

THE KING  
STAG  
1961

## Teddington's youngsters in a fairy play

amateur theatre

WHEN Teddington Theatre Club started their workshop of young people just over two years ago few could have anticipated the success it has become. Last week it staged at York House its second full-length production, "The King Stag," with 31 members taking part, either on stage or behind. And, though there were inevitable weaknesses, it turned out to be a first-class show in every way, far more enjoyable than many shows performed by adults with years of experience.

Only two of the cast of "The King Stag" were over 21—David Evans, who is about 23, and Anthony Hill who has just passed his 21st birthday.

"The King Stag" is essentially a play for children as well as a most suitable one for youngsters to perform. Hence a large proportion of the audiences consisted of boys and girls, especially on the Thursday evening, when many seats had been taken by schools, and at the Saturday matinée. Even on the Friday night, with a larger proportion of adults present, juvenile enthusiasm for this fairy tale was unmistakable.

Under the direction of Eva Inglis, the players displayed a sense of character seldom evinced by young people.

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DAVID EVANS was splendid as the nasty prime minister, Tartaglia, who, foiled in his ambition to marry his daughter to the King, uses a magician's formula in an attempt to turn his majesty into a stag and seize power himself. The way he was hissed spoke much for his interpretation of the character.

He was particularly clever in portraying the minister's duplicity after he has assumed the identity of the king. Nothing was overdone, not even the stammer in his voice.

Anthony Hill had a comparatively small part as the king's birdcatcher, but he and Mary Kemp as the country bumpkin, Smeraldina, provided a great deal of fun.

Julia Wragg, as the heroine, Angela, again showed the charm and grace we have learned to expect from her. Her bewilderment at the change in the king when he is transformed into an old man was very well done.

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THE KING was sympathetically played by Paul Reynolds and Stephen Malton, as Angela's father, Pantaloon, the kindly second



The good and the bad ministers. Stephen Malton as Pantaloon and David Evans as Tartaglia in Teddington Theatre Club Workshop's presentation of "The King Stag."

minister, provided an effective contrast to Tartaglia's harshness.

Others who impressed were Aline Tanner and Adam Middleton as the secondary pair of lovers, John Woodford as the magician, and Brian Dawes as his servant, Cigolotti. Pamela Taylor was a sprightly stag and Stephanie Inglis, though rather lacking confidence as the parrot, dutifully repeated the words of her master, Cigolotti.

Small parts were taken by Merron and Colin Crabbe, Martin Stonelake, Pat Buckland, Jacqueline Clarke, Anne Cartwright, Christine Liverside, Lesley Jameson, Susan Hawes and Wendy Strawson.

The transformation scenes were cleverly and slickly done, and the whole production had a polish astonishing considering the technicalities involved and the ages of the performers. Louis Thresher must be commended for his music and Anthony Eva and Hugh Cullimore for its interpretation, on the accordion and guitar respectively. Pat Buckland had written a lyric.

Barbara Turner's set designs and Iris Mansfield's costumes were other factors which contributed much to the enjoyment of the whole. The sound effects, including hunting horns, were also admirable.

## 18th CENTURY FANTASY

### Teddington Theatre Workshop Praised

I will not attempt either to gild the lily or add lustre to the rose's perfume; in the case of Teddington Theatre Club Workshop's production of "The King Stag" at York House last week it would be quite superfluous and somewhat impertinent. For a more perfect show by youngsters cannot be imagined.

The story is a delightful soufflé of pantomime, fairy tale and romance, probable yet improbable, real yet unreal but always pleasurable and fanciful.

Written in the 18th century by Carlo Gozzi—in the manner of the commedia dell'arte—and translated by Carl Wildman, it was most beautifully produced by Eva Inglis. Nothing was missing that was needed whilst everything that astute and experienced minds could think up was there. Lovely sets by Barbara Turner, delightful costumes by Iris Mansfield. The most appropriate music written by Louis Thresher and played by Anthony Eva, accordion, and Hugh Cullimore, guitar, realistic fights arranged by David Evans, extraordinarily efficient lighting by R. A. Penn and C. O. M. Johnston, first class make-up directed by Edward Sinclair as well as a host of other detail. All were perfectionists and all was perfect.

#### Delightful Acting Too

Now what about the acting? No praise of mine can do full justice to a wholly delightful display. Chief prizes in the long and excellent cast must go to David Evans as Tartaglia the Prime Minister, and Julie Wragg as Angela, Pantaloon's daughter.

Assuming years sufficient to be Clarissa's father and a most disarming impediment in his speech, David Evans gave a performance of adult ability, richness and authority. We all remember him, of course, in "She Stoops to Conquer." Here he made several strides further in what must be an enviable career.

Julie (Ann Frank) Wragg was perfection as Angela, King Deramo's chosen bride. Whilst retaining all her youth and the charm that goes with it, she is adding sophistication and experience to each successive performance. The way she came down the staircase without seeming to look down at it, was quite professional; and her love scenes with the king were as delicately romantic and touched with an incipient ardour that few young actresses could equal.

These two moved the audience, young and old alike, to the greatest admiration.

#### Transformed

The king, Deramo, is first changed into a stag and then into a repulsive old man through the wicked Prime Minister before he comes into his own. Paul Reynolds gave a brilliant performance of much versatility and variety.

Aline Tanner was all sweetness as Clarissa. Stephen Malton played the shuffling Pantaloon with great conviction. Anthony Hill was delightful as the King's bird-catcher. Stephanie Inglis, as the parrot, had a screech that made us feel for the tip of our finger. Mary Kemp was pert and saucy as the country cousin. John Woodford made a perfect magician, and a special word goes to Pat Buckland as the bust who tells the evil fortunes.

Merron Crabbe as Columbine, Brian Dawes as Cigolotti and the bear, David Chandler and Colin Crabbe as the Guards, Martin Stonelake as the King's Butler, Adam Middleton as Pantaloon's son, Jacqueline Clarke as Coviella, Pamela Taylor as King Stag plus Anne Cartwright, Christine Liversidge, Lesley Jameson, Susan Hawes and Wendy Strawson contributed to this memorable show.

MAURICE REEVE.

## Successful show by Workshop

It would no doubt have a mellowing effect on all critics if they had to see an occasional show in the company of a crowd of young children. The intervals, of course, are noisy, sweet-sucking affairs, but once the curtain is up the youngsters give a lesson to many of their elders in absorbed attention.

The opening performance of Teddington Theatre Club's Workshop production of an Italian fairy tale, "The King Stag," certainly enchanted its predominantly young audience and pleased the adults also at York House, Twickenham.

Performances were given on Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

It was, in some ways, an unusual choice of play. But it was well suited to the players and had sufficient of the pantomime about it to keep a young audience amused.

The Workshop, who, in their comparatively short life, have managed to learn a great deal about stagecraft, put it over extremely well.

The scenery was colourful without being fussy and the costumes, while not elaborate, were rich enough to catch the eye.

The group is fortunate in having a nucleus of young players who are capable of taking over the leading parts with confidence. David Evans made a splendidly

villainous Tartaglia and Stephen Malton nicely contrasted the characters of the two leading ministers with his portrayal of Pantaloon.

Julie Wragg and Aline Tanner took the parts of the two girls with grace and charm, and Paul Reynolds was a commanding figure as the prince.

The main comedy roles went to Anthony Hill, another experienced young player, and Mary Kemp, as the country cousin. Both were big hits.

Smaller roles were well taken by Martin Stonelake, Brian Dawes, David Chandler and Colin Crabbe.

Certainly this unusual choice of play, produced by Eva Inglis, was fully justified.