

Eleanor McEnery as Mrs Janice Kelly in **Justifying War** (May 2008)



Edward Alderton Theatre

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Editorial

Contrary to the overly negative review in the *Kentish Times*, **Justifying War: Scenes from the Hutton Inquiry** received almost unanimous praise from those who saw it. Apprehension about the content ("boring", "old news", "confusing" etc) was soon replaced by fascination for how this supposedly disinterested inquiry was really a bit of a whitewash, with the outcome already established from the outset. EAT newcomers James Turner and Ken Swan did themselves proud and Eleanor McEnergy, in her first major role since **A Lady of Letters** in 2006, was absolutely coruscating as Dr David Kelly's widow Janice. Many audience members felt it was just like being at a real courtroom enquiry (something that the newspaper reviewer did *not* like), with the minute's silence for Kelly drawing people into the unfolding drama. As director of this piece, I was extremely pleased at the way that we staged it and only wish that more people had chosen to support us in this unique endeavour.

Our next play is **Abigail's Party** by Mike Leigh (12-19 July 2008), again directed by me. No, I am not Mr Ego (at least I hope people don't think I am!), but I had to step into directing **Justifying War** at short notice as the scheduled director couldn't do it, hence overseeing two plays on the trot. My advice - never again! For more information on the play, see the article in this newsletter.

Our stint at the Bexley Arts Festival a few weeks ago was very successful, and many thanks to Tony Donnelly, Liz Gillett, Clive Madel, Ron and Shirley Andrews and Chris Manning-Perry who came along and helped out on the day. We had lots of interest from passersby and got about 50 names and addresses of people who would like to receive this newsletter. The festival is always a good idea as it helps advertise who we are and what we do. So few local residents seem to know we actually exist - despite being on this site for well over thirty years!

We have also been asked to attend the Danson Festival on Sunday 6 July - check out the website, www.edwardalderton.org, for more information on this.

Have a brilliant summer,



Mark Campbell
Artistic Director

Our next production...



Abigail's Party began life as an improvisation devised by its original cast of Alison Steadman, Tim Stern, John Salthouse, Janine Duvitsky and Thelma Whiteley, under the direction of Mike Leigh. First performed at the Hampstead Theatre in April 1977, it was made into a TV play in November of that year where it became an overnight sensation.

Best described as a black comedy, the play tells in agonising detail the gradual deterioration of a middle-class suburban drinks party held by wannabe society hostess Beverly (Sarah Hills) and her husband Laurence (Ian Long), a highly-strung estate agent who doesn't want to entertain guests as much as monosyllabic Tony (Matt Clowry) doesn't want to be entertained. Tony's wife Angela (Sam Griggs), however, thinks it's the very height of sophistication to be invited to Beverly's house, not seeing that Beverly just has eyes for Tony.

Into this awkward situation comes Susan (Linda Gay), the mother of the teenage Abigail, whose unseen party grows louder by the minute. As tensions escalate, it looks like the evening may not end happily...

I've got a wonderful cast for this play and we've all enjoyed the huge challenge of bringing this quintessential slice of 1970s comedy to life on the EAT stage. I can't remember the last time a cast did so much drinking and (permitted) smoking!

Abigail's Party was last done here back in 1985; then it starred Vera Robinson, Dennis Howlett, Rebecca Wyles, Paul Lay and Pam Sage. I don't know what happened to the first three, but certainly Paul and Pam are still very much active at the EAT. I wonder what they'll think of their modern counterparts...?

Mark Campbell
Director

Looking Ahead...



David Mamet's Pulitzer Prize winning play **Glengarry Glen Ross** premiered at the National Theatre, London in September 1983 to great acclaim, being heralded as a triumph in ensemble acting. It went on to open on Broadway in March 1984 going on to run until it closed in February 1985. During its tenure on the 'great white way' the production was awarded a Tony for Best Play.

The play centres around four real estate salesmen who are prepared to do anything in order to sell 'unsellable' land to unwilling prospective buyers (or leads). They are desperate to sell and get on the board – top of the board wins a Cadillac, second a pack of steak knives, third and fourth get the sack.

Then, from the head office downtown, arrive the Glengarry leads: lists of prime names and phone numbers of potential clients for an expensive property development that the firm will be selling in the near future.

If only they could get their hands on them...

The play is noteworthy for its use of very free, bullet quick, lifelike language, something that is very hard to convincingly pull off. It is also known for its openly generous use of profanity, something that shocked audiences at the time, and will no doubt shock audiences again. My opinion of the profanity is that it fits the play. It helps to get across the desperation of the characters and the desperate situation that they are in.

This is not an easy play to watch but it is ultimately very rewarding. Please do not make your mind up about the play until after you've seen it. I'll be glad to discuss it with you over a pint afterwards.

Peter Griffin
Director

What you said about...



For the prosecution

Though cleverly edited and with some convincing performances by McEnery, Saxton, Turner and Campbell the production itself felt static and strained...Disappointing though that was, I was more frustrated by an unimaginative approach to the play. A static set with QC and witness facing each other and Lord Hutton squirreled away at the back of the stage made for a monotonous two hours...Rather than entertain and inform, **Justifying War** was like a replay of a stuffy inquiry, even down to the real-time feel and the one minute's silence - which was profoundly awkward and strained. ~ *Kate Mead, Kentish Times review (extracts)*

For the defence

Congratulations - a really enjoyable, thought-provoking evening. Wasn't particularly looking forward to it, but it held my attention and the acting was superb. ~ *Dorothy Holmans*

It was brilliant! Difficult to believe we were in a theatre, not a real courtroom. ~ *Pat Devaux*

The cast and crew managed to turn what was potentially a rather worthy piece of reportage into a moving and animated drama. I was impressed. ~ *Ian Long*

Standing for one minute's silence was a great interactive piece of theatre. You really felt you were at the enquiry. ~ *Richard Self*

It was a fine production and made for an engrossing and thought-provoking evening of theatre. ~ *Cllr Peter Catterall*

The ending we thought was marvellous and I felt my eyes 'prick' at Eleanor's performance. ~ *Diane Carson*

Audition Notice

12.00 (Midday)

Oedipus the King by Sophocles

Director and Translator: Clive Madel

Performance Dates: 21-28 March 2009

13.30 (1.30pm)

Glengarry Glen Ross by David Mamet

Director: Peter Griffin

Performance Dates: 9-16 May 2009

15.00 (3pm)

It Ain't Half Hot Mum by Jimmy Perry and David Croft

Director: Roz Betts

Performance Dates: 2-11 July 2009 (extended run)

For more information, including audition pieces, please go to www.edwardalderton.org/auditions.htm

EAT Quiz

1. Who starred as Dennis in **Outside Edge** in 1987?
2. When was **Abigail's Party** last performed here?
3. What was Chris Manning-Perry's first play?
4. Who wrote 2005's **Witness for the Prosecution**?
5. What was the title of our only pantomime?
6. Who played the title role in **King Lear** in 1984?
7. Who was young Bernard in 2006's **Keyboard Skills**?
8. Who wrote **Arsenic and Old Lace**, performed in 1991?
9. What was our Twentieth Anniversary show in 1996?
10. Who was Jeeves in **Come On, Jeeves** (1989)?

Answers in the next issue...

Dates for your diary

July 2008

Saturday 12 - Saturday 19 **Abigail's Party** by Mike Leigh (8pm, £6.50)

Tuesday 22 EAT Committee Meeting (8pm*)

October 2008

Saturday 4 - Saturday 11 **The Graduate** by Terry Johnson (8pm, £7**)

Sunday 12 Auditions
12.00: **Oedipus the King**
13.30: **Glengarry Glen Ross**
15.00: **It Ain't Half Hot Mum**

Tuesday 14

EAT Committee Meeting (8pm*)

November 2008

Saturday 22 - Saturday 29

Classic Ghost Stories for Christmas (8pm, £7**)

December 2008

Tuesday 2

EAT Committee Meeting (8pm)*

* Committee members only

**Price increase agreed at the last EAT committee meeting