Murder in the Cathedral 1964

MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL

by T. S. ELIOT

Characters

Archbishop Thomas Becket	MURRAY SIMPSON
1st Priest	TREVOR GASSON
2nd Priest	PETER COTTON
3rd Priest	PETER HOOD
Messenger	BRIAN AINSLIE
1st Tempter	WILLIAM HUBAND
2nd Tempter	MICHAEL SHIPWAY
3rd Tempter	STEPHEN GLEASON
4th Tempter	DAVID PAGE
1st Knight	RAYMOND EVANS
2nd Knight	RICHARD GRAHAM
3rd Knight	PETER FISCHBACH
4th Knight	PETER LANE

Women of Canterbury

MARGARET EDE, SHIRLEY WHITTINGTON, JULIA DIXON, MARGARET FITZSIMMONDS, STEPHANIE BOWDEN, PAULINE ATTWOOD, SUSAN ENGLEDOW, GWYNETH ROSE

Acolytes and Peasants

B. CHAMBERS, B. MAY, L. MORRIS, N. PITHER, K. REMNANT, M. SEARY, S. TOWN, N. WOOD

Singers: B. CHARMAN, J. CURTIS, G. HEWITT.

Decorations by ..... Mr. A. JAMES, Mr. R. PARKER

Musical Director ..... Mr. S. SPRATT

Make up supervised by ..... Mr. D. MILLER

Business manager ..... Mr. C. WELLS

Stage Staff: P. ROOKS, D. CROZIER, D. BLACKBURN, C. MARSH, J. TWIN, M. GAY-CUMING.

Box Office Manager ..... R. CHATER

Box Office Staff: D. CHALLIS, A. CURTIS, M. DIAMOND, D. KNIGHT, B. LEWIS, A. SHONE.

The play produced by ..... Mr. J. HYDE and Mr. R. EGFORD

Review in the School Magazine by Charles ('Shag') Oakley (staff)

MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL

At the first performance, just after the butchery of the Archbishop, one of the Knights ran finger and thumb down his sword to wipe off the blood and flick it on to the floor.

A macabre touch!

But with two such experienced producers at work it was only to be expected that every ounce of dramatic effect would be extracted, every **coup de theatre** exploited to the full. Consider for example, the first appearance of the assassins. "Enter the Four Knights" is all that the stage-direction says. But in fact they did not **enter** at all: suddenly they were there, ghastly apparitions materialising out of thin air — an unforgettable theatrical moment. About the very stage-set itself, with its nightmarishly massive pillars and the monstrous spear-wound in the side of Christ Crucified there was a kind of gothic horror. Even now my nerves are tangled from the shock of the volcanic second entry of the Knights — this time from the rear of the auditorium. And the sinister figures of the Four Tempters still people my dreams.

But it was only on the first evening that one of the Knights wiped the blood from his sword. Unless my eyes were failing me, this gesture was omitted at the second performance. Deliberately? Was there a failure of nerve on the part of the producers? Did they perhaps feel they had gone too far along the road of harrowing theatricality?

Their misgivings — if indeed they had them — may well have been grounded. For this play seems intended to proceed on a cerebral rather than an emotional level, its drama the drama of dialectic rather than of acts and passions. It is not so much what happens that is important, as why it happens. And the why has little to do with the intricacies of human motivation, for the characters are scarcely beings of flesh and blood at all. No, the why centres on the logical implications of certain mental attitudes, of which the characters are the spokesmen. We are in the world of Corneille rather than Racine, of Bernard Shaw rather than Shakespeare. Is it not indeed conceivable that Shaw, had he been a poet and a Christian, might have written just such a play as this?

In their handling of a drama concerned with such abstruse casuistry as the justifiability of doing the "right deed for the wrong reason" may one suggest — if only for argument's sake — that the producers yielded slightly to the temptation of doing the wrong deed for the right reason? In their very successful seeking after theatrical effect — and after all what is the theatre if not theatrical? — was there perhaps a faint tendency to misplace the emphasis? Thus, for example, the spiritual torment suffered by Becket in the colloquies with the Tempters was most touchingly rendered by Murray Simpson in posture, facial expression and gesture. Perhaps too touchingly, for attention tended to be distracted from what the Tempters were saying; and it was this last that was important, this and Becket's reasoned replies, not his emotional reactions. For a brief while the rarified dialectical atmosphere became polluted with the human, all too human.

The spectator, after all, needs his wits about him to keep up with Eliot and cannot afford for one moment to have them cluttered up with emotions. Just consider, as one of many gnomic utterances, the very first words spoken by Becket:

"... action is suffering
And suffering action. Neither does the agent suffer
Nor the patient act. But both are fixed
In an eternal action, an eternal patience
To which all must consent that it may be willed
And which all must suffer that they may will it,
That the pattern may subsist, for the pattern is the action
And the suffering, that the wheel may turn and still
Be forever still".

Did I hear that correctly? Yes, I must have done, for Murray Simpson, in common with all the members of the cast, was speaking with admirable clarity. And anyway, here again were precisely the same words spoken this time by the Fourth Tempter. What did they mean then? Clearly, something very important. I was, I think, just beginning to get an inkling when suddenly the Four Knights erupted from the back of the hall, giving me that dreadful shock of which I have spoken earlier and completely shattering my train of thought.

It may well be that these mild questionings directed at the production should properly be aimed at the play itself, which — it might be claimed — never quite made up its mind whether it was a poetic drama or a dramatic poem.

That garrulous chorus, for example!

And yet in this production — aided by a few merciful cuts? — the chorus was a signal success. This coil of lugubrious femininity glided on to the stage and melted away again with truly remarkable unobtrusiveness, its every intervention seeming exactly right, its speech clear and resonant, its separate members keeping unerring verbal step. Only one could wish that greater pains had been taken to make these dismal Women of Canterbury look a little older, or at least a little more careworn and haggard, for so much youthful feminine charm accorded ill with the utterances of these mournful sibyls — living and partly living.

If the chorus had been a flop — as it could so easily have been — the whole production would have been ruined. But it would have been ruined no less if merely one of the Priests, or one of the Tempters, or one of the Knights, or even the Messenger had been inadequate — to say nothing of Thomas Becket himself. A failure of one of the parts would have wrecked the whole. This sounds a truism; in fact it is not true of all plays, even of Shakespeare's. But here every single sentence of every single character is important, each making an essential contribution to the dialectic. Every amateur actor is familiar with the nerve-racking strain of delivering a soliloquy effectively, as he stands there in dread isolation, the cynosure of all eyes. This play amounts to a long succession of soliloquies, some — the Archbishp's sermon on Christmas Day and the apologias of the Knights — very long, others short; but all important and all making great demands on the actors. Of these not a single one was found wanting, inspired as they all quite clearly were by an awareness that in being called upon to speak Eliot's fine words they were treading holy ground.

Of the dignity and compelling nobility of Murrey Simpson's performance what can one say that will not seem niggardly? He did not play Thomas Becket; he **was** Thomas Becket. Indeed for me he still is Thomas Becket — even in an unsanctified Selhurst school blazer. I am glad he is not a member of any of my classes: I might be tempted to assassinate him all over again, partly because my sympathies lie to some extent with the Knights, and partly out of sheer vexation that all because of one profoundly moving dramatic performance echoing hauntingly in my memory such vague historical notions as I may still possess will be thrown into increasing confusion and the year 1170 will become inextricably tangled up with the year 1964.

But perhaps that is the whole point of the play: in all that really matters nothing has changed since 1170. The pattern persists, for the pattern is the action and the suffering, and the wheel turns and is forever still.

C.W.O.

King Richard III 1965

KING RICHARD THE THIRD

William Shakespeare.

At the beginning of the play the characters fall into the following groups:

Supporters of the House of York

The Royal Family:	
King Edward IV	PETER HOOD
George, Duke of Clarence } his brothers	DAVID PAGE
Richard, Duke of York } his brothers	RAYMOND EVANS
Young Duke of York } his sons	HOWARD EATON
Young Prince of Wales } his sons	DERRICK LYME
Duchess of York, mother to King Edward	ELIZABETH BIRD
The Queen's Family:	
Queen Elizabeth, wife of King Edward, formerly a commoner	THELMA HOWLAND
Lord Rivers } her brothers	BRIAN SKENE
Lord Grey } her brothers	CORTLAND FRANSELLA
Marquis of Dorset, son to the Queen by her first husband	KEITH WRIGHT
Nobles supporting the Yorkist Cause:	
Duke of Buckingham	RICHARD GRAHAM
Lord Hastings	MALCOLM WALLACE
Followers of Richard, Duke of Gloucester:	
Sir William Catesby	PETER DAVIES
Sir Richard Ratcliffe	STEPHEN TOWN
Lord Lovel	NICHOLAS BENTLEY

Supporters of the House of Lancaster

Lady Anne, daughter-in-law to the late Henry VI, now a widow	SUSAN LUCAS
Queen Margaret, widow to Henry VI	ANNE LETT
Duke of Richmond, later Henry VII	PETER HOOD

Persons Drawn into the Conflict

Archbishop	JIM PETERS
Sir William Stanley, father-in-law to Richmond	RICHARD O'CONNOR
George Stanley, his son (who does not actually appear)	
Sir Robert Brakenbury, Lieutenant of the Tower	VESEY BRIANS
Sir James Tyrrel	DAVID PAGE
Lord Mayor of London	IAN FLETCHER
Murderers	ROBERT SNOOK
	PETER PAVITT

Uncommitted Persons

Citizens	MARK BAILEY MICHAEL SCOTT
Messenger	MICHAEL JONES
Men-at-arms, Monks, etc.	DAVID FOSTER, RYAN HAROLD, BRIAN CHAMBERS, JOHN MAYNARD, ROBERT SNOOK, PAUL HARRIS, ANTHONY GRABHAM.

SCENE: ENGLAND

Part One: 1472-1483

Part Two: 1483-1485

Produced by Mr. J. A. Hyde.
Assistant Producer: Mr. P. Taylor.
Stage Director: Mr. R. H. G. Parker.
Assistants: D. J. Bird, D. Blackburn, T. M. Gasson, C. V. Marsh, J. L. Twin.
Business Manager: Mr. C. F. Wells.
Box Office: D. Challis, A. Curtis, M. Diamond, D. Knight, B. Lewis, G. C. Mays.
Make-up supervised by Mr. D. F. Miller.
Costumes by Star Costume Studios.
Scenery by Art Department.

Part of the review in the School Magazine

"Relevant" is a "vogue" word in criticism today. "Is it relevant?" people ask, leaving one to infer, I presume, that they mean "relevant to contemporary life". In this sense, Richard III certainly has relevance. In this century we are thoroughly familiar with the business of wading through slaughter to a throne and shutting the gates of mercy on mankind. To Shakespeare's audience the Wars of the Roses were recent history: the family that emerged triumphant was still on the throne, and still feeling a usurper's insecurity. But it needs only a slight readjustment for us to see Richard III's parallel in half-a-dozen dictators of today.

What impressed us most about the production was its unity. Not even Racine has given us a greater impression of singleness, of undeviating movement through a career to an inevitable conclusion. Shakespeare did not write here within the conventions of the Racinian unities; but Mr. Hyde imposed them on him. Whether we were at court, or in prison, or on Bosworth Field, we were looking at a throne, built higher than anything else in sight, and backed by a heraldic banner bearing the Sun of York or the Boar of Gloucester. Every event in the action was relevant to the rise and fall of Richard, and followed so rapidly on the previous event that the year 1483 seemed telescoped to a week or a day. And, of course, one figure dominated the play.

Evans has been criticised in this piece for beginning too loudly, and so spoiling the crescendo to his great climax. This stricture was just, I think, only on the first night. On direction from Mr. Hyde, Evans put this matter right at the second performance and achieved an artistic success. His experience as Rosencrantz and as the smooth knight in "Murder in the Cathedral" had prepared him for the part of Richard. Here, in appearance, in manner, in voice, in facial expression, in gesture, he was the accomplished villain. He had all the equipment: hypocrisy, effrontery, cruelty, indifference to suffering, to the claims of loyalty and gratitude. He could imply them all.

It was a good stroke by the producer to double the parts of Edward IV and Henry VII: normality restored after a nightmare. And it required a good deal of stage ability in Peter Hood to act the two parts, senility and youthful vigour.

There was polished and intelligent work by Page and Graham. Both have grown notably in skill during the last two years; both have now a fine stage presence. Skene, Wright, Fransella and Bryans did good work in supporting roles.

Four girls from our sister school lent their aid: Elizabeth Bird, Susan Lucas, Anne Lett and Thelma Howland. The tasks allotted to them were not easy, but all managed to give convincing performances: the half-crazed Margaret, well-skilled in curses, the sweet but easily-persuaded Anne, the dignified dowager, the widow bowed with sorrow.

The palm goes to the producer. He was, of course, responsible for the concentration, unity, the force of the play: but he had room, too, for purple patches: the incitement of the mob to appoint Richard king by popular acclaim, the ghost scene, the battle of Bosworth. These were, in their turn, richly comic, moving and exciting.

There are people who find school drama, and particularly school Shakespeare, a bore. How far they are justified depends, of course, on the producer. I can honestly say that however awkward the gestures, however slushy the speech, I would, any day of the week, prefer to see a school production with Mr. Hyde behind it than anything the cinema has ever produced.

THE SOCIAL WELFARE COMMITTEE

THE COMMITTEE

P. S. Cotton *(Chairman)*
P. Lorimer *(Secretary)*
D. Foreman B. Chambers

The new Social Welfare Committee was started in September, since which time it has flourished surprisingly. A number of money-raising schemes, including a sweepstake, raffles and competitions raised a total of £45 by Christmas. The sale of Christmas cards brought a further £13.

Now the S.W.C. has expanded and has representatives from every year in the school. This term more projects are going to be organised. There will be regular film shows, a clothes collection, a fortnightly magazine and many other things which, it is hoped, will bring a good response from the school.

Julius Caesar 1967 Junior production (up to Third Form)

Steve Robinson as Brutus, Michael Jones as Julius Caesar
and Howard Eaton as Mark Antony

Anonymous review from the School Magazine

Gielgud or Guinness or Richardson would have been overwhelmed by the first sight of Gloria without staggering as if some thug had struck him with some fair–sized cosh. But such remarks are ungrateful. Our man, lacking the refined technique that only years of experience can give, did all he could manage without it. He over–acted, with very good result.

The other grotesque (in the technical sense) is the waiter. Unnecessary to the plot, he is a glor–ious gratuity. He is also a piece of cake to a good actor–and what a good actor Sageman is! Gesture, inflection, stance, looks, all were brought into service.

On Crampton Shaw has lavished all his gener-osity and humanity. Crampton embodies all that Shaw most hated — dull respectability, petty tyranny, ungraciousness, brutality, unimaginative-ness, stupid conventionality. And yet, like Brown-ing, he insists that there is something to be said for the man, and he says it with moving sincerity. This is where Shaw ceases to be a mere wit, how-ever brilliant, a mere technican, however superb, and rises to great poetry. I can only say that Seaman did justice to the part. In spite of all the difficulties, he convinced us.

Whoever designed the stage sets added to a competent knowledge of the technical requirements of the play an amusing sense of period. The result was both convincing and agreeable.

The producer, dealing with a small number of characters, was able to reject all but good basic material, capable of intelligent cooperation. This was one of the most consistently strong casts we have had. The speech of the boys was clear, their actions expressive, their appearance entirely char-acteristic. The producer, moulding good material, brought the play to life. Sustaining a uniformly quick pace, he nevertheless contrived to bring out for us the wit, the humour, the pathos, the point.

JUNIOR PLAY

At last after a lapse of three years the Junior Play has been revived, and not before time. A dangerous gap in experienced actors was appear-ing which threatened to jeopardise future senior productions. Now one hopes this has been averted.

To put on a tragedy with such young actors might be questioned, though of such plays, "Julius Caesar" provides enough bloodshed to inject life into any production, and the clear cut motives and basic emotions of the characters do not lead to difficulties of interpretation. In the event, however, some fears (for tragedy can so easily become comedy) proved to be justified. Not, however, to the extent that Thursday's audience might have wished one to believe. Not actually hostile they were most unsympathetic, treating each new entrance with redoubled laughter. ("Fancy rugby-playing Smith J. spouting stuff like that"). One hopes none of them will have to face such an experience again.

The following night's audience proved to be little better, treating us to as bad a display of arriving late as I have ever experienced. When, oh when, will people realize how distracting it is for doors to squeak and chairs to clatter during a performance. It redounds greatly to the actors' credit that they did not appear to be affected by these constant interruptions.

There were two basic faults in this production and since both are of a fundamental nature the effect was serious. In the first place it was often very difficult to hear what was being said on stage. The acoustics of the gymnasium have been crit–icized before, and must share a part of the blame. but a great deal of responsibility rests with the performer. It is not simply a matter of increas–ing the volume but of clearer enunciation and most important of all, a considerable slowing down in the speed of delivery. There were some exceptions to this criticism in the persons of Wiltshire, Moore and Jones. The latter however suffered from the second major fault of this pro-duction which was a lack of freedom in move-ments. Instead of being natural and relaxed, move-ments became self-conscious and stiff making even the act of walking across the stage seem mech-anical. Again there were exceptions notably Buxton and Robinson.

The former gave a sound over all performance, spoken with clarity, but lacking the depth of character that one would have liked. It is wrong to presume, as a certain critic on the local paper once did, that young actors do not understand the lines they are given to say. But it is one thing to understand them and another to communicate this to an audience. Cassius may not rank with Richard III or Iago as one of Shakespeare's arch-villains, but he is nevertheless both cunning and ambitious. Ours was not, which meant that the contrast between the noble motives of Brutus and the less praiseworthy ones of Cassius were not as marked as they should have been. In which respect the fact that Robinson's voice was at times too harsh was an additional obstacle in maintaining the difference between the two charact-ers. However, once Robinson's voice has broken this fault should be overcome and, given that he learns to speak a little more slowly, he appears to have the makings of a fine young actor.

For the other conspirators Hammond was suit–ably blunt as Casca, while Chitty in the small part of Decius showed promise. So too did Eaton. He put a great deal of life into the part of Antony, in the scenes where he appeared, but in so doing

tended to shout too many of his lines. When his voice did settle down, as with his comment on Lepidus, one could appreciate his talents better.

Those boys playing the crowd had an unenviable task. It can be a thankless part providing a mere foil for the oratorical talents of one of the leading actors, and only coming in for comment if it is acted badly. It demands the difficult combination of individualism with corporate identity. To say that they nearly succeeded is to praise them. At times reactions appeared forced and were too much the same, but occasionally, very occasionally, they seemed spontaneous and individual, and it was moments like these that made the whole production worthwhile.

The lighting was as expertly done as ever, with a very effective storm scene. The set was quite basic serving its purpose both for Roman Forum and battlefield. I was particularly impressed by the mass descent by Brutus and his army to the tent of Antony and the grouping of the crowd during Antony's speech to them (though whether this was more by luck than judgement I am not sure).

The decision to use modern dress for a Shakespeare play was an acceptable one on financial grounds. Audiences too have become accustomed to it, especially in recent years. However, for the actors, especially young actors, costume can provide an additional aid in projecting a character, and it might have helped here. And, if the time was the present, why were swords used in the battle scene?

The cuts in the play, and there were quite a number, aided the smooth running of the piece, though it did mean we were given no introduction to Octavius, and were not deeply affected by Portia's death. (However what Thursday's audience would have made of Smith J. playing Portia I shudder to think).

Once again we have to thank Mr. Egford and Mr. Hyde for the time and effort they put into this production, showing boys the principles of acting and fostering talent from often unexpected sources. It would be foolish to pretend there were no faults to this production. But experience is basically what is needed. This production was advertised as a testing ground and as such it has shown that there are a number of talented boys amongst the juniors. Given a year or two, and more Junior Plays, or even House Plays (unknown to present members of the school) and they will be ready to tackle any senior production.

D.R.S.P.

THE FACE IN THE NIGHT

Of course no one in these days believes in ghosts! There are no such things : creaking boards, noises in the night, the wind in the branches — all imagination ! So when we went camping near a village in Sussex last year, we smiled to ourselves when some of the boys told us that the grounds in which we intended to pitch our tent had belonged at one time to a haunted house. There was no house there, haunted or otherwise ; there were not even any likely-looking ruins.

Having pitched the tent to our liking, we made our way down the winding lane to buy supplies from the few shops in the village. We soon had enough tins of food, and were told that we could get all the fresh eggs we wanted from a nearby farm which was on our way back to camp.

We soon came upon a rather dilapidated farm house. Some of the fences had fallen down and by the look of them the rest would fall down in the next high wind. If we hadn't seen various farm animals around the place I don't think we would have realised the place was occupied.

At the house itself, however, we found the farmer's wife quite charming and she readily agreed to supply us with eggs.

Back at the camp we stored our goods in the larder we had made, and very soon had a glorious fire crackling and glinting through the gathering gloom. After we had finished our evening meal — new laid eggs and bacon taste wonderful in the open — we decided that bed would be the best place, as our activities had made us very tired. A sketchy toilet, and we were soon wrapped in blankets ready for sleep.

We had not been still very long when a strange noise cut across the silence of the night. It seemed to come nearer, a rustling and a clanking which very soon seemed to be right outside our tent. Courageously we peered out through the flap.

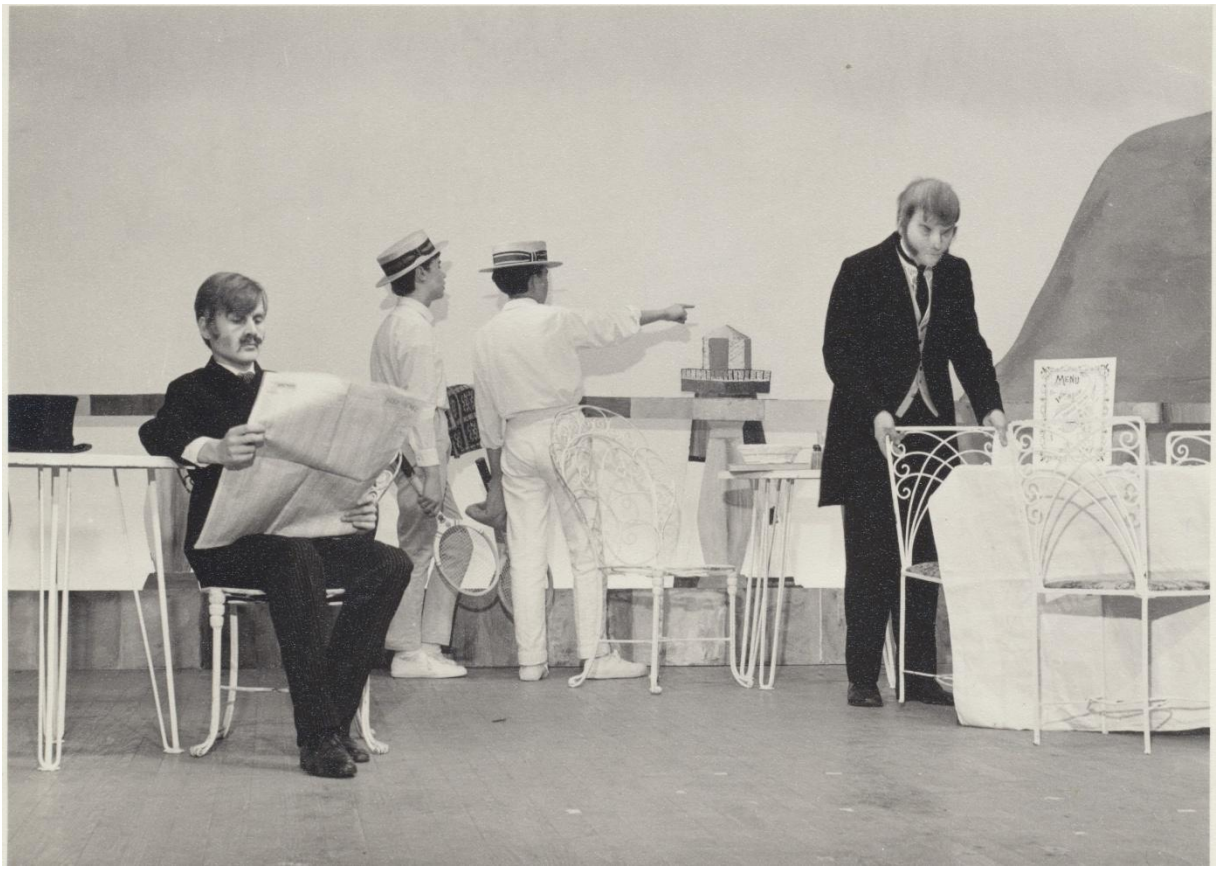
As the fitful light of the moon shone through the clouds, I realised I was staring straight into a face! And what a face! Red glinting eyes, sharp gleaming teeth, shaggy hair and beard, small horns ? Horns ! Surely this couldn't be the devil himself ! We didn't wait to ask — we didn't stop even to put our shoes on — we just ran.

I don't know what the farmer thought when in response to the tattoo we beat on his door he found us panting outside, wearing pyjamas and babbling about faces in the night. He was a kindly man, however, and allowed us to stay in his house until morning.

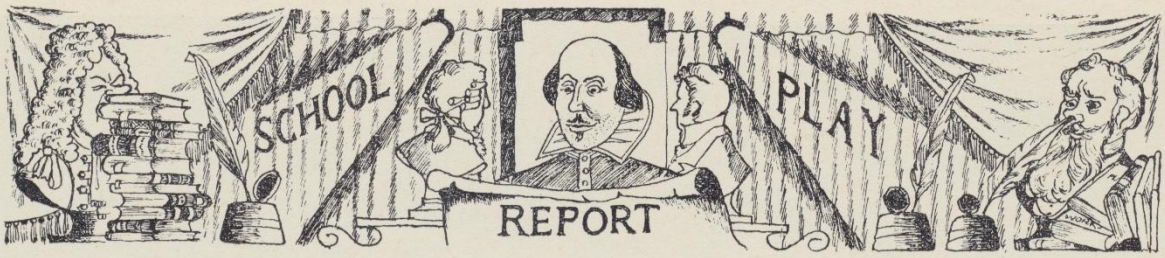
In the light of broad day our fears had abated and we returned to the camp we had left so hurriedly the night before. The face was still there — but we felt such fools when we saw what had made us run a few hours before. One of the farmer's goats had got loose during the night and had caught his chain in a bush by the side of our tent.

H. KEMPTON, 3B1

You Never Can Tell 1967



Anonymous review from the School Magazine



YOU NEVER CAN TELL

by

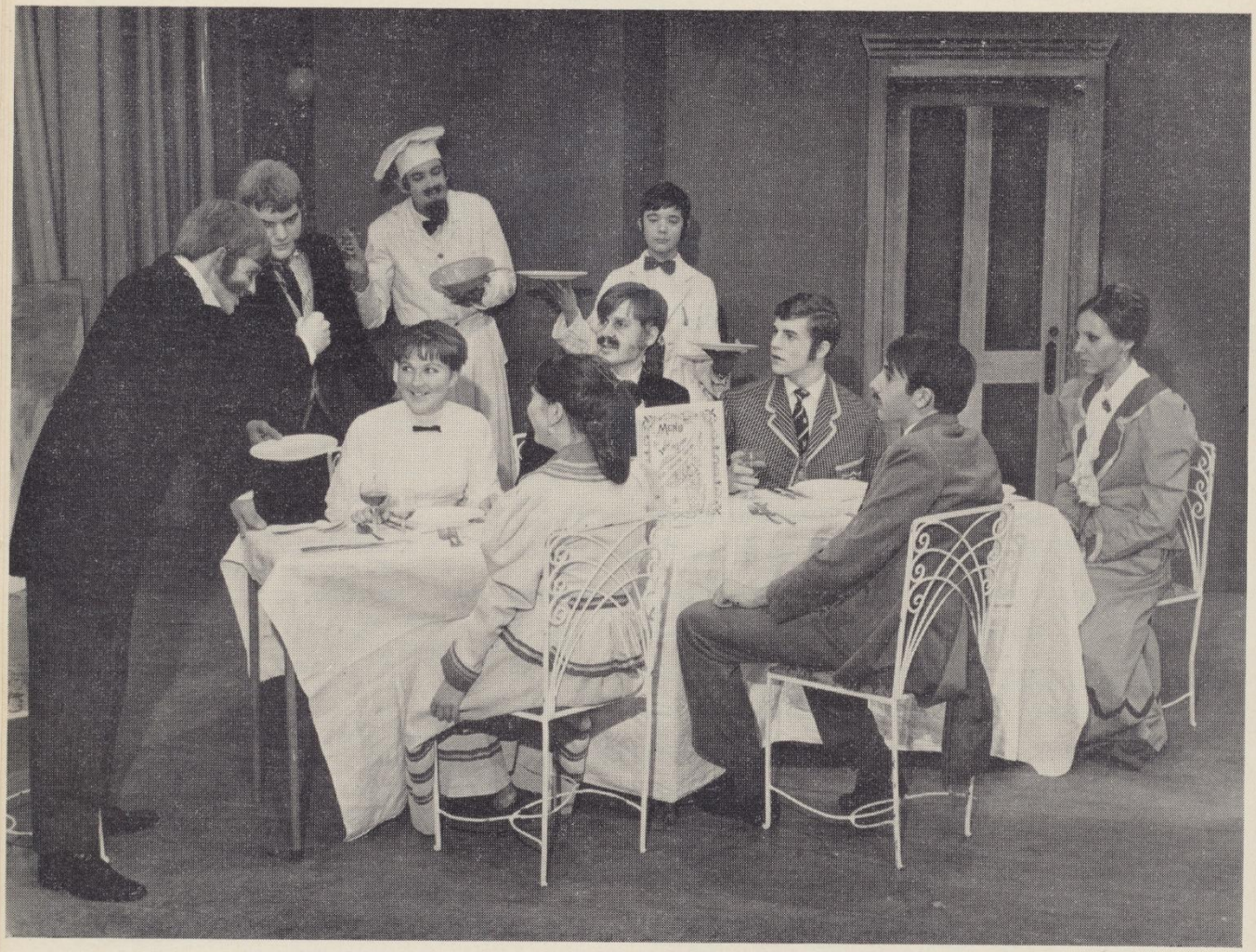
BERNARD SHAW

Characters in order of appearance

Dolly Clandon	Carole Rooke
Valentine, *a dentist*	Peter Dougill
Parlourmaid	Judy Sale
Philip Clandon	Christopher Davis
Mrs. Clandon	Valerie Day
Gloria Clandon	Susan Efford
Fergus Crampton	Peter Seaman
Finch M'Comas, *a solicitor*	Michael Roberts
A Waiter	James Sageman
Chef	Keith Andrew
Assistant Waiter	Michael Scott
Bohun, Q.C.	Robert Cavender
Visitors	Stephen Robinson Nicholas Moore

"Getting Married"has just been taken off after a pretty long run at the Strand Theatre, and now "Heartbreak House" has opened at the Lyric. Last year we had "Man and Superman" at the Garrick. This does not represent a Shaw revival, for Shaw has never died. Since the great man's physical demise there have been few Shawless months in the London theatre, and certainly, I think, no Shawless year. Now this is against all precedent. It is a rule of artistic history that a man's reputation should slump after his death, and then, after a couple of decades, when a truer estimate of his worth has reached, he should be revived for performance, amidst patronising grunts from the critics. This certainly happened to Shake–speare. He had disappeared from the English stage a good many years before that stage itself disappeared under the Commonwealth, and when he came back with the Restoration he had to be rewritten by Dryden and Cibber to make him pub–licly acceptable. Yet John Bull's other Playwright has unbroken life. In spite the kitchen sink vogue, the psychiatric vogue, the vogue of Ionesco, Brecht, Wesker, Osborn, Shaw's head is unbowed and not even bloody. And this is all the odder when you think of the ephemeral nature of most of his opinions. On her return from Madeira Mrs. Clandon learns from her old friend and fellow warrior that all her daring views have now been accepted and passed by. Lubin learns from Savvy Barnabas that Darwin's biology is obsolete rot and Marx's economics is exploded piffle. Shaw's own views on parents and children, the medical profession, poverty, the Superman, Christianity, monogamy, phonetics have long ceased to annoy and have been shelved in favour of other advanced opinions, and yet the plays in which the views are expanded still hold the stage. Why? There are, I think two reasons. First, sheer gusto: sheer force and high spirits. This is the secret of Dickens' lon–gevity and of Macaulay's, of the success of every distinguished music hall comedian. Gracie Fields could not sing for nuts, nor act for toffee: she could project an enormously powerful personality. I once saw Tommy Steele and Margaret Rutherford in the same production. Technically they were not in the same street. Margaret Rutherford with scarcely lifting a finger could act Tommy Steele off the stage, out of the front door and into the New Cut. Tommy Steele sustained his position by sheer high spirits. But in Shaw, added to these high spirits, this gusto, this force of personality, is an enormous technical proficiency. Suppose Tommy Steele, with all his electric personality, had been able to act as well as Margaret Ruther–ford. What a prodigy he would have been. Well, in Shaw we have that sort of combination.

But there is a second point; and here we are on ground familiar to every literary scholar. The ost–ensible subject of Shaw's plays is not the real sub–ject. The "problem", the view to be propagated, is of only minor importance. His real subject is humanity. No one, I suggest, cares twopence for the "philosophy" of "Man and Superman", but we care greatly for Tanner, Straker, Malone and Ricky Ticky Tavy. The more the immediate sub–ject of propaganda recedes, and the more the cha–racters emerge as particulars and yet universals, the more the writer emerges as a man of stature. Shaw lives as a great technician, but more as an acute and warmly sympathetic student of his own species.



Shaw is fond of pointing out that he has acquired a reputation for daring originality by re-hashing the ideas of men who lived long before him, warmly advocating them, and then, immediately, denying them. After the First War we all saw it as a rather alarming joke when Bertrand Russell, Homer Lane and the others rediscovered Rousseau and attempted to remake education in the new light; but Shaw had blazed the trail ten years before in the Preface to "Misalliance". He had also ridiculed the whole idea twenty years before when he created Philip and Dolly Clandon. Presenting us with this dazzling pair, he said, in effect, this is the sort of thing you are liable to produce if you treat a child's mind as a tabula rasa on which you have no right to scribble.

Dolly and Phil are pure fire. Free of earth, air and water, they dance through their incandescent lives, a pair of flames. Yet half the fun is their symmetry, their repetitiveness, their balance. Their career is a ballet, with all a ballet's controlled freedom. Realising this, our producer schooled Carole and Christopher to wonderfully good effect. If each had only been a couple of stone lighter they would have touched perfection.

They were matched by the volatile Valentine. He is, to be frank, no more than a stage property. Shaw wanted someone, first to set the plot in motion by bringing about an accidental reunion of Crampton with his family, secondly to throw the advanced woman off her perch. But, like Dickens, Shaw never gives us a mere piece of furniture. Valentine, the only completely unconvincing figure in the play, is, nevertheless, wonderfully and skilfully made. An experienced actor is bound to find the part a tough job, but our man got as near to pulling it off as a non-Haymarket technician could.

Antony and Cleopatra 1969

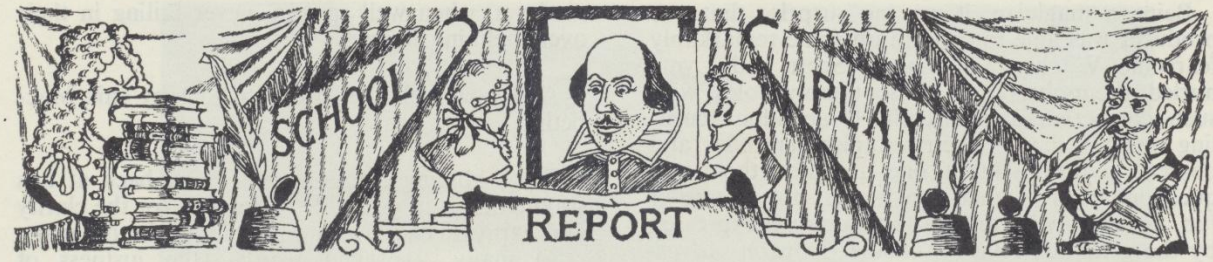
Simon Turner as Mark Antony

The stage crew

Macbeth 1969

Steve Robinson as First Witch

Macbeth review in School Magazine by Charles Oakley (staff)



MACBETH

Characters in order of appearance

Three Weird Sisters ..... S. Robinson
M. Scott, D. Lyme
Duncan "the Meek," king of Scotland
A. Austen
Malcolm, his elder son ..... H. Eaton
Donalbain, his younger son ..... C. Driscoll
Wounded sergeant ..... P. Chitty
Ross — P. Cross
Angus — R. Puchades
Lennox — Scottish noblemen — N. Moore
Caithness — P. Vaughan
Menteith — C. Holbrook
Macbeth — P. Seaman
Scottish generals
Banquo — R. Cavender
Lady Macbeth ..... N. Buxton
Servant ..... S. Priestnall
Fleance, son to Banquo ..... A. Clark
Porter ..... C. Mason
Macduff ..... C. Davis
Old man ..... P. Chitty
1st Murderer ..... S. Turner
2nd Murderer ..... P. Dancy
Seyton, Macbeth's personal servant ..... J. Licence
Gentlewoman ..... H. Eaton
Doctor ..... D. Attfield
Visions, soldiers, etc. ..... R. Winterton
M. Jones, C. Driscoll

Scenery and Lighting designed by the Producer
Stage Manager ..... J. Florance
Associate stage manager ..... S. Morris
Electrician ..... C. Gibbons
Assistant stage managers ..... H. Eaton
N. Moore, P. Dancy, S. Robinson.
Box Office ..... A. Fekete, R. Jackson
and A. Keene.

Production by Mr. J. A. Hyde

"Stay, you imperfect speakers, tell us more." Yes, indeed! Those of us—and there are a few—who do not know our Shakespeare by heart were sorely put to it to follow what was being said by some members of the cast. Did some perilous stuff weigh upon their tongues and vocal cords, causing them to chew at the words, swallow some of the syllables and expectorate them in a new order—signifying nothing? Oh, for the last syllable of the recorded line, or—for that matter—most of the other syllables!

This complaint (it is the only one) had to be made. But in the act of making it one has compunctious visitings: first, because there were indeed some who spoke with clarity, if at times inadequate volume; and, secondly, because those who spoke ill did everything else admirably: they held themselves well, and their evolutions were orderly and brisk. All the acting indeed was marked by abstention from fussy, fidgety movement, thus enhancing the dominant impression created by the production: an impression of taut, ominous restraint. And when the restraint snapped, the erupting violence was all the more overwhelming. This suggestion of damped down fires was, for example, notably conveyed by Buxton as Lady Macbeth, about whose sinister, statuesque stillness and baleful sultriness of gaze there was something evilly hypnotic.

From time to time those damped down fires cast a reddish glow over the scene. This effect of lighting was one of the most telling contrivances of that magician posing as an English master, Mr. Hyde. For, in Bradley's words, the mood of this tragedy is one of "a black night broken by flashes of colour. . . And, above all, the colour is the colour of blood." Blood there was indeed a-plenty, more than enough to make some of us blench, and arouse not so much a moral revulsion from the crime as a physical disgust at its attendant details —one wonders if the two are compatible.

Being a magician, it was no surprise that our producer was able to conjure up some remarkably fearsome Witches. Robinson, Scott and Lyme hurled themselves into these unholy roles with such conviction and disciplined abandon—curdling our blood with their vampire screeches and obscene gyrations—that one accepted them unquestioningly for what they were: not figures of fun, not even (with respect to an opinion expressed by the generous reviewer in the *Croydon Advertiser*) the classical Furies; but—in a tragedy permeated by Christian sentiment—the handmaidens of Satan, no less.

One had to mention the Weird Sisters first—for fear of their spells. But how workmanlike some of the other performances were! One thinks of Eaton who gave a valorous rendering of the very difficult role of Malcolm; of Cavender's Banquo, a worthy antagonist to Macbeth—even more imposing as a ghost than when alive; of Davis's noble, manly Macduff. One thinks of the dignified meekness of Austen's Duncan; of Turner and Dancy as the two gruesome Murderers; of Mason's Porter who had the frightening task of holding the stage all on his own between two scenes of tautest tension; of Moore's spirited Lennox; of Attfield's benevolently vague and ineffectual Doctor. One thinks of . . . but one could go on and on, and the fact is one ought never to have started, for what we had here above all was a splendid team performance to which every single actor (to say nothing of the members of the stage crew under Florance's leadership) contributed his full enriching share, large or small, but indispensable each. "So thanks to all at once, and to each one."

As one tottered out after the murder of Duncan, to restore shattered nerves with a cup of parental tea, and hoping one would not encounter the Witches on the way, one wondered rather anxiously whether the second two thirds of the imperial theme could possibly be as good as the first. Needless misgivings. They were, if anything, even better. Throughout, the tempo scarcely slackened (here indeed there was no creeping, petty pace!), the tension rarely eased. And, throughout, the production soared triumphantly to scale the eminences of the great climactic scenes: the assassination, the morning after, Banquo's ghost at the feast, Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking, the hurlyburly of the final battle. . . Of one or more of these every spectator will have his own cherished recollection. My own is of Macbeth, upon the words "The queen, my lord, is dead," turning towards us a face riven by grief, and breaking into that infinitely moving speech: "She should have died hereafter. . ." Hackneyed lines? And yet, when well spoken, never failing in their overwhelming impact.

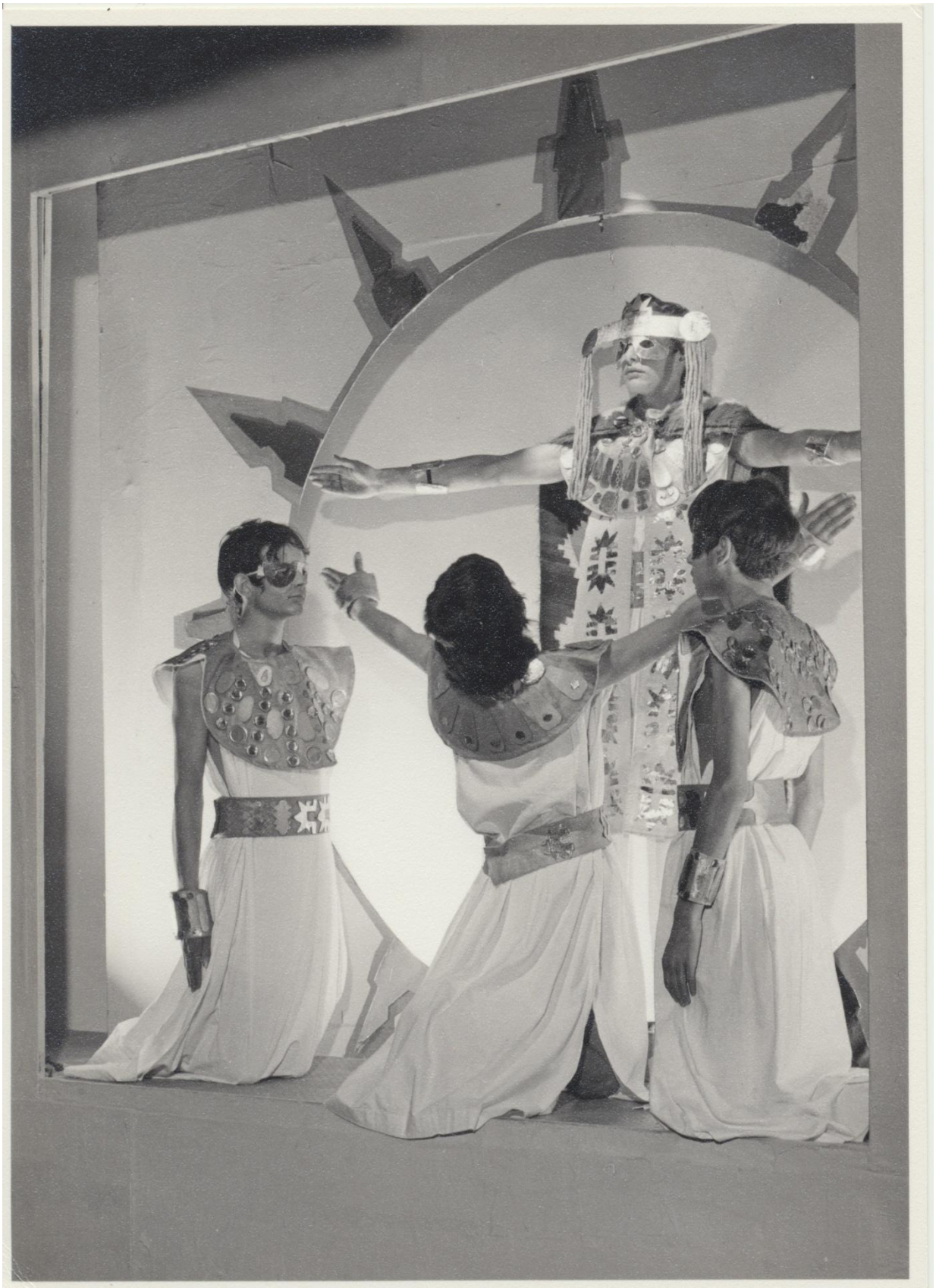
And how well they were spoken by this Macbeth!

One's abiding emotion on looking back at this production is of gratitude to Seaman for the clarity and expressiveness with which he spoke his many —so many! —jewelled words: the justness of phrasing and intonation, the modulated resonance, the rightness of tone and stress. And that was not all, for time and again he conveyed the impression, not of declaiming lines committed to memory, but rather of thinking aloud: seeking out and finding there and then just the right words in which to clothe his feelings and thoughts. The audience's pleasure was thus twofold, paradoxically so: we had the benison of the wonderful speeches, rich with all the emotional accretions of the years (for surely they are even more pregnant now than when first written); and yet at the same time we were given them, as it were, newly minted.

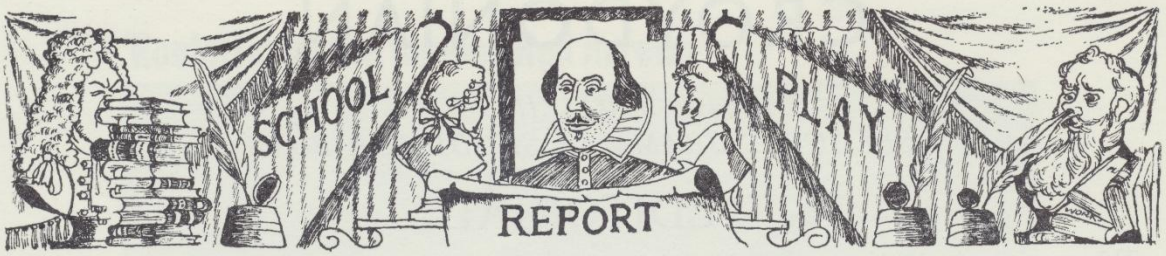
We will not dwell on the many other excellencies of Seaman's interpretation, nor on those of Buxton who partnered him so aptly. They were predominantly excellencies of restraint and understatement. Here were two actors who made full use of what lay within their powers, and wisely eschewed what did not (the producer's guiding hand was very apparent here), so that—the artistic effect of restraint being what it is—the total impact of their tragedy was hardly less stirring than one has seen it in professional performances. Human, all too human, Macbeth and his Lady captured our sympathy from the start and held it even when their hands were dripping with blood. When the great wheel had gone over them and they were with Him who turns it, it was with them that our compassion lingered still; and, despite Malcolm's protestations, what happened to Scotland thereafter was a matter of the utmost indifference.

C.W.O.

The Royal Hunt of the Sun 1970



Review from the School Magazine by Charles Oakley (staff)



SCHOOL PLAY
THE ROYAL HUNT OF THE SUN
by PETER SHAFFER

The Characters

Spaniards—Officers—
Francisco Pizarro, Commander of the Expedition ... Stephen Robinson
Hernando de Soto, Second-in-Command ..... Nicholas Moore
Miguel Estete, Royal Veedor, or Overseer ..... Richard Puchades
De Candia, Commander of Artillery Colin Driscoll
Diego de Trujillo, Master of Horse ..... Hugh Eaton
Spaniards—Men—
Martin Ruiz ..... Simon Turner
Young Martin, Pizarro's Page:
Old Martin as a boy ..... Michael Salter
Salinas, Blacksmith ..... Philip Vaughan
Rodas, Tailor ..... Alan Roadnight
Vasca ..... Stephen Tarrant
Domingo ..... David Moon
Juan Chavez ..... Richard Stokes
Spaniards—Priests—
Fray Vincente de Valverde, Expedition Chaplain ..... Robin Jackson
Fray Marcos de Nizza ..... Andrew Austen
Peruvian Indians—
Sovereign Inca of Peru ..... Richard Winterton
Atahuallpa,
Villac Uma, High Priest of Peru ..... Linton Ross
Challcuchima, An Inca General ... Alan Graham
Chieftain ..... Robert Carlysle
Headman ..... Stephen Priestnall
Felipillo, Interpreter ..... Maxwell Frazer
Manco, a messenger ..... Philip Tong
Inti Coussi, Stepsister of Atahuallpa ... Alison Macdonald
Oello, a wife of Atahuallpa ... Maureen Oughton
Indians—
Christopher Diaz, Raymond Ings, Nicholas Gibbons, Peter Hull, Peter Lay, Paul Loxton, Andrew Hunt, Alan Macaulay, Peter Tuffley and David Dowell.

Produced by Mr. J. A. Hyde,
assisted by Mr. D. T. Thompson

Stage Director ..... Mr. R. H. W. Butterworth

Incidental Music composed and conducted by Mr. A. H. Diamond

Instrumentalists...R. Coull, B. Horgan, R. Hewitt, S. Bowen, I. Bird, A. Hunt, I. Sheeley, M. Sbith, D. Lee, S. Beels, C. Tunney, J. Gostick, R. Pearson, D. Batchelor, D. Taylor.

Lighting ... Mr. T. W. Alcroft and Howard Eaton

Stage Crew ..... Tim Harris, Barry West, Graeme Wilcox, Ross Farncombe, Michael Sewry

Scenery ... built by the Stage Crew, and painted under the direction of Mr. A. J. James

Indian Costumes ... designed by and made under the direction of Mrs. A. Butler

Wardrobe ... supervised by Mrs. L. N. Edwards

Business Manager ..... Mr. C. F. Wells

Box Office ..... Andrew Fekete, Robin Jackson, Andrew Keene, Richard Winterton

It is intriguing to watch the development of the members of the Selhurst Dramatic Society. The gain in self-confidence and poise is often bewilderingly rapid. Can this young actor be the boy who made his first halting appearance in a House Play—four, three, two years ago? It may indeed be only one year, for the luck of the draw—or, more likely, very shrewd casting—will sometimes present the veriest tyro with a role, small or large, which he is able to interpret with outstanding success. So it was last year with Philip Tong. And so it was this year with Michael Salter, whose impersonation of Young Martin was perhaps the most satisfying performance of the evening—the most satisfying, be it noted, not necessarily the most meritorious. And then there is the interesting emergence of specialisation: Robin Jackson seems to be making a corner in the playing of sneering, bigoted priests; Simon Turner, of world-weary old sceptics; Nicholas Moore, of bluff, no-nonsense soldiers. Very well they do it, too. By contrast, Stephen Robinson and Richard Winterton broke entirely new ground this year, and wonderfully well they, too, did it; but of that more later.

So, after "Caesar and Cleopatra"—"The Royal Hunt of the Sun." And once again we are witnessing an encounter between Europe and an alien civilisation. Fifteen hundred years lie between the two plays, and in that long span of time a change has come over the Europeans: they are now distinctly more brutish and nasty. And also distinctly less wittily eloquent. Watching this play in a kind of gloomy fascination, one sighed at times for the lightness of touch that Bernard Shaw might have brought to the theme. "He has got a surprise coming," said Hernando de Soto, in reference to the Sovereign Inca of Peru. Lucky Sovereign Inca! Even if the surprise was an unpleasant one.

But first things first: obeisance—Peruvian Indian fashion—to all who had a part, small or large, in this accomplished performance. As one reflects on all the work that had gone into it: stage-set and lighting effects, alike striking and ingenious; the lovely Indian costumes; the colourful battle-standards of the Spandiards; the incidental music so nicely adjusted that one was not aware of it, only of the mood it created; the demanding, but lightly borne roles of the principal actors; the disciplined evolutions of the supporting cast; the whole fitted together by skilful direction: reflecting on all this, one is overcome by awe similar to that of the Spanish invaders on their first sight of the Andes.

And yet, what a peculiar play this was to see performed by boys and young men, and how strange the contrast between their devoted enthusiasm and the black pessimism of what they portrayed: brutal greed under the leadership of nihilism; religion as either a pathetic fallacy or a camouflage for rapacity; the blighting of a boy's hopes and ideals! Vanity of vanities, dust and ashes . . .

A wearisome play, too. On and on it went, relentlessly, so that we almost felt as if we, and not the Spaniards, had been trekking through the jungles and scaling the mountains. And yet there could be no denying its strangely mesmeric power: a large second night audience was all hushed attention—the more remarkable as those towards the back must have been in difficulty to see and hear what was going on. And here it must be noted in passing that once again, amidst so much that was excellent, the speaking was the least satisfactory part of this production

From time to time one was jerked from the dominant mood of sombre Wedding Guest-like acceptance by moments of quickened interest, nicely calculated by the playwright and avidly exploited by the producer: the first appearance of Atahuallpa and his henchmen, majestic against the refulgent Inca sun; the swift transition from Spain to South America, with Young Martin suddenly cowering amidst the lurking horrors of the Peruvian jungle; the abasement of the puny Spanish before the mighty Andes; their silent vigil at the approach to Cajamarca; Atahuallpa's engagingly exotic dance; the entry of the Sovereign Inca and his re-

tinue from the back of the auditorium—everybody familiar with the workings of Mr. Hyde's mind had known that this moment was imminent, and yet somehow, in the event, it came as a surprise. The sudden freezing of the action to allow for the lugubrious comments of Old Martin was also very effectively managed, and there was at these times a piquancy in the juxtaposition of the old and the young Ruiz.

Our sympathies, however, were never firmly engaged with the characters. We watched them with a kind of dispassionate curiosity—at one and the same time engrossed and alienated—as one might observe an ants' nest in a glass case. This, one assumes, was the playwright's intention, and it was loyally served by acting and production. The impassivity of the Incas, their beautifully executed ritual movements, their utter remoteness from our ken, enclosed them in a magic circle. From this, it is true, their leader did briefly step out, but only with one foot. Even in his humiliation he was never quite human, still bizarrely remote. For Richard Winterton's performance no praise can be excessive. He looked the part; he sounded the part; strangely godlike, still more strangely childlike—a visitant from an utterly incomprehensible antique land:. He did for one moment put a foot outside the magic circle; but he never put a foot wrong.

And the Spaniards?

For all they were much more akin to us, and for all they were more individualised than the Indians—with admirable interpretations, particularly by Nicholas Moore as Pizarro's Second-in-Command, by Richard Puchades as the haughty Royal Veedor, by Philip Vaughan as the boisterous Blacksmith turned soldier-adventurer, by Robin Jackson as a nasty priest and Andrew Austen as a rather nicer one—for all that, they inspired little fellow-feeling. They were an oddly dismal crew, and they had so little of interest to say. And the oddest thing of all about them was their willingness to commit themselves to the leadership of the unleaderlike Pizarro.

Of the two main roles by far the more difficult fell to Stephen Robinson. His was indeed a valiant attempt to portray the tormented figure of Pizarro. He showed us a man at the end of his tether, tortured by an old wound, despising himself and dredging upon dwindling reserves of physical and mental vitality in order to impose his will on followers whom he despised even more; and all in pursuit of an aim in which he did not really believe—a self-questioning man, with nothing at the core of him but hollow despair, despair that made him cruel, not least to those who began to rekindle in him the embers of affection—Young Martin, for instance, and the humbled Atahuallpa. All this was convincing, even touching at times; but not even Stephen Robinson could really make us warm to Pizarro. We were therefore mystified that such a man, so negative, empty, could ever have inspired others to accept him as their leader in a desperate enterprise. Nihilists are not usually assured of a ready following when the journey is beset by perils—even with a promised reward of gold. What then impelled the Spaniards? Was their journey really necessary? Was ours? Well, yes—to see these actors in this production. But we shall hardly be in a hurry to make it again.

C.W.O.

HOUSE PLAYS

The annual evening of House Plays presented at the beginning of spring term was probably the most successful of the present series, the audience having a very varied programme of entertainments.

Alpha presented Julian, an adaptation of a radio play. The setting was most evocative and its central object, a large stained-glass window, was very well executed. The dramatic conflict was well presented with most realistic characterisation. The tension of the climax was most exciting. Mr. Thompson is to be congratulated on his first production at Selhurst.

Beta, once again under the direction of Mrs. Edwards, presented an adaptation of The Pardoner's Tale of Chaucer; it was set in modern times with the "riotoures" of the original being played as "Hell's Angels." This was great fun.

Gamma followed its current tradition and Mr. Tasker as his last production at Selhurst presented The Grand Cham's Diamond. This is a well constructed amusing little piece with some crisp dialogue which the actors played with feeling. The "females" were particularly effective.

Delta again offered a comedy in French. The production in Mr. Oakley's skilful hands was good to look at and very funny. The actors in their speech and mime gave the seriousness to it which an intentionally silly story must have if it is to be effective. The dumb show sequences were accompanied by a beautiful performance of Clair de Lune—we shall never be able to listen to that haunting piece seriously again!

All the casts brought great enthusiasm to their work and consequently the audience enjoyed the plays immensely. Possibly the words were not quite audible but this was only partly the fault of the inexperienced players; our "theatre" must be acoustically one of the worst in the country!

An added attraction was the performance of two Pinter sketches by two sixthformers. Their handling of the dialogue was very good and the timing of the pauses, in this writer's work just as important, very well managed indeed.

Othello 1971

Anonymous review in the School Magazine

REVIEWS

SCHOOL PLAY, 1971

'Othello' by Shakespeare.

People who watched the polished performance of 'Othello' often did not realise the great deal of hard work and thought that went into it. With the 'Royal Hunt of the Sun' out of the way, Mr. Hyde's thoughts began to turn towards the next school play. By the summer term the choice of play was fixed and the major characters cast; all this while Mr. Hyde was busy producing 'Charley's Aunt'.

In the Autumn term, preparations really began, the whole cast was picked and rehearsals started. It is always a fascinating sight to see how Mr. Hyde produces order out of something somewhat distant from that happy state over the course of the term. After school every night for the last month or so, the cast has rehearsed in the gym, on a stage encumbered by a basket ball goal and the gradually emerging set. Movements were worked out and speeches patiently explained, with Mr. Thompson standing in for the invariably absent actors. Liaison with the girls school produced the female parts and frantic last minute arrangements had to be made about costumes, as it seemed that every school in the London area needed Elizabethan costumes for the first week in December.

On the Monday before the first performance was the first of the two dress rehearsals. Actors wandered around admiring themselves in their new costumes or jealously regarding what they considered was another's superior outfit. Actors forgot lines, cues

and in one case a large chunk of their part, while Mr. Hyde walked about trying to look phlegmatic and, most significant sign of all, smoking.

Then to the actual performance. I expected a good evening's entertainment, but all the same, I was not really prepared for the truly delightful finished performance that I saw. It was a pity that the audience was so small, but it did mean that an intimate atmosphere was created, to which the cast fully responded. From the opening of the play, with its bleak, monumental set cast into shadow, our attention was captured, and was not lost until the final words of the play.

From the general excellence, several scenes stood out. The Doge's palace with the grave senators making a dramatic and colourful entrance in Mrs. Butler's costumes. The swift change to Cyprus, with its stirring music and suitably stormy back projection also impressed. In the scenes that followed, the set revealed its potentialities to the full, one moment being a sun drenched street, the next a dark tavern. The scene in the tavern was masterly, not only because of the principal actors, but in the way the whole cast on stage at that moment vividly created an atmosphere of drunken fellowship, making the fight and subsequent change of mood that followed it extremely effective. This sudden change, heightened by the appearance of Othello, was a most telling piece of theatre.

From then on, the pace of the action quickened, and there was a succession of memorable scenes. The two great 'temptation' scenes between Othello and Iago were gripping, and their effect heightened, by the sensitive portrayal of Desdemona by Janet Titterington. And so to the final scene, so completely effective that when the lights finally went out, the audience was momentarily silenced. A memorable experience.

There were very few weak performances from the actors. Richard Winterton as Othello captured the magnificent physical presence of the Moor excellently, and also managed to convey some of the inner torment of the man, especially in the final scene. Robin Jackson's Iago was clearly spoken, so that the poetry of the lines could be fully appreciated; I would have liked more change of pace in his performance, for when fully inside the part he was most effective. Janet Titterington's Desdemona increased in stature as the play progressed, and conveyed well the emotions of a young girl caught up in passions she did not fully understand. Penny Hobbs as Emilia made the most of her final scene when she realises that she has been the dupe of her husband, while Janet Morley made an appealing Bianca. Nicholas Moore, as competent as ever, conveyed the courtly Florentine, Cassio, in a nicely studied performance and Andrew Austen extracted all the humour and pathos that he could from the part of Roderigo. I cannot mention all the actors by name, however much they deserve it. Suffice it to say that they all did well, and in the crowd scenes worked effectively together. One final mention — Hugh Eaton and Ian Nicholson deputised at a few hours' notice for an actor down with influenza, and did so efficiently.

The stage crew were their usual model of efficiency onstage and scruffiness off; the lighting effects were especially notable. Mention should also be made of the unsung efforts of Mr. Wells and his box office staff, who year after year carry out the vital task of ensuring that an audience actually appears.

Finally, all credit to Mr. Hyde, ably assisted by Mr. Thompson, for once again delighting us.

Roderigo	Andrew Austen
Iago	Robin Jackson
Brabantio	Derek Jones
Othello	Richard Winterton
Cassio	Nicholas Moore
Duke	Alan Graham
1st Senator	Stephen Priestnall
2nd Senator	David Moon
3rd Senator	Robert Carlysle
Desdemona	Janet Titterington
Montano	Philip Tong
Herald	Michael Salter
Emilia	Penny Hobbs
Bianca	Janet Morley
Lodovico	John Goodwin
Gratiano	Raymond Homewood

Sailors, Gentlemen, attendants, etc:-
Ian Nicholson, Robert Carlysle, Maxwell Fraser, Peter Fyfe, Alan Graham, Michael Salter, Martin Anderson, Hugh Eaton.
Produced by Mr. J. Hyde and Mr. D. Thompson.

Production Assistant	Andrew Austen
Stage director	Mr. R. H. W. Butterworth
Lighting	Howard Eaton
Sound	Michael Sewry
Stage Crew	Timothy Harris
	Barry West
	Ross Farncombe
	Graham Wilcox

Costumes by	Charles H. Fox Ltd.
Box Office	Mr. C. F. Wells.
assisted by	Andrew Neville
	Christopher Tagart
	Jonathan Stone
	Barry Hinton