling-point.

Yet there are thankfully none of the quasi-philosophical pretensions of "The Rules of the Game."

Candid Romeo

From time to time, the pervasive atmosphere of hypocrisy and internecine village strife achieves a rancid force: expressed with particular clarity, under director Michael Hoddell, by Maria Ritchie and Monyne Kane as a bitter mother and daughter, and by Victor Pompini as the cynically candid local Romeo.

Looking back over "l'annee dernière à Mattock-lane," the impression is of a good, if not a vintage year: True nothing' has provided an experience as memorable as "The Birthday Party" in 1959 or "The Glass Menagerie" in 1960.

But sufficient of note remain for me to feel justified in refuting the recent view by Mr. James Saunders that I find the theatre a bore.

Mr. Saunders must have misread my report on the Questors' New Plays Festival. It is not the theatre I found tedious, but his contribution to it on this occasion.

Not boredom

Boredom was certainly not my reaction, in previous months, to the performances of Paul Imbusch, Ffrangcon Price and Rachele Ellis in John Clemow's staging of "The Living Room"; the cameos of Tony Worth in "Epitaph for George Dillon" and Charles Marowitz's uniformly well-acted production of "Death of a Salesman"; John Howard's Falstaff in Alfred Emmet's rumbustious production of "Henry IV, Part I"; the "Temperance Quartet" in the evening of Christmas Victoriana; Kenneth Conington's Rakitin in "A Month in the Country"; Max Lawrie

and Miss Ritchie in O'Casey's "Bedtime Story"; Jo Arundel, Laurence Nixon and Lawrence Irvin in Michael Almaz's mounting - mounting, indeed—of "Lysistrata"; and Mr. Imbusch, Betty Ogden, Dorothy Boyd-Taylor and others in Barbara Hutchin's version of Pygmalion." (Not to mention the Abse double-bill).

DOUGLAS McVAY.

The Stage

26 July 1962

Pirandello Not at His Best

The première of Frederick May's translation of Luigi Pirandello's "Liola" was given by the second-year students at the Questors last Saturday under the direction of Michael Hoddell, who took advantage of the Italian courtyard setting to present the play in the round.

Unfortunately, neither Pirandello nor his translator had created a work suitable for this form of staging, and Mr Hoddell missed some of the opportunities there were for presenting it in this way. As a result, the audience instead of feeling "involved" - the doubtful benefit extolled by promoters of this type of presentation - felt distinctly excluded.

The work, which is very far from being one of Pirandello's best, did not inspire one to paroxysms of regret for anything that was being missed, for the tale of a lady-killer devoted to repopulating his little quarter of Italy, and a family-conscious old man who was unable to rival him in this respect, is intended to be a minor tragedy with comical moments.

Unfortunately it only succeeds in being rather banal. There were notable performances from Victor Pompini as Liola and Barbara London and Monyene Kane as his current mistresses.

L.G.S.