

THEATRE RECORD

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The Editor's Recommended Christmas Present

Stage Managing Chaos: A Diary of the Old Vic Production of Fernando Arrabal's The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria

by Jackie Harvey and Tim Kelleher

McFarland (17 Oct. 2016) ISBN 978-1476666648

In the early 1970s London's National Theatre, led by Sir Laurence Olivier, launched an infamous *avant garde* production of *The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria*. Concerned that his classical approach would clash with the "enfant terrible" director, Victor Garcia, Olivier enlisted stage manager Jackie Harvey to keep a diary of the often ludicrous, occasionally creative, always challenging rehearsals.

Anthony Hopkins and Jim Dale co-starred in the surreal two-man piece. Led by the eccentric Garcia, the play quickly descended into a chaotic farce. Missed deadlines, technical hitches, unauthorized nudity and backstage feuds culminated in an unforgettable production, leaving the company debating: Was he a misunderstood genius or a brilliant con-artist?

Accompanied by recollections from Hopkins, Dale and others, along with photographs and documents that bring the key players to life, this unique diary provides a snapshot of a crucial period in the history of the National Theatre.

FRONT COVER: Elizabeth Debicki is Mona Sanders in David Hare's *The Red Barn* at the National's Lyttelton (**Manuel Harlan**).

Reviewed in this issue:

London

Production

THE AUTUMN GARDEN – Revival and London première of the play by Lillian Hellman
 CONFSSIONAL – Revival of the play by Tennessee Williams
 NEVERLAND – A new play by Tom Penn from the stories by JM Barrie
 GYPSY QUEEN – A new play by Rob Ward
 LUNCH and THE BOW OF ULYSSES – Revival in a double bill of the plays by Steven Berkoff
 ONE NIGHT IN MIAMI... – UK première of the play by Kemp Powers
 THE MOUNTAINTOP – Revival of the play by Katori Hall
 SHOPPING AND FUCKING – Revival of the play by Mark Ravenhill
 THE DRESSER – Revival of the play by Ronald Harwood
 CATHY – Revival of the play by Ali Taylor
 A MAN OF GOOD HOPE – New musical adaptation by Isango Ensemble of the book by Jonny Steinberg
 SKIN A CAT – Transfer of the play by Isley Lynn
 OIL – A new play by Ella Hickson
 RAGTIME – Revival of the musical based on the novel by EL Doctorov
 THE RED BARN – A new play by David Hare adapted from *La Main* by Georges Simenon
 BLUE HEART – Revival of the two one-act plays by Caryl Churchill
 MOBY DICK: THE MUSICAL – Revival of the musical based on the novel by Herman Melville
 A PACIFIST'S GUIDE TO THE WAR ON CANCER – A new musical with lyrics by Bryony Kimmings
 FROM IBIZA TO THE NORFOLK BROADS – A new play by Adrian Berry
 MY MOTHER MEDEA – A new play by Holger Schober translated by David Tushingham

Regions

HEADS WILL ROLL – A new play from Told By An Idiot
 BROKEN BISCUITS – A new play by Tom Wells
 THE GAUL – World première of the play by Janet Plater
 NINA: A STORY ABOUT ME AND NINA SIMONE – World première of the piece by Josette Bushell-Mingo
 THE GRINNING MAN – A new musical based on Victor Hugo's *L'homme qui rit*, adapted by Tim Phillips, Marc Teitler, Carl Grose and Tom Morris, with puppets by Gyre & Gimble
 THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS – A new musical by Stiles & Drewe, with book by Julian Fellowes, based on *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame
 THREE SISTERS – A new adaptation by Lucy Caldwell of the play by Anton Chekhov
 DISCO PIGS – Revival of the play by Enda Walsh
 ONCE THIS IS ALL OVER WE STILL HAVE TO CLEAR UP – A new play devised by Yellow Magpies
 KRAPP'S LAST TAPE – Revival of the play by Samuel Beckett
 INVISIBLE ARMY – A new play by Victoria Beesley
 FRANCIS THE HOLY JESTER – Revival of the play by Dario Fo
 WALKING ON WALLS – A new play by Morna Pearson
 CRUDE – A new play by Ben Harrison
 ONE THINKS OF IT ALL AS A DREAM – A new play by Alan Bissett
 WHERE THE CROW FLIES – A new play by Lisa Nicoll
 GRAIN IN THE BLOOD – A new play by Rob Drummond

Venue	Opened	Closes	Page
Jermyn Street	07 Oct	29 Oct	1132
Southwark Playhouse	07 Oct	29 Oct	1132
Battersea Arts Centre	08 Oct	16 Oct	1133
Above The Arts	10 Oct	15 Oct	1133
Trafalgar Studios	10 Oct	05 Nov	1134
Donmar Warehouse	28 Sep	23 Nov	1135
Theatre Royal, Haymarket	27 Sep	03 Dec	1139
Lyric, Hammersmith	12 Oct	05 Nov	1140
Duke Of York's	12 Oct	14 Jan	1143
Pleasance	13 Oct	15 Oct	1148
Young Vic	13 Oct	12 Nov	1149
Bunker, SE1	13 Oct	05 Nov	1152
Almeida	14 Oct	26 Nov	1152
Charing Cross	17 Oct	10 Dec	1156
National, Lyttelton	17 Oct	19 Nov	1159
Orange Tree	18 Oct	19 Nov	1164
Union, SE1	18 Oct	12 Nov	1166
National, Dorfman	19 Oct	29 Oct	1167
Waterloo East	20 Oct	06 Nov	1170
Unicom	20 Oct	25 Nov	1171

Plymouth, Drum	06 Oct	22 Oct	1172
Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Live	11 Oct	22 Oct	1172
Hull, Hull Truck	11 Oct	29 Oct	1173
Liverpool, Unity	18 Oct	29 Oct	1173
Bristol, Old Vic	20 Oct	13 Nov	1174

Plymouth, Theatre Royal	20 Oct	22 Oct	1176
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Belfast, Lyric	20 Oct	12 Nov	1177
Glasgow, Tron	04 Oct	05 Oct	1177
Edinburgh, Festival Theatre Studio	04 Oct	04 Oct	1178
Glasgow, Tron	05 Oct	08 Oct	1178
Stirling, Macrobert Arts Centre	07 Oct	07 Oct	1178
Edinburgh, Scottish Storytelling Centre	08 Oct	08 Oct	1181
Glasgow, Òran Mór	10 Oct	15 Oct	1181
Dundee, Shed 39, Port of Dundee	11 Oct	23 Oct	1182
Glasgow, Òran Mór	17 Oct	22 Oct	1183
Edinburgh, Scottish Storytelling Centre	18 Oct	19 Oct	1184
Glasgow, Tron	20 Oct	29 Oct	1185

A Guest in the Prompter's Box

Timothy West CBE reflects for Prompt Corner on tours and touring

On The Road

I am one of a very few actors in this country to *enjoy* touring. To me it still feels like a privilege to be allowed into a new community each week, to play to people in the evening that you're going to meet in Sainsbury's in the morning: this can't happen in London.

But as well as a pleasure, it's a responsibility. Somehow we've got to counter this national assertion that unless you live, work and sell your wares within the metropolitan area, you're somehow second-class, you haven't quite made it.

Touring productions are of course essential to the calendar of regional theatre, but managements often find them difficult to cast. In order to attract "selling" names, the touring circuit has been reduced to accommodate their wishes – not too large, not too far away and not for too long. The Harvey Nichols Tour, as it is affectionately known, is a comfortable short-haul excursion to Richmond, Guildford, Brighton, Oxford, Cambridge, Malvern: no longer do we get to play straight Drama at the 1,500-seat Leeds Grand, the Newcastle Theatre Royal or the Liverpool Empire.

Back in the 1970s, beautiful large theatres around the country were given a face-lift by an Arts Council able for once to spend a bit of money: the exercise was called DALTA (Drama and Lyric Theatres Association), and the idea was to provide efficient and attractive venues for visiting shows of all kinds.

Alongside opera, ballet and musicals, straight plays would travel the circuit of Frank Matcham's majestic creations from Portsmouth to Aberdeen.

What are still known as "Number One" tours are mainly of productions probably destined for the West End. "Number Two" tours can often be of those same productions on their way *from* London, taking the same sets and costumes but with a replacement cast. The label "Number Three" shouldn't be seen as a reflection on quality, just that the product is not seeking to transfer, simply to play as many regional dates as possible.

Touring is a way of disseminating knowledge. The principle of domestic touring reaches back as far as theatre itself. *Overseas* touring, however, had its heyday in the mid-19th Century, mainly to Australia and the Americas (a list of 333 regular British playhouses prepared at this time includes Boston and Philadelphia). The reigning stars of the day, Kean, Macready, Bernhardt, Fanny Kemble, would just come on their own, and the supporting company had to be recruited locally, usually from a pool of amateurs rounded up at short notice.

The performance standard was understandably not quite that of Drury Lane; nevertheless, the demand across the seas for performances by English actors far exceeded any possible supply.

We're lucky today (*pace* Brexit) to be able to perform in our own tongue in countries where English is not generally spoken. The opportunities to take full productions of the classics to Europe have dwindled over recent years, but they do still exist. The language is not really a problem; your average German, French or Russian theatregoer will have a good working knowledge of most of the plays of Shakespeare. How many of us could say the same about Schiller, Racine or Turgenev?

But let's return to Harvey Nichols, and the new play, or new revival, that is being sent out on the road, on perhaps a ten- or twelve-week tour.

"Will it come to London?" actors ask. Well, it might, of course, but then again it very much depends on how well it's received on the tour, and how much the cast, the director and producer are prepared to continue to work on it, and to learn from the different audiences in different parts of the country. Of course it depends on a lot of other things, like the availability of theatres, the interest of backers, the pure cost of it all.

I secretly have to confess that, while of course working my hardest to get the best out of the show while we're still on the road, to me it doesn't hugely matter whether it gets to the West End or not.

Of course I feel for the producer, who naturally is looking to recover his or her production costs, and the director, who is on a percentage...

But no, the point is to get the play performed, and seen, by different audiences all over the country.

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