

If you have any suggestions or comments for ECCO, then please send them to Janet at ecco@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com.

The next ECCO will come out in September 2011

ECCO

June 2011



*It's
sometimes
been a lot
of stress –
but it's
always
been Fun!*

Di Gray

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Letter from the Chair:

Dear All,

Greetings from the Chair, and welcome to the last ECCO before summer. Hard to believe that 2010-11 is all over bar FEATS - and for those who are going to Geneva, have a great time. I hope that you have enjoyed the season, don't forget the playreadings in the summer, and please come back refreshed and raring to go for 2011-12!

This was my last Season as Chair; I have served the maximum three years and the Club will elect a new Chair at the AGM in October. Special plea alert: if you have any time to give, I would urge you to think about whether you can stand for Committee (and if you don't want to put yourself forward as Chair right away, there are of course other roles!) or perhaps offer support ad hoc for some of the many tasks the Committee has to handle. Help is always gratefully received.

With that, best wishes for the summer, and - if not before - see you at "Two" in September.

Abigail Greef

chair@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com



Au Revoir Di & Paul ...



and Good Luck with your new life in the UK

Di and Paul Gray have played such an important role in the history of the ECC, and indeed Am Dram in Brussels in general, that it is impossible just to say "Goodbye"!

The Grays arrived in Brussels in the early 1970s, so have been here for nearly 40 years. During that time they have been involved in over 100 productions for the various theatre groups and of course numerous ECC Playreadings! Di was ECC Chair from 1995-97, and a few days after her election the decision was made to buy the Warehouse and Studio Complex (we'll come back to that). Di is now well known as a director, actress and singer, but she is also a talented hair designer, and for many years housed an impressive collection of stage wigs. Di has also put her hand to props and looked after the costumes at the Warehouse. Di's favourite role was as Doris in the Alan Bennett monologue *A Cream Cracker Under the Sofa*, which she performed in 1999 in Brussels and at Feats (to wonderful reviews) and repeated, again to great acclaim, in Brussels in 2006.

Paul too has served the ECC for many years, and was Treasurer from 1998-2000 (and CAST Treasurer from 2003-05). He too is well known for his singing and acting roles, but has also directed, built many a set and run lighting and sound. Paul's favourite role was that of Hobson in *Hobson's Choice*, but maybe his greatest contribution to theatre in Brussels was in ensuring that the funding for the purchase of the Warehouse and Studio was available.

Having met when performing in *The Marriage of Figaro*, it is not surprising that music has played an important role in their lives since then. Soon after their arrival in Brussels, Di and Paul sought out opportunities to sing, and from their enthusiasm the Brussels Madrigal Singers and the Suppressed Songsters (now Carols for Christmas) were born. Both are well respected and in much demand for their musical talents, which they have put to great use by performing, directing and conducting for The Gilbert & Sullivan Society/BLOC. Indeed, they first became involved in BSS productions as musicians. The couple were delighted to be asked to perform solos at the 50th Anniversary for the Liberation of Brussels, when they sang in Welsh and English and were accompanied by a full orchestra at the cultural centre in Uccle, which was the first commune to be liberated. Di performed *Land of Hope and Glory*, and revelled in producing flags from her dress!

Both the Grays are patrons of the Warehouse Studio complex, but at the time of the purchase it was Paul who dealt with the complicated purchase procedure and put his own money into the project when a sudden change of circumstances and an absent lawyer threw the whole project into doubt. The Warehouse had been rented by the ECC for many years, and at the time the Studio, as we now know it, was a ceramic studio and it is this that gave the small theatre its name. When the whole complex was put up for sale, the ECC teamed up with the ATC to buy the Warehouse and Studio, and a short time later the ITG also became part of the purchasing group. Before the theatre could be used the toilet block and bar had to be installed, and once this was done Jonathan Schaeller directed the Studio's first production – a series of one act plays. It was soon decided that a more ambitious project could be tackled in this new theatre, and Di directed *A Month of Sundays*, her first project as a director, for which Paul made the set.

They may be leaving their long theatrical history in Brussels behind them, but this is not going to be a retirement for the Grays! They will be moving to a small village which not only boasts three local drama groups, but they will be close to Stratford and its famous theatre! And they have already been asked to organise a playreading group in their lovely new home - which in former days was the local pub!

Brussels is going to miss the generous spirits, friendship and talents of these two very special people, and we wish them both much happiness in their new life in England.

FLAME TORBAY

ECC Committee

Chair (& Acts Rep):	Abi Greef
Hon. Treasurer:	Martin Blackwell
Hon. Secretary:	Mark Prescott
Membership:	Rachel Cuff
FEATS Rep:	Andy Ing
CAST Rep:	Martin Kirk
ECCO:	Janet Middleton
Web:	Conrad Toft
Without Portfolio:	Iona Hamilton

It is somewhat ironic that a company with the name 'Flame' should be subject to an arson attack. But why is this of interest to ECC members?

Flame Torbay is the wonderful costume hire firm that provided the authentic WW1 costumes for our production of *Journey's End* directed by Bridget Peirson Davis. The company was a delight to work with and thoughtfully co-ordinated collection from us with a delivery to BSB. At the time of hiring the costumes, I don't think we had any idea what an important company we were using – they have provided costumes for a vast number of drama productions, on television as well as films, and most recently for *Downton Abbey* and *The King's Speech*.

As well as being charged with arson, a man has also been charged with theft, having taken off with imitation weapons and ammunition and police uniforms complete with handcuffs and medals.



C COMPANY in their Flame Costumes

Back Row: Peter Lemerle, Conrad Toft, Arnaud Schmutzer, Paul Davis

Middle Row: Justin Toland, Alan Mackenzie, Richard Foxon

Front Row: Joe Tancredi, Mark Prescott, Graham Andrews

Not Pictured: Guy Harrison – who played the young German prisoner

OUR REGULAR MEMBERSHIP REMINDER!

Our grateful thanks to those members who have already paid their subscriptions. If you have not yet renewed, we would still be delighted to receive your subscription for 2011.

We would like to remind you that membership not only contributes to supporting the ECC, but also gives you benefits such as reductions on ticket prices, monthly play readings and other events.

Membership remains at the rate of €10 per year, and only €5 for students, stagiaires and the under-18s, with the membership year running from 1 October to 30 September.

We would be very grateful if all new and continuing members could fill in a copy of the membership form on ecc.theatreinbrussels.com under Membership, in order to ensure that our contact details remain current.

If you have any queries regarding membership, please do not hesitate to contact our membership secretary, Rachel Cuff, on membership@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com or 0486 102 632.

You can post your membership forms by email or by post to Rachel Cuff, Rue Lesbroussart 110, 1050 Brussels.

Membership dues can be paid by bank transfer to our account: **310-0627727-29**.

Please don't forget to put your name in the communication. **Thank You!**

FEATS 2011

We have been contacted by Ugent (University of Gent English Theatre group) who were meant to be performing at the Fringe of FEATS. Unfortunately they have had to cancel, and have been left with tickets that they've paid for.

If you are still thinking of going to FEATS but haven't yet booked, maybe this will be of interest to you. You should be aware that Easyjet will change the name on the tickets, but it's at a cost of E.25.

For Sale: Flights to FEATS at Geneva, plus availability of single room in the FEATS hotel. Four plane tickets, departing Brussels Zaventem to Geneva on Easyjet flight 1536, Friday 10 June, 17.25, returning Easyjet flight 1537, Monday 13 June, 20.55. 75 euro each or nearest offer. A single room booking at the FEATS hotel can be passed on, if wanted. Kate Macdonald, 0485 313891 (0032 485 313891), or kate.macdonald@ugent.be

TWO by Jim Cartwright

21-24 September 2011

The Warehouse Studio Theatre

The English Comedy Club opens its 2011-2012 season from 21-24 September 2011 with *Two*, a black comedy by English playwright Jim Cartwright. It will visit The Place in Bedford on 31 September and 1 October.

Two is Cartwright's second play and won the 1990 Manchester Evening News Theatre Award for Best New Play. It followed on from his earlier success, *Road*, and like that play deals with the gritty reality of northern working-class life in the 1980s.

The play focuses on the landlady, landlord and regulars of a pub in a Northern English town as they struggle to cope with the difficulties that life has thrown at them. All the parts are played by Ruth England (*Oscar and the Lady in Pink*, *Mary Stuart*, *Moving Susan* and FEATS best actress award recipient for *Orca the Goldfish*) and Rory Harvey-Kelly (ATC Cafe Theatre 2011). It will be directed by Conrad Toft.

Tickets (from July onwards) <http://ecc.theatreinbrussels.com>



Bedford's Swan Theatre Company will be returning to Brussels on 29 & 30 October with *Port Authority* by Conor McPherson, a bittersweet tale about dreams deferred and the loves that got away told through the eyes of three men: one just starting out his life, another in middle age and one looking back on a life already lived. More details will be available in the next ECCO.

FORTHCOMING PLAY READINGS

Wednesday 1 June

Chez Barbara Blackwell
rue Louis Hymans 20, Ixelles 1050

This month's reading will be either a Kate Atkinson (*Abandonment*) or an Alan Ayckbourn (*Table Manners*).

Wednesdays

6 July, 3 August, 7 September

Playreadings will continue throughout the summer. Please keep in touch with Mary for details of the venue and what we will be reading.

We meet at 7.45 for an 8pm start – contributions to the nibbles and drinks (an important part of the evening) are encouraged!

Please let Mary know if you are going to come along:

02 345 85 83 (between 8-10 or 20-22h)

It's Rattigan in theatres all over the UK this year

Much under-rated but now revived, Sir Terence Rattigan would have been 100 in June. Diana Morton-Hooper, who will direct the March 2012 Studio slot, says "The ECC isn't tired of Ayckbourn or Coward, but wants to add some Rattigan to its repertoire. Looking back over all the plays performed since 1909 there doesn't seem to be a Rattigan anywhere. Currently in London there's an achingly poignant *Flare Path* (The National) and superbly staged *Cause Celebre* (The Old Vic) and *The Deep Blue Sea* opens in Chichester in July. So for the ECC could it be *The Deep Blue Sea*, *Cause Celebre* or *Separate Tables*? Lots of lovely parts in all three plays ..."

Another Farewell!

Goodbye and Good Luck to **Jennifer Rankin** who, after playing Anya in *The Cherry Orchard* (amongst other roles) is now off to Moscow for real!

Forthcoming Events... for more see www.theatreinbrussels.com

Private View Theatre Company: *No Man's Land* by Harold Pinter. 6-9 & 14-18 June 2011. For further details email tim.myers@skynet.be

NLive: *The Cherry Orchard* by Anton Chekhov, in a version by Andrew Upton. 7.30pm, 30 June 2011 in various Kinopolis cinemas throughout Belgium. See <http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/61171/venuesamp-booking/europe-venues.html>

ETCetera: 3 One Act Plays in Spanish, French & English with surtitles. Mid-October at the Warehouse Studio Theatre

Swan Theatre Company: *Port Authority* by Conor McPherson , 29 & 30 October, The Warehouse Studio Theatre

The American Theatre Company: *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams, 18-22 October in the Bozar's Studio Theatre

BLOC: *Hello Dolly*, 24-27 November, Auderghem Cultural Centre

Brussels Shakespeare Society: *The Tempest*, 29 November – 3 December, at Bronks Theatre

Irish Theatre Group: *The Seafarer* by Conor McPherson. Mid-November at the Warehouse Studio Theatre.

The Community Help Service has asked us to help them with their search for Volunteers on their English language Helpline. For further details contact jan4chs@yahoo.com or visit www.chsbelgium.org

OCTOBER 2011 - ECC AGM

How can YOU help the ECC?

We are looking for members of the ECC to join the committee. No experience necessary!

Abi has been a wonderful Chair, but according to our rules she must stand down this autumn and she needs to be replaced. Could you take on this role?

For further information contact ecco@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com

21-24 September 2011

The English Comedy Club Presents

Two by Jim Cartwright

Directed by Conrad Toft

at the Warehouse Studio Theatre



If you hear of any productions coming up in English in Brussels or Belgium, why not share with your ECC friends? Send details to Janet for inclusion in the next ECCO:

ecco@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com