

ECCO

The newsletter of the English Comedy Club, Brussels June 2008

Chairman's letter

As agreed at last year's AGM in October, we held an EGM at the end of May so that we could appoint a new Chairman well in advance of the start of the Centenary season and, following that meeting, I now find myself wearing the Chairman's hat wanting to do the best I can for the membership and for the club in general. Next year is a huge year for ECC, and the committee and I will do our very best to make it a very special year for the club and we have got some very special events lined up – most notably the Centenary dinner on September 20th with a very special guest speaker (read on, to find out who!) and then FEATS 2009 in May. You can read more about these elsewhere in ECCO but for these events to be successful, we will need you to support them so please, please, please do so. (You see – I'm not above a bit of groveling when I feel it is needed!).

It certainly will be a busy season for us, so for now, probably the best thing is to just focus on the events in the coming months – Bedford Swan Theatre Company performing 'Private Lives' on June 27th and June 28th; the rehearsed playreadings in mid-September; the Centennial Dinner at the Stanhope Hotel on September 20th; taking 'Honour' to Bedford on September 26th and 27th; and 'Diana of Dobsons' at the Studio in the second week of October. And that's just the start of the season !

Finally, a few words to acknowledge and thank Steve Challens for leading the club over the past 3 years. His contribution to the club has been significant, and I'm personally very pleased that we will be able to continue to rely on him this season, as well. He has already stepped in to take the Chairmanship of the FEATS Organising committee and he will remain on the ECC committee and so, to a great extent, we probably won't even notice the change of ECC Chairman. I hope so, since this was the intention of the EGM, to provide that continuity into the coming season. But despite the fact that Steve isn't going anywhere, we still should acknowledge his huge contribution whilst he has been Chairman of the club over the past three years. Thanks Steve !!

- Paul Davis

Useful contact details

The website: <http://theatreinbrussels.com/ecc/>

For items for ECCO: eccobrussels@yahoo.com

Chairman: pauldavispdavis@yahoo.co.uk 0475 614363

Actors wanted

A production company is looking for actors for a corporate training film. They need a narrator/actor (30 to 40 yrs) and 4 other actors between the age of 30 – 40, all native or fluent English speakers. 1 or 2 should be women, one of Asian origin, one aged up to 60. If you are interested, call Mathy at LiveMedia on 0478/279046

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Club News – all change at the top

As you will have guessed from the new name at the bottom of the Chairman's letter in this ECCO, there have been some changes in the club. Paul Davis takes over as Chairman from Steve Challens, who has in turn taken on the mantle of organising FEATS 2009 from Antonia Mochan, who left Brussels at quite short notice to take up a new post in London.

Forthcoming productions

The ECC are pleased to continue their relationship with Bedford Swan Theatre Company and are delighted to welcome the group back to Brussels. The same cast and crew have already performed "**Private Lives**" to Bedford audiences in March of this year and received tremendous feedback for their version of Noel Coward's classic play.

Time has proved this tale of two divorcees who fall for each other all over again to be the kind of classic worth watching decade after decade. The play centres on divorcees Amanda and Elyot who both having remarried are in France with their new spouses. Not only do they find themselves in the same hotel on their wedding night but they are in adjoining rooms. The old fires start to burn again between Amanda and Elyot with devastating effect. Their passion swings from contented bliss to violent rows with amusing frequency.

This is a play that you can never tire of watching. Swan Theatre company has been fortunate in drawing together a cast from some of the strongest actors in Bedford, some of whom will be known to you from previous visits of Swan to the Warehouse. Tickets for the matinee may still be available on ecctickets@yahoo.com or 0477 408704

The **Honour** Cast and Crew are off to The Place in Bedford at the end of September as part of the exchange programme with the Swan Theatre Company (they are coming over with *Private Lives* at the end of June - a must see). Keeping a production ticking over for 7 months so far has been tricky but regular line bashes and now regular run throughs in the studio are keeping it alive (and the lines are still there amazingly) plus the enthusiasm for what is a well written play performed by a talented foursome. They will be performing before an invited audience during the Centenary Launch Weekend so if you didn't catch it last December and you are attending the Centenary Dinner on 20 September you might get the chance of seeing it earlier that day in the studio. Of course, if any of you are in Bedford or close by on 26 or 27 September then please come and support us at The Place, Bradgate Road, Bedford.

Rehearsals are already underway for the ECC's October production. To celebrate the ECC's 100th year, we are performing Cecily Hamilton's **Diana of Dobsons**, which is also celebrating its centenary. The play centres around Diana (Hilary Barry), a shop girl who inherits a small fortune and decides to live a little of the good life. Mistaken for a wealthy widow, she soon attracts the attention of an older businessman (Richard Foxon) and a dashing but financially-challenged captain (Henri Colens).

The play has a talented and varied cast, mixing both new recruits to the Brussels stage and established actors, including Rose Blyth, Sara Hammerton, Alma Forsyth, Christianna Mason, Femke Beumer, Joanna Patrick, Bridget Peirson-Davis, Marion Tomkins, Craig Simpson & Guy Harrison. The box office will open in September - be sure to book early to avoid disappointment!

BUTT Awards

The BUTT awards (see previous ECCOs) will be held at Jim McKenna's place (outside in large garden - with a wet weather option) at Leuvensebaan 319,3040 Sint Agatha Rode from 4 pm to late Saturday 12 July. This event will see the award of the BUTT trophies for all theatre related activities in the 07/08 season. There is no dress code, but if you would like to dress up appropriately please do so as there will also be a prize for the best dressed award goer. There will be plenty of fun and games (e.g. croquet and boule) as well as food and (some) drink. There will be a nominal charge 10 Euro per person to cover the cost. Feel free to bring additional chairs, blankets, favourite drinks, picnics or anything else to make this a grand occasion. After the last show of the season (*Private Lives* on 29th June) voting will be possible on the theatre portal website (<http://theatreinbrussels.com/portal/>) which will list those eligible for each of the 19 awards, and how one can vote (anyone listed in a program for any of the groups this season). Places are limited so if you are planning to come please notify martinjohnkirk@yahoo.co.uk for directions. We can also arrange lifts for those coming from the centre of town.

100th anniversary

Centenary Dinner

We intend celebrating the start of the centenary season in style, so please join us in the celebrations at a very special dinner on September 20th at 7pm at the Stanhope Hotel (Rue du Commerce, 1000 Bruxelles). We are also delighted to announce that we will have a special guest speaker at the dinner – the famous actor, Brian Blessed.

It promises to be an evening to remember and we are hoping that as many club members, past and present, will be able to attend – including members of the wider Brussels theatre community. Tickets cost 75 euros per head, which includes a glass of sparkling wine on arrival, 3 course dinner with wine, coffee and, of course, Brian Blessed!

We shall send out details such as the menu very soon, including how to book and how to pay. But in the meantime, if you want to secure your places at the dinner – please feel free to contact Abi Greef (agreef@deloitte.com or leave a message on 02/514.10.46) to register your interest. Any of the Centenary organising committee - Sarah Scheele, Paul Davis, Abi Greef, Martin Kirk and Sara Murray - will be happy to answer your questions about the dinner or other centennial events.

Playreadings

One idea to mark the 100th season has been for the monthly play-reading group to read a play from each decade of the ECC's existence. Send us your ideas for what plays would be good to do and we will put it to a vote in future editions of ECCO. All suggestions to be sent to eccobrussels@yahoo.com

One Hundred Not Out

At the start of our centenary season there will be a week of rehearsed play readings from Tues 9th to Sat 13th September in the Studio . There will be a different play and director each night reflecting the diversity of ECC shows over the years with talent experienced and new. We are still looking to fill a few of these slots so if you are interested in directing either as an old hand or for the first time let Martin Kirk know on martinjohnkirk@yahoo.co.uk, preferably with the play and cast you had in mind. And don't forget to come and see the shows during the week (it will be free) and as always the bar will be open.

Centennial Logo

The Centenary Dinner and One Hundred Not Out are just two of the special events we have lined up for this year. But there are others as well. The Centenary itself is in 2009, and we are thinking of having another club event in January (though perhaps not quite so big as the Dinner!) and also a special Steve Challens' production in the summer of 2009. Watch this space for more details.

We've also decided to adopt a logo just for the coming season and throughout 2009. Conrad Toft has very imaginatively produced the following logo which heavily draws upon the current logo, whilst giving it an extra touch in accordance with the Centenary. We hope you like it as much as we do well done, Conrad!



FEATS

FEATS 2009 – Brussels

No longer E.C.C Chairman, no longer C.A.S.T. Chair, things in the Challens household for the time being seem very quiet. However the club needed a Chair for the FEATS Festival to be hosted by our club this coming spring. Being a FEATShead, I jumped at the opportunity. It is a fearsome task. I have a great respect for Diana and Phillip who staged it so successfully last time the festival came to Brussels, I am also aware of the standard set in Stockholm. So it is with some jangling nerves I look at what is ahead of me for this year. That said, I have an excellent committee ready to chase me at every turn and I hope this FEATS will not only be the Club's most successful to date but also the Festival's best yet. Many people are already stepping forward to assist and I hope many more are yet to also throw their hats into the ring and get involved. We are at the same venue as last time and with Diana's excellent FEATS folders, I feel the ship is well on course and in the main (so far) in very safe hands. An Adjudicator has been fixed in Tony Rushforth and the club hopes to add many new experiences to the weekend along with what every FEATS goer has come to expect. Letters to all the participating groups will be going out shortly and then the organization will begin in earnest this autumn. However just so you have some faces to the positions here is the organizing committee and their roles.

Steve Challens – Chair	Martin Blackwell – Treasurer	Janet Middleton - Sec
Andrew Ing – Stage Manager	Colum Hatchell - Fringe	Lynne Vaughan - FEATS Youth
Sara Murray – Sponsorship	Eileen Sutton – Accommodation and Logistics	
Conrad Toft – Newsletter and Web.	Paul Davis – E.C.C. Chairman	

These are the core few already on the committee, already many more are involved - such as Phillip Deeks organizing the bar and Richard Maddern assisting on the technical side of things. However we cannot get enough support. So if you are interested in getting involved please get in touch - there are many more roles to fill yet. Be it for the Bar, Front of House or just sticking up signs or selling programmes and sandwiches, no offer will be declined I can assure you! I look forward to working with anyone and everyone in making this FEATS a very special one to remember.

- Steve Challens

Soaking up Stockholm 2008

What more could one ask for? Beautiful weather. A beautiful city. Meeting up with friends, past and present. And 4 days of what is probably the most eagerly anticipated English Language drama festival in the whole of Europe. FEATS2008 took place between May 9th and May 12th in Stockholm - the first time that FEATS had ever been hosted by the Stockholm Players. And though they are a relatively small group and it was clear that a huge amount of responsibility and effort had fallen onto the shoulders of the relatively few, the whole of the Stockholm team can be justifiably proud of the fantastic job they did.

The venue was the envy of the groups who had hosted FEATS before. The Dieselverkstat theatre itself was good, but what made it such an attractive venue was the overall cultural centre facility - complete with Bisto - making it such a perfect place to 'hang out' during the day waiting for the theatrical events to burst into life during the afternoon and evening. The productions presented were the usual eclectic mix that we have come to expect of FEATS, though this year with a greater representation of original scripts (6 out of the 12 productions, I think) and almost certainly a greater proportion of thought-provoking, discussion-stimulating and downright brave productions. When starting to compile this review, my intention had been to avoid naming productions and groups, but I'm going to fail on that score since no-one who witnessed De WAANzin's production of Pinter's "Celebration" is likely to forget such a courageous, zany and controversial production in a hurry ! It wasn't my own idea of good theatre, but that still didn't stop me wanting to rush up and buy each and everyone involved in the production a drink in recognition of a production I am unlikely to ever forget. Fortunately the queue for the bar was too long at that stage, since the price of alcohol in Sweden would have made that an extremely expensive round ! Brussels groups came away with 4 trophies this year, whilst missing out on the big three which all went to German groups, namely Bonn (1st), Frankfurt (2nd) and Hamburg (3rd). But congratulations to all three Brussels groups involved (ITG, BSS and TIE) for their excellent productions with particular congratulations due to the 4 trophy winners, Vincent Eaton (ITG, Best Original Script), Alice Perry (ITG, Stage Management Award), Steve Challens (TIE, Adjudicators Discretionary Award) and Caraigh McGregor (BSS, Best Actor - for a remarkable 3rd year running).

And so the baton has been handed over to ECC so that FEATS can be staged in Brussels between May 29 and June 1st 2009 during the ECC centennial, arguably the most important year in the club's history. Our objective will be to do as good a job as Stockholm did. To put on a successful FEATS take a huge amount of planning, preparation, manpower and good-spirited cooperation. The planning has already started and is already beginning to move through the gears. We look forward to staging the event and welcoming to Brussels our numerous theatrical friends from around the continent.

-Paul Davis

Coming up elsewhere on the theatre scene

Brussels Light Opera Company

Fiddler on the Roof

Auderghem Cultural Centre

20-23 November 2008

Auditions in 8-17 June 2008

For more information about the show and the auditions contact Philip Bennett at philip.bennett@skynet.be

Tel. 02 537 63 58 or 0495 38 61 77

Brussels Shakespeare Company

What happened here - a retelling of King Lear

By Stuart Delves

De Kam Cultural Centre, 20 and 21 June

BSS present their FEATS 2008 entry at De Kam Cultural Centre on 20 and 21 June, followed by a buffet supper. Tickets are €18 for BSS members and €20 for non-members. Call 0487 380682, e-mail to boxoffice@shaksoc.com or book online at <http://www.tickets.shaksoc.com/>. Caraigh McGregor won the Blackie for Best Actor for his portrayal of Edmond in this production.

TIE Youth Theatre

Runaways and 4.48 Psychosis

Nekkersdal Community Centre, 24 June

TIE present their award winning FEATS 2008 entry RUNAWAYS written and directed by Stephen Challens, and 4.48 Psychosis by Sarah Kane on Tuesday 24th June, 19.30 at Nekkersdal Community Centre. For more information see their website at www.theatreinenglish.be. Book on FEATS2008@theatreinenglish.be or call Stevie.

Other theatrical productions

National Theatre's Watch This Space

4 July - 28 September

Britain's longest street arts festival celebrates its 10th birthday at the South Bank. Thanks to support from the European Commission's London office, a number of European acts will be performing including several from Belgium and the highly acclaimed Polish street theatre retelling of Macbeth: who is that bloodied man? With dance, music, DJ-ing, films, theatre and circus, it's a must-see for anyone heading to London over the summer.

<http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/wts>