



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 January 2014



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Chair's Welcome

I'd like to begin by thanking Sue Botterell for all her hard work as chair of the ECC: she's going to be a very hard act to follow. We should also remember that Sue has not only been providing tireless service for the ECC, but has also been a huge support to all the groups in Brussels for longer than most of us can remember. She's been an excellent stage manager, warehouse manager, comfort and friend. She's preparing to take a well-earned break, so let's all try to help her do that by not inviting her to help out with all the forthcoming shows. My thanks also go to Iona Hamilton, who has stepped down from the Committee after many years' good service. Hopefully, she'll have more time to spend with her family - Jake and Grace. Thanks to them as well, for lending Iona to us for many, many meetings!

Our season has got off to an incredible start with ***Copenhagen***. My congratulations go out to all involved for providing us with such a masterful piece. Not only did we enjoy a great night's entertainment, but we also discovered a lot about history and theoretical physics.

The season continues with a visit from Bedford's Swan Theatre company who are bringing us David Hare's ***Skylight***. The show received rave reviews in Bedford at the beginning of October and I'm looking forward to another great production from them.

Finally, I can't sign off without telling you how excited I am about ***Jack and the Beanstalk***. The rehearsals are in full flow and I have to admit that we are having a whale of a time! If the audience enjoys the show half as much as we are enjoying the rehearsals then you're in for a great time. I look forward to seeing many of you there!

All the best

Conrad

ECC Chairman chair@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com



Tickets now on Sale!

Click on the posters to go directly to the box office





Jack and the Beanstalk

5 – 7 December

Come along and enjoy Jack and the Beanstalk at the Auderghem Cultural Centre in December. The shows start at 8pm on Thursday, 5 December and Friday, 6 December. On Saturday, 7 December, there will be an early matinee at 3pm and a late matinee at 6pm.

Tickets (€18 adults, €14 children) are available on the web site (<http://ecc.theatreinbrussels.com>) and selling fast, so if you want a good seat you need to book early!

Director Conrad Toft writes: We're having great fun preparing the pantomime for you. We even took a few pictures during the last rehearsal to give you a taste of what is to come. In the pictures you can see Jack (Cath Howdle), Widow Twanky (Charif Wehbe), Jill (Lara Gill) and Simple Simon (Henri Colens), but the panto has a lot more characters than that! The other goodies include Goldilocks (Anna Harvey-Kelly) and Fairy Foxglove (Joanna Drake).

There is a line-up of baddies ready and waiting for your boos and hisses led by the money-grabbing Baron Hardup (Hugo de Chassiron) and the giant (Richard VandenBosch). They will be ably assisted (or should that be hampered?) by the dynamic comedy duo, Moules and Frietjes (Neasa Conroy and Femke Beumer).

But that's not all! You'll love our children's chorus: Mariella, Chiara, Lucas, Anna, Alice, Annaya and Daniel have all been training hard to learn the steps that choreographer Leanne Darnbrough has taught them. We also have an adult chorus struggling to keep up with them: Katarina Jovovic, Hugh Murphy, Anis Elyouncha and two of the children's parents who didn't run away fast enough - Victoria Caston Vivas and Jess Gill.

And, of course, no pantomime would be complete without the animals: Martin Kirk and Martina Meyer will be playing Milka the Cow with her love interest, Red Bull, being energetically performed by John Howard and Teresa VandenBosch. Teresa and John will also be doubling up as Farmer Jones and Mrs MacDonald. A certain crocodile will also be making a cameo appearance...



Janet writes: I'm glad to see that Conrad has learnt a lot from Lyn's directorial debut! I hope he made sure his actors had a head for heights before casting them!

Loving the Legomen School of Directing!

A great opportunity to see an award-winning play

Skylight

By David Hare

The Warehouse Studio Theatre

1 – 2 November

David Hare's *Skylight* analyses the aftermath of an adulterous relationship between two lovers after three years apart. In this multi-award-winning play, questions of love and politics collide.

Edward Sergeant visits Kyra Hollis, a school teacher who lived with his family three years earlier, until his mother discovered that Kyra and his father, Tom, had been having an affair.

Edward's mother has since died and he demands to know why Kyra walked out of his life - he had considered her as an older sister. The talk turns to the old relationship when Edward's father, Tom, also appears and starts poking fun at Kyra's lifestyle choices.

The show premiered in 1995 at the National Theatre. It won the Laurence Olivier Award for Best New Play as well as receiving a host of award nominations.

The Swan Theatre Company, an amateur group from Bedford, has been visiting us with some fascinating plays for years and this one will be no exception. Come and enjoy the show at the Warehouse Studio Theatre on 1 & 2 November. Tickets, €15, are available from <http://ecc.theatreinbrussels.com>.

Quote:

"You give them an environment where they feel they can grow. But also make bloody sure you challenge them. You make sure they realise learning is hard. Because if you don't, if you only make it a safe haven, if it's all clap-happy, and 'everything the kids do is great', then what are you creating? Emotional toffees, who've actually learnt nothing, but who then have to go back and face the real world ... Find that balance, it stretches you, it stretches you as far as you'll go."



COPENHAGEN

AS SEEN BY A NON-SCIENTIST

Sara Hammerton writes: Lyn Wainwright's directorial debut was a master class in meticulous preparation.

The choice of play wasn't obvious. As Lyn herself said, two dead physicists arguing hardly sounds like a 'must-see' night at the theatre. More promisingly, however, it was written by highly respected author and playwright Michael Frayn. He is perhaps best known for his acclaimed farce *Noises Off*, but anyone expecting something similar was in for a shock.

Copenhagen is about a real-life meeting in 1941 between the Danish Nobel Prize winning physicist, Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg, his German counterpart, at Bohr's home in occupied Denmark. The action centres on the question "why did he come to Copenhagen?" asked by Bohr's wife Margrethe at the opening of the play. The spirits of the two men and Margrethe examine and re-examine the events of that meeting, verbally and at one point physically orbiting each other, colliding, moving apart, coming back again, as they interact, speak separately then returning to the group. There is no clear account of what actually happened at that meeting, but it ended with the former friends and colleagues parting on bad terms. Frayn offers several theories but does not attempt an answer, leaving us in a state of uncertainty. Heisenberg's famous "uncertainty" principle is indeed one of the key themes, applied to the uncertainty of human memory and of our understanding of each other's behaviour, as it becomes clear they did not see or recollect those events in the same way.

As the two scientists talk they go back over their work on quantum physics. Their discussions show just how much preparation Frayn put into his work, both the technical content and the style of speech, using words he claimed were "entirely their own", based on his research of their memoirs.

For actors, this is a very demanding piece, with only three parts and a lot of complicated, interwoven dialogue. The rehearsal process must have been rigorous, judging by how smoothly the dialogue flowed. We were treated to three outstanding performances. When David Steen, as an avuncular Niels Bohr, and Chris Jones, the more energetic and impatient Werner Heisenberg, discussed science together, you could really believe this was two scientists talking. I envied them their intellectual prowess and the stimulation they found in their conversations with each other. And because that was so convincing I was deeply saddened by the end of that friendship and extraordinary collaboration. Anna Holmen gave us a beautifully judged portrayal of Margrethe, calmly but fiercely protective of her husband and suspicious of Heisenberg. She anchors the whole piece, as observer to the debates and as the non-scientist, interpreting the theories in layman's terms. All three moved very naturally around the set, marking the changes in time by adjusting the position of their three chairs – the only furniture – with nonchalant ease. (I wonder how many rehearsals that took?)

A lot more than just brilliant acting went into making this a stand-out production however. The lighting was carefully planned - and skilfully executed - to suit the changing mood and tempo of the piece, and the music added a special touch. That too was carefully researched, including a Carl Nielsen piece written to celebrate the reunification of Southern Jutland with Denmark in 1921.

The set was deceptively simple with a beautiful pair of "French" windows with a hint of a wrought iron balcony behind to suggest the interior of a house. But what really made it was the surprisingly tasteful atom-like design painted on the floor. Sadly that may have already disappeared by the time you read this, but I hope it is preserved photographically. At the start and in the interval another image of an atom was projected onto the walls, further underlining a key theme.

Scattered around the set were dried autumn leaves, suggesting not only the time of year the play was set in but the idea that these ghosts were revisiting a home that may by now be derelict. Not even the leaves were left to chance – they were collected a year ago, because they were dry, just in case this year's autumn leaves got wet.

The programme too had been carefully planned, and included a guide to the research that led to the creation of the atomic bomb, each stage represented as part of an atom. The same images were used as a slide show screened at the beginning and during the interval. All highly educational!

Last but not least are the costumes and make-up. Both gentlemen had suits befitting their time, age and status while Anna/Margrethe wore a simple, period dress and shoes. She was also very well made up to look convincingly aged.

Lyn, her cast and crew all thoroughly deserved the heartfelt applause at the end of this perfectly crafted production.

But, oh dear, I've got to the end of this review without explaining the theory of atomic physics...



OUR FORTHCOMING PRODUCTIONS

An Ideal Husband

By Oscar Wilde



The Studio Theatre, Palais des Beaux-Arts
19-23 March 2014

An Ideal Husband is now almost completely cast, with Deborah Griffith, the director, and her actors eager to start rehearsals in December. Deborah has set the play in the early 1950's.

However, Deborah is still on the hunt for Lord Caversham. We require a sophisticated and sprightly 60 to 70 something with a twinkle in his eye. Lord Caversham is frustrated by his son's lack of ambition, and is definitely appreciative of a pretty lady. If you are interested, do not hesitate to contact the Director on deborahgriffith@mac.com.

The cast is as follows:

Lord Chiltern: Conrad Toft
Lord Goring: Mark Prescott
Lord Caversham: ???

Lady Chiltern: Martina Meyer
Mrs. Chevely: Abi Greef
Lady Markby: Boff Muir
Lady Basildon: Ailsa Higgins
Mrs. Marchmont: Sara Hammerton

AUDITION NOTICE

Miss Julie

by August Strindberg

Director, Anna Holmen, writes: *Miss Julie* is probably Sweden's best-known play. This 90 minute play is set in a manor house, and the plot is built around the tensions that arise when the count's daughter visits the servants in the kitchen on a midsummer's evening. It will be performed at the Warehouse 10-14 June 2014.

Auditions will be held at rue Veronese 28 (close to Schuman) on:

- Sunday 1 December – 14:00
- Tuesday 3 December – 20:00
- Wednesday 4 December – 20:00

We are looking for:

- Miss Julie, female 25-35 years
- Jean, valet, male 30-40 years
- Kristin, cook, female 25-40 years



COMMITTEE NEWS

Thank you to everyone who came to the AGM at the Warehouse last month: it was great to have your support.

Your new committee was elected as follows:

	Role	Contact us at:
Conrad Toft	Chair	chair@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com
Janet Middleton	Secretary & Ecco	ecco@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com
Martin Blackwell	Treasurer	treasurer@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com
Andy Ing	FEATS	feats@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com
Joanna Patrick		joanna@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com
Laura Smith	Webmaster	web-admin@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com
Lyn Wainwright	CAST	lyn@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com
Sara Hammerton	Publicity	sara@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com

Please do not hesitate to contact any one of us if you have a question or suggestion to make.

You will be pleased to know that Conrad, in his role as Treasurer for the year 2012-13, reported that last year we had a surplus of €4,615, and that our finances are in an excellent state.

Other points raised at the meeting included:

- The work of CAST in keeping the Warehouse running; thanks to the Friday volunteers and a cry for a new Warehouse Manager
- Thanks to Roisín and Kevin for taking on the responsibility for the workshop, and for overseeing the installation of new heating, windows and doors
- FEATS: a wonderful festival in Antwerp in 2013, and we are hopeful that the ECC will be selected to participate in FEATS 2014
- The success of the Warehouse Open Day – and thanks to all involved
- A reminder that now there is no longer a membership fee, anyone who receives ECCO is deemed to be a member of the ECC and has voting rights
- It was agreed that a further charitable donation should be made from the surplus, and The British Charitable Fund and Guide Dogs for the Blind will each receive €500



Behind The Scenes – The Box Office

For many years the smooth running of the Box office has been down to one man: Conrad Toft.

Now however we have a new system!

Conrad writes:

As you may have already discovered, we've started using a new booking system for our shows. The system is run by a British company, which provides the service to many other amateur and professional groups around the world.

Until now, running the box office has been a very labour intensive operation. When we moved to online bookings a few years ago, we reduced the burden significantly.

However, despite the reduced workload, the original online system still could not address one major problem: when people book for a show, but then don't pay and don't show up. That's really frustrating - especially when it is a sell-out show where we've had to turn people away and still end up with empty seats.

With the new system, you can still pay for your tickets by bank transfer (to **English Comedy Club: 310-0627727-29, IBAN: BE26310062772729, BIC: BBRUBEBB**), but we've now added the possibility of paying online with credit and debit cards via PayPal. For *Jack and the Beanstalk*, you also have the opportunity to choose your own seats. However, if you have problems with the booking, you may find that the seats you wanted are no longer available when you try a second time (they are already reserved for you). If that happens, just send an email to tickets@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com and we'll help you complete your order.

We'd love to get your feedback on the new system, so please do get in touch with us at tickets@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com and let us know what you think.

Other Membership News in Brief:

- **Huge Congratulations** to **Abi Greef** and **Ingemar Mikander** who are getting married this month! We wish you a wonderful day and much happiness in your future together.
- Congratulations also to **Sandra Lizioli** who has landed another film role! This time in a film starring Sir Anthony Hopkins.
- Congratulations to **Graham Andrews** on the publication of his book of short stories: **A Gentle Flow of Ink**
- ECC stalwart **Diana Deeks** is directing *The Way of the World* for the Brussels Shakespeare Society and would welcome your support!
- Meanwhile **Hugh Dow** is directing for ETCetera, and would love to see you at *Buonapart: rise and fall*



←
Our outgoing and
incoming Chairs!



Monthly Play Readings

Wednesday 6 November

Janet Middleton will lead us in reading

Tom & Viv by Michael Hastings

Janet writes: *Tom & Viv* is based on T S Elliot's tumultuous first marriage to Vivienne Haigh-Wood. Although it was turned into a film in 1994, I only discovered this play while listening to Radio 4 one afternoon while working my way through a huge pile of ironing. I was captivated by their passion, which was both destructive and creative, and my certainty that the treatment Vivienne received at the hands of her husband and family was not unique at the time. It is sad to think that had she been alive today Vivienne's illness would have been understood and medical treatment would have enabled her to live a full and 'normal' life. But then again, maybe her passion would have been subdued along with her bouts of insanity?



HO HO HO ...

WE WILL MEET FOR A FESTIVE CHRISTMAS READING ON

WEDNESDAY 12 DECEMBER

This is the second Wednesday of the month so that we don't clash with *Jack and the Beanstalk*. There will be mulled wine, mince pies and jollity!

Please ring Mary for further information about the play readings, and to let her know if you are going to come along, or email ecco@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com. (If ringing you are most likely to catch Mary between 8-10, am or pm).

Merry Christmas to all ECC Members!



Forthcoming Productions

For more information and auditions see www.theatreinbrussels.com

Swan Theatre Company Bedford

Skylight by David Hare

1-2 November

ETCetera

Buonaparte: rise and fall

Two plays by Bernard Shaw and Jean-Claude Brisville

5-9 November

Brussels Shakespeare Society

The Way of The World by William Congreve

13-16 November

Irish Theatre Group

An Béal Bocht by Myles Copaleen

14-23 November

BLOC

Evita by Tim Rice & Andrew Lloyd Webber

28 November – 1 December

English Comedy Club

Jack and the Beanstalk

5-7 December

American Theatre Company

Sylvia by A R Gurney

21 January – 1 February 2014

English Comedy Club

An Ideal Husband by Oscar Wilde

18-22 March 2014

Click on the name of the theatre group above to go directly to their website

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