

Middlesex County Times  
2 July 1960

## DRAMA STUDENTS AT WORK An Engaging display at Questors

The Questors theatre isn't just a drama company, but a drama school: there lies the reason for the exceptional standard of its amateur performance. Enrolled students take three classes a week in speech, deportment and acting. At the close of a year a number continue to a further course.

Last Monday at Mattock-lane, the first-year group allowed us to eavesdrop. The resulting display, involving a dozen or so casually dressed youngsters and two instructors, possessed the fascination of all such exercises; a fascination felt on the highest level in the scenes at Lee Strasburg's Studio during ITA's "The Method," in the Martha Graham film "A Dancer's World," or in Jerome Robbins' silent ballet "Moves."

"The inherent curiosities of movement." Robbins' explanatory phrase defines, too, the interest of much of what we saw on Monday. The boys and girls, strung across the bare stage like a gym team, on their teacher's command sagged, straightened, alertly raised their arms, relaxedly lowered them, whirled, shook, and advanced in unison to the staccato rhythm of a single drum. Noiselessly they stretched their hands into an invisible spotlight, turned the palms over, basked in the imaginary heat; noiselessly a kneeling soloist, struck by warmth from above, slowly stood and strained to touch the ray's source, amid a quiet only broken by the faint chirp of birds outside.

Passing to the mime of concrete experiences. A daisy and rose were plucked, an apple picked - and eaten. The males conveyed the sense of appetite, the sound of relishing mouth juices, better than the females - perhaps because greedier by nature. Similarly, the ladies excelled on the sentimental task of throwing a dead bird into a

## DRAMA STUDENTS AT WORK

### An engaging display at Questors'

THE QUESTORS THEATRE isn't just a drama company, but a drama school: there lies the reason for the exceptional standard of its amateur performance. Enrolled students take three classes a week in speech, deportment and acting. At the close of a year, a number continue to a further course.

Last Monday at Mattock-lane, the first-year group allowed us to eavesdrop. The resulting display, involving a dozen or so casually dressed youngsters and two instructors, possessed the fascination of all such exercises; a fascination felt on the highest level in the scenes at Lee Strasburg's Studio during ITA's "The Method," in the Martha Graham film "A Dancer's World," or in Jerome Robbins' silent ballet "Moves."

"The inherent curiosities of movement." Robbins' explanatory phrase defines, too, the interest of much of what we saw on Monday. The boys and girls, strung across the bare stage like a gym team, on their teacher's command sagged, straightened, alertly raised their arms, relaxedly lowered them, whirled, shook, and advanced in unison to the staccato rhythm of a single drum. Noiselessly they stretched their hands into an invisible spotlight, turned the palms over, basked in the imaginary heat; noiselessly a kneeling soloist, struck by warmth from above, slowly stood and strained to touch the ray's source, amid a quiet only broken by the faint chirp of birds outside.

Passing to the mime of concrete experiences, a daisy and rose were plucked, an apple picked - and eaten. The males conveyed the sense of appetite, the sound of relishing mouth juices, better than the females - perhaps because greedier by nature. Similarly, the ladies excelled on the sentimental task of throwing a dead bird into a lake. One cast it in with sudden disgust; a second clasped her skirt as if in an effort of self-cleansing; a third cursed the creature sullenly before bending away with a delicate, hurt gesture of finger to lips. The same actress repeated this gesture while retreating in mesmerised horror from a snake. Again the effect told, but she must be careful not to let it be a mannerism.

Snake-reaction  
Another imaginative snake-reaction came from a girl who jumped up and buried a shoe. And indeed imaginative reactions were frequent. As everybody twisted and coughed under the pretence of being tied to a stake, a boy cried aloud in realistic suffering. As a boy lay dying after some general catastrophe, a girl tried desperately to drag him to safety, and his hand limply lifted, wavered, then fell; here was a moment of legitimate bravura pathos. More elaborate motion set to music followed later: a primordially violent "transgression from peace to war," executed with cymbals and drums against a blood-red backdrop; a flamenco-dust memorandum for a sensually inventive instant where the youth grasped his feminine partner's long hair; and a balletic accompaniment to a scene from "Frey and Bea."

(This I thought a shade posturing, yet in any case it jumped up and buried a shoe. And indeed imaginative reactions were frequent. As everybody twisted and coughed under the pretence of being tied to a stake, a boy cried aloud in realistic suffering. As a boy lay dying after some general catastrophe, a girl tried desperately to drag him to safety, and his hand limply lifted, wavered, then fell; here was a moment of legitimate bravura pathos. More elaborate motion set to music followed later: a primordially violent "transgression from peace to war," executed with cymbals and drums against a blood-red backdrop; a flamenco-dust memorandum for a sensually inventive instant where the youth grasped his feminine partner's long hair; and a balletic accompaniment to a scene from "Frey and Bea.")

(This I thought a shade posturing, yet in any case it jumped up and buried a shoe. And indeed imaginative reactions were frequent. As everybody twisted and coughed under the pretence of being tied to a stake, a boy cried aloud in realistic suffering. As a boy lay dying after some general catastrophe, a girl tried desperately to drag him to safety, and his hand limply lifted, wavered, then fell; here was a moment of legitimate bravura pathos. More elaborate motion set to music followed later: a primordially violent "transgression from peace to war," executed with cymbals and drums against a blood-red backdrop; a flamenco-dust memorandum for a sensually inventive instant where the youth grasped his feminine partner's long hair; and a balletic accompaniment to a scene from "Frey and Bea.")

physical originality the group inevitably found greater difficulty, partly due to the initial embarrassment of beginning to speak to an audience. A certain exaggeration was apparent in their improvised dialogue when supposedly trapped in a rainbowed beach shelter waiting for the sun to shine; what flashes of authenticity remained were vital, in the rubbing on of tan-ol and an unexpected mock-attempt at necking. Their response to the radio news of incipient atomic conflict lacked conviction. (Admittedly a hard thing to suggest; even so... ) Lengthier prepared variants on a given theme also disappointed, largely emerging as stock studies in plump emotionalism - except for a mildly witty comedy built round the mother-in-law problem. Yet the Questors are meant to be actors rather than authors; and very little could be faulted in the section of the programme devoted to recitation. Resonant, impulsive renderings of the Harfleur harangue and Antony's soliloquy to Caesar's corpse; a sibilant, tittering Indian lagoon monologue from Williams and Pinter - these impressed. But did I, in an elsewhere most intelligent delivery of a Lawrence poem, hear "drawing" pronounced as "drawing"? Such elementary errors should have been corrected by now.

DOUGLAS MCVAY.

### THE BOYS' BRIGADE SUMMER PROGRAMME IN FULL SWING

Certificates of merit were presented at a recent meeting of the Ealing battalion, the Boys' Brigade, by the Battalion president, Mr. H. T. C. North, to the various companies who had won the competitions held during the past season.

The Life Boys - the junior movement of the Boys' Brigade - held their annual games in Fishanger Park on Saturday last, when the winning team was presented with a tick box. The 4th Ealing team will be having their annual outing on Saturday July 9, when they will be going to Margate. A training course for leaders has been arranged for early in next session; B.B. officers will be invited to take part.

Eighty-seven boys of the battalion have been examined for the various first-aid awards. A new award - the 2nd advanced certificate - has been issued to Pte. A. Muir of the 13th Ealing company. Six companies have first-aid classes.

So far £1,271 has been raised by the companies towards the World Refugee Year Appeal. Of this sum, the Ealing companies and Life Boys teams have contributed over £15. Just released by B.R. Headquarters, in time for this year's camp, is the "Code of the Good Camper" which has been printed on card 13 inches by 10 inches in two colours and is suitable for use at camp and company headquarters.

### Annual Council At the invitation of the 2nd Ealing company, the annual council of the Ealing battalion will take place at North Grange Free Church hall on Tuesday, July 12. The chairman, on this occasion will be Mr. R. Hewson, the London district secretary; all officers of the Battalion are invited to attend. Mr. W. Yarn will, during the meeting, lead a discussion on the Duke of Edinburgh's avowed religion.

The 1st Ealing Company held a jubilee sale on Saturday last for their company. The jubilee bands of the 4th and 13th Ealing Companies will be playing for the annual church parade of the Girls' Guild on Sunday, July 10. Throughout the United Kingdom last year 37,420 boys went to camp under the best conditions. Foreval figures indicate that this number will be exceeded this year.

### Ealing Division Girl Guides

Last Friday evening, as the rain began to fall, about 500 Girl Guides from the Ealing Division made their way by train and bus to Braden Green, the foot of Horsenden Hill, to light the beacon in celebration of the first fifty years of guiding.

Despite the weather the programme was adhered to, though somewhat curtailed. It commenced with a procession of Guides carrying lighted torches to light the beacon, while a Guide read a prologue.

Then, led by Miss Wellingham, the Guides sang five fire songs from many different countries. The climax of the evening came when a Guide from each company released a balloon, with a label attached, carrying a greeting to other Guides abroad. As the balloons were carried away on the wind high in the sky, the Guides sang their golden jubilee song. After a short story from Miss Wellingham the Guides stood to sing "Glorious to God this night," and the evening concluded with "Taps" by the dying embers of the beacon fire.

Hospitality needed  
Five French guides from a Paris company, who visited Ealing a few years ago, are coming to Ealing and hospitality is needed for them from July 25 to July 28 or 30 and again on August 1 and 8. They return home by plane early on August 9. Last time members of the company visited us they were able to sleep in the Guide Hut, which we no longer possess. Any one who can help please let Mrs. Beer, 7, Amhurst-road, W.11, know.

Later, help with the Frejus Guides will be needed. Will companies and packs making special jubilee plans please report them to Mrs. Boulwood for inclusion in these notes?

lake. One cast it in with sudden disgust; a second clutched her skirt as if in an effort of self-cleansing; a third caressed the creature sadly before bending away with a delicate, hurt gesture of finger to lips. The same actress repeated the gesture while retreating in mesmerised horror from a snake. Again the effect told, but she must be careful not to let it be a mannerism.

### **Snake-reaction**

Another imaginative snake -reaction came from a girl who jumped up and hurled a shoe. And indeed imaginative reactions were frequent. As everybody twisted and coughed under the pretence of being tied to a stake, a boy cried aloud in realistic suffering. As a boy lay dying after some general catastrophe a girl tried desperately to drag him to safety, and his hand limply lifted, wavered, then fell; here was a moment of legitimate bravura pathos. More elaborate motion set to music followed later; a primordially violent "transgression from peace to war," executed with cymbals and drums against a blood-red backcloth; a flamencoish duet memorable for a sensually inventive instant where the youth grasped his feminine partner's long hair; and a balletic accompaniment to a scene from "Porgy and Bess." (This I thought a shade posturing, yet in any case it would have paled beside the aural spell of Gershwin's opera.) The evening concluded, though, on a return to a note of death. Each student successively yielded the ghost, with one in particular crumpling on to his knees, staring agonizedly in front of him, then pitching forward - making a good end.

In verbal as distinct from physical originality the group inevitably found greater difficulty, partly due to the initial embarrassment of beginning to speak to an audience. A certain exaggeration was apparent in their improvised dialogue when supposedly trapped in a rainbound beach shelter waiting for the sun to shine: what flashes of authenticity remained were visual, in the rubbing on of tan-oil and an unexpected mock-attempt at necking. Their response to the radio news of incipient atomic conflict lacked conviction. (Admittedly a hard thing to suggest: even so...) Lengthier prepared variants on a given theme also disappointed, largely emerging as stock studies - except for a mildly witty comedy built round the mother-in-law problem. Yet the Questors are meant to be actors rather than authors; and very little could be faulted in the section of the programme devoted to recitation. Resonant, impulsive renderings of the Harfleur harangue and Antony's soliloquy to Caesar's corpse; a sibilant, tittering Indian lingo; tense monologues from Williams and Pinter - these impressed. But did I, in an elsewhere most intelligent delivery of a Lawrence poem, hear "drawing" pronounced as "drawring"? Such elementary errors should have been corrected by now.

DOUGLAS MCVAY