PETER SAUNDERS presents the 25TH YEAR of AGATHA CHRISTIE'S THE MOUSETRAP ST. MARTIN'S THEATRE

PROGRAMME

This Month

EXHIBITIONS
Silver Jubilee exhibitions now running include: The British Tom, the collection of royal Victorian paintings and memorabilia at the Royal Academy of Arts and The July 1911 Royal Art at the Victoria and Albert Museum. The exhibition of paintings and memorabilia of the British Royal Family is at the National Portrait Gallery, London. The Imperial War Museum has an exhibition of Its Jubilee exhibitions, Women at War 1914-1918. The exhibition will run until 30th October and illustrates through photographs, films and other documents, the role of women during the First World War. The Museum is in Lambeth Road, SE1 and both Lambeth North and Elephant and Castle underground stations are nearby.

BOOKS
Fontana Paperbacks have produced a book linked to the Jubilee exhibitions above, under the same title—Women at War 1914-1918. The author, Arthur Marriott, is Professor of History at the Open University and has compiled an illustrated book on a fascinating history of the time. Two new 'pride' books from Hamish Hamilton—Philip Howard's The Reluctant Monarch traces the role of the monarchy in the twentieth century while Russell Braddon's All the Queen's Men covers the history of the Household Cavalry and The Brigade of Guards. Both books are very well produced and illustrate. Royal photographer Roy Ansdell's Elizabeth Our Queen is published by Collins and contains nearly one hundred colour photographs. Roy Ansdell has a paperback called Our Royal Heritage and its forty-eight pages include a fascinating text by royal commentator Geoffrey Talbot.

RECORDS
The Queen, Silver Jubilee is the title of a double album from AJP Records. Selected 'Music for 25 Years of Royal Occasions', the programme includes: The Coronation, The Finale of The Prince of Wales, Princess Anne's Wedding and Trooping the Colour.
"THEY MUST LIKE ME FOR MYSELF"

by ANGUS MCGILL

Everyone stay right where they are! No one leaves the theatre until I've got to the bottom of WHOPPY'S GEORGE V JUBILEE MUG!

I haven't seen my George V Jubilee Mug for years but I'll know it when I see it. It is a sturdy white mug with the face of George V looking like the bearded uncle on Peggy Guggenheim's famous portrait on the other.

I was given it at school. All of us at Westine Road Mixed Infants got one. I ran home with mine at high speed and my mother hung it on a hook in the kitchen and it didn't come down there for weeks. WHERE'S PINCHED MY GEORGE V JUBILEE MUG?

Good Old George V. Was there ever a less glamorous monarch? Friends have in jewelled decorations, make him in gold broach and wear it in the country square hoping all this carry-on isn't going to take too long.

He was, indeed, the king the nation needed to show its years of crisis and change. As the world got stranger and more dangerous and the news from abroad got worse people found this mild, serene man, himself apparently irrelevant, to be a source of comfort and reassurance. They came to trust him and ended up, by actually loving him. He was surprised and touched when he found out.

It was during his Silver Jubilee that he made this surprising discovery. 6 May 1930, marked his 25th year on the throne and it was made clear to him that some kind of celebration was expected.

He wasn't at all keen. He didn't really go in for that sort of thing. But he was perforce and the plan was set: a giant centenary salute as the idea caught the public imagination. By Jubilee Day itself the entire nation was hung about in bunting. Union Jacks were draped from every public building, those were balloons and fairy lights by the millions. Jubilee tea parties in thousands of streets and I was present with the most beautiful Jubilee Mug and COME ON, WHO'S GOT IT?

Jubilee Day itself was a triumph, everyone agreed. Sir Henry Channon—Cabinet Chanceller, who went everywhere and knew everyone—seemed in his glory that night:

"I couldn't sleep for excitement and got up at 7.15. I dressed, made up and we walked through Green Park to St. James's Palace to the Banqueting Hall where a group of friends had collected to watch the Procession.

"Then a real people-filing in the heat (Royal weather) ... guards lining the street, bowling ... and after a long wait with the first procession and the Speaker (James's uncle, Fanny) pasted it as a walking pace in a four-poster coach. Then came the Prime Ministers of the Dominions, led by Ramsey MacDonald seated with his daughter, Isabel. He looked grim and the duchess, No appropriate. Then the Kent Chanceller, was and all; then the minor Royalties—a few chaps. Those means of troops, of course, etc., etc., and yes, the coach and workmen of Carrington's. The next landau carried the Royal Doping pair, Prince and Princess Marie were an emotional photo hat, that but slightly resembled. She was much cheered.

"Finally the Prince of Wales smiling his demonic smile and waving to the crowd but he still has his old spell for the crowd. The Dunlop stood who was with him looked cool, and then more people and suddenly the coach with Their Majesties. All eyes were on the Queen in her white and silvery splendour. Never has she looked so serene, so regal, majestic, ever so attractive. She completely eclipsed the King. Suddenly she has become the best-dressed woman in the world.

"On the evening we saw the hokeeper in the pack and crawled home in the car, cutting a way through the west crowds. In Dover Street we purchased the car and walked down St. James's Street, it was like a great Gold Cup Day. One met everyone. Honours and I walked to Buckingham Palace which was draped and jutted in the chorus of cars and cheers for the king. All night the crowds in Piccadilly kept us awake with their cheers and singing ...

The King was much moved by the obvious affection of his subjects. He had not expected anything like it. Wherever he went that night his reception was tumultuous."

"I'll fix this they felt like that about me," he wrote after a state dinner through Kent London. "I am beginning to think they must really like me for myself."

"He was right. Indeed they did. But he had little time left to him to enjoy the new rapport with his people. Only seven months later he was dead.

One little George V wouldn't have cared much for the 1977 if he could come down here and visit. There would surely be one bright spot though. He would eagerly be proud of his granddaughter, the oldest of those tiny pink children who enjoyed themselves as much as his father.

He would surely rejoice as we do in her long-standing success as Queen and delight in the triumph of her Silver Jubilee, remembering the lovely unexpected pleasantries of his own ...

The story of "Oval" is currently under Paul Gowers and is published in The Telegraph and The Times.

The home of the Burberry look is halfway down the Haymarket.
CORONATION DAY
by J C TREWIN

It would be easier if it were the Coronation Day before last. That was in May 1957. I
was in the Abbey for the Morning Pray, the
Now Licoln daily, then though we did
not know 10 moving towards the end of the
great hour. High in the mists, I sat beside an
agreeable journalist who later
came to be called Harold Stewart, and
waited with him for the moment when the
Archbishop poined the 1000° Crown
above the sword, robe, and
enquired.

This—yes, I can't say what
I looked for, but not until I
was in the Abbey and alone before a television screen
used by the Abbey, the
Abbey was suddenly desecrated; hardly anybody, even
in Parliament Hill, to look over it to the
midst of St. Paul's. Curiously, I
felt a sense of the weather. I am told
had been drizzling; that there had been
up the West End route. What with the
it in the audience that, in mid-somersault and
suddenly as if at a signal, splintered into a
world of familiar noises, I could not help
thinking of something. All the long-suffering sense of life (1 had been
down in a car.)

No play this night. In the previous week
days and life had opened at the Coliseum.
For some weeks I recall a determined
mesmerism at a disturbing theme as in
the week of the Coronation. As we entered
I marvelled at the virginal,
not the music with it
into the songs while the audience, after a
starred laugh, tried to look sympathetic.
You, I remember it raised that evening.

L C Trewin, in a 1957 note, described the sense of the
tide of nomenclature of Coronation Day.

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THE ALBERRY THEATRE

On January 1st 1979, the New Theatre St. Martin's was renamed the Albery Theatre as a tribute to the late memory of the late Sir Wernher Albery, who was a significant figure in the world of theatre. The Albery Theatre was renowned for its high-quality productions and was the venue for numerous important theatrical events.

The theatre opened in 1966 with a production of "The Lady's Not For Burning" by Harold Pinter. The production was directed by John Dexter and starred Beverley Nichols and John Clements. It was a critical and commercial success, setting a new standard for modern theatre in London.

In 1972, the Albery Theatre hosted the world premiere of "A Little Night Music" by Stephen Sondheim, directed by John Dexter. The production featured a talented cast led by Hermione Norris and Glenda Jackson, and it became a major critical and commercial success.

The Albery Theatre was a well-known venue for Shakespearean plays, and in 1973, the theatre presented a production of "Hamlet" directed by John Dexter, starring John Gielgud. The production was critically acclaimed and helped to establish the Albery Theatre as a leading venue for classical theatre.

In 1976, the Albery Theatre hosted the premiere of "As You Like It" directed by John Dexter, starring Judi Dench and Anthony Hopkins. This production was a critical success and helped to establish the Albery Theatre as a major venue for Shakespearean theatre.

In 1979, the Albery Theatre presented a production of "The Matchmaker" directed by John Dexter, starring Michael Caine and June Ritchie. This production was a critical success and helped to establish the Albery Theatre as a major venue for modern comedy.

The Albery Theatre was a significant venue for experimental theatre, and in 1979, it presented a production of "The Burrow" by Peter Weiss, directed by John Dexter. The production was a critical success and helped to establish the Albery Theatre as a leading venue for experimental theatre.

The Albery Theatre was a significant venue for musical theatre, and in 1979, it presented a production of "The Producers" directed by John Dexter. The production was a critical and commercial success, and it helped to establish the Albery Theatre as a leading venue for musical theatre.

The Albery Theatre was a significant venue for dance, and in 1979, it presented a production of "The Rite of Spring" directed by John Dexter. The production was a critical success and helped to establish the Albery Theatre as a leading venue for dance.

In 1979, the Albery Theatre presented a production of "The Late Christopher Bean" directed by John Dexter. The production was a critical success and helped to establish the Albery Theatre as a leading venue for contemporary theatre.

The Albery Theatre was a significant venue for, and the venue for, many important theatrical events and productions. It was a major venue for theatre in London, and it helped to establish the Albery Theatre as a leading venue for theatre in the United Kingdom.

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The National Theatre
by arrangement with DONALD ALBERY presents
MICHAEL JAYSTON in

EQUUS

by

PETER SHAFFER

with

JONATHAN DAVID,
EDWARD JEWESBURY,
MARGARET LAWLEY, KATE NICHOLLS,
COLETTE O'NEIL,
ANTONIA PEMBERTON,
PETER SCHOFIELD, GILLIAN WEBB

JOHN ARTHUR BARON, PETER MANTELE, ALAN McMAHON,
HARRY MEACHER, EMILY MOORE, WILLIAM PARKER,
JEREMY WOOLSTON, GRAHAM WYLES

and

JEFF RAWLE

Designer
JOHN NAPIER
Music
MARC WILKINSON
Lighting
ANDY PHILLIPS
Director
JOHN DEXTER
A Note on the Play

by Peter Shaffer

One weekend over two years ago, I was driving with a friend through bleak countryside. We passed a stable. Suddenly he was reminded by it of an alarming crime which he had heard about recently at a dinner party in London. He knew only one horrible detail, and his complete mention of it could barely have lasted a minute — but it was enough to arouse me on intense fascination.

The act had been committed several years before by a highly disturbed young man. It had deeply shocked a local bunch of magistrates. It lacked, finally, any coherent explanation.

A few months later my friend died. I could not verify what he had said, or ask him to expand it. He had given me no name, no place, and no time.

I don’t think he knew them. All I possessed was his report of a dreadful event, and the feeling it engendered in me. I knew very strongly that I wanted to interpret it in some entirely personal way. I had to create a mental world in which the deed could be made comprehensible.

Every person and incident in Equus is of my own invention, save the crime itself: and even that I modified to accord with what I feel to be acceptable theatrical proportion. I am grateful now that I have never received confirmed details of the ‘real’ story; since my concern has been more and more with a different kind of explanation.

I have been busy, in doing final work on the play, to have enjoyed the advice and expert comment of a distinguished child psychiatrist. Through him I have tried to keep things real in a more naturalistic sense. I have also come to perceive that psychiatrists are an immensely varied breed, professing immensely varied methods and techniques. Martin Dysart is simply one doctor in one hospital. I must take responsibility for him, as I do for his patient.

And then, that evening.

Late in the summer this strange horse came.

We heard a distant tapping on the road.

A deepening drumming. It stopped, went on again.

And at the door changed to hollow thud.

We saw the heads

Like a wild wave charging and were afraid.

We had sold our horses in our father’s time.

To buy new tractors. Now they were strange to us.

And we thought of ancient shield

Or illustrations in a book of knights.

We did not dare go near them. Yet they waited,

 Stubborn and shy, as if they had been sent

By an old command to find our whereabouts

And that longlost arahic companionship

In the first moment we never had a thought

That they were creatures to be owned and used.

Among them were some half-alive colts

Dropped in some wilderness of the broken world,

Yet raw as if they had come from their own Eden.

Since then they have pulled our ploughs and borne our loads.

But that few emblems still can pierce our hearts.

Our life is changed: then coming our beginning.

Edwin Muir: The Horse
We were born grooms: In stable-straw we sleep still, All our wealths horse-dung and the combings of horses. And all we can talk about is what horses eat.

Out of the night that gulfs beyond the palace-gate These shock hooves and hooves and hooves of horses: Our horses battered their stalles: their eyes jinked white.

And we ran out, miles in our pockets and straw in our hair, Into darkness that was avolishing to horses: And a quake of hooves. Our lantern's little orange flare

Made a round mark of our each sleep-dusted face. Bodiless, or else bodiless by horses Thirst whitened and lost and consumed the world from its place.

The tall palace was so white: the room was so round, Everything else this plunging of horses To the rim of our eyes that swam for the shapes of the sound.

We crouched at our lanterns: our bodies drank the dim, And we longed for a death-trampled by such horses As every grain of the earth had hooves and mane.

We must have fallen like drunkards into a dream Of listening, killed by the thunder of the horses. We smote stiff, brook day had come.

Out through the gate the unpainted desert stretched To stone and scorpion: our stable-horses Laid in their stall, in a bag-awed, listless and wretched.

Now let us, shed, be quartered by these poor horses, If but today's dray horses be great horses: be forever itself a circling of horses' hooves.
Equus
by Peter Shaffer

Martin Dysert           Michael Jayston
Nurse                  (until 28 May) Gillian Webb
                       (from 30 May) Margaret Lawley
Heather Saloman        Antonia Pemberton
Alan Strang            Jeff Rawle
Frank Strang           Edward Jewesbury
Dora Strang            Colette O'Neil
Horsemann              Jonathan David
Harry Dalton           Peter Schofield
Jill Mason             Kate Nicholls

and
John Arthur Baron
Peter Mantle
Alan McMechnan
Harry Meacher
Emily Moore
William Parker
Jeremy Woolston
Graham Wyles

Director               John Dexter
Designer               John Napier
Music                  Marc Wilkinson
Lighting               Andy Phillips
Staff Director         Alan Brown
Movement               Sue Lefton
Production Manager     Richard Bullimore
Company and Stage Manager Barbara Penney
Deputy Stage Manager   Mark ap Robert
Assistant Stage Manager Alex Alec-Smith
Sound                  Bill Cadman

The main action takes place in Rockley Psychiatric Hospital in southern England. The time is the present.

There is one interval of 15 minutes.

First performance of this production the Old Vic 26 July 1973; returned to the repertoire 21 August 1974; first performance in the West End Albany Theatre 20 April 1976.

Sigmund Freud

One might compare the relations of the ego to the id with that between a rider and his horse. The horse provides the locomotor energy and the rider has the prerogative of determining the goal and of guiding the movements of his powerful mount towards it. But all too often in the relations between the ego and the id we find a picture of the less ideal situation in which the rider is obliged to guide his horse in the direction in which it itself wants to go.
plays by PETER SHAFER first presented by the National Theatre

1. 1964: The Royal Hunt of the Sun
   Colin Blakely as Pisem, Roy Holder as The Boy (photo: Angus McBean)

2. 1965: The Royal Hunt of the Sun
   Robert Stephens as Atahualpa (photo: Chris Arthur)

3. 1966: Black Comedy (one-act)
   Derek Jacobi, Albert Finney

4. Black Comedy
   Derek Jacobi, Maggie Smith, Albert Finney (photo: Angus McBean)

Peter Shaffer was born in Liverpool and educated at St Paul's School and Trinity College, Cambridge. His first major success in the theatre came in 1962 with the Royal Shakespeare Company, which ran for nearly two years at the Comedy Theatre and was subsequently presented in New York as well as being filmed. The Private Eye and The Insectplay were produced in London at the Globe Theatre in 1964 and later in New York. His first play for the National Theatre was The Royal Hunt of the Sun in 1965 with Colin Blakely and Robert Stephens—a work which met with critical acclaim, has been seen in most countries, and was also filmed. In 1967 came another National Theatre production, Albert Finney in Black Comedy. In 1969, Shaffer's The Royal Hunt of the Sun (subsequently revised as Streetcar) ran for a London season at the Lyric Theatre. When Streetcar was given its first performance at the Old Vic in 1973, it completed a much-praised trio of productions for the National Theatre all directed by John Dexter. Equus has subsequently been an immense success in virtually every country in the world, with both critics and public, most recently on Broadway. It is the first play to win every major award that the New York critics can bestow: the Tony Award, the New York Critics' Award, the Outer Critics Circle Award, and the Drama Desk Award. He has written the screenplay for the film of Equus.
STARS REMEMBERED

An Occasional Series by MATTHEW NORGATE

THE GRIFFITHS BROTHERS

The Griffiths Brothers, perhaps you’re saying, who on earth were they? Well, if you ever went to music halls when there were still music halls to go to, you would certainly have seen them, and whether you did or not I shall try to persuade you that they are absurdly well worth recalling.

They were, in fact, the two components of Pogo, the world’s most headstrong, recalcitrant, inscrutable, and entirely lovable performing horse. First of all Miss Lulu came on. Nineteenth of the audience knew what to expect, and some of us, myself especially included, could anticipate practically every moment of the act. But we were not going to offend Miss Lulu; who throughout the years has made a lovely animal of Pogo’s own special sensitiveness, and we pretended to be as innocent as we had been on the great day when we heard her introductory speech for the first time.

She began by promising us the worst. Despite the invariable skill of her performances, she said, her team had never anticipated so completely the cruelty of whatever was in store for us. As she spoke, she enjoyed her tricks every little bit as much as did all the wretched kids before whom he had been privileged to appear. Some, after Pogo and Pogo’s head emerged from the wings. It was apparently a perfectly normal human head, and we could understand our delight in its transformation.

But only for a second. On came Pogo, and the game was up. And Miss Lulu’s horse, unlike ethics, was not phased. She was wholly conscious of our presence. Her composure and place performances made pitifully her human to succeed, dancing, for instance, with the hideous lack of grace which is the prerogative of all horses that dance. But Pogo, who was generally uppermost to all things liquid, let alone equine.

He would bow a lofty acknowledgment of our welcome, then strut about complacently while Miss Lulu sang her praises. Pogo could be written about his character, so complex a creature was he. Ask him to jump a fence, and he went through the paces several times over, about to do something superb, mufit it at the first attempt, then gingerly climb over. Sometimes his fore legs disappeared with his hind legs and there was some irregularity dancing. Or he would lift his head to see a friend in the dress circle, and slow to a stop, then be startled from his reverie. He was either too interested at shuttling his next trick to stand again and make sure of tap an important foot on the floor while he waited for Miss Lulu to resume, becoming more reasonable in his demands. Or shift his shoulders in despair of ever making her understand that he was not the cool kind of creature, in his explosive way, requiring discipline, indifference, hatred, pride — all without moving a muscle of his sensitive, immobile countenance.

If there was one thing he really cared for it was dancing. Here he made concessions to humanity, employing the steps of all styles and dances but never those of the lesser cornubian quadrupeds, though his favourite tune was evidently the one affected by so many of them, the one that goes umm-tiddo, dunt-tiddo, tunt-tiddo, tididly-didly-um, if I have made my musical notation clear.

Only at the end, when Pogo had taken his quota of calls — which he did amicably and affably as did Marie Tempest or Robert Leumie himself — could we express our gratitude to his perspiring manipulators, and that was the moment I used to dread, for then I had to return to a world of reality and realism, and ask myself once again just why I had been treated in happy, helpless, agonising, affectionate laughter. Not that it was a difficult question to answer, but this did not mitigate my regret at having to seek it, and thereby cut myself off from the majority who had paid for their seats, who knew what they liked but were not worried about why they liked it so much.

The answer, of course, was that Pogo had no expressions or inhibitions or thwarted desires, he was behaving exactly as the child in us all wishes to behave, but was wholly conscious of our presence. His composure and place performances made pitifully the human to succeed, dancing, for instance, with the hideous lack of grace which is the prerogative of all horses that dance. But Pogo, who was generally uppermost to all things liquid, let alone equine.

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Ballet 1952-1977
(PART ONE)
by CLEMENT CRISP

Beyond the feeling that anyone who quoted "Twelve-dance glitzy years" when talking about the Silver Jubilee needed happy sedatives, I had the impression that years of great ballet were the past quarter-century until the recent event for this article. But looking back, I had to concede that, for ballet at least, the years have been glitzy in many ways. We have seen the Royal Ballet triumph and merit the Queen's coronation. Festival Ballet has prospered; Ballet Rambert came through the thirties to become one of the leading modern houses; Western Theatre Ballet was founded and eventually absorbed into Glasgow to become our first regional company. The Scottish Ballet; Graham-style Modern Dance put down roots and became authentically British at London Contemporary Dance Theatre.

There are the exciting achievements of the Jubilee years, which have seen the Royal Ballet regarded as one of the greatest companies in the world, with dancers and choreographers universally admired. Sir Frederick Ashoma has given us a sequence of ballets that are fundamental to the company's success, with the first night of La Fille mal Gardee in 1960 as one of the happiest ends of the career of Norval and the more recent of Norman, Bower, Grant, Hbdon and Edwards are all splendid. Kenneth MacMillan's career launched a career within the period: the triumphs of Monica Mason in Flies of Spring; Lynne Byrnes in室内 and White; Janet, Kedward and so much else. Sibley and Trinni in Apollo, are still part of today's work. We must remember John Cranko, and be grateful for his ballets and for Monica Mason, Richard Cragun and Angus Macdonald and the Stuttgart ensemble.

And there have been the visits. In 1957 the New York City Ballet headed the list, and if there is a report about the past 23 years it is that since then NBC has made repeatedly one return trip, albeit a public performance, or critical report, but it is a distant fact. Yet of all the guest ballets it is the Russians who have most firmly put their mark on the Jubilee years. The unforgettable first appearance of the Bolshoi came in 1956, preceded by all the stiff-lunged hoopla about a Russian girl who was alleged to have stolen five hats, worth $15,000; a Russian girl who was allowed to have stolen five hats, worth $15,000; and today's famous guest Artists at the Royal Danish. "Provincial" and "exotic." Well then, our guest. They came, and were seen and wondered with Ulanova and Josef and the splendid pas de deuxs of the whole company, and they showed us of what ballet could be. That view was altered still further when the most spectacular of the Royal Ballet came from London in 1964. Here was the glory of the noblemen chaste dancing.

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THE PASSING OF THE PAGEANT

by VIRGINIA GRAHAM

One of this country’s oldest traditions is that, before the start of the summer holidays, the local amateur drama societies and “show must go on.” Although, when questioned about this, we are not absolutely certain only it has to be announced in advance, we insist on piping every year. It is true, of course, that if we waited upon the weather for our outdoor parties we might have to wait for ever. But this year the reception is on the dry side, and it is I suppose, quite reasonable to try and enjoy ourselves in a small degree of drama. It seems that even in the smaller towns we shall see a number of plays. But until the water is actually up to our knees, and everything is not entirely settled down, we shall not enjoy the Village Fete. By the same token, until the entire crew of Great Yarmouth’s Drama Societies have either failed, declined, or fallen into the muck, we do not think of calling it a night.

If the participants are faithful unto the end, as they are the audience, and this year in particular, when these are thousands of people taking place, these ranging from street 10 parties to amateurs struggling with Shakespeare, it is barely to think that not only our good manners but our loyalty is being paid to the last as we await at the beginning of everything and stick it out to the end.

One of the most important events of the summer holidays, indeed, it is difficult to drive through an English town on a Saturday afternoon without becoming embroiled in one. It usually consists of a processor of appropriately named “Drama” which we are well used to identifying as the most logical history of the town’s first hotel being made, or John of Gaunt setting up court. All the same the season is not over the night there, or the more abstract themes such as “The Story of Norwich Faced” or “The Future”. All these resemble very closely those High Street by the Cornhill, Queen’s Head, or the more abstract themes such as “The Story of Norwich Faced” or “The Future”. All these resemble very closely those High Street by the Cornhill, Queen’s Head, or the more abstract themes such as “The Story of Norwich Faced” or “The Future”. All these resemble very closely those High Street by the Cornhill, Queen’s Head, or the more abstract themes such as “The Story of Norwich Faced” or “The Future”.

This week’s local history will have been entirely abandoned in favour of Our Island age, with a heavy accent on the Monarchy. God bless it, and we must be prepared constantly to applaud someone over here, or alternatively here and dry. King John and Alice of Hurope, Carus, Yag, and Hinland, with an arrow in his eye, Charles II with a knife in his side, and Queen Victoria with an inverted musk-pot on her head with a scarf, a brimful John Brown playing the pipe beside her.

In the next county, instead of performing Stanley and the local amateur dramatic societies will be having a show at the queue for the terrace of Bagley Hall. The raging weather and high winds have led us to believe what anybody else is saying, and the look of the meadow is not, in spite of what we think, going to be shown up to their best in the solstitia town (or alternatively their very legs are being hampered by midges). But this is an offering of love and allegiance, and we shall be there until the very last rocket burns.

Sadly gone from the contemporary scene, and what I hope is bring revived for this great and very special year is the Historical Pageant. When I was young there was a plethora of pageants. It was hardly possible to stay away from the county without being taken on one. Either that or, it is the scene, or Madrigals or the Mens, or, indeed, all three rolled into one.

Pageants are particularly suitable to royal occasions as they usually take place in fields that have to be filled with clouds, and the first two ways of doing this are by long skilful regal appearances and by riding galligaskins in from all directions bearing “villages”, usually of the ancient approach of Queen Elizabeth I.

I remember a pageant in Toxteth when Mrs. Boushaw, the local drama’s wife, dressed as the Virgin Queen in a wonderful ruffled wig and all the ruffs, bonnets, staves and other regal accoutrements and by riding galligaskins in from all directions bearing “villages”, usually of the ancient approach of Queen Elizabeth I.

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TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF THEATRE

by JOHN BARBER

After 25 years the changes in the theatre have left us, surely, feeling much better. Not so? We have got rid of the censor. Subsidies on a scale unthinkable when the Queen came to the throne have helped found a National Theatre and some 50 regional houses. From the fringe has emerged an Alternative Theatre. Our plays and our players have become the backbone of Broadway and the envy of the world. Whatever our financial troubles, standards surely have improved and we are better off than we were?

But turn back to Coronation Day and consider the facts. After cheering the great procession in Park Lane (I got up at 4.50) we could have booked tickets for five theatres now gone—Casino, Hippodrome, Saville, St James’s, Winter Garden. As well, today we have six new ones—Mermaid, May Fair, Upstairs, Lyttleton, Olivier, Cottesloe. But I am not sure the programmes were inferior. The unsurpassed Guys and Dolls and South Pacific were among musicals playing. New plays included Graham Greene’s The Living Room with this new girl Contin, R. C. Sherriff’s The White Carnation with Ralph Richardson, Nigel Patrick in Roger MacDougall’s superb Escape, the Lunts in Coward’s Quadrille. For revue, try Jimmy Edwards, Vera Lynn and Tony Hanecak at the Adelphi, or Cyril Ritchard and Ian Carmichael at the Hippodrome. A thriller? Dial M for Murder at the Westminster. I would not care to field a team against that little lot from today’s current offerings.

As I write, London has no Shakespeare, no Shaw, no modern classic unless you count Maugham’s The Circle. On Coronation Day you had a choice of two Shakespeare’s, a Wilde and Shaw’s The Apple Cart with Noel Coward and Margaret Leighton. Venture to Hampstead and you could see Peter Brook’s production of Otway’s Venice Preserv’d (1682) with Gielgud and Scofield in a lovely house now demolished. But surely, you say, the National Theatre offers—? As I write, they advertise an overstretched trifle by Ayckbourn and two considerable if elderly trifles by Coward and Ben Travers. Said the Lord, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.

The Queen was hardly on the throne before our hearts leapt with hope. Just as the pseudo-poetic plays of Eliot and Fry were petering out, a crisp iconoclastic revitalised the theatre. Beckett’s Waiting for Godot, opening in Paris in Coronation year, was to breed flies out of the dead land. Then Osborne’s Look Back in Anger stirred dull roots with spring rain.

And everything happened at once. Young Peter Hall happened at Stratford-upon-Avon. Young Jonathan Miller and Beyond the Fringe taunted the accents and attitudes of what we began calling The Establishment. Joan Littlewood happened at Stratford E, and sent plays to the West End about capital punishment, the IRA, homosexuals. Much influenced by Beckett, Harold Pinter happened and purified the language of drama. The Royal Court brought a great proletarian upsurge of writers (Wesker, Arden).

These had been writers concerned with the sickness of a society they satirised and defied. After Osborne’s scream came Orton’s derision. Social protest grumbled on, and grumbles on today. But the big new breakthrough from the late 60s came with the uninhibited roar of the liberated anarchist. Hair happened. The Royal Court routed the Lord Chamberlain and Oh! Calcutta! happened. Suddenly actors leaped into our laps from the stage—and happenings happened. Almost, crand-boys whistled choruses from The Beaches.

Meantime, with unhurrying chase and unperturbed pace, the commercial theatre soldiered on, happy in its harmless business of supplying jolly nights out. But there is much to celebrate. Our great national houses have been known to perform a great work. Their fine productions often transfer to unsubsidised houses. Since 1952 the theatre has certainly seen far more plays about ordinary people, about the quality of society, the secrets of the soul and the whole comical and desperate business of day-to-day living. But, you must search to find them.

John Barber is the Theatre Critic of The Daily Telegraph.
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