

HAMLET, by W. Shakespeare, and FRATRICIDE PUNISHED, by Anonymous.
Questors, W.5.

The Questors' November production of *Hamlet* was undoubtedly one of the finest amateur productions I have seen; the producer must have lavished considerable time and thought to have achieved such technical excellence. The silence and attention of the audience was ample proof that the emotional appeal of this production was really felt, and the simple setting on different levels served to emphasise and further enhance the treatment; and good costuming and lighting contributed much to the high quality.

The one jarring note was the voice of Hamlet's father; intended no doubt to convey a sense of detachment from the figure the reality of the tone quality emphasised the artificiality of the device. The voice should have been distorted, but not mechanically.

John Murray Scott as Hamlet carried Shakespeare's longest part with an ease which would have done credit to an experienced professional. One sensed a little immaturity of character in the portrayal and a lack of smoothness in gesture which inclined to be repetitive; was this the actor's inexperience or the producer's design? If the latter, 'twere well done for this Hamlet had youth to bias his mind and put a wayward spring into his green limbs.

From this well-wrought tragedy the Questors led us in December to the gambols of "The Misnomers" in a less ambitious version of the same play. The Tragedy of *Fratricide Punished*, translated from a 17th century German text, derived from an impromptu performance of *Hamlet*. Gone was the silence of a wrapt audience; producer Barbara Hutchins has skilfully proved that *Hamlet* can be produced as a tragedy and a comedy.

The burlesque was as technically excellent as the tragedy and the fine line between burlesque and farce was never once overstepped, which could so easily have been done with some of the features and situations. The skill of the producer and her players in this respect is highly commended, particularly Vincent McQueen who played the burlesque Hamlet.

J. B.

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'FRATRICIDE PUNISHED'

Questors' play to aid theatre fund

Profit: on the final performance of each of the Questors' seven major annual productions have been allocated to their building fund (more recently known as the New Theatre Fund) for several years now. There have also been occasional special productions, such as the ever-popular variety concerts and the Festival of British Puppetry, presented specifically in aid of the fund. But to-night, and throughout next week, the Questors are presenting their first complete production, with a fixed run of seven performances, the entire profits of which will go towards the building of the new theatre in Mattock-lane.

The play thus to be presented is "Fratricide Punished," a version of the Hamlet story that comes to us as a translation from a German text of unknown origin. This work, which is a notable contribution to the rare species of unintentional comedy, is being produced by Barbara Hutchins, who will employ the same décor costumes, and cast as were recently seen in her production of the Shakespeare masterpiece on the same theme. The direct comparison between the two works should add a special touch of its own to the comedy that bubbles so unconsciously throughout the German play; and those who saw the recent "authentic" version will now be able to enjoy an evening of wholesome laughter at the antics in the shorter prose piece.

An introductory film

In view of the brevity of the play itself, there is to be an introductory film on the new theatre project which has recently been completed by Mr. Frederick Pateman, a member of the Questors, who has been working on the subject through the summer months. This film, about which more will be said elsewhere, is devised as a means of giving the Questors' important scheme publicity in places where it might be otherwise impossible, and in a form that will be readily understood by people who may not have the background of theatre knowledge that makes it all so impressive to those professionally involved with theatre.

The box office for "Fratricide Punished" will be open at the Questors Theatre on nights of performance from 6.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. Tickets, at 5s, 4s and 2s 6d, may be purchased only by members of the Questors for the use of themselves and their friends. Performances at the Questors Theatre are not open to the general public. Applications should be addressed to the box office, the Questors Theatre, Mattock-lane, Ealing, W.5 (telephone Ealing 5184).