

Teddington TC's 'Thieves' Carnival' lacked sparkle

TEDDINGTON Theatre Club have maintained such a high standard in the last year or two that anything that falls below that standard is bound to be received with a tinge of disappointment. And I was disappointed with their presentation of Jean Anouilh's "Thieves' Carnival" at York House.

Like most French comedies the play demands a very light touch. Eva Inglis has done wonders in training young people and with her workshop productions, but in this case she failed to provide the sparkle that was so essential. It was all too much on the same level. Neither did we have enough contrast between the stuffy but wealthy English aristocracy and their more lively but impoverished French counterparts.

Beryl Barber had the dignity of Lady Hurf, but scarcely suggested the boredom. Anthony Eva was an amusingly frumpy Lord Edgard, but I felt that more humour could have been obtained from the character.

Most successful were Cliff Broad, Anthony Hill and Robin Hope-Johnston as the three inept thieves who pick each others' pockets until they worm their way into Lady Hurf's villa. Here was contrast with the trio entering wholeheartedly into their various pretences as Spanish noblemen. Robin had just the right touch of simplicity as the youngster who falls for one of Lady Edgard's two nieces and is too ashamed to carry through the proposed robbery.

THE two nieces were played by Patricia Buckland and Anne Cartwright. Products of the workshop, they are charming girls, but they were too much on the quiet side. I should have liked to have seen more liveliness from them.

Harold Inglis and Stephen Malton were a delight as father and son confidence tricksters.

Among the small parts I liked Christine Cowlett's little girl and Eric Yardley had a good deep voice as the town crier. Graham Sawyer, as the musician, I felt, could have had more of that

lightness of touch, missing from the production in general, but he deserves credit for his playing of the clarinet and, especially, for having composed the tunes.

Merron Crabbe, Zoe Chrimes, Susan Howes and Anne Saville were an attractive quartet of nursemaids in the first act which, set in a public park, presented an animated scene.

Anne Hazell was Lady Hurf's maid and Reg Abbott, Brian Draper, David Hawes, Dorothy Edwards, Doris Maisey, Elaine Burge, Marion Kingston, Susan Hope-Johnston, Peter Jenkinson, Stephen Wragg, Alexandra Badderly, Joy Manning and Martin Atkins were other crowd players in the park scene.

There was plenty of colour in Barbara Turner's decor and it was well lit by Richard Penn and Keith Richardson. It was unfortunate that on the Friday night the musical recording broke down for the dance in the villa. The dances, by the way, were arranged by Merron Crabbe and directed by Iris Mansfield.

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* TWT 24/4/63
AFTER three serious plays, Teddington Theatre Club concludes the season with Jean Anouilh's frolic, "Thieves' Carnival." It is being performed at York House on May 16th, 17th and 18th.

This delightful creation by one of France's most popular playwrights, was written in 1931, but was not seen in England until the production of Lucienne Hill's translation in 1951.

Set in a French watering place, it concerns three unsuccessful pickpockets who descend on the town to make their fortunes at the expense of visiting aristocracy. But, in the true tradition of stage comedy,

their plans miscarry. The wealthy English family they choose for their victims includes the elegant Lady Hurf who, bored and looking for adventure herself, takes in the thieves, in more senses than one, assisted by her elderly friend, Lord Edgard. After many hilarious adventures the three thieves depart in disgrace, two of them having broken all the rules by falling in love—with Lady Hurf's adorable and wealthy nieces.

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ANNE CARTWRIGHT
 who played Juliette who elopes with the young thief, Gustave.



PATRICIA BUCKLAND
 who played Eva, the elder of Lady Hurf's two nieces.

TEDDINGTON TC'S 'THIEVES' CARNIVAL'

TNT
8/5/63

EVA INGLIS, who has produced the three highly successful full-length productions of Teddington Theatre Club workshop, is turning her talents to a senior production for the club. She is directing the Jean Anouilh comedy, "Thieves' Carnival," which the club is presenting at York House on Thursday, Friday and Saturday of next week.

Beryl Barber, another esteemed producer for the club, returns to acting. She is playing Lady Hurf, the eccentric widow whose efforts to stave off the boredom of age provide one of the motives of the plot. She played the part for Stagecraft in 1954 when the comedy was given in the St. Margarets Residential Grounds in very adverse weather conditions and was later taken to Torquay as part of their summer festival. She will no doubt be glad that this time she will be playing the part indoors.

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TONY EVA will be seen as Lady Hurf's old friend, the ineffective Lord Edgard. Patricia Buckland and Anne Cartwright, both from the workshop, will be her two wealthy nieces.

The three thieves, who descend on Vichy to make their fortunes but are themselves discomfited by the machinations of Lady Hurf, will be played by Tony Hill, Cliff Broad and Robin Hope-Johnston. The last-mentioned will be making a return to the club after two years trying his hand as a professional.

Harold Inglis and Stephen Malton will be a father-and-son team of confidence tricksters, and Eric Yardley appears as a town crier.

Graham Sawyer, as the musician who acts as musical commentator throughout, has learned to play the clarinet specially for the production. He is also composing the music he will play. Iris Mansfield, the club secretary, who has found time in the last two years to gain seven awards for ballroom dancing, is arranging the dances which form a delightful part of the play. She is being assisted by her niece, Merron Crabbe, also a member of the club, who is training to be a teacher of ballet.

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SURREY COURIER 22-5-63 'Thieves Carnival' not on right wavelength

JEAN ANOUILH'S extravagant piece of nonsense, "Thieves Carnival," was no doubt chosen by Teddington Theatre Club to bring its current very successful season to a bright and hilarious conclusion. For any one who managed to get on to Anouilh's wavelength early on, it no doubt achieved this effect, but for so many of us it proved abominably flat.

And, disliking the play so much, it was difficult to appreciate the efforts of the players. However, it must be agreed that all the principals worked hard and that the production came over smoothly and with this group's accustomed stamp of professionalism.

Yet, for all that, it had a somewhat lifeless, mechanical look to it, so that one felt like marking it, "competent yes, inspired no." Cliff Broad, Anthony Hill and Robin Hope-Johnston, who played the three thieves, are all good actors and very pleasant to watch, but their performances here lacked some of the spontaneity that was so necessary if their audiences were to get into the spirit of the play at all.

SOUND PRODUCTION

Likewise, Eva Inglis' production was a sound one, but the notes of fantasy, such as the nursemaids' ballet, appeared as oddities, rather than blending into the whole.

As usual, Anthony Eva gave a neat and thoughtful character study as Lord Edgard, and Beryl Barber was a dignified Lady Hurf, though she never really hinted at the imp of mischief which most certainly played an important part in that lady's character.

Patricia Buckland and Anne Cartwright were well contrasted as the two nieces and Harold Inglis and Stephen Malton added to the humour by some careful timing as Dupont-Dufort senior and junior. One could also admire the clarinet playing of Graham Sawyer.

The costumes were, as always, good and the decor extremely well done. Such, however, was the overall effect of this being some kind of old fashioned entertainment, that the noise of a motor car on the sound track caused one to look quickly at the programme and see to one's surprise that the setting was indeed "present day."

Perhaps one expects too much from the name Anouilh, but "Thieves Carnival" was certainly a puzzle.

Frolicsome finish for the Theatre Club's season

TWEDDINGTON Theatre Club's current season—one of the most ambitious in their 36 years' history—is finishing on a frolicsome note. On May 16, 17 and 18 at York House, Twickenham they will be presenting Jean Anouilh's lively comedy, "Thieves Carnival."

Although it was written and produced in France as far back as 1931, it was not until 1951, when Lucienne Hill's translation was presented in London, that it was seen in England.

Set in a French watering place, the plot concerns the adventures of three very inefficient pick-pockets, who descend on the town to make their fortunes at the expense of the visiting aristocracy.

They select as their victims an English family, two members of which are very young, lovely and wealthy. Unfortunately for the conspirators, the lady who rules this delightful family is herself looking for an interest and she beats the thieves at their own game.

After a number of unexpected adventures and tribulations they depart in disgrace, two of them having broken all the rules of their union by falling in love with the two beautiful girls.

Eva Inglis, who has been responsible for the Workshop's three full-length productions, is producing and a strong cast has been chosen. The three thieves will be played by Cliff Broad, Anthony Hill and Robin Hope-

Amateur Stage

Johnston, who is making a welcome return to the club after an absence of two years.

Beryl Barber, who, in recent years has been more concerned with the production side—she was responsible for "The Lady's Not For Burning," "The Rape of the Belt" and "The Miracle Worker"—is pleased to be back on stage again and has the important comedy role of Lady Hurl.

This is the second time that she has played the part—she took the same role in the Stagecraft's production in 1954, at Torquay, which was presented as part of the town's summer festival.

Anthony Eva, one of the club's most talented and versatile members, appears in his fifty-fourth role in a major production as the elderly Lord Edgard.

The two beautiful nieces will be Patricia Buckland, who had the exacting, but unglamorous part of Miss Quedsted in "A Passage to India" earlier in the season, and Anne Cartwright, who was so highly praised for her performance in the Workshop's prizewinning production of "The Bald Prima-Donna."

Other parts will be taken by Eric Yardley as a town crier—Mr. Yardley too is more accustomed to the role of producer—and by Stephen Malton and Harold Inglis as a father and son team of confidence tricksters.

Graham Sawyer, who takes the non-speaking part of the musician, is learning to play the clarinet for the occasion.

Iris Mansfield, the club's hard-working secretary, who has found time over the past two years to gain seven ballroom dancing awards, is arranging the dances, with the help of her niece, Miss M. Crabbe.

ANOUILH PLAY AT YORK HOUSE

Teddington Club

Teddington Theatre Club's season ended last week at York House with yet another delightful production, Anouilh's "Thieves' Carnival."

Set in Vichy at the present time, two sets of thieves, three and a father and son, perform miracles of pickpocketing as they mix with the throng of idle and unsuspecting promenaders and cafe habitues in the gay French spa. How they are caught, fall in love and ride their luck is the theme of the play. Lucienne Hill's translation was used.

Crowd Scenes Good

Perhaps the most notable feature of Eva Inglis's production was her handling of the crowd scenes. They always seemed so natural and free, leaving lots of room for cafe tables and individual acting. I have remarked before how T.T.C. producers always manage these scenes so well. Of course the York House stage is in some respects inadequate. But whilst we hear and read such a lot about this it is as well to remember that its shortcomings *can* be reduced to a minimum by gifted producers.

The three thieves were a splendid team: Cliff Broad, Anthony Hill and Robin Hope-Johnson, bearing a strong likeness to the three convicts, also French, in "My Three Angels," which the club did in 1958 with Cliff Broad as one of them.

Anthony Eva took down from its peg his disguise of age and senility, plus a nose denoting a bibulous past, for the part of Lord Edgard. Beryl Barber was excellent as Lady Hurf.

Could any pair of English aristocrats have two more charming nieces than Patricia Buckland as Juliette and Anne Cartwright as Eva? Patricia's love scenes with Robin Hope-Johnson, and his with her, were as sweet as the honeysuckle or the new-mown hay.

His Own Music

Harold Inglis and Stephen Malton were splendidly braggadocio as Dupont-Dufor senior and junior.

Graham Sawyer made an attractive musician, playing clarinet music of his own composing to fit in with the moods of the changing scene.

Eric Yardley, in a scene of a minute or two's duration, staked his claim to the post of town crier of Twickenham.

Christine Cowlett played a little girl, Anne Hazell a maid, Reg Abbott and Brian Draper were policemen, and Merron Crabbe, Zoe Chrimes, Susan Hawes and Anne Saville were nursemaids.

The costumes in the "thieves' carnival" scene were excellent concoctions extremely easy on the eye.

The Workshop announces A. A. Milne's "Toad of Toad Hall" on October 10th, 11th and 12th.

MAURICE REEVE.



The three thieves of Jean Anouilh's "Thieves' Carnival" which Teddington Theatre Club is staging at York House tomorrow, Friday and Saturday—Robin Hope-Johnson, Cliff Broad and Anthony Hill.