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by Arthur Laurents

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WHAT'S ON

at the LITTLE THEATRE

8th — 16th MAY, 1981

BEQUEST TO THE NATION

A fascinating portrayal of
Nelson and Lady Hamilton

by **Terence Rattigan**

Directed by **Don Anderson**

AN S.D.C. PRODUCTION

27th — 30th MAY, 1981

MAYTIME SERENADE

An extravaganza of comedy and song

Music by **Sylvia Taylor** and **Joyce Moore**

Directed by **Sheila Clarkson**

AN S.D.C./BIRKDALE ORPHEUS JOINT SOCIETY

20th — 23rd MAY, 1981

LOCK UP YOUR DAUGHTERS

Adapted by **Bernard Miles** from

Henry Fielding's comedy "Rape Upon Rape."

Directed by **Thelma Falls-Hand**

A GARRICK PLAYERS PRODUCTION

10th — 13th JUNE, 1981

OUT OF SEASON — THEATRE IN THE BAR

THE CARETAKER

by **Harold Pinter**

Directed by **Merle Kessler**

AN S.D.C. PRODUCTION

20th JULY — 1st AUGUST, 1981

SUMMER SHOW

A BEDFUL OF FOREIGNERS

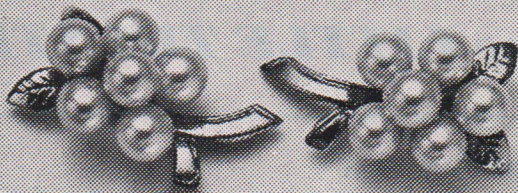
An uproarious comedy

by **Dave Freeman**

Directed by **Mike Rogerson**

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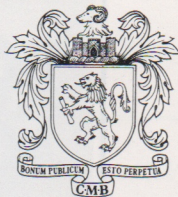
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A Tourist Remembers Venice

As a matter of hard, physical fact, I have visited Venice three times; in imagination, however, I have met with Shakespeare's merchant on the Rialto, endured the ravages of the plague through Thomas Mann's description of death in Venice and shared Canaletto's vision of the splendid church of La Salute. Long before my first visit, Venice had established itself in my mind as a unique, magical city, combining gloom with glamour. Now I see it as a theatrical city. Venice puts on a show for its tourists — a magnificent show—but behind the spectacle moulders a large insalubrious area, and the decay is eating into the glamour.

My first visit, however, showed me only the glamour. On a hot sunny day, way back in my schooldays, my family and I travelled from Mestre along that long causeway which whets the appetite in the way of a good operatic overture. We had been warned to expect smelly canals and avaricious shopkeepers, but the canals did not smell and the shopkeepers did not bother us because we did not enter the shops. Instead, we strolled over the Rialto, marvelling that a bridge made famous through art should actually exist, and wandered across the Piazza San Marco, amazed by the oriental splendour of the Basilica — and trying to avoid the pigeons. It was during this day trip that we first saw water melon — thirst-quenching slices of rosy flesh restrained by a severe green-black shell; an exotic novelty to us, this was obviously part of everyday life for the Venetians; the vendors with their trays of fruit were simply helping the citizens cope with the exigencies of hot weather.

My second visit was altogether different. As students, a friend and I were taking a two-centre holiday in Italy. After a week relaxing by Lake Garda and a day whistling round the sites of Verona, we arrived in Venice glad to find ourselves in reasonably comfortable accommodation near the centre of the city. We were thrilled to be in Venice and determined to spend our first evening in the heart of the place, the Piazza San Marco. "Come on," I said, "it's only round the corner." It really was "only round the corner," but somehow we just could not find the right corner. As it grew darker we found ourselves in small neglected piazzas, each with its central statue or fountain of crumbling stone, the only signs of life the mangy stray cats, repellent as rats. The canals had shrunk to filthy sewers and the imposing façades had crumbled to pathetic slums. This was backstage Venice, and anyone who

continued

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A TOURIST REMEMBERS VENICE — continued

saw the film, 'Don't Look Now,' will know how sinister it can be. Having, this time, a week to spend in the place, we found it difficult to avoid this backstage area. Even the big set pieces one saw, on closer examination, were showing signs of wear and tear.

I remember one day, exhausted by sight-seeing and the heat, we took the vaporetto over to the Lido for a day of sea and sand. Magnificent hotels, elegant holidaymakers, beautiful beaches with their gaily striped sun shelters — all very inhospitable to two impecunious students. We were amazed to discover that you had to pay to go on the beaches and spent valuable sun-bathing time trying to find a stretch that allowed free access. Eventually, having clamboured over some tatty barbed wire, we found ourselves some tatty sand surrounded by some tatty rocks — the Lido had its backstage aspect too.

One night we visited the opera — Verdi's 'Aida' — at that jewel of a theatre, La Fenice. We, of course, sat in the back topmost row, but the spectacle was marvellous (even if the proscenium arch cut off the top for those of us in the 'gods') and the sound was exhilarating. The intervals, however, were tiresome; three half-hour breaks spun out the evening till we feared we should be locked out of our pensione.

As I watched and listened to the Triumphant March that evening I never dreamed that one day I should be singing on that stage. I wish I could say that my next visit to La Fenice was to sing — not Aida (I don't have a soprano voice) but, perhaps Amneris. The truth is somewhat humbler. Whilst still at University I was lucky enough to be included in a section of the London Bach Society and had been invited to join the London Symphony Orchestra to sing Benjamin Britten's 'War Requiem' in three Italian cities. The final stop of the tour was Venice and La Fenice was to be the concert hall. This time I arrived not as a simple culture-hunting tourist, but as a cultural ambassador — or, at least, a minuscule part of a large cultural enterprize, my passport ennobled by a work permit. The visit was all too brief — an afternoon rehearsal, the evening performance and a very early departure the next morning for London — back to the unglamorous reality of a new university year.

I have not been back to Venice since, except, once more, through the paintings of Canaletto, when I have delighted in its glamour, and reportage in the mass media, when I have been saddened by its decay.

V. P.

3rd April to 11th April, 1981

The Time of the Cuckoo

by Arthur Laurents

Directed by Lesley Winsland

THE CAST

In order of appearance

Signora Fioria	...	...	...	...	...	Frieda Kelly
Eddie Yeager	...	...	...	...	...	Mike Yates
June Yeager	...	...	...	...	...	Jenny Peet
Giovanna	...	...	...	...	...	Maria D'Alessandro
Leona Samish	...	...	...	...	...	Robin Hirsch
Mrs. McIlhenny	...	...	...	...	...	Anne Sykes
Mr. McIlhenny	...	...	...	...	...	John Hale
Mauro	...	...	...	...	...	Timothy Perkins
Renato Di Rossi	...	...	...	...	...	Gordon Winsland
Vito	...	...	...	...	...	Gary Williams

Synopsis of Scenes

The action takes place in the garden
of the Pensione Fioria in Venice

ACT I

- Scene 1—Late afternoon
- Scene 2—Early next afternoon
- Scene 3—Evening

Interval

ACT II

- Scene 1—Late next afternoon
- Scene 2—Early evening the following day
- Scene 3—The following morning

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STAGE STAFF

Stage Manager	John Gosling
Deputy Stage Manager	Denis Parker
Asst. Stage Manager (Book)	Joan Burns
Asst. Stage Managers (Cast)	Catherine Culligan Andrew Gregson
Properties	Frances Gregson, Cathy Barnes
Lighting Design	Sid Coley
Lighting	Colin Grimes
Sound	Ian Byron
Wardrobe	Ann Terry

The set designed by **DAVID CHARTERS**

Constructed and painted by **ROY BLATCHFORD**

and built by the **PRODUCTION TEAM**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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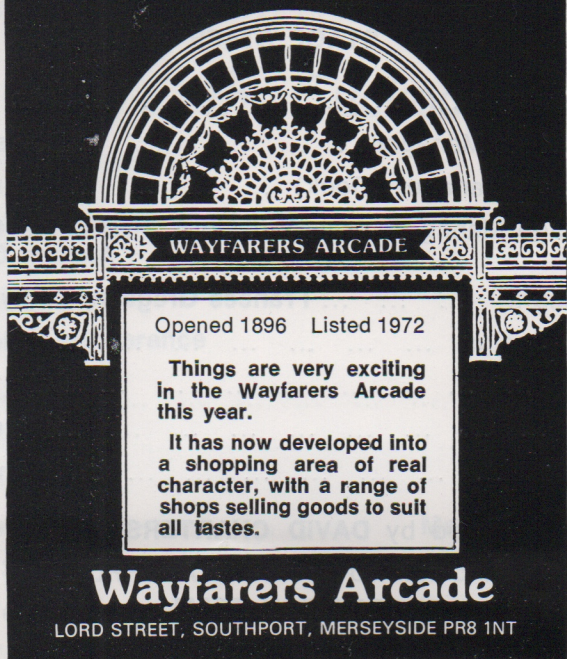
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A Look Back To Melodrama

When "Lost in London" nearly became
"Lost in Lancashire"

Some of you may have seen the short but stirring melodrama that was the SDC's contribution to the Victorian Weekend in the Wayfarer's Arcade last July. "Lost in London" as originally presented in 1867 ran for something over four hours (excluding overture and intervals). The time allotted to it on this occasion was twenty-five minutes, so a slight amount of adjustment had to be made. The resultant speed of action left the cast as well as the audience breathless: the heroine was tempted, seduced, ruined, repentant and dead, all in the space usually taken up by one soliloquy!

Playing a short, fast melodrama means that you have to be absolutely certain of your stage: where the entrances and exits are, whether the prompt can see you, if you can get around the back quickly, etc., etc. On this occasion, the stage was still in the last throes of construction as the audience started to arrive, and so the first chance the cast had to get to know the boards was when they walked on for their entrance—or rather leapt on, as there was a twelve-inch drop all around the stage! As the villain swept the fainting heroine into his arms, the audience thought his momentary hesitation was due to a stab of remorse—but no, he was frantically wondering whether to carry her off to a fate worse than death through the potted palms at the back or take a chance in leaping from the side of the stage. The hero and his faithful friend knew they had to make a dramatic exit **somewhere**, and the aforementioned potted palms looked impregnable; so spying a handy staircase halfway down Wayfarer's Arcade, they threaded their way through a breathless audience and majestically ascended the stairs to a storm of applause. The heroine, however, **did** have time to realise that as the stage was only eight feet wide, she had better die diagonally!

After triumphing over these difficulties we had no hesitation at all in accepting the invitation to play at Parbold and Aughton Women's Institutes the following November. Of course it would have helped if everybody had known where both establishments were; as it was, a few (the same few each time, I noticed) managed to get to a local hostelry considerably in advance of the nose-to-tail convoy which trundled out from Southport in the November fogs. Parbold W.I. was next to a railway crossing; and while the audience sat expectantly in the hall at one side, we sat at the other, singing a stirring medley of German marching songs while waiting for the train to pass and let us through.

The situation at Aughton was more tense as our dedicated and hard-working pianist had been delayed and had to follow on later; trouble was, she didn't know the way either, so while the link-up person sat in a car, chewing her nails, at Ormskirk traffic lights, and the latecomer tried desperately to negotiate the icy roads from Southport at considerably over the legal limit, the cast took elaborate care over dressing and making up at the village hall, assuring the anxious ladies that no, everything was fine, they just liked to take their time and get the feel of the theatre before going on . . . !

It was only as the exhausted pianist was actually poised over the keyboard and the relieved committee had announced the melodrama that it was noticed there was no exit on the prompt side. This led to a wild rush to the O.P. side and frantic whispered arguments about who could go on where and in what order. But what matter that the villain carried the heroine off directly past the nose of her husband who was supposed to be descending a mine several miles away? What matter that the hero had to push his way past the villain and several assembled guests before turning around and discovering them for the first time? And what matter indeed that the curtains refused to close at the end so that the cast had to stay frozen and motionless in the final tableau until they got cramp? The audience loved it, and I don't think any member of the SDC's 'mobile unit' will ever forget "Lost in London."

JO McCARTHY

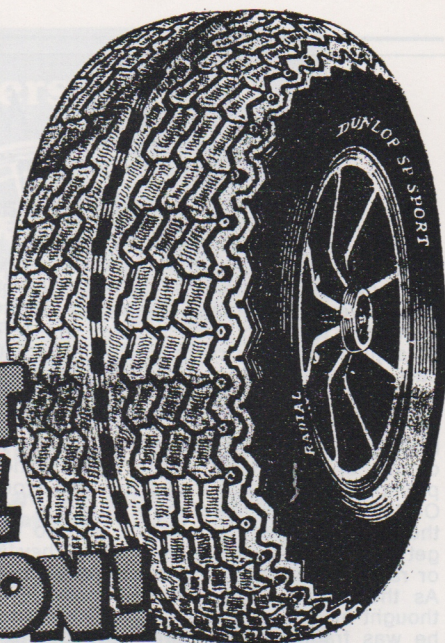
who produced "Lost in London"

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A look ahead to Theatre of the Absurd

When confronted with a play that has no story or plot to speak of, that lacks recognizable characters, that appears to have neither a beginning nor an end and that far from observing and mirroring nature, would often seem to represent dreams and nightmares, it is fairly safe to assume that we are watching Theatre of the Absurd.

The term was applied to a group of dramatists in the 1950's who shared similar attitudes about man in relation to the universe. These attitudes were expressed in plays such as Beckett's "Waiting for Godot," and Ionesco's 'The Chairs' where the dramatic formlessness represented man's hopeless state, out of harmony with his surroundings. Theatre of the Absurd thought is defined further by Ionesco as "devoid of purpose . . . cut off from his roots, man is lost, all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless."

It is the sense of pain at this irrationality of the human condition that underlies the works of Beckett, Ionesco and much of Pinter for instance, but a sense of humour is present also. We laugh at Davies in "The Caretaker," and at Beckett's tramps, Vladimir and Estragon in the emptiness of "Waiting for Godot," at the music-hall quality of their dialogue and the strong elements of physical humour seen in the loss of Estragon's trousers and the repeated emphasis on crude bodily functions.' At the same time we are becoming more and more painfully aware with them of the essential tragedy, hopelessness yet — paradoxically — the continuing hope of humanity.

By 1962 the movement was fading, yet the ideas it contained still influence the more conventional theatre.

MERLE KESSLER

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S.D.C. Members' Diary

SUNDAY, APRIL 5th — Play Reading

"The Italian Girl" by James Saunders and
Iris Murdoch.

Arranged by Jan James (32150)

Bar Lounge at 7.45 pm

MONDAY, APRIL 6th — Drama Workshop

Led by Marle Kessler

Annexe at 8.00 pm

SUNDAY, MAY 10th — Play Reading

"Death of a Salesman" by Arthur Miller

Arranged by Pat Ball (31990)

Bar Lounge at 7.45 pm

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WHAT'S ON ELSEWHERE

GUILD OF PLAYERS, DUMFRIES

April 6th — 11th

MOVE OVER MRS. MARKHAM

by Ray Coney and John Chapman

THE GARRICK THEATRE, STOCKPORT

April 25th — 2nd May

PRIVATE LIVES

by Noel Coward

WIGAN LITTLE THEATRE

May 1st — 9th

SLEUTH

by Anthony Shaffer

BINGLEY LITTLE THEATRE

April 27th — May 2nd

DEAR OCTOPUS

by Dodie Smith

CHORLEY LITTLE THEATRE

16th — 23rd May

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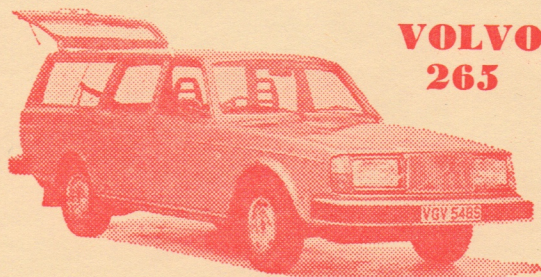
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