



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 July 2014



Alma Forsyth Farewell

An Ideal Husband Review

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Chair's Welcome

Thanks to everyone involved in the sell-out production of *An Ideal Husband*. It was great to hear so many positive comments after the show (despite the sweltering conditions in the Palais des Beaux Arts for some of the performances.)

A special thanks goes, of course, to all those people who worked so hard backstage to make the production a success and, in particular, to our director, Deborah Griffith, and producer, Donatella Camminante, who both put in so much hard work behind the scenes to make the show a success.

They have set the bar high, but having seen the energy that is already being put into *Miss Julie*, I can see that our next production will also be one to avoid missing!

Given how quickly tickets sold out for *An Ideal Husband*, I recommend that you buy your tickets for *Miss Julie* now!

Conrad Toft
ECC Chairman chair@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com



The ECC is proud to present

Miss Julie
by August Strindberg
translated by Michael Robinson

10-14 June 2014, 8 pm
14 June, 3 pm
Warehouse Studio Theatre
69a rue Waelhem, 1030 Brussels

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




TICKETS NOW ON SALE!

Click on image left to go directly to our Box Office

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ECCO:

8 JUNE 2014

Miss Julie

Directed by Anna Holmen

Playing with Fire

Gender conflict and sexual jealousy, class conflict and social jealousy and hysteria are all explored in Strindberg's famous psycho-drama. On Midsummer's night in a manor house somewhere in Sweden, Miss Julie, the daughter of a Count, bids her father's valet, Jean, to dance with her. Jean accepts the offer and goes with her, leaving his fiancée Kristin behind. But Julie's beauty and high birth hide her chaotic and destructive inside, and the dance becomes a play with fire.

10-14 June 2014 8.00 pm

14 June 3.00 pm

Warehouse Studio Theatre, 69a rue Waelhem, Schaerbeek

Tickets: <https://thelittleboxoffice.com/ECC/book/event/11657>



ECC NEWS

Committee	Role	Contact us at:
Conrad Toft	Chair	chair@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com
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**Welcome to
new
Committee
Member
Chris Jones**

We are delighted that Chris has responded to our appeal for anyone interested in joining us to come forward.

FRIDAY

Thank you to everyone who helps out on a Friday morning at the Warehouse.

New helpers are always welcome, and might be encouraged to do so by the news that you no longer need to be there until 10.30am.

If you are interested, please contact Anna at annaholmen@hotmail.com



Many thanks to everyone who so generously responded to our appeal for tea towels for the Warehouse. We are, however, still in need of handtowels, so if you do have any to spare please either leave them in a marked bag in the Warehouse, or contact Lyn or another member of the committee who will arrange with you for them to be collected.

WAREHOUSE OPEN DAY SEPTEMBER 2014

Following the success of last year's event, we will join with the other groups in an Open Day again in September (exact date to be confirmed).

Many thanks to Sara, who is our representative on the committee organising this event, for all her hard work last year.

With many thanks to the ECC's own bard – The Poet in The Woods – Sarah Strange

An Ideal Husband (by Oscar Wilde)

Set in the 1890s, the theme is up to date
Oscar plays with social mores – reputations are at stake.
A dashing politician with his oh-too-righteous wife
Entertain in genteel splendour, where gossiping is rife.

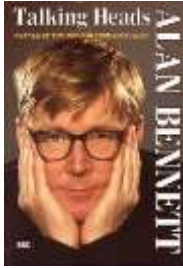
Enter Mrs. Cheveley with an Argentinian sell
Lord Chiltern, played by Conrad, smells a rat as we can tell.
Persuaded by wife Gertrude to renege upon the deal
He remembers how when young he fell for Arnheim's spiel.

A compromising letter held in Laura's reticule
Threatens to denounce him and expose him as a fool
Lords Caversham and Goring are woven in subplot
Arthur gets the letter and burns it on the spot.

Then it's Gertrude's turn to suffer as her letter goes astray
Robert Chiltern starts to wonder if his wife will run away.
But Oscar's skill is masterly; the loose ends are soon tied
And Goring pleases father, taking Mabel as his bride!

Deborah's version here in Brussels is set in smart Post-war
With glamorous cocktail dresses and dramatic wigs galore
"Carriages" are banished; instead we have the "car"
The staging is well managed – I think we have a star!

You can see this, and Sarah's other poems, online here:
<http://poetinthewoods.blogspot.be/2014/03/an-ideal-husband-by-oscar-wilde.html>



3 Alan Bennett Monologues

23-27 September 2014

Producer Boff Muir writes: Joanna Patrick, Jonathan Stockwell and Mark Prescott will be directing three Bennett Monologues to be presented at the Warehouse Studio Theatre the week beginning 22nd September.

Copyright applications are currently pending, but it is hoped that

AUDITIONS WILL BE HELD

Tuesday 13 May and Wednesday 14 May

in the Warehouse Studio Theatre, Rue Waelhem 69, 1030 Brussels, at 7.30pm.

Pencil these dates in your diary ... now!

AN ECCO FLASH WILL CONFIRM THE DATES AND PLAYS

MORE AUDITION DATES ON NEXT PAGE!

OUR NEW DIRECTORS INTRODUCE THEMSELVES



Jonathan Stockwell

'If you can't act in it, direct it', reasons Jonathan, once a regular on the Brussels stage. Conceding that drag isn't always a suitable option, Jonathan settled on directing as the best way to explore some of his favourite drama: Bennett's 'The Hand of God' this year and Nicholas Wright's play for three women, 'Mrs Klein', in autumn 2015.



Joanna Patrick

I have been involved in amateur dramatics for many years in countries including the UK, Gibraltar, Norway, Luxembourg and now Brussels. My experience has mainly been as an actress in roles including street vagrant; a WI speaker with a bizarre interest in broccoli and a female portrayal of Mark Anthony. I directed a couple of plays (including a FEATS entry) during the 1990s. I see this production as a wonderful opportunity for my directorial debut here and I am very much looking forward to this project where I will be exploring how over-enthusiastic communication can lead to unexpected and unintended consequences.....



Mark Prescott

I exploded onto the Staffordshire theatre scene at the tender age of 5, and a few years later was in a high school production of Calamity Jane. Fast-forward to Luxembourg, 2003, where I played a gay Teletubby-like character in Betty's Summer Vacation. I then moved to Brussels and performed in My Night with Reg, Moving Susan, The Best Man, Journey's End and King John. I thoroughly enjoyed my last role, Lord Goring in An Ideal Husband. Well, who wouldn't?

More Forthcoming Auditions

It isn't very often we can have a whole page dedicated to Forthcoming Auditions – so actors, get your diaries out!

As mentioned on the previous page, the ECC will be auditioning for the September production, 3 Bennett Monologues, in May, but that is not the only production we are already looking forward to casting.

The ECC will be holding auditions for its January pantomime, *Aladdin*, in June

The show will run from 9-11 January 2015 at the Auderghem Cultural Centre in Brussels.

Pantomime is a comedic genre that tells traditional folk tales through farce and musical theatre. We are looking for actors of all ages with a sense of fun, who enjoy high-energy theatre and cross-dressing. Whilst not essential, we will be interested in singing ability. The principal parts are:

Abanazar – An evil, yet insecure, sorcerer (**male**)

Widow Twankey – a poor washer woman in Old Peking (**male**)

Aladdin – A young lad, pure of heart (**female**)

Wishee Washee – Aladdin's more sensible brother (**male/female**)

Princess Jasmine – A feisty young noblewomen (**female**)

The Genie of the Lamp – A magical spirit (**male**)

The Emperor – Jasmine's rather irritable and long-suffering father (**male**)

PC Jean and PC Jan – two dim-witted Belgian policemen (**male/female**)

If you think you could bring these and other characters to life, please come and audition on:

Sunday 15 June at 14.00; Wednesday 18 June at 19:00; Saturday 21 June at 14:00

at the Warehouse, rue Waelhem 73, 1030 Brussels

Please contact Henri Colens on 0479 671 766 for any further information or if you are interested in auditioning but cannot attend on any of the abovementioned dates.

The BSS has asked us to publicise their auditions for *Henry VI Parts 1, 2 and 3* and *Richard III*

To be held on Tuesday 20 May and Thursday 22 May at 19.45 and on Sunday 25 May at 15.00 at the Warehouse, rue Waelhem 73, 1030 Brussels. Rehearsals will start in early September. Further information tel.: 0473 71 09 66 or see the BSS website: <http://www.shaksoc.theatreinbrussels.com/>

However ... as the BSS is looking for a cast of 30 I feel I need to declare my hand now!

Auditions for *Tom & Viv*

The BSS's production is for next March, the same month that the ECC will be producing *Tom & Viv*, a fabulous play about T S Eliot's complicated marriage to his first wife. I will be looking for a number of actors and actresses, including a strong male actor who can perform well in American as well as upper-class English-English; an actor to play a well-meaning, thoroughly English, 'twit' and an actress who can represent the various stages of Vivienne's hysteria, madness and eventual calm. Other roles are also available for actors and actresses of all ages. **Auditions will be in September, but I would be delighted to discuss the play and the roles available with anyone who is interested now. Please ring me on 0495 94 2991. Janet Middleton**

Monthly Play Readings

Wednesday 7 May Chez Barbara

An evening of one-act plays, including Brussels resident Martin Westlake's self-penned *THE IMPOTENCE OF BEING FRANK*

Wednesday 4 June Chez Mary: Play to be announced

Please ring Mary to let her know if you are going to come along, and to check that the venue has not changed, on 02 345 8583 (you are most likely to catch Mary between 8-10, am or pm), or email ecco@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com for further information.

We meet at 7.45 for an 8pm start!

Contributions of interval drinks or nibbles always welcome!

Save the Date!

2014 Buttie Awards - 12 July

FEATS 2016 – Planning Party still being planned

Watch this Space!

WELCOME to RACHEL BRENNAN!

Congratulations to Roísín, Kevin and Toby on their new arrival



European Commission Open Day

Conrad Toft writes: Each year the European Commission opens its doors to local clubs and societies, as well as the Brussels communes, to invite new staff to find out more about the possibilities in their local communities.

On 19 March, just like last year, the English-language theatre groups that work together to coordinate their activities and jointly promote their productions (through the theatreinbrussels.com website and season brochure) sent a delegation along to spread the word. So, together with our friends from the American Theatre Company, the Brussels Light Opera Company, the Irish Theatre Group, the Brussels Shakespeare Society and ETCetera, we spent a few hours at the Commission's headquarters: the Berlaymont building.

There was an enthusiastic response to our presence, and, as a result, we have 60 new subscribers. If you are one of them - welcome to Brussels and the ECC. We hope that you will enjoy many shows in the future. If you would like to get involved on-stage or backstage, come along to our play readings, our auditions or send an email to info@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com.

It is with great sorrow that we bid 'Farewell' to Alma Forsyth who is leaving Brussels

Lyn Wainwright writes: Alma came to Brussels in 1979 to work at the Council. I always thought that she would be a Brussels-lifer but the sad news is that she is now leaving Belgium and returning to her native Edinburgh.

As far as I can remember Alma first became involved in the Belgian theatre scene as a dancer. She started tap lessons under the watchful eye of Beverly Bott (now Lewis) who gave lessons at the Redant Institute of Dance. Alma performed her first routine at the Palais des Beaux Arts in May 1980 to Scott Joplin's *The Entertainer*. *Babes in the Wood* was the first of many pantomimes to follow and Bev and I remember it well, being the proud mothers of the two 'Babes'.

Bev recalls that for many years Alma drove a brown VW Golf which she christened 'Wolfgang' and that as well as a love of all types of dance and of theatre they shared an even greater love for cats.

The Gilbert & Sullivan Society had not yet become BLOC but one of their first non G&S productions was *Orpheus in the Underworld* in 1989 which was certainly the first show in which I was a performer and Alma was in charge of the choreography.

Since then Alma has reinvented herself many times. Malinda Coleman remembers her in *Ladies Night Out*, an ATC Café Theatre production where Alma performed a monologue and a 'sort of' belly dance. But her first real acting role was when she was cast in a couple of Pinter sketches directed by Sarah Scheele. She played a tramp alongside Nicky Harrison (now Clarke). This was a 'Shoestring Theatre' production at the Jacques Franck theatre which offered opportunities to new and aspiring actors and directors alike.

A long line of performances was to follow; *Passion Play* directed by Hugh Dow, *A Streetcar Named Desire* for the ATC with Bob Bender and *Merry Wives of Windsor* for the Shakespeare Society to name but a few.

And all the time she kept on dancing and even playing Paddington Bear in the Panto of the same name directed by Adam Brown.

The FEATS Summer School has always been a very important fixture in Alma's continental calendar. It was instrumental in developing her acting skills and at the same time opened up a new horizon, namely writing. It led directly to a real high point in her career with the production of *Bye Bye Bunty* which she wrote and in which she also starred. It won third prize and best Original Script at Feats in 2001 and had a successful run at the Edinburgh Fringe.

She has returned to Feats several times since having tap-danced her way through *Red Peppers* for the ECC and delivered her lines with a sack over her head in *Come On Over* for the ITG. All in the name of Art!

Success led to further academic studies towards an MA and a part-time life between Brussels and London. The resulting thesis was a play about various Edinburgh folk and we were treated to a reading in Brussels with Eileen Sutton, rarely seen on stage, in a memorable portrayal of one of the old lady roles. Alma continues to write and perhaps one day she will return and direct something new for us in Brussels.

There have been memorable performances in Diana M-H-D's Ayckbourn plays. We all remember the would-be suicide with only a few lines and the estate agent with a murky past with even fewer clothes.

Steve Challens also cast her in a number of his productions which I know she found to be a lot of fun. She has also worked tirelessly for TIE preparing students for their LAMDA exams.

So, just when you might think that she had exhausted all her talents and skills she decided to head in a new direction. Partly in response to some health issues that threatened her mobility and certainly her dancing she approached me to see what she could learn about theatre lighting. A series of very happy collaborations have followed. Alma has an excellent eye, a sensitive touch and above all perfect timing. All essential attributes of the lighting board operator.

I shall miss her greatly. You will all miss her too because although the audience rarely notices what goes on in the lighting box, you will notice when she is no longer there.



Alma in *Separate Tables*

Julian Oliver has been kind enough to review the ECC's most recent Production *An Ideal Husband*

The two best plays by a master wordsmith performed within 12 months on the same stage is temptation indeed for Brussels "Am Dram" fans or as Oscar Wilde himself said: "The only way to get rid of temptation is to yield to it." So we all trooped downtown to see *An Ideal Husband* with high expectations. As well as sharing high comedy and society life with *The Importance of Being Earnest* this play has melodrama, a foreign visitor, high politics and intrigue in spades. At its core it is about the human condition in general and marriage in particular.

Director Deborah Griffith got the play off to a bright start with the opening scenes replete with witticisms, beautifully delivered by Mrs Marchmont (Sara Hammerton) and Lady Basildon (Ailsa Higgins) and then it gets serious as the 'femme fatale', Mrs Chevely (Abi Greef) worms her way through the superficially perfect world of the Chiltern family radiating menacing charm. Mrs Chevely gets Sir Robert alone and informs him that unless he reverses the government's support on the Argentine Canal scheme in which she is a big investor, she will blackmail him. Sir Robert struggles but soon accedes to what she wants on condition of strict confidentiality. When, however, this is revealed to Lady Chiltern she refuses to allow him to compromise. Separately both husband and wife turn to consult Lord Goring, their foppish but not so simple friend. Mrs Chevely reveals that Sir Robert's fortune is built on the proceeds of a crime and on discovering this Lady Chiltern attacks Sir Robert saying she can't love a dishonest man. He counterattacks that she should never have put him on a pedestal; no man could survive her idealistic love. Lord Goring, described by his father as "the Idlest man in London" then goes into action, talks a great deal of common sense to both husband and wife and ends up marrying Mabel Chiltern, Sir Robert's flighty younger sister.

Plays about corrupt politicians have a universal and timeless appeal. Satire about the ruling classes is another classic theme. Add to these a number of theatrical contrivances: a letter from the past; a lost then found bracelet with a secret clasp and mistaken identities and you can quickly imagine many of the intrigues that pepper the plot.

Deborah, fresh from her direction of the all-male *12 Angry Men* set in its period, chose to set Wilde's play, dominated by six strong female characters, in the early 1950's. There are parallels: the Suez Canal crisis of 1956, the impending Profumo scandal of the early 1960s and the barely continuing aristocratic class. However, this transposition by 60 odd years did not add enough value for your reviewer. *An Ideal Husband* focuses our attention on marriage and what makes a good husband and a good wife. Some of the attributes ascribed by women to themselves sound antediluvian to a modern audience and some women in the audience voiced their outrage; but this is a piece written some 60 years before women obtained the full franchise to vote on equal terms.

The melodrama adds pathos when Sir Robert, who sold confidential government information, describes the terror "as if one's heart were beating itself to death in some empty hollow", a palpable echo of Wilde himself, already being blackmailed by rent boys and sent to Reading Gaol before the highly popular run of *An Ideal Husband* was over.

Mark Prescott, as Lord Goring, gets it right with a self-confident and crystal-clear articulation. As well as having many of the best one-liners, delivered immaculately, Prescott demonstrates a real skill in persuading both Sir Robert and Lady Chiltern to reverse their instinctive initial reactions to Mrs Chevely's threats. Abi Greef was well-cast as the scheming and propositioning Mrs Chevely. She looked and sounded in full control from her entrance in heliotrope to her finale in red roses. She appears serene through all her ups and downs: threatening Sir Robert, losing her brooch, stealing the pink letter and receiving a rejection of marriage from Lord Goring. On the night your reviewer was present she even earned well-deserved, friendly pantomime boos on the curtain call.

Conrad Toft looked every inch the unflappable diplomatic rising star, Sir Robert Chiltern, with not a hair out of place and an elegant profile, which he was not afraid to show off. Toft struggled with his conscience during the blackmail scenes but refrained from appearing smug at the denouement when his character gets away scot-free. Martina Meyer, as Lady Chiltern, has not a single witticism to deliver but quickly establishes herself as Miss and then Mrs 'Goody-two-shoes'. She conveyed seriousness and high moral principles with conviction. Charlie White, as Lord Caversham, was plausible and persuasive from beginning to end, while Boff Muir, as Lady Markby, was a delight: sharp, elegant, witty and clear.

Other Forthcoming Productions

For more information and auditions see www.theatreinbrussels.com

BLOC

Sweeney Todd by Stephen Sondheim
15-18 May 2014

American Theatre Company

We Live Here by Zoe Kazan
21-24 May 2014

English Comedy Club

Miss Julie by August Strindberg
10-14 June 2014

Brussels Shakespeare Society

King Lear by William Shakespeare
24-28 June 2014

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

YOU MIGHT ALSO BE INTERESTED IN

National Theatre Live at Mechelen: 13 May, *King Lear* and 12 June *A Small Family Business* by Alan Ayckbourn. To book: http://www.utopolis.be/nl_BE/events/207 and http://www.utopolis.be/nl_BE/events/209

KVS has regular productions subtitled in English. Visit their website to find out more: <http://www.kvs.be/en>

Fun, Food & Acting: Once a month a unique presentation at Theatre de la Toison D'Or in association with Brusselslife: <http://www.ffact.be/#>

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