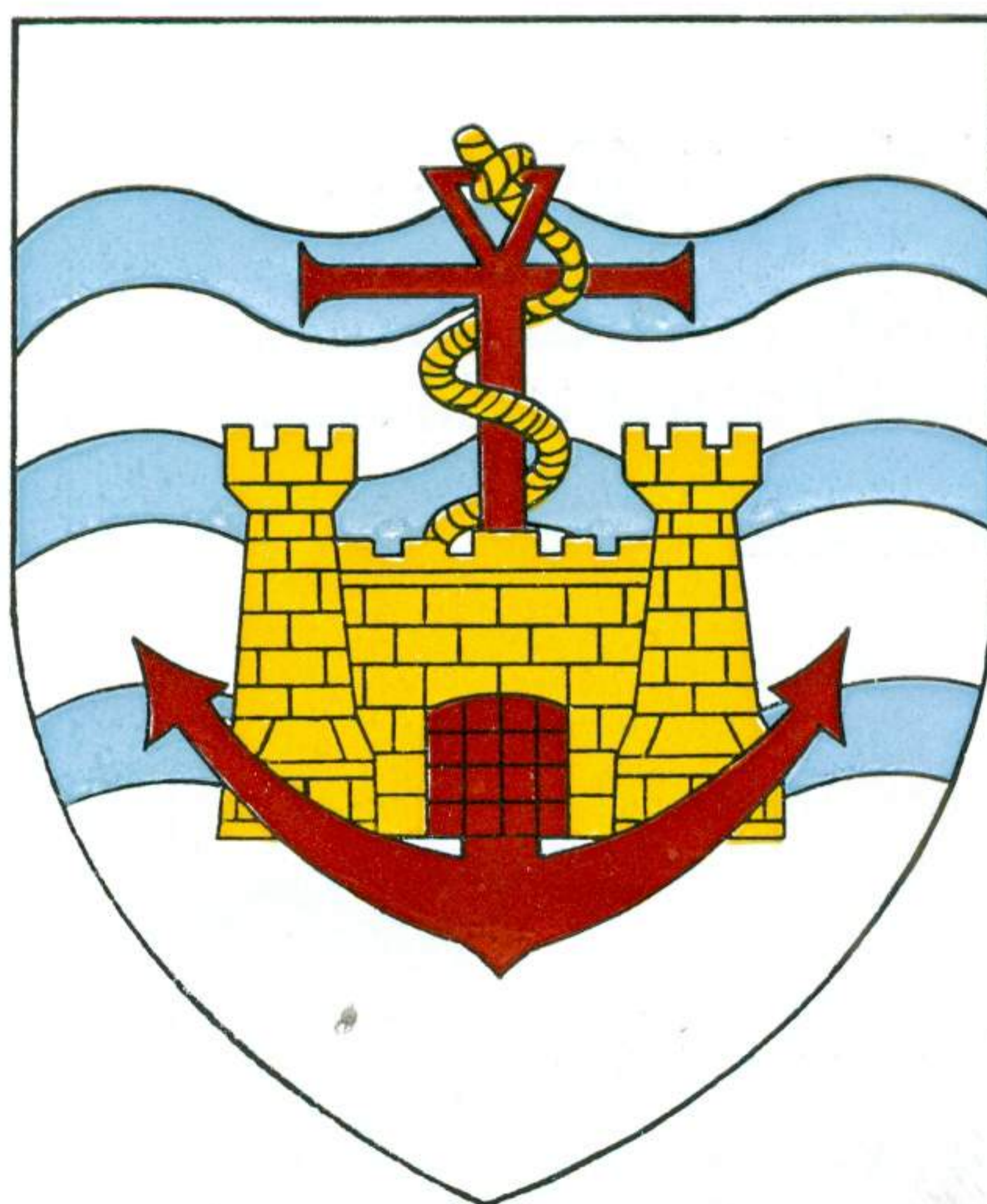


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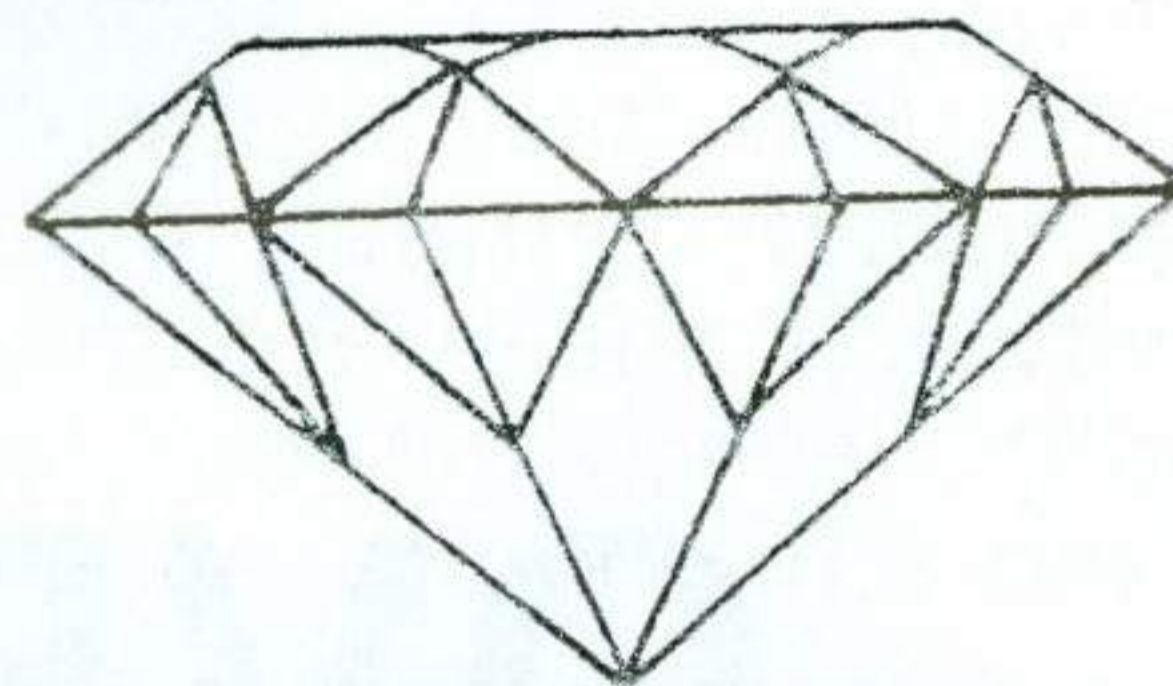
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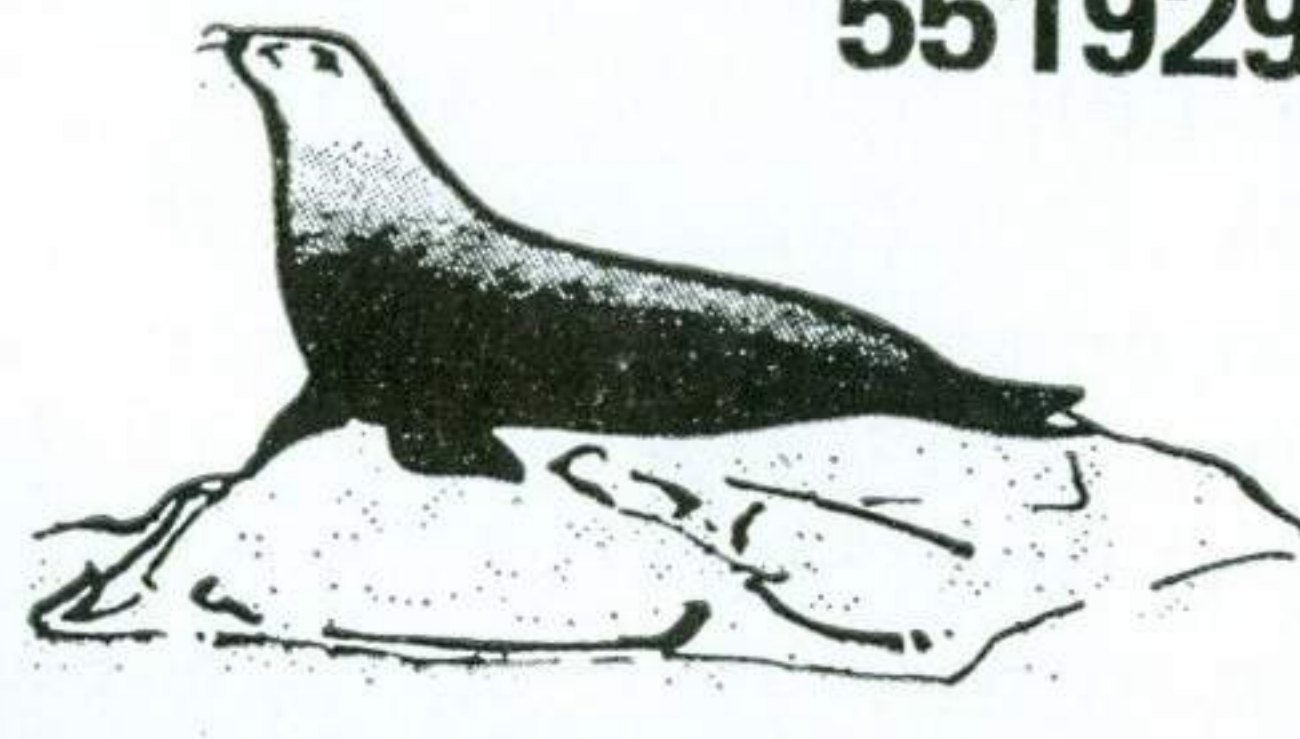
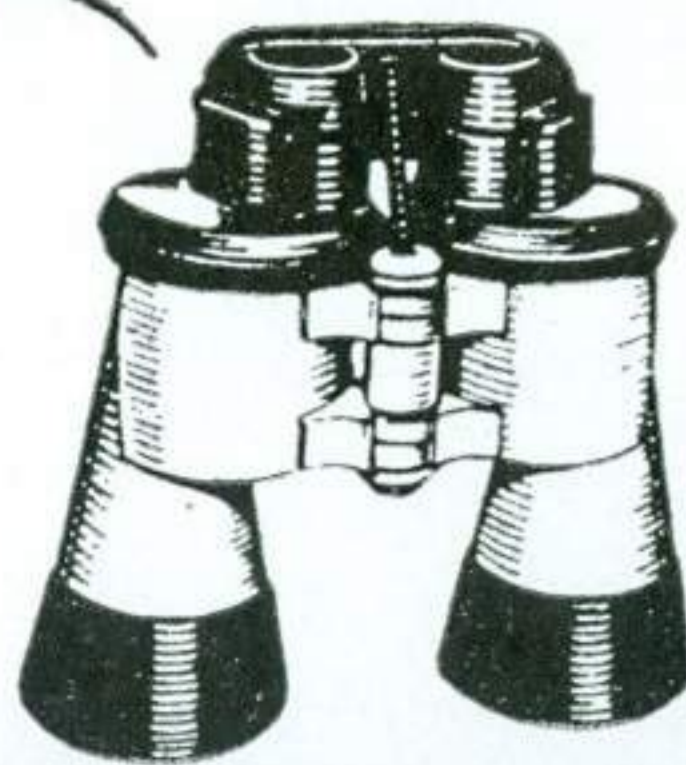
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A CHANCE FOR NEW WRITERS

by Eric Shorter

Amid the British economy's encircling gloom there stands (to my perhaps optimistic mind) a beacon of hope. Faith and charity have much to do with it. Where after all would the British theatre be without its grants? And with those grants goes the faith of the rate or tax payer that the men who spend those grants know what they are doing.

But, considering the state of things elsewhere, some of our theatres — and in particular the theatres outside London which outnumber the theatres in it by two to one — are showing signs of health which no one could have predicted a few years' ago.

Some groups and companies have just been dealt a body blow. The Arts Council has cut their grants; and where those grants assisted touring there is bound to be grief because if our provincial theatres are to stay open they must have as many shows to pick from as possible. In any case the provincial playgoer has as much right to his share of the cake as the Londoner. It also looks as if the withdrawal of grants will close down certain groups abruptly, leaving debts. This means no choice but to shut up shop.

If we remember, though, the number of shops the British theatre can boast we must be glad (while shedding a tear or two for those that have to close) that so many are still open — and not just open but apt to show initiative. This is the wonder.

Not many seasons ago it looked as if they couldn't. It seemed all up with many theatres then. Even the Royal Shakespeare Theatre was talking of shutting its London shop (the Aldwych). The Birmingham Rep used to close down in the summer. At Sheffield they were apt to play billiards instead of

drama. And because of some new horror like the Value Added Tax or new rates of pay for actors or inflation's way of reducing a subsidy's real value, there was a fear not only that many theatres might close their doors once and for all but that even if they didn't actually close they would have to close their minds to plays of quality or new work. They would have to lean on stand-bys: popular thrillers and farces. Enterprise would be forbidden in the clamour for customers, for it is almost an axiom among theatre managers that people will not go to new plays unless those plays are by well-established authors who can count on the services of a star player.

Wasn't it proved long ago — at the Royal Court and elsewhere — that the playgoer will no more chance his arm on a new play by an unknown author than will a manager: unless (of course) Olivier or Richardson, Scofield or Guinness chance to be in the cast? We playgoers are presumed a conservative lot. It isn't plays we go to see, it is acting; and though we know that our favourite actors can't be acting in every play we can only bear their absence if the play is already well and truly known to us.

Which means revivals and revivals and still more revivals of the tried and tested: whereas the health of the nation's drama is gauged by the quality and quantity of new plays — the injection of new blood with new ideas, new aspirations, maybe new thoughts, to show "the very age and body of the time his form and pressure." In other words, plays about life today.

So new plays are desirable; and if our new dramatists are to develop they need encouragement. They can't be expected to write hits straight off. They

continued overleaf

A CHANCE FOR NEW WRITERS – *continued*

must get experience of the stage and its uses; which means that they need playgoers. But if playgoers won't take a chance on new writers? There's the rub — traditionally speaking. That tradition however could be changing, at any rate outside London. Alan Ayckbourn's new plays of course don't count. They may start life at Scarborough where he runs his own company but he is hardly a new author. No, I mean authors who are venturing into the theatre for the first time.

The world still won't flock at once to their work, of course. But it is giving it (I suggest) a more sympathetic hearing than it would have got a few years' ago; enough to suggest that the regions are a vital force in the cultivation of new dramatists.

For one thing, at a subsidised repertory theatre a new author is unlikely to feel the heartbreak or the thousand natural shocks which his breed is by tradition heir to, for example, in Sloane Square when the critics descend en masse. There is less of the hit-or-miss atmosphere about the opening of a new author's piece in the provinces.

And the audience is different. It is a local audience. It takes a certain natural (ratepayer's) interest in the place. A regional theatre belongs to its audience in a way that can't be felt in central London where playgoers having more choice are necessarily more casual, less reliable, less likely to be supporters in the sense that many playgoers are supporters of their playhouse at, say Hornchurch or Birmingham, Coventry or Watford, Sheffield or Manchester, Salisbury or Bristol. And the result of this sense of support is a more open-minded attitude to plays, a greater willingness to try the untested whether it has stars to adorn it or not.

For although our regional theatres can muster a surprisingly high standard of production they cannot often hope (with the conspicuous exception of the Royal Exchange, Manchester) to trade in stars. What they mostly trade in is confidence and goodwill: the regular customer and (here and there) the kind

of season ticket system which if we subscribe to it makes regular playgoers of us all.



Whatever the reason for this growing sympathy outside London for the new dramatist, it is heartening to see its development — the crowded houses for new plays by utterly unknown authors, sometimes in the main auditorium, sometimes in the studio, always attracting close attention. I saw half a dozen such plays near the end of last year.

They were not, in the West End sense, try-outs. Nor (as far as I could tell) had any London management despatched a taster to snap the thing up if it looked profitable. There were technical faults, and a reviewer had no trouble picking holes. Reviewers seldom do.

But the plays were none-the-less thoughtful and serious-minded. They showed an imaginative understanding of different human dilemmas in a refreshingly theatrical way which gave their first audiences obvious pleasure. To the playgoer who cares about the theatre and doesn't merely want an easily digested entertainment to which he can take a mixed party of friends or business acquaintances, these new plays are an encouraging sign. Not only is the taste of the playgoer outside London improving. So are the quality and enterprise of regional theatres which have learned (as no West End house can hope) to cultivate a loyal and trusting audience.

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Vol. 5 No. 6

LOUIS I. MICHAELS and DUNCAN C. WELDON
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present

**DEBORAH
KERR**

**IAN
CARMICHAEL**

in

OVERHEARD

A new play by

PETER USTINOV

with

AHARON IPALÉ

CATHERINE FELLER

BRIGID MACKAY

**TAMMY
USTINOV**

**BARRY
DENNEN**

ROBERT PUTT

WILLIAM THOMAS

and

PAUL HARDWICK

Directed by CLIFFORD WILLIAMS

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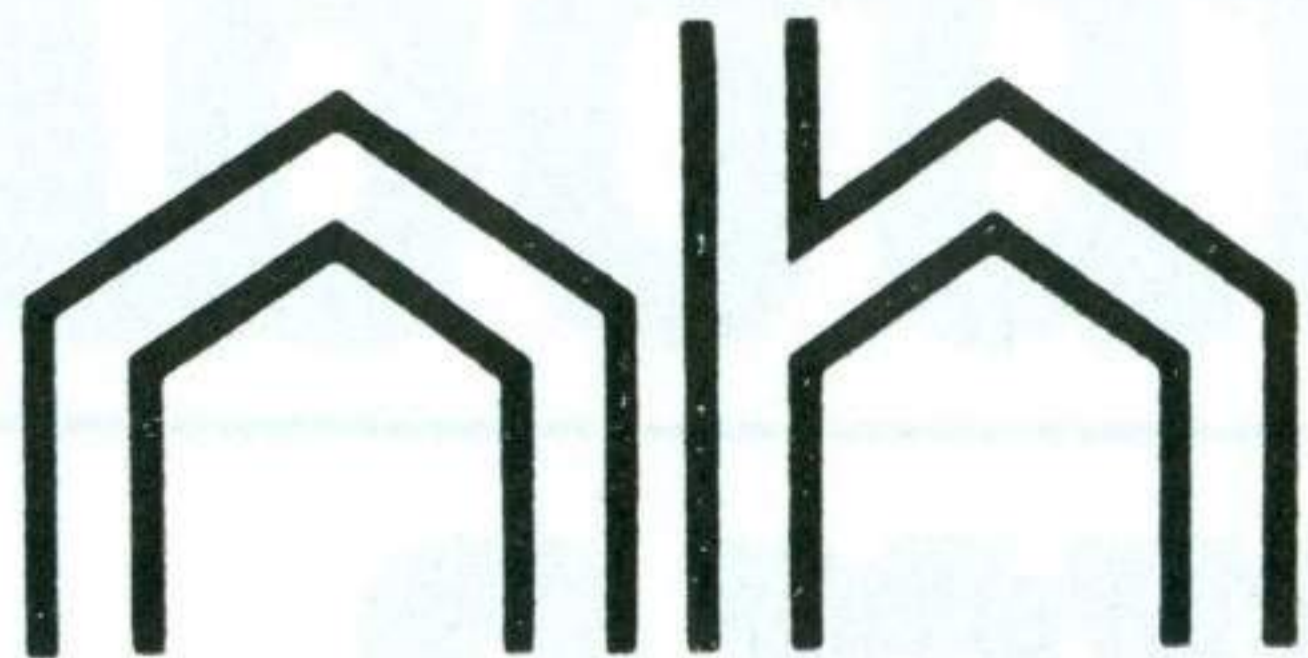
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FROM THE THEATRE DIRECTOR

Tonight we welcome Deborah Kerr, Ian Carmichael and the company to the Forum Theatre, in this new play by Peter Ustinov, scheduled to leave Billingham for a six-week tour (Birmingham, Bristol, Richmond, Brighton) before opening at the Haymarket Theatre, London, in May. This is the sixteenth West End show with which we have been associated. And there should be more to come. Your support alone will ensure that.

Now that we have re-commenced our major presentations, there is a wealth of interesting productions coming your way, with, we confidently hope, a wide range of appeal.

Immediately *Overheard* leaves us, we have the annual stage presentation by Stockton Stage Society. This year they have chosen the vigorous and musically delightful *The Pajama Game*.

From this we go into a week of *Early Days*, the play written by David Storey for Sir Ralph Richardson, and produced by the National Theatre. We are proud to present this 'tour de force' by one of our great actors — a 'must' for any theatre-goer.

We are also preparing a production of Agatha Christie's *Black Coffee* with Patrick Cargill whose portrayal of Baines, the butler, was hailed by all critics last year in the Forum production of *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*. This is one Christie we are fairly sure you will not have seen before.

From the Savoy Theatre on 27th April we bring popular team John Alderton and Pauline Collins in Charles Dyer's acclaimed play *Rattle of a Simple Man*.

12th May sees the return of full-length ballet with Delibes' *Sylvia*. Again we give you an opportunity to see a superb classical ballet you may well have never seen before. Delibes wrote two ballets, *Coppelia* and *Sylvia*, and part of a Minkus ballet *La Source*. The first-named is seen most often, but I can assure you that the music of *Sylvia* is every bit as gorgeous as the better-known work, and will delight young and old alike. The spacious Forum stage, of course, lends itself well to the great ballets. Again we urge you not to miss this opportunity. Since it has not been produced for fifteen years, this may well be a once-in-a-lifetime chance.

By way of complete contrast, the following week sees *The Jolson Revue* which has been playing very successfully for some time now.

Watch the Press for further announcements as negotiations are completed for other shows.

LES JOBSON

We apologise to patrons for any inconvenience during the building of our new, extended bar facilities.

DEBORAH KERR

Deborah Kerr was born in Helensburg, Scotland, and later moved to Sussex. She was educated at the Phyllis Smale Drama School, run by her aunt, and then obtained a scholarship to the Sadler's Wells Ballet Company. Her first stage appearance in London was in the corps-de-ballet in 1938. Her first acting roles came in the 1939 season at the Open Air Theatre, Regent's Park, doing walk-ons. She then joined the Playhouse Theatre, Oxford, playing Margaret in *Dear Brutus*.

Her British screen career began in 1940 playing a Salvation Army girl in *Major Barbara*, followed by *Love on the Dole*, *Hatter's Castle* and *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*. In 1943 she appeared in *Heartbreak House* with Dame Edith Evans at the Cambridge Theatre, then came more films including *Perfect Strangers* and *Black Narcissus*. In 1946 she was signed by MGM and went to Hollywood to appear with Clark Gable in *The Hucksters*. This was followed by *If Winter Comes*, *Edward My Son*, *King Solomon's Mines*, *Quo Vadis*, *Thunder in the East*, *The Prisoner of Zenda*, *Dream Wife* and *Young Bess*. Then came *From Here to Eternity* starring opposite Burt Lancaster, which was followed by starring roles in some of the greatest Hollywood films. These included *The King and I*, *Tea and Sympathy*, *Heaven Knows Mr. Allison*, *An Affair to Remember*, *Separate Tables*, *The Sundowners*, *The Grass is Greener*, *The Naked Edge*, *The Innocents*, *The Chalk Garden* and *The Night of the Iguana*. More recent films include *Casino Royale*, *Prudence and the Pill*, *The Gypsy Moths* and *The Arrangement*. Miss Kerr was awarded six Oscar nominations and three New York Film Critics' Best Actress of the Year awards.

Her many stage appearances include *Tea and Sympathy* on Broadway, for which she won the Donaldson Award, the Variety Poll Medal and the Sarah Siddons Award — all for the best actress of the year, *The Day After the Fair* at the Lyric Theatre, London, which was followed by a highly successful tour of the USA, and then Edward Albee's prize-winning play *Seascape* on Broadway, and *Long Day's Journey into Night* at the Ahmanson Theatre, Los Angeles.

Most recently she appeared in *Candida* in London, *The Last of Mrs. Cheyney* in the USA, and she then toured Australia in *The Day After the Fair*.

She is married to author/screenwriter Peter Viertel and lives in Klosters, Switzerland.

IAN CARMICHAEL

Ian Carmichael was born in Hull and was educated at Scarborough College and Bromsgrove School, Worcestershire. He studied for the stage at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, and had just embarked on his career when war broke out in 1939 and he volunteered for the Royal Armoured Corps.

After a period in the ranks, he passed through Sandhurst and was commissioned into the 22nd Dragoons. He was demobilised in 1946, having spent the final year of his service as a major organising army entertainment in Germany.

After the war, for several years, his work was mainly in musicals in which he appeared in many of London's small club theatres, in long tours of the provinces and on television — a period which also included a spell as a free-lance TV light entertainment director with the BBC. In 1951 he scored his first West End success in *The Lyric Revue*.

A whole series of intimate revues followed including *The Globe Revue*, *High Spirits*, *At the Lyric* and *Going to Town*. In 1954, in his first West End play of note, he made a considerable impact as the young TV director in Alan Melville's *Simon and Laura* — a part he was later to repeat in the film.

His film career burgeoned in 1955 when the Boulting Brothers cast him as the hapless recruit Stanley Windrush in *Privates Progress*. A string of films were to follow: *Brothers in Law*, *Lucky Jim*, *Happy is the Bride*, *I'm Alright Jack*, *School for Scoundrels*, *The Amorous Prawn* and many more. His most recent film is the remake of the Hitchcock thriller *The Lady Vanishes*.

In the theatre, apart from his revues, he will perhaps be best remembered for his performances in *The Tunnel of Love*, *The Gazebo*, *Critics' Choice*, *Say Who You Are*, *Getting Married* and the musical *I Do! I Do!*

His TV series include his impersonations of the legendary Bertie Wooster and the elegant, aristocratic sleuth Lord Peter Wimsey.

He is married with two daughters and five grandchildren, and he lives with his wife (the only one he's ever had!) in the wilds of Yorkshire.

PAUL HARDWICK

Paul Hardwick, after taking a degree in modern languages at Birmingham University, was commissioned in the Green Howards, and in 1942 was wounded and captured in the Western Desert. After his release at the end of the war his first professional role was Scarus in *Antony and Cleopatra* at the Piccadilly Theatre with Dame Edith Evans and Sir Godfrey Tearle. For eight years he was a leading player with the Royal Shakespeare Company.

He is credited with over 300 television plays — recently *Churchill's Generals* for the BBC — and has also appeared in many films, most notably as Capulet in Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet*. He has made several world tours, appearing in over 30 different countries. In the last few years he has played such diverse roles in London's West End as the Cardinal in Hochhuth's *The Representative* at the Aldwych Theatre, Dr. Relling in *The Wild Duck* at the Criterion Theatre, John of Gaunt in *Richard II* at the Piccadilly Theatre, The Duke of Buckingham in *The Wars of the Roses* at the Aldwych Theatre, Falstaff in *Henry IV* at the Round House, and The Mayor in Feydeau's *Signed and Sealed* with Kenneth Williams at the Comedy Theatre.

He was in the 1977 Chichester Festival and repeated the part of Boanerges in *The Apple Cart* in London at the Phoenix Theatre, and the part of Robert Lancaster opposite Ingrid Bergman in *Waters of the Moon* at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, followed by *Look After Lulu* with Geraldine McEwan, also at the Theatre Royal. In 1980 he played Boss Mangan in the Malvern Festival production of *Heartbreak House* — these four productions were for Triumph, and portrayed Leonid Breznev in the Granada TV documentary *Invasion*.

AHARON IPALÉ

Aharon Ipalé was born in Tel Aviv and was at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art for three years. His Motion Picture credits are: *Airport 79 Concord, The Personal Touch, Fiddler on the Roof, Madron* and *The Innocent Bystander*. His movies for TV are: *The Immigrants, The Hostage Heart, Raid on Entebbe, Moses, The Law Giver, Christ Recrucified, Warship* and *Center Play*.

Aharon has appeared as a guest star in numerous television series including *Salvage, Vegas, Taxi, One Day at a Time, Grandpa Goes to Washington, Hawaii Five-O, Kojak, Policewoman, Charlie's Angels, Wonder Woman, San Pedro Beach Bums, Feather and Father, The Somerset Maugham Series* (featured as the painter 'Augustus John'), *Jason King* (featured as a 'young revolutionary'), *Department S, The Zoo Gang* and *Ventures*.

His theatre credits are *The Great Caper* (Royal Court Theatre, London), *Decameron '73*, and he appeared in ten plays both classic and contemporary for Coventry Belgrade Theatre Rep.

TAMMY USTINOV

Tammy Ustinov went to Oxford University. She has worked extensively in repertory throughout Britain, including Birmingham, as Vivie in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, Luka in *The Promise* at Derby, Nora in *The Plough and the Stars* at Oxford Playhouse, and Julia in *The Rivals* at Coventry. Tammy lived and worked in Scotland for a time, appearing as Joyce in *Walter and Gloria* in *B Movie*, and in the rock musical *Kibbo Kift*, all at the Traverse, Edinburgh. She was in *The Magistrate* at Chichester and in London. She played Gertrude in *Oh, Clarence* at the Lyric and was in *The Unknown Soldier and His Wife* at the New London. She was a member of the Young Vic Company, appearing as Beattie in *Roots*, Hero in *Much Ado About Nothing* and Giancinta in *Scapino*. She played Nana in *Roundheads and Pointedheads* at Nottingham Playhouse.

She was a member of the BBC Radio Repertory Company.

Her numerous television credits include Jean in the BBC series *The Standard*, Miss Finch in STV's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, Liz in *Billy Liar*, Debbie in *Airport Chaplain*, and Robert Louis Stevenson.

Her film credits include *Blood from the Mummy's Tomb*, Rosalind in *Blood on Satan's Claw*, Julie in *Antiques at Auction* and Constance in *This House of Bude*.

She has just returned from South Africa, where she has been playing the lead in *Romantic Comedy*.

BARRY DENNEN

Barry Dennen grew up in Hollywood and has lived in London since 1968 when he came here to play the MC in *Cabaret* at the Palace Theatre and stayed to appear in *La Turista* at the Royal Court. He created the role of Pontius Pilate in the original recording of *Jesus Christ Superstar* and played that part in the Broadway production and in the film. He has been seen in many films including *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Kentucky Fried Movie*, *The Shining* and in *Shock Treatment* and *Ragtime*. He was featured in the BBC TV series *Oppenheimer*.

He is married to the actress Pamela Strong and has two boys, Timothy and Barnaby.

OVERHEARD

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IRIS <i>His Wife</i>	—	DEBORAH KERR
HILDA BEVERIDGE <i>His Secretary</i>	—	TAMMY USTINOV
ABDUL <i>A servant</i>	—	WILLIAM THOMAS
SERGEANT BUTTIMER <i>In Charge of Security</i>	—	ROBERT PUTT
BOZIDAR POPKOV-PROKOP <i>A Poet</i>	—	AHARON IPALÉ
COMRADE KURUK <i>First Secretary of the Party</i>	—	PAUL HARDWICK
MME. KURUKOVA <i>His Wife</i>	—	BRIGID MACKAY
COMRADE RUKUC <i>Secretary for Commerce, Initiative, Energy & Recreation</i>	—	BARRY DENNEN
MME. RUKUCOVA <i>His Wife</i>	—	CATHERINE FELLER

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CATHERINE FELLER

Born on the Eiffel Tower, Catherine could best be described as European — of Austrian/Polish parentage, lived in Italy and Yugoslavia — came to England at the age of nine, and learnt her English at a stage school, which she left at the age of fifteen to become the youngest actress to win a Tennents Contract and go behind the Iron Curtain in the Peter Brook/Paul Scofield production of *Hamlet* — where her teenage jiving caused the Russian dignitaries to comment on the last night in Moscow that should her career match her dancing she would indeed be great!

Oddly enough — eight years later, at the age of twenty-three — Catherine got her name in lights at the Phoenix Theatre in *Monsieur Blaise* — which was the same theatre that *Hamlet* played at after Moscow! Further West End plays include *Rose Tattoo* by Tennessee Williams, Gogol's *Marriage Brokers*, *Who Cares* by Leo Lehman and once again in a Brook production of *The Lark* by Jean Anouilh.

Outside London she has worked at the Nottingham Playhouse, Bristol Old Vic, Liverpool, York and at Windsor as well as at Croydon where she played one of her favourite parts — *Gigi*. Most recently Catherine toured with the Cambridge Theatre Company in *Anatol*, playing 'Elsa'.

Catherine has played in 38 television productions — the most recent being the series of *Lillie* in which she was 'Dominique, Lillie's Italian maid/companion, and the part of Peppone's wife in *The Little World of Don Camillo* for the BBC.

Films include getting her bottom pinched by Peter Sellers in *Waltz of the Toreadors*, and playing opposite Oliver Reed in *The Curse of the Werewolf*. When she appeared with Monica Vitti in an Italian film being shot in England, she was asked to stay on as Monica's dialogue-coach. Catherine, who speaks fluent Italian, German and some French, accepted, and this led to a period of study which led to a Secretary/Linguist Diploma and becoming a registered Guide Lecturer, where Catherine enjoyed having a captive audience of Italians, Germans and Americans.

BRIGID MACKAY

Brigid's recent theatre credits are Daphne Drummond in *There Goes the Bride* at Plymouth, and Olympe in *A Flea in Her Ear* also at Plymouth.

Her recent television credits have been Katinka in *The Birds Fall Down* directed by John Glenister, Cook in *The Ghost Sonata* directed by Philip Saville, Nurse in *C2 H5 OH* directed by James Cellan Jones, Shopkeeper in *We The Accused* directed by Richard Stroud, Mrs. Cobb in *Maybury* also directed by Richard Stroud, and Mrs. Davis in *Autumn Sunshine* directed by Rodney Bennett.

ROBERT PUTT

Robert Putt trained at the East 15 Acting School. His first professional engagement was a brief visit to the Royal Court Upstairs in an improvised play by Mike Leigh. After this came Repertory at the Liverpool Everyman, first with Peter James, then with Alan Dossier; followed by Lincoln, the Manchester Library, Nottingham and Sheffield.

Returning to London he appeared at the Shaw Theatre in Adrian Mitchell's *Mind Your Heads*, and then did two plays with Ken Campbell — *Old King Cole* and *The Taming of the Shrew*. This was followed by a return to the Royal Court Upstairs in Jeremy Seabrook's and Michael O'Neill's *Sex and Kinship in a Savage Society*. After a long gap away from the theatre while working in television, he went back to Sheffield to play Sergeant Kite in *The Recruiting Officer*. He played Abhorson in Peter Gill's production of *Measure for Measure* at the Riverside Studio. He then joined the Old Vic Company for *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Government Inspector* and *The 88*. After this he went into the Royal Shakespeare's production *Once in a Lifetime* at the Piccadilly Theatre.

Television appearances include *Easy Go* by Alan Clark, *King of the Castle* by Willy Russell, *Two Days that Shook the Branch* by Henry Livings, *The Life of Shakespeare*, *Barmitzvah Boy* and *Ready When You Are Mr. Gagill*. He has appeared in episodes of many series including *Target*, *The Sweeney*, *The Avengers*, *Z Cars*, the Granada children's series *Soldier and Me*, and *Pennies from Heaven* for the BBC, and *The Professionals*.

Films include *It Shouldn't Happen to a Vet*, *The Ruttles*, *Porridge* and *Hawk the Slayer*.

Bob has recently finished at the Churchill Theatre, Bromley, in *Funny Peculiar*, and he has just completed work on *Shine on Harvey Moon* for ATV.

WILLIAM THOMAS

William Thomas was born in Swansea. After training at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London he made his first professional stage appearance in *Geneva* at the Mermaid Theatre. He stayed on to appear in *Dick Turpin* and a season of other productions for children.

After gaining experience in television in Cardiff and London he joined the Brian Way Children's Theatre Company. More television was followed by seasons in repertory at Coventry and Leicester and with the Prospect Theatre Company in London and on tour. In Wales he appeared in several productions for the Cardiff-based Welsh Theatre Company and Theatr Yr Ymylon.

Recent television appearances have been in *Grange Hill* and *Dylan Thomas* for the BBC, and in *Rain on the Roof* for ITV. For five years he has played one of the main characters in *Pobol y Cwm*, a Welsh-language series for children. He will shortly be seen in *Ten Years On*, a dramatised documentary film, and as William George in a thirteen-part drama series based on the life of *Lloyd George* which begins transmission on BBC 2 this month.

CLIFFORD WILLIAMS — Director

Clifford Williams has been an Associate Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company since 1963. He has also directed for the National Theatre of Great Britain and for the National Theatres of Finland, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Mexico. He directed Anthony Shaffer's *Sleuth* in London, New York and Paris, and *Oh! Calcutta!* in London and Paris. His recent London productions include *The Old Country* with Alec Guinness, *Stevie* with Glenda Jackson, *Wild Oats* with Alan Howard and *Born in the Garden* with Beryl Reid. He is Chairman of the British Theatre Association.

ALAN TAGG — Designer

Alan Tagg has designed a wide range of productions for the theatre and exhibitions. He has worked extensively for the Royal Court, designing seventeen productions including *Look Back in Anger*, *Hedda Gabler* and *Alpha Beta*, and has also worked for the National Theatre and the RSC. His numerous West End shows include *The Constant Wife*, *Absurd Person Singular*, *The Seagull*, *The Bed Before Yesterday*, *Same Time Next Year*, *Donkey's Years*, *Candida*, *Waters of the Moon* and *The Kingfisher*, both in London and New York. His most recent work in the West End includes *Whose Life Is It Anyway?*, *The Millionairess*, *Bent*, Alan Ayckbourn's *Sisterly Feelings* at the National, and the current productions of *Middle Age Spread*, Alan Ayckbourn's *Taking Steps* at the Lyric Theatre and *Moving* at the Queens Theatre.

JUDITH BLAND — Costume Designer

Judith was an Arts Council Assistant Designer with the Royal Shakespeare Company from 1973-1975. Following this she worked on several projects with Abdelkader Farrah including *The Bewitched*, *Mardi Gras*, *Carte Blanche* and *Dracula* in London, and *Troilus and Cresida* and *As You Like It* in Vienna. Judith's solo designs include *Babies Grow Old*, *The Changeling* and *The Maid's Tragedy* set and costumes for the Royal Shakespeare Company, and costume designs for *Wild Oats* (RSC), *She Stoops to Conquer*, *Happy Days*, *The Crucifer of Blood*, *Ghosts of Riddle-Me-Heights* and *Reflections*.

MICK HUGHES — Lighting Designer

Mick Hughes began his career as a cameraman in television, went on to light productions at Chichester between 1966 and 1970, was responsible for lighting *Vivat! Vivat! Regina!* at the Piccadilly, *My Fat Friend* at the Globe, *Collaborators* at the Duchess, *A Month in the Country* at the Albery, *The Circle* and *Look After Lulu* at the Haymarket, and several productions at the Hong Kong Festival including Chichester's *Julius Caesar*. In 1978 he lit *The Merchant* at the Birmingham Rep., and the pop group 'The Gordon Gilrap Band!' Recently he lit *Death of a Salesman* at the National Theatre, *Stagestruck* at the Vaudeville, *Rattle of a Simple Man* at the Savoy Theatre, and *The Last of Mrs. Cheyney* at the Cambridge Theatre. He has been lighting designer for all Chichester productions since 1974.

PETER USTINOV — Author

Internationally celebrated for his versatility in the arts, Peter Ustinov has made an impact as an actor, playwright, director, author and designer and is also known as an incomparable raconteur. He has acted throughout the English speaking theatre: in the West End, on Broadway, at Chichester, on tour in North America, and he played the title role of King Lear for the Stratford 1979 Season Canada. His numerous films, among them the recent *Death on the Nile*, have brought him two Oscars. He also has three Emmy Awards, a Benjamin Franklin Medal, Warsaw's Order of the Smile (for his work with UNICEF) and a *Nobel Award* presented by the Association for the Promotion of Humour in International Affairs to honour his artistic achievement and his dedication on the idea of international assistance for the world's children. He has published novels, short stories and a collection of cartoons. His newest book, *Dear Me*, is an autobiography, published in 1977.

Please no smoking or photography in the auditorium.

The Management reserves the right to refuse admission to the theatre, and to change, vary or omit, without previous notice, any item of the programme.

Coffee is available during the interval in the restaurant area.

Drinks for the interval may be ordered before the show commences.

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There is ample free car parking space near this theatre.

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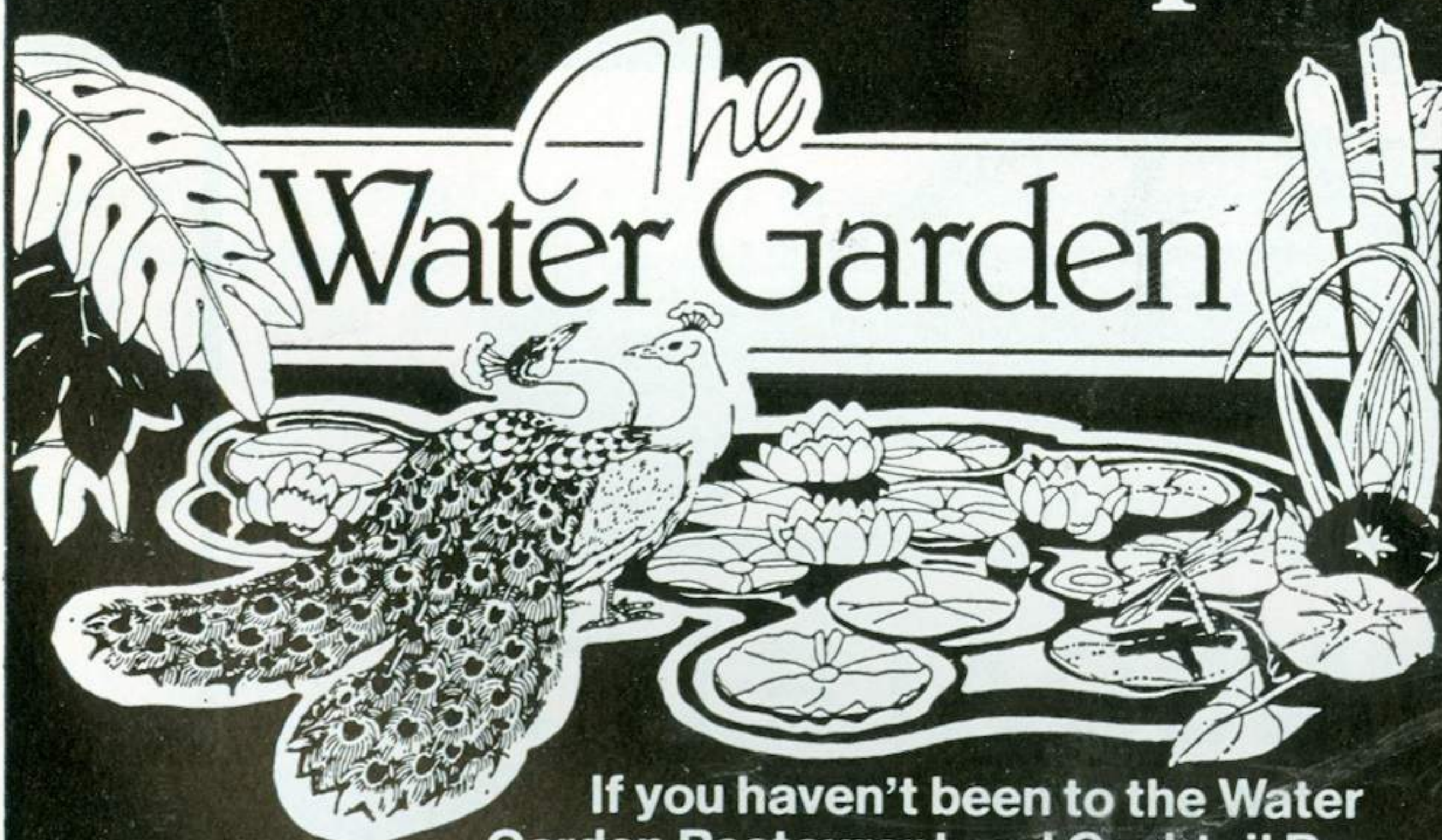
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ECHOES OF AN ACTOR-MANAGER

by Patrick Ludlow

Away from the theatre Donald Wolfit was a charmer with an endearing way of telling stories against himself. The last time we lunched together he'd just returned from South Africa where he'd insisted that a quota of seats be reserved for Blacks. 'But, Patrick', he said, 'the Blacks couldn't care less for me, or my plays.'

As an actor-manager he wasn't always popular. The money was good — but there wasn't much of it. And there wasn't much chance to shine either. Irving, the *guv*, often allowed Handsome Bill (William Terriss) to steal his thunder. Du Maurier let Ronnie Squire, as the attractive crook-butler, run away with 'The Last of Mrs Cheyney' (it's the same story with the recent Joan Collins revival). And Olivier is renowned for taking a back seat with a small part. But the lesser actor-managers were notorious for keeping all the glory for themselves.

Nevertheless there is much praise due to Donald for persisting with the Bard when he was death to the box office. Wolfit's *King Lear* has been acclaimed as the best of our time; and when the Blitz was at its worst he put on lunchtime shows at the Strand. His bust is in the Garrick Club. His knighthood richly deserved. There's a lovely touch of irony in the play 'The Dresser' when it is known that the Grand Theatre, Plymouth, has been bombed. Says Sir, the actor-manager: 'I made my debut at the Grand, Plymouth.'

Norman, the dresser: 'They weren't to know.'

In his foreword to 'The Dresser' (Samuel French, 26 Southampton Street, WC2E 7JE, £2-25) Ronald Harwood maintains that although he was in fact Wolfit's dresser for five years, he is not Norman. Sir is not Wolfit. Nor is Her Ladyship Lady Wolfit.

But Sir, the actor-manager, is portrayed as an egotistical exhibitionist. So, with many saving graces, was Wolfit. And Freddie Jones, playing Sir, conveyed this in Mr Harwood's play with rich humour. Her Ladyship was always in the shadows and discredited by the press. So was Lady Wolfit. And the casting of an actress who resembled Lady Wolfit makes one think that the author 'protests too much'.

All the smaller parts tally with the kind of people Sir Donald employed so that we get a portrait of the Wolfit set-up. But, as Mr Harwood says, he is not the dresser in his play. Norman, apart from his other qualities, depends on his master. Harwood was self sufficient. Latterly he became the company manager (note, a character missed) and this would be his *métier*. They say a man who can run a theatrical company can rule all Ireland.

Now it could be that he does come obliquely into the play. There is a strong scene, which smacks of a manager's attitude, where Norman threatens a girl with the sack. She is the general understudy and "effects" girl (Jacqueline Tong) who, hoping for promotion, is for ever sneaking in on her boss soliciting his advances. To sort out fact from fiction one should read Mr

continued overleaf

ECHOES OF AN ACTOR-MANAGER – *continued*

Harwood's biography of Wolfit (also obtainable from French).

Wisely the play is mainly comedic. To rebut the ill luck of mentioning 'that Scottish piece', Sir, must leave the room, turn round three times and knock before being readmitted. He starts to make up for Othello when about to play Lear. And in his hilarious curtain speech he can't remember what town he's in, where he is going next week, or what play they are doing next day. Actually it was Tree who could never remember where he was and would wax poetical on the beauties of York when at Wigan.

Norman, brilliantly played by Tom Courtenay, is effeminate, devoted, possessive and very funny. Some of these treasures look after their charges at home as well as in the playhouse. But they are dying out. So it's good to have the character retained for perpetuity. Even Sir's death scene is played for laughs with Norman's line: 'We're not dead, are we?'

Then, when Norman discovers he's been left out of Sir's autobiography, he behaves badly and abuses the corpse. But in the end we should feel deep sympathy for the dresser whose life's work has finished. It's a great part and Courtenay has the propelling force and perfect timing of a star performer; but the afternoon I saw him, at the Queen's, he lacked the pathos required for the finale.

Backstage plays are not easy to write. It's a long time since Wyndham did 'David Garrick' and I doubt if it would be acceptable today. The exciting subject 'Kean' (with Alan Badel) did not create the furore expected. And a colourful piece about the clown Grimaldi was a flop. Mr Harwood's cleverness lies in not taking the theatre too seriously. Her Ladyship: 'Who cares whether he acts or not?'

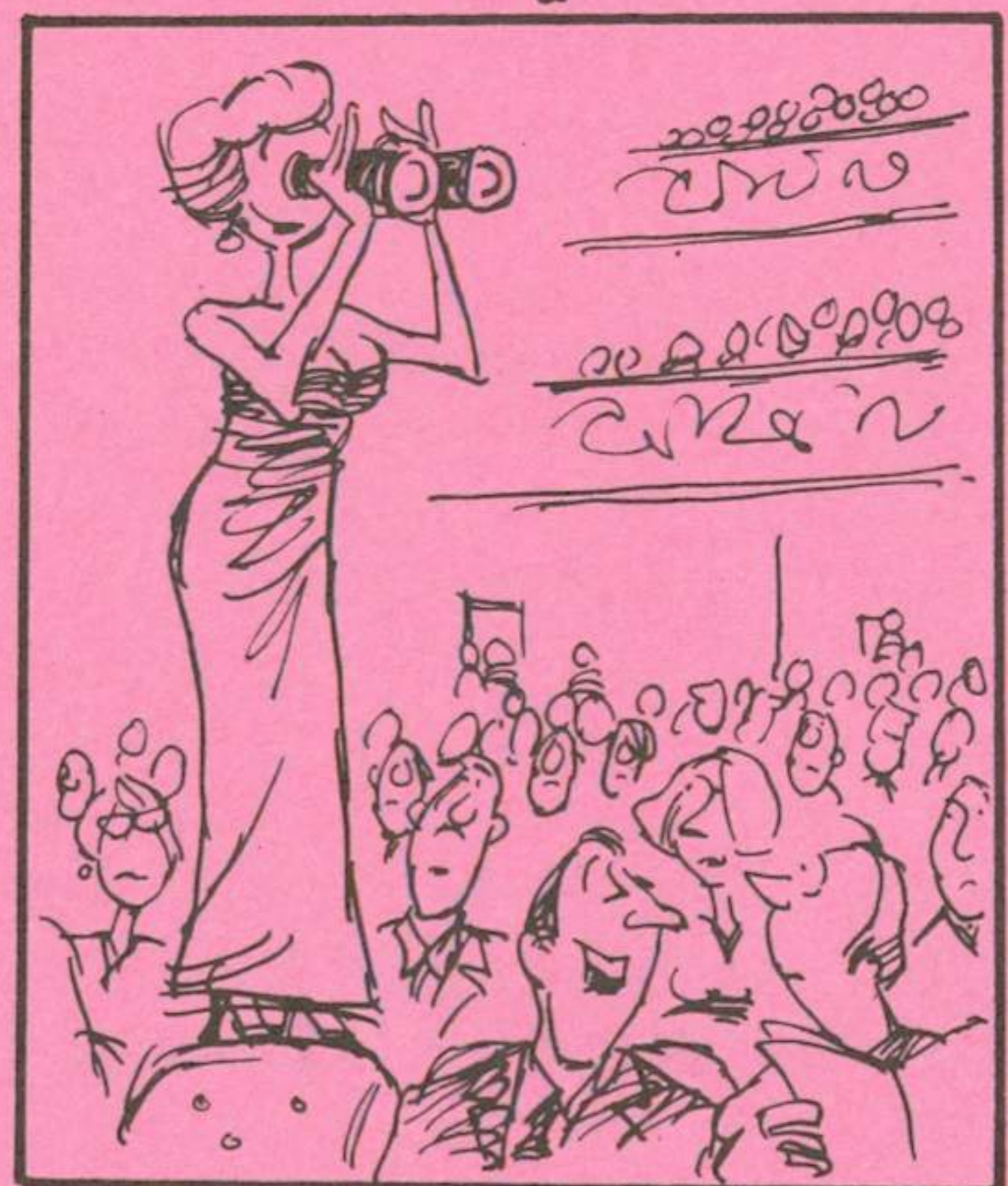
Norman: 'There must be someone.'

Later in the year 'The Dresser' is due to open in the United States. What are its chances? Even with that capricious audience I'll hazard three reasons why it may succeed. Americans understand backstage life, will enjoy an English actor-manager being sent-up, and the beautiful 'Beggar on Horseback' did better their side of the Atlantic. Alas, Marc Connelly (part author), doyen of their Algonquin Round Table and our Savage Club, has just died, aged ninety. Marc was an expert on this kind of play and his advice, for the New York opening, would have been invaluable. However Michael Elliott's direction is faultless.

With two such parts the reps will clamour for the play. And it's a must for the movies. Even film stars can hardly make a hash of a line like: 'When a doctor says you want a rest, you know perfectly well he hasn't the slightest idea what's wrong with you.'

Or: 'He went on playing Hamlet till there were more lines in his face than steps to the gallery.'

ENCORE! BY NIM BAKER



"My wife invariably sees someone she knows in the interval."



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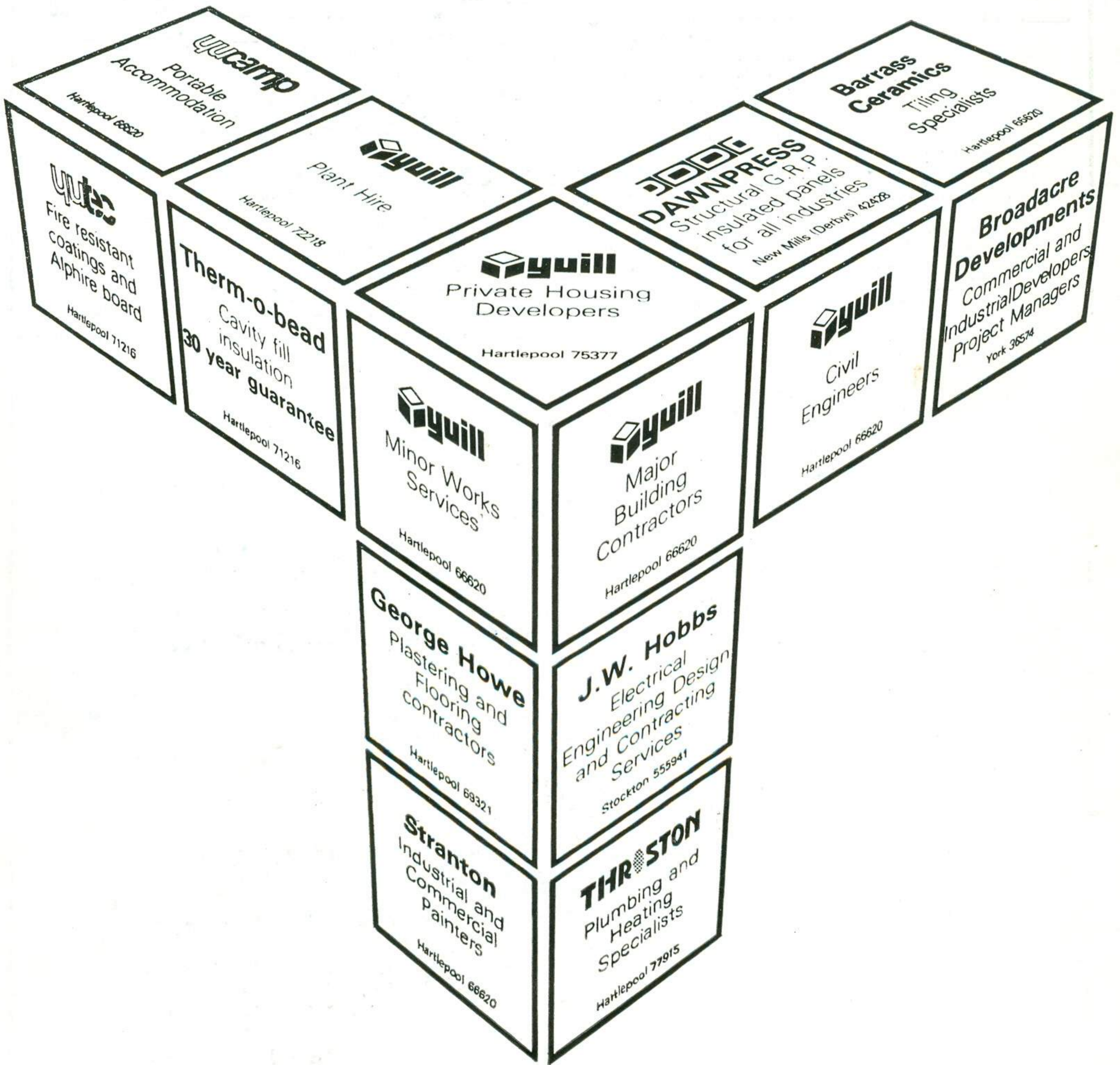
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