

EXTRACT FROM

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Their first 'in the round' production

A NEW experience awaits audiences tomorrow (Saturday) when, at their Ealing theatre, The Questors present their first "in the round" production, which is also the first play to be presented in the recently completed Stanislavsky Room.

The play is "The Glass Menagerie", by Tennessee Williams, and the method of production will be of interest to the many theatre-goers who have not seen a production in the round before. No member of the audience will be more than a few feet from the stage.

FIVE WAYS

This Stanislavsky Room production is the first of a series designed to familiarise Questors producers with techniques suitable for use on the stage when the new theatre is completed. This stage

will be capable of being used in five ways from theatre-in-the-round to "picture-frame" productions.

The use of the Stanislavsky Room with its seating capacity of one hundred has enabled The Questors to add four more productions to their programme this year, all designed to experiment in new methods of presentation.

As the bricks and mortar go up in Mattock Lane, The Questors are now beginning to prepare for the new stage in what Sir Alec Guinness has called "the most exciting theatrical venture to be launched in this country".

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ANOTHER 5-STAR PERFORMANCE BY THE QUESTORS

IT is impossible, within the limited space of this review, to do justice to the theatre-in-the-round production of Tennessee Williams' "The Glass Menagerie" which Alfred Emmet has been mounting for the Questors during the week.

The year 1960 must unquestionably rank as Mr. Emmet's year. In May he staged "Three Sisters" to our deep satisfaction. Now, however, he has surpassed that earlier triumph.

The piece which ends its run tomorrow (Saturday) night is graced by the most accomplished acting I have seen at Mattock-lane since "The Birthday Party" last December.

"The Glass Menagerie," like "Orpheus Descending," is one of Tennessee's younger, softer works. Unfortunately his prentice efforts aren't his best; and while "Menagerie" — unlike "Orpheus" — seldom bores, it doesn't possess the dramatic drive or tragic inevitability of "Cat" and "Summer and Smoke," his finest achievements.

Its first half suffers through a triple division of interest; between the predatory St Louis gentlewoman whose husband escaped from her long ago, her shy crippled daughter whom she aims to marry off, and her restlessly ambitious son whom she tries to dominate (an over-

vague, quasi-symbolic character-cum-chorus, played solidly but unexceptionally by Edward Pitt).

The second half repairs the deficiency by concentrating on the situation of the daughter. Yet even here Williams tends to defeat himself. He never really convinces us that the girl's physical and psychological problems are insoluble.

In consequence, the sad final curtain after a single unsuccessful attempt to gain a suitor appears sentimental rather than poignant, touching rather than fiercely moving.

Nonetheless, he affords considerable opportunities to a skilled director and cast. The Questors supply both.

Jan Kenny's rendering of the daughter is as beautifully tiny and fragile as the toy glass animals she childishly clings to (and made me very glad to be a member of a close-range audience).

Two amaze

But two performances amaze. Jo Arundel turns the mother into a quintessentially William-sian personification of crumbling elegance laughable, rapacious and pathetic in her nagging Southern sing-song where every other sentence seems to finish on a query. And Tony Worth lives the part of the intended groom with a spontaneous ease and confidence, a gaiety and warmth, a tact and understanding and simple kindness which are quite extraordinary.

Mr. Worth's handling of the long, delicate dialogue with Miss Kenny sets the crown on this memorable evening.

DOUGLAS McVAY