

the advantages of their mixed training in dance and mime to great effect in their version of *The Insect Play*. It was gratifying to see them enter so completely into the atmosphere of the week, as when they performed impromptu sketches before a late night cabaret audience whom they conquered entirely. A similar company effort came from Birmingham Youth Theatre with *The Goalkeeper's Revenge*, an adaptation of Bill Naughton's stories, which firmly broke the University monopoly on student drama with many of its cast being under sixteen. Indeed the atmosphere generally during the week was one of involvement, with very few companies making the mistake of leaving directly after their performance.

Hull University's musical *Through the Iris* provided an undemanding and popular late night slot. Based around the photographs of Bill Brandt it had a fine score and an excellent cast, but was sadly hampered by the banality of its lyrics. For students to undertake a full-length musical is, however, commendable at the very least, and *Through the Iris* provided one of the Festival's treasured 'moments': David Allman singing "I'm not Rene Magritte" while dancing absurd, puppet-like steps. The same talented performer turned up later in the week in a wholly different vein, as a Polish survivor of Auschwitz in *A World of Stone*. He brought a powerful presence to the part in a play which was nominated for the Sunday Times Playscript award, and provided a reminder if one was needed of the legacy of the holocaust. Another remarkable 'moment' came in a hilarious educational satire called *Sabre-Tooth Curriculum* from the University of East Anglia. A caveman gives a detailed series of instructions to a dozen fish frozen in a block of ice, about how to avoid being tickled. A fine example of inventive absurdity in a spectacular show, and of adventurous directing triumphing over limited resources: the ice and many more things beside were mimed with a table cloth.

Technically also companies were more adventurous this year. *Voyage Fantastique* from the Wimbledon School of Art made extensive and imaginative use of sound effects, while the lighting and set design of *Brenda* from Manchester Umbrella was exemplary. A trapeze, a false lawn and a rope light provided the basic tools which were used to create a variety of effects and settings. The play won the BP award for best stage design. General lighting still caused a failure of nerve with many companies however, who seemed content with poor general cover. It seems an area which has been left behind in the general range of improvements.

The other 'general' failing of many of the Festival's finalists was related to the hardest of all things to predict; audience response. Many directors pitched their plays at an audience which was expected to respond in a particular way. This resulted in unintentional humour or occasionally in a complete failure of purpose, when the audience reacted unpredictably. Directors can never rationalise audience response, but they should do their best to focus the effect of their work.

NATIONAL STUDENT DRAMA FESTIVAL – AWARDS 1982

National Theatre/BP Student Administration Award: Lesley Wake (UEA)

Michael Imison Administration Award: Hettie Macdonald (Bristol Univ)

International Student Playscript Award: Mick Clifford for *Breaks*

Sunday Times Student Drama Critic Award: Robert Randall (B'ham Univ)

Inter-action Community Theatre Prize: St Luke's, Exeter for *Sabre-Tooth Curriculum*

BP Awards:

Best Director: Simon Curtis – Bristol

Outstanding Production: *Happy Jack* – Minsthorpe High School

Best Classic Production: *The Dog in the Manger* – Manchester

Best Actress: Eileen Ryan – Hull

Best Company Acting: Birmingham Youth Theatre

Best Supporting Actress: Katharine Jones – Manchester

Best Actor: Cyril Nri – Bristol

Best Supporting Actor: George Usill – Manchester

Best Comedy Performance: Sara Thomas – Manchester

Design: Paul Lister and Hugh Charterton – Manchester

Costume: Wimbledon School of Art

Stage Management: Bristol

Lighting/Board Operation: Dave Cook – Manchester,

Pete Herbert – Minsthorpe High School

Best Lighting: Bretton Hall

Best Incidental Music: Manchester

BACKGROUND TO SELECTION:

Any student, or mainly student group may enter any kind of production. Adjudication can take place at the Edinburgh Festival or by arrangement with the selectors, who are all theatre practitioners.

| 1982: | Total | entry | – | 68 |
|---------------|-------|---------|----------|----|
| | | Entered | Selected | |
| New Plays | | 24 | 9 | |
| Group Devised | | 8 | 3 | |
| Adaptations | | 5 | 1 | |
| Classics | | 14 | 4 | |
| Known Moderns | | 17 | 1 | |
| | | 68 | 18 | |

PRINCIPAL SPONSORS:

The Sunday Times
 British Petroleum
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 The University of Hull
 Granada Television
 London Weekend Television
 Scottish Television
 The City of Hull

The judges' summary when it came after all the frenetic activity of a week's performing, was astute and helpful. They appealed for a marshaling of the obvious energies present in all the productions into more specific channels. The major misgivings were expressed by Bill Alexander when he warned against the dangers of "performance". Productions should be *felt* as well as staged and should allow their own logic to develop without self-consciousness. Unintentionally a summary of the week's best productions.

James Fenton summing up, said that any student company on a limited budget which had the choice between the National Student Drama Festival and the Edinburgh fringe would be well advised to choose the Festival for its wealth of professional guidance. That guidance was in evidence this year as constructive and apposite. When the circus reconvenes at Bretton Hall in 1983 more people should give themselves the opportunity of receiving his advice.

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