THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

1966

Diction excellent in 'School for Scandal'

The perfect scandalmongers — Jim Crowther (left) and Robin Hope-Johnston.

FOR something like 160 years Sheridan's "School for Scandal" has tittle-tattled across the English stage, professional and amateur, with unfailing success, beating most other plays of its type and period in the popularity stakes.

The choice of Teddington Theatre Club last week, it was produced with a delicacy of touch by Beryl Barber that was very pleasant, avoiding the temptation of being flamboyantly farcical, or near-serious.

In the cast were 23 players (plus the dog Sukey), and all spoke and moved in their period costumes with ease. Diction and pace were excellent.

A gem

A gem of a character study was given by John Malyon in the role of a Jewish moneylender, deservedly winning him laughs as soon as he stepped on to the stage.

Equally to be admired was Robin Hope Johnston as Sir Benjamin Backbite, by no means an easy part to keep light and amusing without being slightly repellent. Robin was highly successfully teamed with Jim Crowther as his uncle.

David Evans was outstanding as Joseph Surface, particularly in the last act, when his scheming is gradually unmasked until he cannot lie his way out of his villainy.

Movement and facial expression were used most skilfully, and at the essential pace needed to indicate rapid changes of mood as he struggled to save something from the wreck of his hopes.

A newcomer to the company, Morry van Ments, was Sir Peter Teazle, a part which includes long, explanatory soliloquies, that are not easily made to sound convincing unless the actor moves and behaves as though talking to himself rather than to the audience.

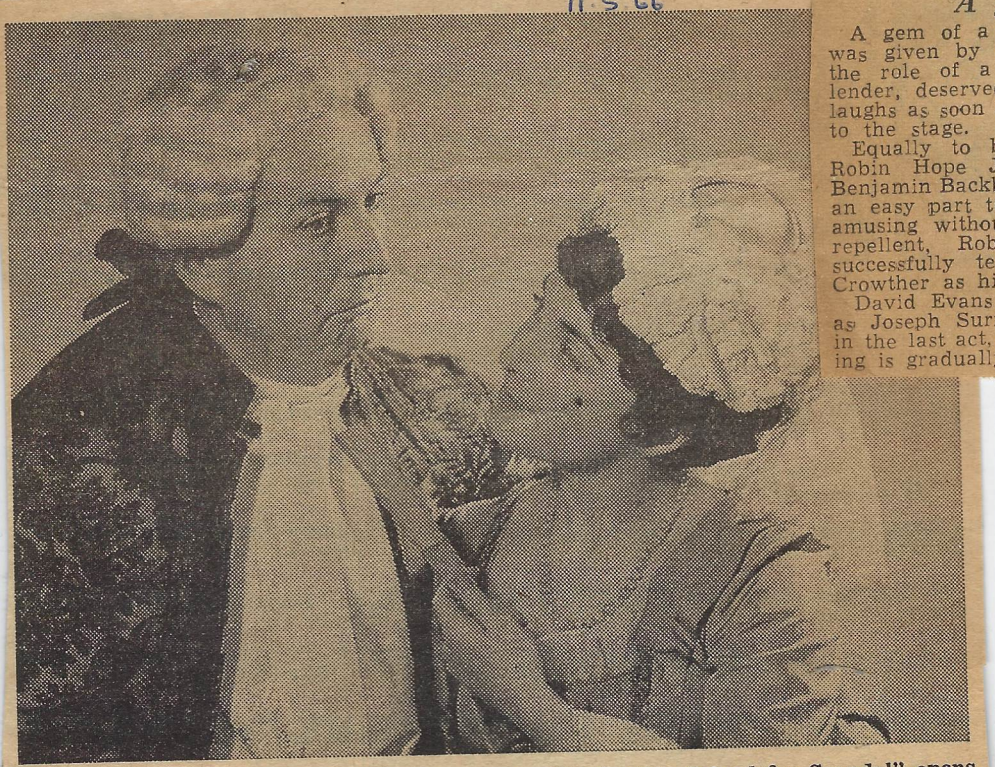
Morry van Vents tended to stand still addressing his audience, which detracted from his impressiveness.

The principal female parts were played with grace and charm by Gladys Burnie, Stefanie Inglis and Sally Coulston, with Dorothy Oscard as Mrs. Candour.

All the players—those I have not the space to mention individually, as well as those I have named—brought out the full humour of the dialogue and maintained the pace that lends credibility to the plot.

O.M.S.

11.5.66



Teddington Theatre Club's production of Sheridan's "The School for Scandal" opens tomorrow night at York House. There are further performances on Friday and Saturday (evening and matinee). Above are Morry van Ments, a newcomer to the club, and Sally Coulston as Sir Peter and Lady Teazle.

No sparkle in 'School for Scandal'

SHERIDAN'S comedy, **"The School for Scandal"** has become so familiar that it needs very sharp pointing of lines if it is to come over with any impact. Beryl Barber's production for **Teddington Theatre Club** at York House had the 18th century airs and graces, but the sparkle was lacking.

Morry van Ments, the Sir Peter Teazle, is a newcomer of personality and experience who should prove a distinct asset to the club. But he did not show the irascibility we should have expected from the elderly Sir Peter who takes a country wench for wife and finds himself burdened with her extravagances.

Sally Coulston was a charming Lady Teazle, but again the fire was missing. The scenes between these two should have been much more lively. Even the famous episode with the screen was relatively tame. Gladys Burnie made an auspicious first appearance with the club. Her Lady Sneerwell enlivened the earlier scenes and she had a good match in Dorothy Oscard whose Mrs. Candour was another joy.

I also enjoyed the exaggerated graces and affected speech of Robin Hope-Johnston as Sir Benjamin Backbite. Tony Eva fulfilled expectations as a splendidly assured Sir Oliver Surface, David Evans admirably brought off the hypocrisy of Joseph, and William Kindley offered an effective contrast as the gay but honest Charles.

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THERE was a well-etched little study from John Malyon as the moneylender, Moses, Anthony Hill lived up to his name as Snake, and Stefanie Inglis was a charming Maria.

William Kindley and David Evans as the brothers, Charles and Joseph Surface.

Jack Longford did not seem too sure of himself as Rowley, but Jim Crowther had a part to fit him as Crabtree.

I liked the way the producer had introduced servants to cross the stage from time to time, to change the centrepiece — which so effectively and economically provided a different background to each scene — and to set the furniture. Jane Roberts, as a blackamoor pageboy, came on with Lady Teazle's pugdog, Sukey. Ian Crabbe and Nicholas Chrimes were the footmen.

Stephen Malton, Dennis St. John, Madeleine Johnson, Mary Davies, John Carr, Avery Wheatley, Roger Butterworth and Peter Chamberlain had small speaking parts.

SALLY COULSTON as Lady Teazle

The richly coloured costumes, set off against the black and white decor of Colin Andrews, presented many delightful pictures and the dance arranged by Iris Mansfield fitted in well with the grace and style of the production.

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ANOTHER costume play

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TEDDINGTON Theatre Club concludes its season with Sheridan's comedy **"The School For Scandal."** One of the most famous plays of the 18th century, its witty dialogue, lavish costumes and the intrigues of the characters promise a rare delight.

The play is being produced by Beryl Barber, the Mrs. Noah of the recent BBC TV series, "Making a Play."

It will be Beryl's fifth production for the club since she joined 10 years ago. Her first was "The Lady's Not For Burning" in 1960. Since then she has been responsible for "The Rape of the Belt," "The Miracle Worker" and "Venus Observed." She enjoys producing comedy and is particularly happy working on "The School."

Bookings for the play, to be performed at York House on May 12th, 13th and 14th, are expected to be heavy. Many last-minute applicants for the club's last production, "Becket," were disappointed, the three evening performances being completely sold out. So early application is advised to avoid a similar fate. Tickets may be obtained from Mrs. Barbara Turner (TWI 4019).

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