

**THE QUESTORS STUDENT GROUP 17  
THREE ONE-ACT PLAYS  
FEBRUARY 1964**

**PRESS CUTTINGS**

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[Source not known]

**STUDENTS IN ONE-ACT PLAYS  
Promising Talent at Questors**

THE three one-act plays which the acting students of the Questors Theatre have been presenting at their Ealing theatre this week certainly gave them a chance to do some acting.

Surprisingly the tragedy was much more successful than the elaborately - staged comedy. Rupert Brooke's only play "Lithuania," is a horrible, tautly-wrought tale of murder in a peasant's hut. Gillian Kerswell gave the correct impression of the strong lame girl quite capable of murder. The producer, Michael Hoddell, and all the cast held the audience tense throughout the play, which is, of course, essential for such plays.

**Luxury**

Full advantage was taken, in producing Chekhov's comedy "The Wedding," of the chance to dress up in beautiful clothes, and a feeling of luxurious colour was created in the middle of the bare brick hall the Questors are using while their new theatre is being completed.

There are 17 characters, all more or less comic, and while most of the players created caricatures which were really funny, one felt that experienced players would have the audience in fits of laughter every minute of the action.

However, these two-year students can congratulate themselves on keeping the audience amused half the time. A funny play, against all appearances, is the most difficult.

Two of the funniest players never said a word. Using nothing but stage "business" and mime. Michael Langridge and Reta Saxton-Howes kept up a continuous by-play as an aged waiter and waitress.

But David Evershed-Martin was also competent as the stupid bridegroom, Earl Norder as the Greek confectioner, and Donald Clarke as the telegraph clerk making gaffes in the conversation.

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But David Evershed-Martin was also competent as the stupid bridegroom, Earl Norder as the Greek confectioner, and Donald Clarke as the telegraph clerk making gaffes in the conversation.

Reta Saxton-Howes was also convincing as the old peasant woman in "Lithuania" but showed she could also shine as a young woman too as Mary in Inesco's "The Bald Prima Donna."

This was perhaps the most successful play of the three. Now in its eighth year at a small Paris theatre, this play consists of deliberately inane dialogue or complete nonsense by which the playwright gives English middle-class ineffectiveness, preoccupation with trivia snobbishness, and many other defects.

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The Middlesex County Times  
22 February 1964

### EXCELLENT STUDENTS - IN THEATRE OF RITUAL

Easily the best of the three one-act plays presented this week by the Questors students at Mattock-lane, Ealing, was Ionesco's "The Bald Prima Donna."

Superficially, this may seem a surrealist piece, but in fact it contains nothing that is not realistically credible. Perhaps there never was any such thing as surrealism.

Because one of the three things which the play is about is class: and the outrage of the middle-class couple when their maid starts passionately necking in the dining-room is a direct echo of the supposedly "L'Age d'Or."

The play's second theme is the English. Ionesco was inspired to write it by an English phrase-book. English "small talk" frequently conceals marital apathy, boredom with acquaintances, or shyness.

Ionesco shows this in a series of dialogues at once mad and sane, fantastic and true, funny and serious.

#### Theatre of ritual

And the third theme is that of ritual. The play belongs to the "theatre of ritual." Its



climax of concerted gobbledygook proves that, as Colin Wilson has suggested, anything can become sexy.

Conversely, the most obscene word can seem innocent and meaningless, if spoken innocently and meaninglessly.

The piece's cleverest passage (a long duologue between a man and woman who pretend to be tentatively wondering if they've met before, in order to gain gradual mounting pleasure through slowly arriving at the fact that they are actually lovers) unites both the English-shyness-politeness theme and the ritual theme.

The cast of six in the Questors production by Michael Hoddell and Estelle Hampton was uniformly excellent. In it were Michael Langridge, Virginia Fell, David Evershed-Martin, Cleo Wrighton, Roger Kidd and Reta Saxton-Howes as a Cathy Gale-ish "leather girl" of a maid in kinky boots.

### **Proper disrespect**

The second-best play was Chekhov's "The Wedding." It is very minor Chekhov and is not very amusing. But it was staged and acted quite amusingly, though over-leisurely.

Cheekbones were well rouged: cigarette-holders were worthy of Auntie Mame (if not Holly Golightly): and you should have seen them dance the polka.

Again, the servants maintained a proper disrespect for their masters, and twitched in high [??] style.

Last, [??], we had "Lithuania" a forgotten Rupert Brooke opus which should have stayed forgotten, about an unfortunate traveller who met the fate of Thomas of Reading and the patrons of "L'Auberge Rouge."

Other attractions of this everyday story of country folk included a [soused?] father and a lame daughter. What with "Struggle Till Dawn" and now Brooke's spot of homely fun, the Questors' addiction to resurrection begins to outdo Jerry Cruncher's and must be cured forthwith.

When Cole Porter wrote "Lithuanians and Letts do it," he meant something enjoyable.

DOUGLAS McVAY