

THE 27th National Students Drama Festival 1982

a report by
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The 27th National Student Drama Festival settled in Hull for the second consecutive year, and proved once again the value of its extensive and generous sponsorship. The annual event, founded by the Sunday Times, provides a unique opportunity for student companies not only to meet and perform, but also to receive the attention of several theatre professionals. This guidance is an invaluable asset for students with theatrical ambitions, especially in these days of reduced subsidy, when entry to the profession becomes increasingly difficult. Each year the Festival uncovers new talent which might otherwise remain undiscovered, and for this reason alone justifies its existence.

The direction in which students have channelled their creative energies this year, was revealed by eight days of continuous

spectacle. A full scale production of Goethe's *Goetz von Berlichingen* shared space in the programme with an updated *Seagull*, a musical and an improvised 'performance' piece. An almost unremitting pace was sustained over the week as curtain down was followed hard by curtain up. All credit is due to the technical and administrative staff who kept the Festival's house in order despite a minimum of fit-up time.

Alongside the 18 productions were a host of workshops and fringe events which provided light relief and stimulating distraction. This year's adjudicators: voice coach Linda Maher, BBC director Martin Jenkins, Sunday Times critic James Fenton and RSC director Bill Alexander, each contributed valuable workshops. Besides those on voice training, verse speaking and direc-

ting, James Fenton offered the rare delight of a forum to criticise the critic, and gave several much needed tips to aspiring word-smiths. Equally informative were workshops by William Hobbs on stage-fighting, Mike Bradwell on characterisation and Joyce Nettles on casting in the theatre.

The fringe cabaret, as so often in the past, threw up acts which rivalled the Festival finalists in polish and commitment. A new all-women group called "Short Back and Sides" provided a blistering evening's entertainment with a fine series of songs and sketches. Alan Plater gave us 'poems and pints' and the fringe generally lent a welcome air of levity to the Festival's main proceedings.

A noticeable element this year was the way in which students had made a laudable response to the plea from last year's judges



Best Actress Eileen Ryan in *Faith Healer*



George Ussil in *The Dog in the Manger* (Best supporting actor)



Neil Horsefield in *Goetz von Berlichingen*