

# FEATS NEWSLETTER

## JUNE 2006



When I arrived in Luxembourg late Thursday evening last, my hostess greeted me with “I was just putting a hot water bottle in your bed”. However, traditional FEATS weather came in time for the weekend and more than one picnic was enjoyed. Congratulations all round to the FEATS 2006 team for putting on such a successful and smooth-running 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary festival. There were lots of new, young faces, which is very encouraging; but some of the ‘old’ ones were noticeable by their absence: a pity as they missed a good weekend. The other things which were noticeably missing were sets: many of the groups using a bare stage or just a couple of boxes to create a scene. We enjoyed some good theatre during the Fringe and the FEATS sketch was hilarious. How does Martin manage to come up with such a topical script so quickly? Saturday night’s party was an excellent affair which ended certainly long after it was time for us all to turn into pumpkins. The catering team did us proud with a piece montée in sugar (I think!) of all the programme covers of FEATS right from the first one. One little lady wowed everyone with her dancing and several others did a spot of table dancing - fully clothed, I hasten to add, for those of you of a sensitive nature.

Our adjudicator, Mike Tilbury, who mentioned the ‘unique atmosphere’ of FEATS, and I, mostly agreed on our appreciation of the performances, but he was in charge and hereafter are the results, both the prize-winners and those who were nominated for prizes :

<b>Kast Cup : 1<sup>st</sup> Place</b>	<b>Brussels Shakespeare Society</b>
<b>Mervyn Briscoe Award: 2<sup>nd</sup> Place</b>	<b>FEST, Frankfurt</b>
<b>Taché Diamond Award: 3<sup>rd</sup> Place</b>	<b>ATC, Brussels</b>
<b>Blackie Award for Best Actor</b>	<b>Caraigh McGregor, ATC, Brussels</b>
<b>Blackie Award for Best Actress</b>	<b>Antonia Kitzel, FEST, Frankfurt</b>
<b>Best Stage Presentation</b>	<b>Theater de WAANzin, Gent</b>
<b>Marcel Huhn- Bruno Boeye Trophy For Stage Management</b>	<b>Brussels Shakespeare Society</b>
<b>Anthony Cornish Discretionary Award</b>	<b>Richard Maddern, TIE for Lighting</b>
<b>Verulam Award: Best Original Script</b>	<b>Stuart Marlowe for <i>Fallujan Women</i></b>

Nominations for awards were as follows:

**Best Stage Presentation:**

AATG, The Hague	Recognition scene from <i>Anastasia</i>
FEST, Frankfurt	<i>WASP</i>
BSS, Brussels	<i>The Real Lady Macbeth</i>
ATC, Brussels	<i>The Author's Voice</i>
ACTS, Stuttgart	<i>Fallujan Women</i>

**Anthony Cornish Discretionary Award:**

In Players, Amsterdam	<i>The Miser</i>
TIE, Brussels	<i>Roy</i>

**Blackie Award for Best Actor:**

Ken Kitchen, In Players, Amsterdam  
Sean Lambert, In Players, Amsterdam  
Martin Swabey, BSS, Brussels  
Glenn Vaughan, BSS, Brussels  
David Kelly, NEAT, Stuttgart  
Kristian Lazzaro, FEST, Frankfurt  
Marnix van Hamme, de WAANzin, Gent  
Dirk Crommelinck, de WAANzin, Gent

**Blackie Award for Best Actress:**

Annika Groeneveld, In Players, Amsterdam  
Antonia Mochan, BSS, Brussels  
Tamsin Rosewall; BSS, Brussels  
  
Greta Redmond, NEAT, Stuttgart

**Marcel Huhn- Bruno Boeye  
Trophy For Stage Management:**

TIE, Brussels  
De WAANzin, Gent

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The **2006 British All Winners Festival**, adjudicated by Mike Tilbury, will take place at the Rhoda McGaw Theatre in Woking, Surrey from Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> until Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> July 2006. Our very best wishes to the British Shakespeare Society who will defend the FEATS colours there. If you are in the Woking area during that week, I am sure they would appreciate your support.

A few reflections on the weekend's performances:

Friday evening started with the Irish **Theatre Group, Brussels** and *The Yalta Game* by Brian Friel, where we see Dmitry at his favourite summer pastime of womanizing. This summer, however, he falls hopelessly in love with the married Anna, in Yalta with her small dog. Played on an open stage, with just a couple of chairs for a set, it was important that the actors paint the scene for us. Unfortunately, there was a often lack of change of tempo and delivery was often a little staccato. The costuming of the play, however, was good and the stylized movements worked well.

Second up were **In Players International Drama Group, Amsterdam** with a potted English translation, *The Miser*, of Molière's *L'Avare*. Here we were catapulted headlong into pantomime mode. Unfortunately some awkward straight-line moves resulted from the action's being played entirely on the apron. We enjoyed the fast pace and attack; the crazy mix of costumes; the fight scene; Frosine, the mother, cast as a vamp; some lovely mime from Cléante; Harpagon's performance and Maître Jacques' skipping gait.

Last up on Friday were **AATG, The Hague** with the Recognition scene from *Anastasia* by Marcelle Maurette. A very simple but effective set, complete with two chandeliers greeted the audience when the curtains opened. A pity they were not pulled in a little to bring the scene in a bit. The Grand Duchess looked the part in her dark costume and small hat and we understood every word she said. Alas, poor Anastasia was not so fortunate: her costume was somewhat strange to say the least and she had not found her sound levels, making her hard to hear.

*Roy*, Stephen Challens' version of Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi* was the **TIE Youth Theatre, Brussels** offering on Saturday night. No set here but lots of smoke and music. From where I was sitting this latter seemed too loud but the choice throughout was good. We have come to expect pace and energy from TIE and we certainly got it. The play would have benefited from some cutting and I was not the only member of the audience who would have liked subtitles! Part of the problem was, again, diction. There were some fun ideas: suicide by corkscrew, the Skywalker dance and the sword fight among others.

Newcomers to FEATS, **Osnabrück Amateur Dramatics Society**, followed with an original script *Alice in Slatternland* by Stephen Swann. The play started well with its back-projection and the lovely train departure board and announcements. Alice's costume, too, was great. However, the pace soon fell, partly due to long, complicated and rather noisy scene changes. The court scene was very clever with the full jury box. Again the script could have done with some cuts, but we all welcome a new group to the FEATS family.

Saturday night ended with the **Brussels Shakespeare Society's** production of Stuart Delves' *The Real Lady Macbeth*. A good opening effect had the four characters silhouetted under top and side lighting with a slight mist and the sound of loud, running water. The players all sustained changes of mood with their multiple characters, each with different accent and the play had tempo and shape. The five minute *Macbeth* was very funny as were the scenes between King James and Queen Anne and between Shakespeare and his wife, Anne Hathaway.

Yet another original script was played on Sunday, with **Entity Theatre Workshop, Munich's** performance of Danny Strike's *Kevin*. Again a striking opening, this time with red and blue side lighting. I found it rather hard to follow some of the short scenes and, though there was some very good writing here on an extremely interesting subject, the red pen needs to come out again. Voices were sometimes a little flat and more energy was needed – perhaps some was lost through over long blackouts between scenes. The first teacher was convincing and I might have swapped her and Jeanette's roles.

A pretty summer garden set and good choice of music backed the production by the **New English American Theatre of Stuttgart** of George Bernard Shaw's *O'Flaherty, V.C.* Costumes were, on the whole, convincing, but oh! those brown boots! The 'priest' scene was good but the pace dropped during the quarrel. The new V.C. and his mother played well together and there were some fine comic moments, especially during the women's argument, though the final 'discussion' needed some more work.

**FEST, Frankfurt** ended the Sunday evening with their production of Steve Martin's *WASP*. The curtains opened to this awful family eating with all the 'snap, crackle and pop' of the breakfast cereals magnified over the loudspeakers. I loved the choreographed scene changes and well-chosen linking music. Characterisation was effective, though I found the boorish father sometimes hard to understand. Mother was somewhat pathetic in her yearning for a better life. Her timing was excellent. Costumes were good, especially the son's shorts and wonderful 'babygro' outfit.

We had already reached the last night with **ACTS, Stuttgart** and Stuart Marlow's *Fallujan Women*. Here ends of scenes were signalled by evocative back projections and music. At times the pace dropped, perhaps because of too-long pauses but there were strong performances from the mother and the blind Selma. I was not sure of the women's costumes, nor am I sure that the chaplain would give orders to the captain. However, there was some excellent writing, though I felt the play should have ended when the captain removed his jacket.

A dingy basement room and menacing, throbbing music which played throughout, set Harold Pinter's *The Dumb Waiter* performed by **Theater de WAANzin, Gent**. The only light came from a neon strip in the room, leading, at times, to some underlighting of the action. The actual dumb waiter was very effective and more than one person jumped when the first message arrived. Here was a pair of accomplished actors, though they seemed to be playing for comedy rather than evoking the tension usually experienced at a performance of this play.

The final play of the festival was *The Author's Voice* by Richard Greenberg, performed by the **American Theatre Company, Brussels**. Here the curtain was not drawn to its full extent, thus giving a more intimate feeling to the room. There were some lighting problems and, on the whole the blackouts were too long, but a striking effect was achieved with the illumination of the cupboard. Gene's seduction scenes were well played and his strange, sinewy movements produced an other-world impression of the character.

Marq Riley has put up a picture page on the web, with some impressions of the weekend, including the party. He is hoping people will send him some of their best snapshots to add to the page. <http://www.marqriley.com/attica/FEATS>

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Our 2004 FEATS adjudicator, Colin Dolley, has just published a book together with another FEATS adjudicator, Rex Walford, entitled *The One-Act Play Companion*. A complete reference book, it surveys the work of over 250 playwrights and contains notes on staging and writing one-act plays, licensing and copyright issues, sources and contact addresses, and a history of the genre. The book, published by A & C Black Ltd., mentions more than 2,000 one-act plays, features specific 250 playwrights and has a telling introduction by Sir Alan Ayckbourn.

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Below is Chairman of FEATS 2007 Organising Committee, Dympna Donnelly, complete with outrageous sized ice cream, hard at work with organising next year's FEATS!

AATG hosts **FEATS 2007** in the Hague from 25<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> May 2007 at the Royal Theatre, The Hague. See you there.



**The Drama Association of Wales** runs a **script reading service**. The service, which takes up to two months from receipt to the issue of the critical review, costs £ 15 per script. For this the author receives a critique from an expert in the fields of writing, directing and academia. In the case of a 'rave' review or a strong recommendation from the reviewer, the script will automatically be passed on to DAW Publications for consideration. *Script Reading Service, Drama Association of Wales, The Old Library, Splott, Cardiff, CF24 2ET, Wales.*

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