

"English Conversation"

English Conversation marks a new direction for the amateur thespians of the Suburb: it was written by one of their number. But the play, put on in early December at the Institute, lacked both tension and excitement.

Michael Sabine-Bacon is well known to Suburb residents as an actor, but not until now as a playwright, although he has written several plays previously. This one, we are told, is based on a true story.

Set in a castle in Holland it tells of a middle-aged count whose life is blighted by an iron-willed, possessive mother. The count likes to invite young English women for the summer to give him lessons in English conversation.

None stays long, as his autocratic mother drives them away. The new arrival, Jane, obviously appeals to the count. Then his mother dies mysteriously, because someone has exchanged the medicine she takes for a heart condition for water.

The roles of the supporting characters are not made clear. The menage at the castle is very peculiar. What are Dirk Huyts and his wife Gretel doing there? Gretel cleans and cooks but Dirk only chases after the girls, and in particular the sluttish German maid Mathilde. And why has the dreadful Mathilde not been sacked? She is extremely rude and serves dinner with a cigarette

hanging from the corner of her mouth. What secret can she know that allows her to behave like this? Apparently none. For some reason she stays when all other domestics have fled the countess's caustic tongue.

The play is extremely slow getting going. Nor are the characters well drawn. Simon Lesser and Ashley Collins did their best to give some life to Dirk and Gretel. Diana Bromley looked and sounded extremely haughty as the countess. Judith Gubbay brought out the awfulness of Mathilde and hinted at murderous inclinations, as did Derek Smith as the count. His was a well-spoken solid performance. But what were his intentions with Jane, the pale English teacher? She, wise girl, faced with the improbable behaviour of the others, fled. Marilyn Greene made something quite interesting out of Jane.

The programme contained bits of information about the actors. Why was the author not included? It would have been interesting to see what else he has written. Altogether I felt that the playwright, who also produced his own play, has had poor support from the Hampstead Garden Suburb Theatre. The set, usually so good, looked as if it had had minimum thought, time and money spent on it

Léonie Stephen

"Ring Round the Moon"

Anouilh is an outstanding master of fantastic comedy, or rather a kind of comedy poised between laughter, satire and genuine emotions. This *Pièce Rose* is an enchanting entertainment with brilliant dialogue among fleeting moments of bitterness and tenderness. But it is not a farce, and my quarrel with the producer, Robert Jayes, is that he appears to have seen it only in that light. It is true that Anouilh has taken all his favourite characters and set them before us in an extravagant manner but, as in all of his plays, there are serious themes underneath, such as the corrupting influence of money on society. The moment most true to the playwright was the scene in which the fabulously rich Messerschmann offers a bribe to the innocent heroine, Isabelle, and she refuses and together they tear up his money. This moment was played with a simplicity lacking elsewhere by Lou

Kochane and Sarah Michaelides and was extremely affecting. Indeed both Mr Kochane and Miss Michaelides were outstanding in their roles.

Richard Kinder differentiated the twins Hugo and Frederic successfully and Simon Ramssey was gravely amusing as the wise old butler. Kim Small brought a petulant glamour to Diana Messerschmann.

But the rest in my opinion were over the top and the shrill goings-on between Madame Desmortes, Capulet and Isabelle's silly mother, played by Alison Newton, Val Gregory and Sonia Woolf, did not do justice to the author's characters.

The elaborate set rather cramped the stage and made the famous Tango scene even more difficult for Diana Bromley and Colin Gregory.

The costuming was as usual beautiful.

Léonie Stephen

Institute's University Link

Art and English have for many years been subjects for which the Institute has enjoyed an excellent reputation. A substantial number of individuals, both from Britain and overseas, have used the knowledge and skills gained in English and Art at the Institute as a basis for achieving their ambitions. From September 1996 a new course will bring these two subjects together in a programme designed to help foreign art students prepare for study at colleges and universities in the United Kingdom.

The 'University Preparation Course' has been set up in consultation with Middlesex University, which will be accrediting the English language element. Students who successfully complete it will be guaranteed an opportunity to present their portfolio of work at an interview for studio-based art courses at the University, for which there is a tremendous demand. The course should also be a great asset to students who wish to apply for undergraduate places elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Students enrolling on the course will be committing themselves to a rigorous and comprehensive introduction to studying in this country. The Art module will include Drawing and Painting, Life Drawing, History of Art, Illustration and Graphic Design, Jewellery, Sculpture, Pottery and Stained Glass. Because they will be participating in the Institute's well established Prefoundation Art course, the overseas students will be in constant contact with their British counterparts, which should help them to adjust to their new surroundings.

The English module will concentrate on the improvement of general language skills for day-to-day communication; the use of English in an academic context so that students can understand and participate fully in lectures, seminars and tutorials; the presentation of written materials, and study skills. There will be no examinations, however, because the students will be continually assessed.

The link with Middlesex University will bring the students other benefits too: they will be able to make regular visits to the University to meet its staff and use its facilities - not only its libraries and language resource centres, but also its sporting and leisure facilities. Both the Institute and the University offer social programmes and if the students feel in need of still more education, they can always join one of the Institute's evening

classes! Middlesex staff will also visit the Institute from time to time to monitor students' progress and offer information and advice.

The University Preparation Course is an exciting new development for the Institute and is an example of the positive outcomes that can be achieved when organisations from different branches of education work in partnership. During the coming months the brochure promoting the course will be distributed all over the world, by both the Institute and Middlesex University. **Richard Bradbury**



Cllr Shutz; David Rapson, Chairman RA Roads & Traffic; Colin Davis; Jill Lawrence; Chris Kellerman, Trust Manager; discuss the original Parker & Unwin plan for the Willifield Way - Hampstead Way junction

Traffic calming study for Suburb

The RA's Roads & Traffic Committee and the HGS Trust are commissioning Colin Davis & Associates to carry out a traffic study which will include a master plan and strategy for calming traffic across the whole of the Suburb. It will cover all the main rat-running routes and the

measures that could be introduced to slow traffic on these roads; recommendations for a range of traffic calming measures which could be implemented by Barnet as a phased programme; and a range of actions that could be carried out by the Trust and the RA.

Garden Suburb Theatre

"Troy" revival

If you cast your mind back to 1983 you may remember a musical produced by the Garden Suburb Theatre (or the Hampstead Garden Suburb Dramatic Society as it then was) called *Troy*, which was written and directed by one of its members, Terry Rogers. Well, this February Terry is hoping to repeat the success of 13 years ago with a revival, rewritten in places and with a couple of new songs, but essentially the same play which audiences enjoyed so much last time.

Troy!, which tells the story of the Trojan War, has lots of dancing and action and some great songs, as well as a certain large wooden horse, and will provide excellent entertainment for all the family during the February half-term. Please note that this year there will be four matinee performances instead of the usual two.

April production

Back to the classics in April with Mick Orme's production of Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge*. Written in 1955, this is a tale of family honour and revenge set in the Italian community

working the docks near Brooklyn Bridge. Eddie, a longshoreman, welcomes two illegal immigrants into his home, a situation which sparks tragedy. Miller's characters are, as usual, real and well written, the play powerful and dramatic. Do come and see it.

Little Wood lift off

Apart from the usual drama productions, the Garden Suburb Theatre has recently been involved in the Little Acorns project which aims to raise money to restore the open air theatre in Little Oak Wood off Denman Drive. The news this time is good - a donation of £18,000 from the Foundation for Sport and the Arts, matching the sum already raised by the group, will enable the whole project to be completed. Work will start this year on the new audience terracing and on a scenery store. Anybody who comes to see next summer's outdoor production of *Love's Labour's Lost* will see the refurbished theatre in all its glory. This should be a good incentive to come, whatever the weather!

Please see *What's On* for the details of dates and tickets.

Debbie Lane

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Road Accident Survey

The RA Roads and Traffic Committee is conducting a survey of road accidents on the Suburb, in order to concentrate its efforts on traffic calming and other safety measures where there is evidence that they are most needed. The local police have been very helpful, but they know only of incidents that are reported to them. The Committee believes that many accidents that result only in damage, without injury to people, are not known to the police.

The Committee would be grateful to know of any accidents of which you are aware during **February** and **March**.

Please fill in the form below, and send it to Professor Denis Baron, 47 Holne Chase, N2 0QG. **Thank you for your help**

Scissors icon

Your name:

Address and phone number:

Date and time of accident:

Place (e.g. junction of roads A & B):

Any adverse conditions (e.g. heavy rain):

Any personal injuries: major minor

Any vehicle damage (e.g. scraped paint, wing mirror): major minor

Any environmental damage (e.g. hedges, trees, walls.): major minor

Comments:

Please return to:
Professor Denis Baron, 47 Holne Chase, N2 0QG.