

ECCO

**The newsletter of the English Comedy Club, Brussels
May 2008**

Chairman's letter

Normally this time of year things go quiet on the theatre front. However things in Brussels are rarely quiet when it comes to Theatre. Whilst the ECC is not performing at this year's FEATS three other Brussels groups are, so the Warehouse remains a hive of activity. Although we will not be performing many ECC members will be in Stockholm either with other groups or assisting the Stockholm Players. We will also receive the baton at the end of the festival as we are to stage the festival next year. So the call goes out now, if anyone is interested in being involved please contact any committee member you know. The planning is up and running, a theatre is ready and available and I think as well as the club's 100th season FEATS will also be very special next year for all involved.

On a different note please don't forget the Bedford Swan Theatre company pay us another visit this summer, think about booking your tickets now (well, maybe after FEATS !). I am sure the production will be as good as we have come to expect from Rae Levene and the Swan, so whilst our current ECC season is finished, there is still excellent theatre to see. Hope to see you in Stockholm or at the EGM on May 27th.

Steve

Useful contact details

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

For items for ECCO: eccobrussels@yahoo.com

Chairman: stephenchallens@theatreinenglish.be or call 02/351 5487

Latest Production

Thanks to everyone involved in the hugely enjoyable production of Animal Farm that was performed at De Kam in March. It was a very good demonstration of how choosing the right venue can bring a lot to a production, with the farm feeling set from the moment you arrive. Steve's bang-up-to-the-minute telling of George Orwell's classic brought a new dimension to a story that still has relevance today, and the cast gave a perfect demonstration of ensemble acting. Well done to all involved

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Club News

Bedford in Brussels

As all club members know, every year we host our friends from Bedford Swan Theatre Company and, of course, we also take a production over to Bedford to be performed. This year, we will be performing 'Honour', which was performed to great acclaim at the Studio in December. The dates for the Bedford production are Friday 26th and Saturday 27th September.

At one stage, due to calendar conflicts, it looked our options of hosting the Bedford group for a return trip wasn't going to happen. This would have been a great shame, since it is always good fun. However, cutting a very long story short, I'm pleased to report that this year Bedford will now be bringing **two** productions over this year, so please make a note of the following dates in your calendar:

Fri June 27th & Sat June 28th - Private Lives by Noel Coward. This production was performed with huge success in Bedford at the beginning of March, and I can promise that it will be an absolute treat.

Sat October 25th & Sun 26th October - This is the usual time that Bedford visit us, though this year the productions will be held on the Saturday and Sunday. Final details are not known yet, but the current favourite is that it will be 'The Killing of Sister George' by Frank Marcus. I hope so, since it is one of my favourites and will fit very nicely into our anniversary season.

- Paul Davis

BRUSSELS THEATRE AWARDS - UPDATE

Brussels United Theatre Technicians (the usual suspects) are hosting the first of what will hopefully be an annual gala theatre awards for the amateur Anglophone productions (i.e. not just ECC) performed in Brussels in the 2007/2008 season. Anyone who has been named at least once in a programme for any of the shows presented this season will be able to nominate winners of the BUTT awards. You can only have one vote for each award category (even if named many times in many programmes) and you can't vote for yourself!

It will be an occasion to dress up, have fun with your friends and maybe even win a trophy or two. We will lay on entertainment and food and drink, so there may be a small charge to cover the costs.

Due to a clash of dates the BUTT awards have been moved from the previously announced date. They will now be held on Saturday 12 July. The venue will be in Jim McKenna's garden (with a wet weather option) and the festivities will kick off at 3 pm until late. Jim's address is Leuvensebaan 319, 3040 Sint Agatha Rode. We will be arranging help with transport from the centre of Brussels and will post directions on the web site.

We will be posting a list of the award categories on the ECC, Theatre Portal and other websites in the next few weeks with a complete list of all named in a program this season. These will be the jury who can vote for the BUTT awards winners. The same list will also remind you who is eligible for an award in each category. There will be one Audience Choice award where anyone can vote.

Once the FEATS madness is over (in a few weeks) we will issue a lot more information via email, on the web and other publicity. So keep an eye out as we welcome anyone who would like to help with organisation. Please contact me (Martin Kirk) on martinjohnkirk@yahoo.co.uk or 0486 300912 for more information or to get involved.

- Martin Kirk

ECCO editor / Antonia

As many of you will now know, Antonia is moving to London in June and, at the moment is in the States. So, this edition of ECCO is being cobbled together by Paul. Antonia has kindly offered to stay on as ECCO Editor for as long as we need her to, or until someone local offers to do the job. But it wouldn't be right without paying tribute now to the tremendous support Antonia has provided to the club over the past 12 years or so. A past Chairman, often on the committee, often directing, and occasionally on stage - her contribution to the club has been immense and she will be missed. Thank you Antonia!!

FEATS

Stockholm 2008

Hopefully if you're going to FEATS 2008 you've booked your hotel by now, because they seemed to be getting booked up pretty quickly. Unfortunately ECC were on the reserve list this year, though many ECC members are going and some are supporting the other Brussels groups that are performing, namely BSS, ITG and TIE. The party will be on the Sunday night and has as its theme...you guessed it...ABBA. So dust off the flared jumpsuit and knee-high spangly boots and strut your stuff!

Brussels 2009

As mentioned earlier, Antonia has been transferred to the UK for work, so we have scoured Brussels to find someone willing to take over as Chairman on the Organising Committee of FEATS 2009, and I'm pleased to report that Steve Challens will be taking on this role, ably supported by numerous leaders of the various sub-committees. The organisation has already started, some of it put in place by Antonia and the Steering team and now being continued by Steve and the Steering Team. As mentioned by Steve in his bit at the front, we will be needing lots of volunteers, so don't be shy. Watch this space - much more to report in the future.

100th anniversary

Productions

Our 100th season will be action-packed, with two main-stages and a number of interesting theatrical events. Hopefully we will start the year with 5 rehearsed play-readings in September (9-13) - more mentioned below. Then the conventional season will begin with Conrad Toft directing *Diana of Dobsons* by Cecily Hamilton in October (7-11) - more on this later, as well. This will be followed by Lynne Vaughan directing *A Christmas Carol* in December (4-7) and *Absurd Person Singular* by Alan Ayckbourn, directed by Diana Morton-Hooper-Deeks in March 2009. The final event of the anniversary year is intriguingly titled 'Shakespeare Club Night', being written and directed by Steve Challens.

Rehearsed Play-Readings

In planning the Anniversary season, the idea was suggested that we perform 5 rehearsed play-readings presented by 5 different directors. This will be open to the public and performed at the Studio, and will cost nothing to attend. But for this event to happen we need your support. We need 5 Directors (some have expressed an interest already) and, even more importantly, a Producer to pull the whole thing together. If you are interested in helping in this way then please contact Steve at stephenchallens@theatreinenglish.be

Play-readings

Mary Pritchard and Barbara Blackwell do a fantastic job of organising the monthly play-reading group. 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. If you have ideas and are willing to organise one of the playreadings, then I'm sure Mary would love to hear from you on 02/3458583 or send us your ideas to eccobrussels@yahoo.com

ECC Centenary Dinner

Please reserve Saturday September 20th in your calendars for the ECC Centenary dinner. The date is provisional at the moment, as we are hoping to have a 'name' attend the event, and so we are also needing to keep the previous Saturday free as well (in which case the rehearsed play-readings will take place one week later). Watch this space - more to be revealed in the next ECCO!!

EGM

At last years AGM in October, it was decided to hold an EGM in the Summer to appoint a new Chairman of ECC. Steve is coming towards the end of his 3rd year as Chairman, and constitutionally he cannot stay on for another year. Therefore the idea was to appoint a new Chairman in the Summer to allow more time for that person to settle into the role prior to the approaching centenary season.

At the moment there are no official nominations for the role of Chair, though there is one person waiting in the wings to step in if no-one else comes forward.

This EGM does not replace the annual AGM – this will still be held in its usual slot in October. Consequently the agenda is smaller than a typical AGM. But we still need to give plenty of notice for such a meeting and we still your support – so please come along. Remember that this is your chance to air your views and, more importantly, provide your support to those who will be guiding the club through this most important season.

**Notice of Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) of
The English Comedy Club ASBL to be held on
Tuesday May 27th at 8pm in the Warehouse Studio Theatre
69 Rue Waelhem, 1030 Schaerbeek**

1. **Outgoing Chairman's Report**
2. **Matters arising from the Chairman's Report**
3. **Election of a new Chairman**

The EGM will then close after point 3 has been concluded.

Drinks will then be available at the bar, after which we will then reconvene for a relaxed and informal discussion so that the views of the meeting can be taken forward into the forthcoming Centenary season. The discussion will be chaired by the new Chairman and supported by the outgoing Chairman and existing committee.

Nomination Form for the role of Chairman

I wish to nominate (please print name in capitals) for the role of Chairman.
The nominee must be a paid up member of the club whose consent has been given for the nomination.

Proposed by (print name in capitals). Membership Number :
Seconded by (print name in capitals). Membership Number :

Nominations should be submitted by Friday May 23rd 2008 at noon, and should be sent to the ECC Hon. Secretary either by e-mail sara_murray@hotmail.com or by post to 10 rue van Elewyck, 1050 Brussels.

Diana of Dobsons

The Warehouse Studio Theatre – 7th to 11th October 2008

As part of the ECC's centenary year, we present this hundred-year-old feminist comedy drama by suffragette Cecily Hamilton. The play follows its heroine, Diana, as she is transformed from shopgirl to heiress, and moves from the poverty of Edwardian London to the riches of a Swiss resort and an unsuitable pair of suitors.

Tickets : ecctickets@yahoo.com or 0477 408704

Forthcoming Productions

ECC & Bedford Swan Theatre Company

"Private Lives" by Noel Coward

Warehouse Studio Theatre - Friday 27th & Saturday 28th June 2008 at 20:00

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. I can promise that it will be a cracker!

Tickets: ecctickets@yahoo.com Tel: 0477 408704

Coming up elsewhere on the theatre scene

Brussels Light Opera Company

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum

De Bosuil, Jesus Eik - 29 May - 1 June

Stephen Sondheim's music and lyrics recount the hilarious tale of a Roman slave named Pseudolus and his attempts to win his freedom by helping his young master woo the girl next door. A hilarious romp through Ancient Rome with music, comedy, dance, disguise, trickery, mistaken identity, chaos, magic potions, reunions, love and lust.

Tickets: www.bloc-brussels.com or 0484 768 117

An independent production sponsored by Irish Theatre Group

Some Blue Horizon (a new play by Andrew McIlroy)

Warehouse Studio Theatre - 3 to 7 June 2008 at 8pm

Liz has a problem - her credit card bills get delivered personally by a bailiff; Elizabeth has a problem - she wants to stop her PhD and leave college; Dearbhal has a problem - it isn't easy after all being a single mother, sexy - and an evangelical Christian. But all the problems fade into insignificance beside Brian's - global warming, drought in Africa, tidal waves and social collapse. 'Some Blue Horizon' is a bitter, funny glance at what might happen if someone really took their fears in hand and did something about them.

Tickets: www.irishtheatregroup.com or 0475 585462

Brussels Shakespeare Society

What Happened Here - A Retelling of King Lear (followed by a buffet supper)

De Kam, Wezzembeek Oppem - Friday 20th June & Saturday 21st June 2008 at 8pm

This tells the story of King Lear and his three daughters, with the parallel story of Gloucester and his sons, set in the year 2020 and with the ozone layer hanging on by a thread. In the tradition of popular culture, Lear decides to divide his kingdom on reality television. The paths of love, betrayal, greed and power are considered, and human foolishness and the consequences of fatal flaws are exposed.

Tickets: www.shaksoc.com Box Office will open on 5th May.

The bit at the back

There's not much in the bit at the back this time - there's too much at the front! But I will leave you with the thought that next year is a very important year in the year of the club, and to get the most out of it we will need your support. Do you want to be on committee? Are you good at publicity? Do you want to assist in organising any of the centenary events? There's plenty of ideas but not so many people to carry them through - all help will be gratefully received.