



Szabo: Bath Technical College's play about the life of French Resistance heroine Violette Szabo.



Durham University's production of 'Equus'

making distinct impressions on the Festival nonetheless, were a brace of original plays written and directed by students. *Somewhere in Barnet* by Manchester University was a touching if rather slight musical which was popular and appealing in an undemanding way. It also gave

Festival goes a variety of tunes to whistle at odd moments. Hull University's *How Does Your Garden Grow?* in much the same vein, was a group-devised view of children and the ways in which they perceive adults. Eileen Ryan's sudden transformation from a small girl in a pinafore to an equivocating Catholic Priest inveighing against the evils of masturbation, achieved purely by the force of her characterisation, brought her the award as best supporting actress.

The judging when it came, fittingly on the seventh day after six days of frantic creativity, was apposite and constructive. James Fenton and Martin Jenkins gave particularly incisive reviews of the week and provided answers to some of the problems posed by the productions. Estelle Kohler gave a wonderfully sensitive invocation, appealing to young actors and actresses to value the words they spoke. Her advice that to be heard is crucial came too late for the cast of Exeter University's *The Changeling*, whose version of Middleton's Jacobean revenge tragedy was sadly muffled. Her advice was not needed by the company from the Central School of Art and Design, whose play *Stories* was relayed principally by slides and tape recordings.

Technically the Festival was a remarkable success, with each play involving high speed fit-ups, tech. runs and strikes. The general standard of lighting was unimpressive, consisting mainly of general covers, with little imaginative effect in evidence in most of the plays. Perhaps fear of failure inhibited full use of the effects of the Gulbenkian Studio Theatre's Rank SP 80/3 lighting desk. The notable exception was *A Portrait of Mrs Siddons* in which careful design and imaginative effort made the use of single parabolic spots freeze the beginning and end of the play. Throughout, the technical crews worked under pressure, fitting up in the minimum of time, and surmounting even the disappearance of a wall—the only prop. for an excellent production of *Abide With Me* by Southampton University.

The festive season is over, and this year's National Student Drama has again allowed attention to be focused on work that would otherwise go unnoticed. It has brought to light the considerable talents of John Godber, Rebecca Harbord and John Phelan: a memorable 'best actor' from Manchester. The obvious conclusion of the week must be, however, that without the cooperation and labour of a great many students all this would not have been. . .

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