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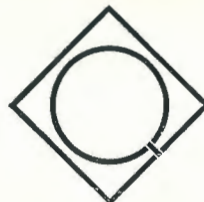
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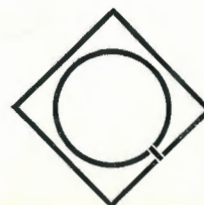
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THE QUESTORS THEATRE

FIRST PERFORMANCE

SATURDAY, 23rd SEPTEMBER, 1967

Performed by this cast at The Minack Theatre, Cornwall August 14 - 19

PHAEDRA

Theseus IVAN PINFIELD
son of Aegeus and King of Athens

Phaedra PEGGY BUTT
wife of Theseus and daughter of Minos and Pasiphae

Hippolytus PETER HEALY
son of Theseus and Antiope, Queen of the Amazons

Aricia MAVIS SAGE
princess of the royal blood of Athens

Oenone MARY JONES
nurse of Phaedra

Theramenes MARTIN BOWLEY
tutor of Hippolytus

Ismene SANDRA WAINWRIGHT-FAHEY
friend of Aricia

Panope JEAN HARDING
waiting-woman of Phaedra

Guards } JOHN STACEY
ERIC SMITH

Directed by ALAN CHAMBERS

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Music composed by DON KINCAID

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Background to the action :

Greek mythology, like the Arthurian legends of this country, combines historical facts of the lives and times of real people with fables and fantasies about the powers of those same people and their relations with the gods. Thus it happens that the well-known, and seemingly supernatural, stories of the ancient Greeks contain the outlines of the early history of the Northern Mediterranean region, which in turn produced the origins of our Western Civilisation.

Theseus was the son of Aegeus, King of Athens. One of his earlier exploits was the slaying of the fire-breathing white bull, sent by the god Poseidon, which had killed men by the hundred, among them the son of Minos, King of Crete. Pasiphae, Queen to Minos, had coupled with this bull and borne the Minotaur, a bull-headed monster which King Minos kept in a labyrinth at his great palace. Minos demanded seven youths and seven maidens every ninth year from Athens, as a sacrifice to the Minotaur. Theseus travelled to Crete and with the help of Ariadne, daughter of Minos and Pasiphae, entered the labyrinth and killed the Minotaur. In return for her help, he promised to take Ariadne back to Athens as his wife, but he abandoned her on the island of Naxos. He returned to Athens with black sails hoisted and Aegeus, recognising this as the signal for failure in their mission, threw himself into the sea.

Theseus succeeded Aegeus as King of Athens and proceeded to unify the city-states of the Athenian peninsula; known as Attica. He led an expedition to Amazonia, and took Antiope, Queen of the Amazons, as his wife. She bore him a son, Hippolytus.

When Theseus later entered into an alliance with King Deucalion of Crete, he married Deucalion's sister Phaedra, who was also a daughter of Minos and Pasiphae, and Antiope was killed. Hippolytus was sent to Troezen, where he was adopted as heir to the throne. Phaedra became strongly attracted to Hippolytus while Theseus was on an expedition in Epirus, and the play recounts their fate thereafter.

Racine—After a period of seventeen years 'running with the wolves', Racine, in 1677, returned to his Church and to the Jansenist sympathies that had moulded his youth. It was in this year that he wrote his masterpiece 'Phèdre', and there can be little doubt that his own guilt at his way of life and his struggles to come to terms with his faith are mirrored in the play. Jansenism regarded man as fundamentally corrupt, and the sect was obsessed with predestination; their outlook was one which came near to believing that human beings were damned or saved for all eternity. They believed that men had small chance of salvation if unaided by divine grace.

Phaedra shows Racine's attitude to these problems. The main character has been described as 'one of the just to whom grace has not been vouchsafed', for Phaedra spends the entire play struggling with desires that the Goddess Aphrodite has visited upon her. Her tragedy lies not in her death but in the fact that beyond death she must confess her sins before her father Minos, who holds the judgement seat in Hades.

Racine has rightly been considered untranslatable. There is no equivalent in the English verse tradition for the syllabic alexandrines in which he wrote; his virtues of discipline and restraint have often led to translations seeming flat and limping. Robert Lowell, perhaps one of the greatest living American poets, has created, however, a verse form for the play which allows the language to do the work that it did in the original. It is a magnificent achievement. We hope our performance can come somewhere within reach of matching it.

Golden Star

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The Setting for "PHAEDRA" is the design of Micha Berger

A DISCUSSION is held after each production by The Questors to which all members of the audience are cordially invited. The discussion on "PHAEDRA" will be held in the Bernard Shaw Room on Monday October 2nd at 7.30 p.m.