



ECCO

APRIL 2009

English Comedy Club, Brussels

Dear All,

Hope that you had a Happy Easter. If you are back in town by Saturday, please come join our **Centenary celebrations at the Town Hall**, and bring friends – but do call Sarah Scheele to let us know you are coming or we risk under-catering the nibbles! The theme is England, basically because a few of us wanted an excuse to dress up, but everyone is welcome to “come as you are”; particularly if you are heading out for dinner afterwards, a policeman’s uniform might be a bit tricky to explain... And there are more Centenary celebrations with the **staged play readings** next week – you can read details below.

If you have not already booked for FEATS (**Festival of European Anglophone Theatrical Societies**), to be held in Brussels over the weekend of 29 May to 1 June, the web address is <http://feats2009.theatreinbrussels.com/tickets.htm> and the phone number is 0488 165 395 (9.00-12.00, Monday to Friday). We’ve received lots of interest for FEATS since the February launch party, but more volunteers are still very welcome – please do sign up, and encourage friends and colleagues to do so too, however little time you can offer. Contact Janet Middleton on 02/347.11.13 or feats2009@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com for more information.

I hope that you were able to see “Absurd Person Singular” in March. Many thanks go to director Diana Morton-Hooper Deeks and her talented team of cast and crew for bringing such a technically demanding show brilliantly to life. Both APS and the Irish Theatre Group’s “Nurse Edith” at the end of March (another winner of a show, I loved it!) showed once again the versatility of the Studio setting; if anyone needed a reminder of why the Studio is A Good Thing, those two shows did the trick for me.

Finally, we recently said goodbye to Alan Kenway, a long-standing member of the ECC, and the person I first remember having to use the phrase “wearing my ‘x’ hat” to distinguish the many responsibilities he had (‘x’ standing for ECC Committee, ATC Board, CAST member, Warehouse manager and probably other things too). My thanks to Sherry Vosburgh, and to the ATC Board, for letting us reproduce the obituary which first appeared in the ATC Newsletter, and which Sherry read very movingly at Alan’s funeral.

All the best,
Abi Greef
ECC Chair

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CALENDAR ROUND-UP (see below for full details):

Saturday 18 April 2009: Centenary Year Launch reception at Brussels Town Hall (TBC)

23-25 April 2009: ECC 100 Not Out

26 and 28 April 2009: Auditions for *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me*

5-9 May 2009: ATC Café Theatre, Maison Blanche, Uccle

29 May–1 June 2009: FEATS weekend

20 June 2009: *Delyria* – Shakespeare Club Night (“Museum” Nightclub)

SATURDAY 18 APRIL – BOOK SOON ECC CENTENARY PARTY

Join us to raise a(nother) toast to our centenary season! We will be celebrating in a very special venue – the wedding room of the Brussels Town Hall. Details are below. And since we are, after all, a theatre club, we could not resist an opportunity to dress up....

- **Time:** 1900-2100 (
- **Theme:** ENGLAND! As it will almost be St. George's Day and Shakespeare's birthday, we decided to celebrate with an England theme. “English” costume will be voluntary, but of course encouraged and warmly welcomed!
- **Tickets:** €10 a head for a free drink and lots of nibbles; cash bar to follow
- **How to reserve:** Please contact Sarah Scheele asap (scheelesk@skynet.be or 02/736.98.14) to confirm you are coming, though you can pay on the door.

SUNDAY 26 APRIL AND TUESDAY 28 APRIL AUDITION NOTICE: SOMEONE WHO'LL WATCH OVER ME

The ECC plans to perform Frank McGuinness' play *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me* from 22-26 September 2009 at the Warehouse Studio Theatre and from 2-3 October 2009 in Bedford, UK. The play follows three hostages in the Lebanon as they strive to maintain their sanity in an insane situation.

There are three parts in the play: Edward (an Irishman, 30s), Michael (an Englishman, 40s-50s), Adam (an American, 30s-40s). Open auditions will be held on Sunday, 26 April at 4.30pm and Tuesday, 28 April at 8pm at the Warehouse Studio Theatre (enter via Rue Waelhem 73, 1030 Schaerbeek). If you are interested in coming along, please contact the director in advance if possible - Conrad Toft, conradtoft@gmail.com or 0484 799 534.



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**THURSDAY 23 – SATURDAY 25 APRIL
100 NOT OUT: FREE REHEARSED PLAYREADINGS**

- Three evenings of celebration in the Warehouse Studio Theatre
- Three evenings of past successful productions from 100 years of putting on plays
- Four plays recreated in the form of rehearsed staged readings for your enjoyment

Thursday 23 April, St. George's Day, at 8pm

Pinter's *The Dumb Waiter* won 2nd Prize and the Stage Management prize at FEATS 1986.

Steve Challens recreates the production, with a twist,

with Abi Greef and Rachel Cuff

PLUS

Coward's *Fumed Oak* won 3rd Prize and Best Supporting Actress for Paula McGowan as Elsie at FEATS 1993. Diana Morton-Hooper recreates her production with her 1993 Mrs. Rocket,

Diane Gray, who will be joined by Abi Greef as Doris Gow, Sara

Murray as adenoidal Elsie and Richard Foxon as the worm who turns, Henry Gow.

Friday 24 April at 8pm

84 Charing Cross Road by Helene Hanff was the October 1992 production of the ECC, directed by Richard Wells and staged at The British School. Conrad Toft and Michelle van der Straeten recreate the characters of Frank Doel and writer Helene Hanff played by Nick Hartley and Ruth Lanzer in the 1992 production and will be joined by Peter Finnigan, Sara Hammerton, Natacha Hesketh, and Joanna Patrick.

Saturday 25 April at 8pm

Ronald Harwood's *The Dresser* was directed by Richard Wells in November 1990 at the Treteaux Theatre. With just two changes of cast, the 1990 actors are still around and Richard Wells has gathered them together to recreate their roles in a blended version with snatches of video from that production. Join Nick Hartley as Sir, Diana Morton-Hooper as Her Ladyship, Lyn Wainwright as Madge, Philip Deeks as Geoffrey and Hilary Barry in the role of Irene originally played by Loretta Stanley. Nick Roche recreates his memorable portrayal of Norman, the dresser.

These three club evenings at the Warehouse Studio Theatre are open to all ECC members and their friends. Seats are free and there will be a cash bar. To be sure of a seat, e mail ecctickets@yahoo.com or send an SMS to Diana on 0476 68 94 25 stating which night or nights you wish to attend. Doors open at 19h30 each night.

Obituary: Alan Kenway

Anyone who has been involved with the English-language am dram scene in the last 25 years or so will have come across Alan Kenway, one of the stalwarts of the talented (and overworked) group of “techies”, and will have their memories of him. I first met Alan in 1997, when I was operating lights for a Studio show. He informed me that if I showed any aptitude for backstage work, I might never get to act because good backstage people are far harder to come by than actors (how true). Still, both he and I got a chance to shine on stage in the ECC production of “Silly Cow”, in 1999. Alan’s character, for reasons too complicated to explain, was lying behind a sofa, a mild-mannered accountant who has supposedly been murdered (by my character). Every performance, I stood in the dressing room and heard the shrieks of shock, turning to laughter, as Alan emerged from behind the sofa, launched himself to the centre of the stage and started declaiming Shakespeare – the character transforming into a gloriously luvvie old actor who has been pretending a) to be an accountant and b) to have been killed, in order to prove that he “can ACT”. And one of those laughing loudest every night was our director, Antonia Mochan; Alan captured the comedy of the scene so beautifully, one could not tire of seeing it.

Abi Greef

Many thanks to Alan’s long-standing friend Sherry, for allowing us to reproduce the obituary which she read as the eulogy at Alan’s funeral service:

I first met Alan 23 years ago when he offered to dance the lambada, with me at the cast party for Orpheus in the Underworld, for which he had been working front-of-house for the then Gilbert and Sullivan Society. I know it must be hard to imagine him dancing the lambada in later years, but he flung himself into the dance enthusiastically, looking very elegant in his black tie, with his characteristic verve and good humour. It is how I will always remember him.

It was the beginning of a long friendship, during which he worked on many shows with me, some for Scarabaeus – with Irini Chalkia, who is with us today - and others for Italian theatre groups, and he once came all the way to Perugia to work on the sound for an Italian play – without understanding the language but making up for that with his good-natured patience and dogged attention to sound cues.

He worked for all the Brussels theatre groups for some thirty years in all, giving his time and energy tirelessly to the theatre community. He had arrived on contract to the European Commission as a talented young programmer, going on to work for the computer agency Cap Gemini for several years, then for Hugh Dow, who is also here with us today.

As well as working on sound and lighting, backstage and building sets for countless productions, he appeared in many plays in cameo parts until his health problems forced him to retire gradually around 2007. He remained a stalwart member of the ATC Board and together with Sue Botterell he was responsible for running the Warehouse for many years. He even moved to be nearer the Warehouse, so that he could be on tap to sort out any problems and be

relied on in an emergency. He often took a back seat and didn't expect any glory. He was a permanent fixture on the English-speaking theatre scene, always cheerful, always ready to lend a hand and help people out, lending his expertise generously, especially to groups of stagiaires and young people. He will leave a gaping hole in the theatre community.

He had been planning a big 60th birthday party this year possibly at the Warehouse and had wanted to invite all his theatre friends and some of the health professionals who had been helping him with his mobility problems in recent months. He wanted to give something back to the staff at the various hospitals which had treated him in the past year or two. He was always determined to live the way he wanted, taking responsibility for his own life choices. He resisted his friends' nagging and advice, protesting that he wanted to enjoy his life and have a brief and colourful time rather than a long, drab, conformist one obeying doctors' orders.

His friends and family will miss the extra years that he could have had if he had looked after himself better, but that would not have been the Alan we knew. He was sometimes infuriatingly stubborn but always engaging and kind and generous to a fault, a caring person without a nasty bone in his body. He had a very big heart and wanted to make a difference. I think you will all agree that he really did.

When I spoke to him on the phone just the week before he died he couldn't stop laughing and said he was quite content with his life. He had an infectious and outrageous sense of humour. He was one of life's real characters who will be severely missed and leave an indelible impression on the hearts and minds of those privileged enough to have known him. Thank you, Alan, for being you, a truly GENTLE MAN, eccentric, sometimes infuriating, annoying and stubborn, but always charming, kind, honest, funny, modest, brave and indomitable.