

in her discussion of the drama documentaries where playwrights siezed on such contemporary material as murders, witch trials and lives of the famous and infamous, with plays of famous trials being staged within a few weeks of the verdict.

Judith Cook discusses the place of women in the plays of the period, noting that many of them provide a reliable cross-section of believable women which reflects accurately the position in which women found themselves at that time — indeed, compared with their Victorian counterparts, the women of Middleton, Dekker and Massinger are positively liberated. Interviews with Barry Kyle and Adrian Noble discuss the potential of the work of Shakespeare's contemporaries as plays for today. Certainly we will never be able to experience them in quite the same climate as their original audiences who might well expect to witness a public hanging, drawing and quartering on their way home from the playhouse. On the other hand is there much difference between this and our going home to the television news where the violence and gore is nightly on a par with that in a Jacobean tragedy?

I read **THE SHAKESPEARE WALLAH** shortly after returning from India. I completed it in a day of British Railing during which I became so engrossed that I twice nearly missed my connections. This is high concentration for one who does most of life's thinking while looking out of train windows. Perhaps it was my recent closeness to India that did it. But no I think it was something more than that. Geoffrey Kendall's autobiography is a tale of the mystic power of theatre to enter the soul so that life's compulsive purpose becomes getting the show on. Floods and earthquakes did not stop the curtain going up for the Shakespearana Company; nor did an inflation which raised every cost except seat prices. Every administrator and every Arts Council client should read the tale of how this particular Shakespeare wallah with his family and friends got their bookings and delivered their performances. And gave us the gorgeous Felicity as a bonus. No theatrelover should go on holiday this summer without this wallah's story.

Maybox who have acquired the Albery family theatres and added a restored Whitehall have produced a history of these

theatres as **THEATRE NIGHTS & THEATRE KNIGHTS**. It is in A4 format, about the same thickness as this magazine: the sort of publication that the antiquarian theatre booksellers list as 'festschrift'. The colour is good and if the pictures are a little small they do clearly focus on the important point that they are intended to make. The text unravels the intertwining family trees of the Wyndhams and Alberys, tracing the history of the stages and some of their hits. Just the thing to help increase audience awareness of our theatrical heritage and the need for a Theatres Trust to watch over it. And, of course, it is obligatory for we ephemera nutters.

John Willett's new book is published by Methuen in association with this year's **CASPAR NEHER** exhibition organised by the Arts Council at Riverside Studios and subsequently seen in Manchester, Sheffield and Plymouth. It is copiously illustrated in monochrome with many of Neher's fine drawings which are as economical in their line as were the stage settings in their visual contribution to the productions. A coated paper ensures a high printing quality for these illustrations and Willett's spare text guides us through Neher's life and relates his designs to the plays. The book concentrates on Neher's work with Brecht. Considering the stylistic versatility that Neher demonstrates in his work with other directors, particularly in the opera house, one is tempted to conclude that Neher had more influence on Brecht than Brecht had on Neher.

Macmillan continue to be the most prolific of the theatre publishers. The *Modern Dramatists Series* has acquired **ANTON CHEKHOV** and a volume of **THE 'NEW DRAMA' 1900-1914** in which Jan Macdonald's coverage includes Granville Barker, Galsworthy and Masfield as well as the influence of such theatres as the Court and the early stirrings of the provincial repertory movement in Liverpool, Manchester and Glasgow. **SHERIDAN'S COMEDIES** are added to the *Casebook Series*. The playwright is set in his social and professional context and there are essays and reviews on the four key comedies. Two of them, **THE RIVALS** and **THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL** are included in a batch of additions to the *Master Guides* series, and

there are also new guides **HENRY IV PART ONE, ST JOAN** and **THE CRUCIBLE**. In these you can stimulate your discovery of the plays for less than a pound.

OLIVER MESSEL. A Biography. Charles Castle. Foreword by Sir John Gielgud. Thames & Hudson. £25 (UK).

DAVID GARRICK. A Biography. Alan Kendall. Harrap. £12.95 (UK).

AT THE SIGN OF THE SWAN. An Introduction to Shakespeare's Contemporaries. Judith Cook. Foreword by Trevor Nunn. Harrap. £9.95 (UK) £6.95 (paperback) (UK).

THE SHAKESPEARE WALLAH. The Autobiography of Geoffrey Kendall with Clare Colvin. Introduction by Felicity Kendall. Sidgwick & Jackson. £12.95 (UK).

THEATRE NIGHTS & THEATRE KNIGHTS. A History of the Maybox Theatres. Researched & written by Lindsay Molton. Maybox Marketing, Albery Theatre, St Martin's Lane, London WC2N 4AH.

CASPER NEHER. Brecht's Designer. John Willett. Methuen. £5.95 (paperback) (UK).

ANTON CHEKHOV. Laurence Senelick. £15 (UK) £4.95 (paperback) (UK).

THE 'NEW DRAMA' 1900-1914. Jan Macdonald. £18 (UK) £5.95 (paperback) (UK). Both in Macmillan (*Modern Dramatists Series*).

SHERIDAN: COMEDIES. A Casebook edited by Peter Davison. Macmillan (*Casebook Series*) £20 (UK) £6.95 (paperback) (UK).

THE RIVALS. Jeremy Row. **THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL**. Paul Ranger. **HENRY IV PART ONE**. Helen Morris. **ST JOAN**. Leonee Ormond.

THE CRUCIBLE. Leonard Smith. All Macmillan (*Master Guides Series*) 99p (paperback) (UK).