10-12 Dec 1959

THE MAN WHO CAME TO DINNER

Enjoyable production

An enjoyable production of "The man who came to dinner" by Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman, was presented by the Teddington Theatre Club on Thursday, Friday and Saturday at York House, Twickenham. The acting was of a high standard, the diction was good and the set attractive.

In this play, much depends on the success or otherwise of the actor portraying Sheridan Whiteside, and in this role Anthony Eva gave a fine performance. He was commanding, irascible and yet had a certain charm. It was a performance that it would be hard to fault.

Eileen Johnston was admirable as Whiteside's secretary and made an excellent foil to Eva.

The parts of Beverley Carlton and Banjo were taken with great gusto by Cliff Broad and Jack Sinclair respectively, and their acting contributed much to the humour of the production.

In a large cast of a generally high standard, it is difficult to pick out names, but W. R. Hazell (Matinee Handel Evans) as Dr. Bradley, C. O. M. Johnston as Professor Metz and Jennifer Oscard as Lorraine Sheldon are all worthy of special mention. Dorothy Oscard as Mrs. Stanley, Dick Jacques as her husband, Dorothy Edwards as the nurse Miss Preen and Terence Chiswell as the reporter Bert Jefferson, all contributed good performances, as did David Evans and Doris Maisey as Richard and June Stanley. Kathleen Blayney was successful in the small comedy part of Harriet Stanley.

Others in the cast were: Anthony Hill, Patricia Buckland, Caryl Bannister, Chloe Crabbe, Neville Joseph, Michael Watts, Harry Lock, Stanley Andrews, Kenneth Gibbins, Robin Johnston, Richard Penn, David Green, Stephen Malton, Bonita Bantock, Mary Kemp, Jenifer Robertson, Christine Waters, Joan Connor, Julia Wragge, Ann Cartwright, Michael Whitton, Michael Charles, Joe S. Pereira, Michael Freeman and Hilary Walklett.

The production by Eric Yardley, after a somewhat slow start, quickly gained pace and held the interest of the audience, and kept them amused throughout.

Stage manager was Harold Inglis and assistant stage manager Ann Woodall, lighting was by David Green and Richard Penn, properties were by Pamela Sprange and Kay Partis, décor was the responsibility of Cliff Broad, and sound that of Tony Johns. Wardrobe mistresses were Sheila Turpin and Hazel Butterworth, the front of house manager, Derek Poland, and the production assistants, Beryl Barber and Kenneth Gibbins. The music for the Beverly Carlton song was composed and recorded by Tommy May, of the Richmond and Twickenham Arts Club.

ANTHONY EVA is playing the eccentric egomaniac, Sheridan Whiteside, in **Teddington Theatre Club's** production of **"The Man Who Came to Dinner"** at York House from December 10th to 12th. TVT. 2.12.59

Jennifer Oscard, who played Lady Teazle in "The School For Scandal" for the Crown Players in Austria this summer, has the part of Lorraine Sheldon, Whiteside's glamourous actress friend, and Bill Hazell, the only founder member still with the club will play Dr. Bradley at the three evening performances.

Handel Evans will be the doctor at the Saturday matinée.

C. O. M. Johnston and Dick Penn, who usually confine themselves to backstage or front-of-house activities, are this time taking on acting parts. The former will be Professor Metz and the latter the radio commentator, Westcott.

Four newcomers from the club's Theatre Workshop are making their debut — Anthony Hill, Pat Buckland, Ken Gibbins and Robin Johnston.

Dick Jacques and Dorothy Oscard are playing Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Stanley who have to put up with the eccentric in their home. Cliff Broad has the part of Beverley Carlton, the character supposed to have been modelled on Noel Coward, and Jack Sinclair will be Banjo who can be taken as being Jimmy Durante or Groucho Marx.

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ERIC BOURNE'S WEEKLY ENTERTAINMENTS

ERIC YARDLEY'S SUPERB PRODUCTION OF 'THE MAN WHO CAME TO DINNER'

TEDDINGTON Theatre Club last week excelled themselves with **"The Man Who Came to Dinner."** I have no hesitation in saying it was one of the best productions, if not the best, since the club moved to York House from Ronayne Hall six years ago. Judging from Friday's audience it must have also been one of the most financially successful.

As with "Sganarelle" its success was due mainly to the painstaking direction of Eric Yardley. He drew the best from everyone of the large cast.

Outstanding was Anthony Eva's Sheridan Whiteside. Tony has become justly celebrated for his studies of old men, but his portrayal of the crusty egomaniac surpassed all his previous efforts. There was such variety of expression. His mischievous laugh at his own scheming, his raising and lowering of voice, his command of every situation were completely in character. The result was a thoroughly entertaining performance.

Neither has Eileen Johnston ever been better. As the secretary, Maggie Cutler, she was an admirable foil to Whiteside's tantrums. She had an outspokenness which matched Whiteside's, but she never convinced me that she was in love.

Jennifer Oscard gave a beautiful impression of the airs and graces of the actress, Lorraine Sheldon. Here again was a performance which owed much to personality. Her first entrance might have been more showy, but she warmed to the part later.

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OF all Whiteside's visitors Jack Sinclair's Banjo was the one I shall remember most. Making a very late entry he held the audience with his cheek and quick-wittedness. It was a superb performance in every way.

Cliff Broad made a noble effort at the part of Beverly Carlton, the sophisticated English actor. He was much better than I had anticipated. He has not the gift of subtlety which the character really requires, but he played the part with a blandness and a vigour which I thought very effective. Where he failed was in putting over the song. The music was reproduced from the recording made by Tommy May for the Arts Club production last season, but Cliff's singing made it seem dull. Also I learn that the recording had been re-recorded on disc.

W. R. Hazell was again excellent in the comparatively small part of the doctor who keeps popping in throughout the play with his requests to Whiteside to help him with the book he is writing. It was a most delightful performance.

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ANOTHER consistently maintained characterisation was the nurse of Dorothy Edwards. Her fears and annoyance at the great man were always convincing.

Dick Jacques made the unwilling host, Mr. Stanley, a firm character, whose annoyance at his guest's effrontery in taking over his home simmers to boiling point. Dorothy Oscard was admirable as his wife who tries ineffectually to pour oil on troubled waters, and Kathleen Blayney had the audience rocking with laughter with her gaunt figure as Mr. Stanley's demented sister.

Terence Chiswell, one of the club's newer members, gave another strong study as the journalist in love with Maggie, although his drunk scene was very weak. David Evans and Doris Maisey did all that was required of them as the Stanley son and daughter.

Of the four youngsters from the club's newly established theatre workshop Anthony Hill gave a well-composed study of the house boy. Patricia Buckland looked too young for the cook, and her scenes with Whiteside lacked weight, but she should gain from the experience. The other two, Robin Johnston and Ken Gibbins, did not have much chance.

Chloe Crabbe and Caryl Bannister were excellent as the two indignant neighbours in the first scene, and the women's choir in their red cassocks made a very pleasing appearance as they sang their Christmas carol.

The club made the same mistake as the Arts Club in introducing names of present-day personalities. It made nonsense of Lorraine's assumed haste in getting to London.

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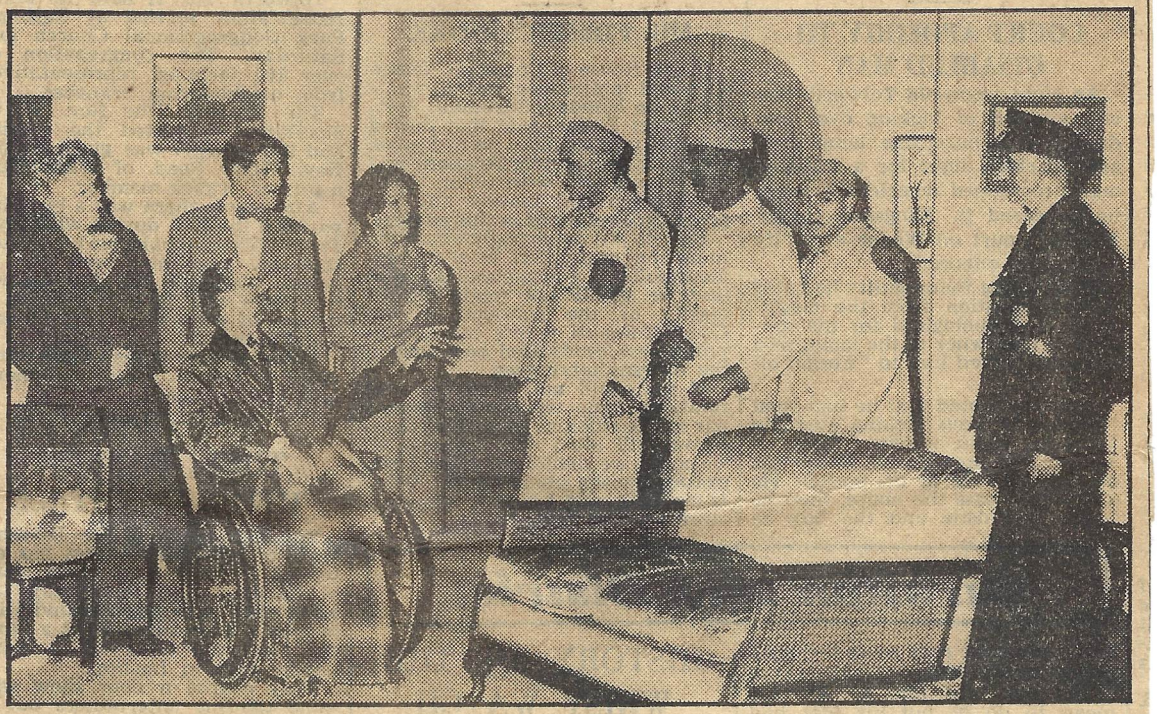
Theatre Club's wise choice



Sheridan Whiteside in his wheelchair, played by Anthony Eva, meets the convicts who are in the charge of the policeman, Stanley Andrews. Others in the picture are Cyril Johnston, Terence Chiswell and Dorothy Oscard.

TEDDINGTON Theatre Club made an excellent choice for their Christmas play this year and although "The Man Who Came to Dinner," by Moss Hart and George Kaufman, is now old enough for his whiskers to have turned white his acid tongue and megalomaniac outlook still make for a show with plenty of laughs.

This production at York House, Twickenham, by Eric Yardley, with its cast of over 30 is one of the best by the club for some time.

They were fortunate in having a Sheridan Whiteside of the calibre of Anthony Eva. This is a longe exacting role and the play largely amuses, bores or irritates according to the performance of this leading player. Mr. Eva delighted everyone.

He displayed a vituperative tongue, an amazing line in invective and, best of all, a glint of undoubted charm. He possesses a voice of surprising quality and, in view of this, was occasionally guilty of over-emphasis but it was pleasant to be able to hear every word.

He had good support. Jack Sinclair, a favourite with regular patrons, was particularly effective as the ebullient Banjo and injected a new style of humour just when it was most needed.

Cliff Broad was also very successful as the precious Beverly Carlton, although his song was not the hit it might have been, due partly to Mr. Broad's deficiencies as a singer and partly to the recording being played in such a way that no one could believe the music was coming from the piano on stage.

Of the rest, Dorothy Oscard and Dick Jacques were well cast as the long suffering Stanleys, Dorothy Edwards made an indignant Nurse Preen, Eileen Johnston had considerable authority as Maggie Cutler, W. R. Hazell earned his laughs as the misguided Dr. Bradley, Jennifer Oscard was a suitably bitchy Lorraine and Terence Chiswell made an earnest Jefferson.

Among the younger members, David Evans made his mark as Richard Stanley and Robin Johnston, although rather too young for the part, was assured and likable as Sandy.

Despite the length of the play, Mr. Yardley never let his production flag and wisely did not make his players pay too much attention to acquiring American accents. Obviously some attempt had been made to make Whiteside's famous acquaintances have a modern look about them —but Maria Callas and Oscar Wilde at the same time?

Club members had made a pleasant and spacious set.

The final performances take place this afternoon and evening.

Teddington and Twickenham

THE MIDDLESEX CHRONICLE, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18th, 1959

"Man who Came to Dinner" Takes Many Curtains

Teddington Club

The Teddington Theatre Club's production, under Eric Yardley, of Hart and Kaufman's "The Man Who Came to Dinner," at York House on Thursday, Friday and Saturday last week, touched a club high water mark. Four large audiences testified to its success with roars of laughter.

The huge cast looked like a co-ed school when they took their many curtains. The piece ran with great speed and dash. The penguins were dispensed with and, on the Saturday, Beverley Carlton's song and dance, to Tommy May's music, was omitted.

Though the programme contained the names of no fewer than 39 players, most of whom have parts of significance, the play must stand or fall on the performance of the one playing Sheridan Whiteside, the tycoon sob-stuff broadcaster who comdandeers the Stanley house.

Anthony Eva gave a most excellent account of it and turned himself into a rip-roaring, insult-hurling, tyrannical Yank, making his staff flinch under his obscenities, and his host and hostess fume with despair and rage. It was wonderful to see how Mr. Eva added stature to himself in all phases of the part; in age, depth and range of voice, and strength of character.

Three out of every four times I have seen him play he has simulated an age in advance of his own. Here he did so again but, with a perfect make-up and a role in which he obviously revelled, he gave the best performance I have yet seen from him.

When I first heard that he had been cast for this part, I feared he would prove to be too lightweight for it. I was, however, quite wrong. He had all the necessary power and authority, and appeared even physically, larger than usual.

The others, in order of appearance: Dorothy Oscard fluttered a l'Americaine as Mrs. Stanley. Dorothy Edwards kept her dignity marvellously as Miss Preen. David Evans and Doris Maisey were charming in the Stanley son and daughter. Dick Jacques made a masterfully impotent Mr. Stanley. Eileen Johnson played Maggie Cutler, the tyrant's sorely-tried secretary, beautifully. Caryl Bannister did well as Mrs. Dexter, W. R. Hazell as Dr. Bradley (Handel Evans at the Saturday matinee) was very funny as the duped author.

Kathleen Blayney popped in and out from another world as Aunt Harriet Stanley, Terence Chiswell as Bert Jefferson, journalist, got all the news he wanted as well as Maggie.

Jennifer Oscard made Lorraine Sheldon, the actress, some baby, a dazzling destroyer; her "working clothes" were certainly meant for a light assignment. Cliff Broad was bright and breezy in his, on Saturday, truncated part of Beverley Carlton.

All the others, angel choir, convicts, the lot, added distinction to the whole.

The producer, and his two assistants, Beryl Barber and Kenneth Gibbons, as well as all the long list of associate workers, must be warmly congratulated. Cliff Broad's decor was perfect in almost all aspects.

The club are doing, as a complete contrast, "The Diary of Ann Frank," by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, on February 25th, 26th and 27th. Frances V. Whitton will produce.

MAURICE REEVE