

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

In the Playhouse

Scorched by Carl Grose

Winner of the 1994/95 Student Playwriting Competition, *Scorched* is set on the island of Cornwall in the not too distant future. A catastrophic story seen through the eyes of Cornwall's last society, using humour, ritual and finally tragedy to explore the extreme situation that these people have been forced into. Spiritual, mythical, apocalyptic.

30 March, 2 - 6 April at 7.45pm; 31 March at 2.30pm

In the Playhouse

Coarse Acting – The Revenge

Returned by overwhelming popular demand, the best of the World Coarse Acting Championships. If you missed it last time, hurry to book your tickets now. A hilarious evening awaits you.

11 - 13 April at 7.45pm. Tickets £6.50

In the Studio

Anna Christie by Eugene O'Neill

Set in America in the 1920's. Anna is reunited with her estranged father, Captain of a coastal barge. She is careful to keep her father ignorant of her worldly past, although this emerges as she becomes involved with a sailor whom she and her father have rescued from "Dat ole devil sea". This tragic comedy is resolved in a tempestuous final act.

20 - 27 April at 7.45pm

In the Playhouse

Metamorphosis by Steven Berkoff based on the story by Franz Kafka

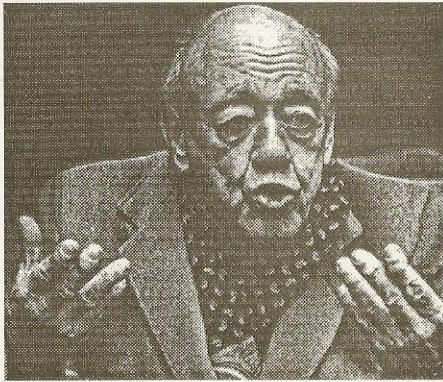
Berkoff is unique in modern theatre, and the play, based on Kafka's horrific nightmare of a man transformed into an insect, promises to be as visually dramatic as the text.

27, 30 April, 1 - 4 May at 7.45pm; 28 April at 2.30pm



49th STUDENT GROUP IN
EUGENE IONESCO'S TRANSLATED BY
DONALD WATSON.
HERE COMES A CHOPPER

EUGÈNE IONESCO (1910 - 1994)



EUGÈNE IONESCO, whose innovative plays revolutionised the contemporary theatre, devastatingly satirised modern society while discovering new uses of language and theatrical techniques. Inspired by silent film clowns and vaudeville, he was a playful playwright, clownish in his own personality as well as in his work onstage.

With outrageous comedy, Ionesco, who died in 1994 at the age of 84, attacked the most serious subjects: blind conformity and totalitarianism, despair and death. Repeatedly he challenged – and accosted – the audience and his critics. As he said, “The human drama is as absurd as it is painful”.

Along with Samuel Beckett and Jean Genet, Ionesco was one of a trinity of pioneering experimental playwrights who lived and worked in Paris. Although there were thematic bridges among the three, Ionesco’s distinction was in his fanciful surrealism and sense of Dada.

He had a profound effect on younger playwrights, including Tom Stoppard, Fernando Arrabal and Edward Albee. Ionesco was among the playwrights often grouped as practitioners of the Theatre of the Absurd. He objected to the label, preferring, he said, the Theatre of Derision.

Really a French writer of Romanian origin, rather than a Romanian who adopted French as his language of expression, Ionesco was born at Slatina, in the foothills of the Carpathians. His real name was Eugen Ionescu. His father was a Romanian lawyer and his mother Thérèse Icard, was French.

Their marriage was not a happy one, and in the frequent arguments Eugène sided with his mother. He disliked his father and later broke with him completely. Not surprisingly, oppressive father-figures dominate his later stories and plays.

Shortly after Eugène’s birth the family moved to Paris. The father was called up in 1917 and returned alone to Romania which had entered the war on the allied side, while the mother went to work in a factory to support her children.

Eugène was already showing an interest in the theatre, becoming a devotee of the Punch and Judy shows in the Luxembourg Gardens. But he became anaemic and was sent with his sister to recuperate at a village, La Chapelle-Anthenaise near Le Mans.

He was intensely happy there. This stay in the country became an image of paradise which never left him. It satisfied two deep-seated needs: for space in which to move and be free, and for shelter in which to feel completely secure, something which in later life he described as “L’éspace et le nid”.

On returning to Paris he rejoined his mother in the damp and gloomy flat in the Rue de l’Avre which later inspired the setting of *Amédée*, the play in which mushrooms sprout on the floor of the Buccinioni’s flat. The young Eugène was, however, writing a quite different play at the time, a heroic drama in two acts full of French patriotic sentiment.

When he was 14 his mother took the children back to Romania, but she did not stay long, soon discovering that her husband had divorced her and married again. Eugène, however, remained with his father and stepmother, learnt Romanian, and rewrote his French play as a Romanian epic. He ran away from home at the age of 17 and enrolled at the University of Bucharest, where he studied French and began to write seriously.

Ionesco was once asked if he believed there was a Theatre of the Absurd. “No,” he said as if confiding a naughty secret, “but don’t tell Martin Esslin. It exists only in the sense that life is absurd”. He then began to recite over the lunch table in his elegant Montparnasse apartment the Macbeth soliloquy: “Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow...signifying nothing.” “You see? Everything that the Theatre of the Absurd is supposed to say has already been said by Shakespeare”.

Ionesco’s first play, *The Bald Prima Donna* (in which there is no singer and nobody is bald) was first performed in 1950, three years before Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*. It arose from his attempt to learn English from a phrase book in which two couples converse like robots, informing each other about things they must already know, such as the fact that they are married. Ionesco described it as a parody of human behaviour and of theatre too”.

Nothing could have been farther from the boulevard plays of the 1950s in Paris or London (where it was put on in 1956) or from the so-called “kitchen sink” social realism of Osborne and his contemporaries. It was coldly received at first in Paris. Sometimes Ionesco’s wife, Rodica, and the theatre usher were the only audience; “and if Rodica had a cold, there was no one”, he told me, twinkling mischievously.

When George Devine took up Ionesco, presenting *The Chairs* and *The Lesson* at the Royal Court from 1957 onwards, there were rowdy audiences, boos and cries of “surrealist rubbish”. The critic Kenneth Tynan declared that Ionesco portrayed a world of isolated robots which was an escape from social realities. Ionesco replied: “I have the impression that Mr Tynan is in search of messiahs. I do not like messiahs. A playwright simply writes plays ... no political system can deliver us from the pain of living, the fear of death, or our thirst for the absolute”.

But his next play was a social parable, *Rhinoceros*, in which his “little man”, always called Berenger, watches in horror as one by one his friends and acquaintances turn into rhinoceroses, leaving him to search the auditorium in vain for a single human face. It was given to packed houses in an overdone production by Orson Welles, with a miscast Laurence Olivier trying to convince us that he was the ordinary little clerk that Ionesco intended.

The play was inspired by the rise of fascism and the Iron Guards in Romania, where Ionesco lived from the age of 14 to 26. He watched the bully-

continued on page 6

The Questors 49th Student Group

present

Here Comes A Chopper

by Eugène Ionesco

Translated by Donald Watson

First performance of this production at The Questors Theatre: Wednesday 13th March 1996

CAST

Housewives – Carol Cabourn-Smith, Yvonne Coward, Ava Taylor, Amica Pavey, Charlotte Levin, Panyin Ewusi-Aikins, Elena Munoz, Freddy Henry. **Men in the Street** – Wayne Roberts, Raj Abir*, Edward Knight, Wójtek Godzisz, Robbie Frater*, Alex Batterbee*. **Stall Holders** – Lisa Skelton, Sarah Keller, Elia Alvarez Diaz. **Dignitary** – Felicia Massiah. **Mistress of the House** – Yvonne Coward. **Servants** – Charlotte Levin, Lisa Skelton, Freddie Henry, Elena Munoz. **Alexander** – Alex Batterbee. **Katia** – Amica Pavey. **Emile** – Robbie Frater. **Jacqueline** – Sarah Keller. **Doctor** – Raj Abir. **Nurse** – Felicia Massiah. **1st Citizen** – Wójtek Godzisz. **2nd Citizen** – Wayne Roberts. **Nurse** – Carol Cabourn-Smith. **Prisoners** – Elia Alvarez Diaz, Freddy Henry. **Jailer** – Panyin Ewusi-Aikins. **Passer By** – Lisa Skelton. **Companion** – Amica Pavey. **Jean** – Wayne Roberts. **Jeanne** – Sarah Keller. **Lucienne** – Elena Munoz. **Pierre** – Edward Knight. **Mother** – Ava Taylor. **Daughter** – Carol Cabourn-Smith. **Maid** – Lisa Skelton. **Serving Girl** – Charlotte Levin. **Traveller** – Alex Batterbee. **Women at Windows** – Yvonne Coward, Elia Alvarez Diaz, Freddie Henry, Felicia Massiah, Panyin Ewusi-Aikins. **Men at Windows** – Wayne Roberts, Wójtek Godzisz, Edward Knight. **Policemen** – Robbie Frater, Raj Abir, Alex Batterbee. **1st Orator** – Yvonne Coward. **2nd Orator** – Panyin Ewusi-Aikins. **Doctors** – Wayne Roberts, Robbie Frater, Carol Cabourn-Smith, Sarah Keller, Ava Taylor, Freddy Henry. **Policemen** – Raj Abir, Alex Batterbee. **Old Man** – Wójtek Godzisz. **Old Woman** – Charlotte Levin. **Official** – Edward Knight. **Shouting Women** – Panyin Ewusi-Aikins, Freddy Henry, Elia Alvarez Diaz. **Woman with Rissoles** – Felicia Massiah. **Mutes** – Raj Abir, Wayne Roberts. **Horse** – Alex Batterbee, Robbie Frater. **Women** – Yvonne Coward, Panyin Ewusi-Aikins, Elia Alvarez Diaz, Carol Cabourn-Smith, Amica Pavey. **Public Official** – Ava Taylor.

There will be one fifteen minute interval.

* Raj Abir, Alex Batterbee and Robbie Frater are acting members of The Questors Theatre and former members of the Student Group.

The action takes place in a town somewhere at some point in time.

PRODUCTION

Director/Designer John Horwood
Costume Designer Chloe Faine
Lighting Designer Martin Sapsd
Sound Designer Nigel Worsley
Production Manager Jon Webster
Stage Manager Claire Whiteley
Assistant Stage Managers Karen Milburn
Rachel Darlington, David Goldsworthy, Cullen Henshaw
Lighting Operators Ben Wright
Annette Rayner
Sound Operator Veronique van der Eynde
Properties Panyin Ewusi-Aikins
Masks Chloe Faine
Wayne Roberts
Prosthetics Barry Jones
Construction Edward Knight
John Horwood, Bob Cooper
Set Painting Sandy Coventry
Kate Morton
Wardrobe Assistant Amber Smit
Poster Design David Skeggs
Photography Cullen Henshaw
Make-up "Greasepaint"
Speech Tutor Carol Fairlamb
Movement Tutor John Wilson
Original Music composed & performed by Chloe Faine
James Horada

With Thanks to:

Amelia Bowman, Jim Craddock, Sarah Fink, Katy Gallantry,
Nick Hawker, Richard Kelly, Vicky Lingley, Lubna Malik, Vincent McQueen,
Ossie Peled, Luke Smith

ART EXHIBITIONS

UPPER FOYER - 9 MARCH - 6 APRIL 1996

JOHN FLEMONS - Watercolours from France

John Flemons trained at the Chelsea School of Art, and also studied at the University of London Institute of Education and the Birmingham School of Art Education. He was Senior Lecturer at Thomas Huxley College in Ealing, and for ten years was Head of Art at Morley College, where he still teaches.

He has had one-man shows at the University of Birmingham, Queen Mary College, the Cockpit Theatre, Brunel University, Thomas Huxley College and the Morley Gallery.

GRAPEVINE GALLERY - 9 MARCH - 6 APRIL 1996

MARTIN ROBBINS

Martin Robbins was born in Warwickshire 1957. He is a painter of both abstract and more figurative work. He was originally inspired by the landscapes of Brittany and Cornwall. He later abandoned the more representational landscapes, and pursued more abstract explorations into the relationship between painting and self-expression, using an individual technique and marks in order to convey a sense of energy, harmony and empathy with the media via expression of personal emotions.

EUGÈNE IONESCO

continued from page 3

ing of the party his father had joined. On his return to Paris before the war he was sentenced in his absence for attacking the regime in Romania. He was still attacking it 1989, before the fall of Ceausescu.

To meet Ionesco was to realise the depth of anxiety and depression that lay beneath his sociable and amusing conversation. His themes remained the pain of living and the fear of death which he explored in *Exit The King* (1962). King Berenger is told that he must die in two hours at the end of the play and he goes through all the stages of panic until gradual resignation to the inevitable teaches him to understand common human suffering for the first time. "The years have increased my weariness, disgust and terror," Ionesco wrote, though he also maintained, "you must arrive at the point where you could laugh at anything, even at the prospect of becoming a corpse".

He became a member of the Académie Française in 1970, the year in which *Here Comes A Chopper* (Jeux de Massacre) but after more than 30 plays he gave up writing and took to painting. "I had enough of talking - I speak now in a different way", he said. Eventually, like Beckett's Ionesco's reputation may be detached from any theatre "movement".

In his early 20s, he wrote about his reasons from wanting to be a writer: "To allow others to share in the astonishment of being, the dazzlement of existence, and to shout to God and other human beings our anguish, letting it be known that we were there".

(Precis from obituaries)

INFORMATION

THE GRAPEVINE CLUB

The Questors has a fully licensed Bar which is now open to all members. The Bar is open every evening plus lunchtimes on Sundays. Questors members are requested to sign in their guests when entering the bar.

THE HOTPLATE

Delicious hot and cold food is available in the upper Foyer between 6.30pm and 8.00pm during the run of Playhouse productions, and coffee, tea, and cakes are served during the interval. No hot food will be provided at the Sunday matinées.

NOTE

The Hotplate is not open for Studio productions, but when Studio performances coincide with those in the Playhouse, it will endeavour to serve those audiences whenever this is possible.

BACKSTAGE PREVIEW

Why not attend one of our new, or prospective members evenings, and have a conducted tour of the Theatre complex. Tours start and finish at the Grapevine Bar, 8.00pm every Wednesday.

THE STUDENT GROUP

The Questors runs a two year part time student course in Acting; details can be obtained from the office.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S GROUPS

There are a number of groups for younger members. These cater for all age groups, from 5-17. The classes are intended to create awareness of the theatre and provide a stimulating channel for imagination.

For The Questors Theatre

Artistic Director	Spencer Butler
Artistic Directorate	John Horwood, Norman Wilkinson
Director of Studies	David Emmet
Chair	John Davey
Vice-Chairman	Steve Hames
Company Secretary	Sue Blake
Club Secretary	Christine Garland
Finance Director	Ken Kettle
Stage Director	Nick Hawker
Marketing Director	Colin Jervis
Theatre Manager	Elaine Orchard
Productions Secretary	Christine Greening
Membership Secretary	Alice Pennicott
Marketing Officer	Fleur Lloyd
Programme Editor	Vincent McQueen
Questopics Editor	Peter Knight
Sponsorship	Geoffrey Sellman
Box Office Management	Ken Parker
Programme Sales Organiser	Val Blaxland
Front of House Manager	Eric Lister
Press Relations	Sandra Hutchinson
Haberdashery	Tootal Craft
Wardrobe Equipment	Wilkinson Sword Scissors..Fiskars Ltd
Wardrobe Care	Persil, Comfort and Stergene courtesy of Lever Bros. Dry-cleaning by C.D.S.

Administration

The Questors office is open from 9.30am until 5.00pm every weekday. If you wish to make contact for details of membership, or hiring the Theatre and rehearsal rooms, telephone the office on 0181-567 0011.

Membership

If you wish to become a member please fill in the application form (copies in the Foyers); just send it to the Theatre with the appropriate subscription. 0181-567 8736.

Box Office

For personal callers the box office is open every Wednesday evening 6.45pm to 8.30pm; Monday to Friday 11.00am to 12 noon; during productions 6.45pm to 8.30pm; Sunday matinées 2.00pm to 2.30pm; Studio productions 6.45pm to 8.00pm.