



## ECCO: May 2016



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If you have any  
contributions for  
ECCO, please send  
them to Janet at

[ecco@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com](mailto:ecco@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com)

The next Ecco will  
come out July 2016

**Deadline:** 15 June

### Letter from the Chair

I am writing to you today from the Flaggy Shore in the West of Ireland where I am taking a post Easter break with family and grandchildren. A truly peaceful spot away from the bustle and recent dramas of Brussels and time to reflect on our latest sell-out success *Dinner Before Death*. For many of us the production went smoothly and I personally enjoyed the experience of being on stage once again but Janet Middleton deserves much of the credit for staying calm and overcoming major difficulties which at times threatened to derail the whole project.

Thanks to the internet I have not been completely out of touch with the ECC which is just as well as there is a great deal going on at the moment in preparation for FEATS which we are hosting in Brussels from 5th-8th May.

The ECC is proud to be one of the founder members of the Festival and this will be the 8th time that it has been held in Brussels since it began in 1976. As usual we will be hosting theatre groups from all over Europe so make sure that you don't miss out on this stimulating event which continues to inspire and educate those of us who love all aspects of performance and theatre.

Theatre in English has never been more popular in Brussels. Our audiences continue to grow as many non-native speakers from a wide range of European countries swell their ranks and this should ensure that the longevity of the ECC is secure for the foreseeable future.

**Lyn Wainwright**

[chair@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com](mailto:chair@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com)

**Feats**  
**BRUSSELS 2016**  
Thursday, 5 May - Sunday, 8 May

**Click on image above to go directly to  
Box Office**

**Sara Hammerton writes:** On Thursday 5 May, 12 English-speaking theatre groups from around Europe will converge on Brussels for FEATS, which is celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. As the ECC prepares to host, checking the proofs of the programme for the last time, finalising the rota for the welcome desk, ushers, cloakroom and bar, the competing groups will be working out just how they can fit their entire set into the back of someone's car. Casts will be checking they actually have every bit of their costume together, and really do know their lines, their cues, their blocking. Directors will be preparing to hand over the whole show to their stage managers, cast and crew, knowing there is nothing more they can do. Except bite their nails. (Don't - it's a bad habit).

Three of the groups don't have very far to come, in fact, as they are already here, namely the Brussels Shakespeare Society, the Irish Theatre Group and the English Youth Theatre (formerly known as TIE). And the BATS only have to leave their Belfry in Antwerp to get to Brussels. They will be joined by groups from Amsterdam, The Hague, Hamburg, Munich, Bonn, Basel and Geneva, all ready to strut their stuff on the stage of the Woluwe St. Pierre Cultural Centre.

Three competing groups will perform every night, for four nights. All are one act-plays, none are more than 50 minutes long. Previous FEATS have provided some stunning performances, ranging from outrageously funny to deeply moving to simply breathtaking. This year promises to be no different. The subject matter ranges from 11<sup>th</sup> century women warriors battling monsters and dragons, to a 21<sup>st</sup> century woman student struggling to pay her way, from bickering couples examining their relationships to a man falling in love with a washing machine, from a teenage girl up a tree to a man lying in intensive care. Morals, identity, language and the nature of creativity are just some of the subjects covered in the plays we have lined up for you, which include five original scripts and six comedies.

Watching them from her perch near the back of the auditorium will be Bev Clark, an experienced theatre professional with numerous writing and directing credits to her name, and a member of the Guild of Drama Adjudicators. She will be delivering her comments at the end of every evening, and her final judgement at the end of the festival. There are nine prizes up for grabs, including best performance (first, second and third place), best actor, best actress, best stage presentation, best stage management, best original script and the judge's discretionary award. The scoring system is explained in the programme, and you can keep score yourself each day and see if your views tally with those of the adjudicator. Whatever the results, you will be royally entertained.

**And it doesn't stop there! We have The Fringe!!** Starting at 1.00 pm every afternoon from Friday to Sunday, there will be more performances (including another chance to see BATS "Zoo Story" by Edward Albee in case you missed it) plus workshops – Improv, Drama-based Games, the Creative Forum – to choose from. Not to mention the bar. There is something for everyone – enjoy it. [Click Here to go directly to the Fringe Programme](#)

And if you've had enough theatre (and can you?) then you might wish to join some of our visitors on a guided walk of Brussels or take part in Saturday's Hash

**The ECC looks forward to welcoming all the competing groups to Brussels, and to seeing you all at what promises to be a truly spectacular festival of theatre.**

## Woluwe-Saint-Pierre Cultural Centre

93 Avenue Charles Thielemans  
1150 Woluwe-Saint-Pierre



**Ticket prices:** €20 per night, or €70 for all 4 nights; Students (with I.D.) €10 per night, or €35 for 4 nights.

**\*Special discounted 4 night pass for all cast and crew members – including ECC Volunteers. Contact your team leader for further details.**

**Click here to book:** <http://www.thelittleboxoffice.com/ecc>

If you have any problems using this booking system or wish to book for large groups, please contact [tickets@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com](mailto:tickets@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com).

For details of the final programme, together with more news and information, go to: <http://feats2016.theatreinbrussels.com/>

## THANK YOU TO ALL OUR VOLUNTEER HELPERS!

The ECC is very grateful for the enthusiastic response that we have had to our appeal for help during the festival – so many keen volunteers! And we are especially delighted to see so many new names on the list.

All roles have now been allocated, but if you are desperate to help then let us know and if we can find a way of fitting you into the team then we will!

### **Please don't forget:**

- That if you are helping and wish to watch the performances you will need a ticket, and as a thank you for your help we are offering a special discounted rate. Your team leader can give you the special code that you will need when booking.
- That all helpers are warmly welcome to join us at the party. No ticket needed, and hot food and cold drinks will be on sale: registering on the sign up form will help us to ensure there's enough of both!

### **We would still be particularly happy to hear from:**

- Qualified first aiders who will be attending/volunteering
- Anyone willing to make a cake and bring it to the theatre for the back stage crew who will be arriving early in the morning and leaving when the theatre closes each night.

**To respond to any of the above, please contact:**  
[feats2016@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com](mailto:feats2016@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com)

# DINNER BEFORE DEATH:

## A view from the audience

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**Sara Hammerton writes: Two plays, two dead bodies, lots of laughs.**

The ECC's comedy double bill had its audience doubled up in laughter when I went on the Friday night. Apparently we were even laughing where no laughs were expected, but we were happy!

There were actually several deaths by the end of the evening, but both plays had one body lying on stage from start to finish.

First up was *Dinner for One* by Laurie Wylie, a New Year's Eve staple for German TV audiences since the sixties, but not so familiar to UK audiences. The dead body was in truth a tiger skin rug, so lying still on stage wasn't a big ask, but it played a key role in the play. (Not a real tiger, folks, just a very clever find by Director Hugh Dow). Shere Khan, for such is his name, was there to be tripped over repeatedly by the doddering old butler, played by the excellent Tim Myers. The story line is simple - the elderly Miss Sophie is holding a dinner party to celebrate her birthday. Unfortunately the four guests are all deceased, and so James the butler has to pretend to be each of them in turn.

James is a very physical role, and demands precise orchestration and timing, which Tim carried off with aplomb. I particularly liked the missed click of the heels causing him to spin round, while playing the non-existent German guest, and the huge range of facial expressions. There is a lot of voice work too, as each of Miss Sophie's guests has a different accent, and each time the words get steadily more slurred, as the hapless James imbibes the guests' drinks for them. Well within Tim's capabilities (not just the drunken thing...). Meanwhile Lyn Wainwright had to sit through it all with a straight face, as a smart but eccentric old lady. Elegantly done, understated with a hint of humour, and very convincingly aged.

*The Real Inspector Hound* is a longer and more complicated story, with a brilliant script by Tom Stoppard. Two theatre critics meet to review a murder mystery, but seem more focused on their own lives and personal hang-ups until they get literally drawn into the play, as spoof murder mystery turns to farce. The dead body in this one, bravely played by newcomer Hayk Zayimtsyan, spent the entire play lying under a sofa as it was moved side to side over him. No wriggling, giggling or throat clearing, and he had to do it for five nights. Well done. He wasn't the only newcomer. Heli Pärna played Felicity in the play-within-the play in her first role since student days, while Kai Stolzenburg took on her first English-speaking role as Cynthia. Both got into the melodramatic mood of the piece and both were clearly having great fun. Eddie Brannigan as Hound was another newcomer who also seemed to be enjoying himself hugely as he treated us to an enthusiastic performance. Another very assured newcomer was Chris Yeager who struck exactly the right note as the duplicitous cad Simon, with Hugh Grant-style self mockery.

The cast also included two actresses who have not appeared on stage in years. Nor did they this time, but Barbara Blackwell and Mary Pritchard lent their crystal clear tones to the play as the newsreaders on the radio. Pitch perfect and just right for the era.

The rest of the cast was made up of four ECC regulars. The lovely Boff Muir showed her comic talent yet again as she transformed herself into the aptly named Mrs. Drudge, treating us to a great physical performance, with some priceless facial expressions. Then just in case anyone had any doubts about the nature of the piece, the greatest moments of farce were provided by the ever versatile Graham Vincent, switching accents from Scottish, French and English as his character required. All this while sitting in a wheelchair in a kilt.

The two theatre critics were played by Ailsa Higgins and Jonathan Goldsmith. Jonathan, as the more experienced critic Birdboot, switched from smug professional confidence to defensive aggression about his private life and then as the comedy turned to farce smoothly transformed into the preening cad Simon. Moon by contrast is a far less confident character, desperately trying to prove what a clever, sophisticated critic she really is, while failing to understand anything because she is so caught up with her own issues and the massive chip on her shoulder. She had by far the most complicated dialogue, but Ailsa didn't miss a beat. An accomplished performance.

Costumes and make-up were an important contribution, notably Tim's penguin suit, Lyn's hairdo and pearls, everything about Mrs. Drudge (great make up) and Heli's period-style tennis dress. Both plays were set in elegant homes, so a pair of French windows provided a good backdrop for both. Timing is crucial for comedy to work, and so well done crew for the lighting and especially the sound. The props meanwhile almost had a life of their own. The tiger skin rug has already been mentioned, and there was a lot of tableware to be chucked around by Tim as the drunken butler. And the farce in *Inspector Hound* could not have worked without mounting the sofa on castor wheels - that didn't squeak.

The warm applause and second curtain call at the end were well deserved. Barbara and Mary take a virtual bow, as you weren't there in person, and newcomers I hope we see you on stage again soon.

### **And a word from Janet, Director of *The Real Inspector Hound***

In her *Chair's Welcome* Lyn kindly says: *Janet Middleton deserves much of the credit for staying calm and overcoming major difficulties which at times threatened to derail the whole project.* I would like to respond to that because I was only able to overcome the major difficulty of almost losing a cast member by the great kindness and talent of **Carlos Casorran**.

When I approached Carlos, the week before our performance, it was not knowing if or when my missing cast member would be able to rejoin us as he had gone to the bedside of an extremely sick relative in America but was hoping to be able to return. Therefore, all I asked of Carlos was that he familiarise himself with the role, with the stage movements and with the rest of the cast: apart from that I was happy that he should perform with the script in his hand.

What I got instead was a very talented man who spent an entire weekend learning the role and then arriving at the Tech ready to go - off book. The cast, the ECC Committee and, not least, myself, are extremely grateful to Carlos for his generosity with his time and his understanding of the situation.

I am also very grateful to **Diana Campillo** and **Graham Vincent** who gave a lot of their time to allow and help Carlos get to grips with the role, and to the cast of *Hound*, who dealt brilliantly with the unexpected change in casting and helped Carlos to perform as if he'd been rehearsing for months.

**Thank You All**

# Dinner before Death: Performance Photos



# ECC NEWS

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## Committee

Lyn Wainwright  
Kerry Lydon  
Martin Blackwell  
Andy Ing  
Chris Jones  
Janet Middleton  
Boff Muir  
Joanna Patrick  
Sara Hammerton  
Fiona McGinnis  
Conrad Toft

## Role

Chair  
Secretary  
Treasurer  
FEATS  
CAST Rep  
ECCO  
  
Publicity  
Costumes  
Webmaster

## Contact us at:

[chair@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com](mailto:chair@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com)  
[secretary@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com](mailto:secretary@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com)  
[treasurer@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com](mailto:treasurer@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com)  
[feats@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com](mailto:feats@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com)  
[chris@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com](mailto:chris@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com)  
[ecco@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com](mailto:ecco@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com)  
[boff@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com](mailto:boff@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com)  
[joanna@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com](mailto:joanna@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com)  
[sara@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com](mailto:sara@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com)  
[fiona@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com](mailto:fiona@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com)  
[webadmin@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com](mailto:webadmin@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com)

## Our November Production

### The Government Inspector

By Nikolay Gogol

The Warehouse Studio Theatre  
9-12 and 16-19 November 2016



### Director Anna Holmén writes:

*The Government Inspector* by Nikolay Gogol is an 1863 classic Russian farce. Its themes are corruption and greed, with no likeable characters at all. It is therefore only natural that it gets produced again and again in theatres all over the world. The references to 19th century Russia are usually updated, and so they will be in our production.

Casting is almost done, with a mix of seasoned and new actors in the 16 parts. Be prepared for a production full of satire, twists and turns, colourful costumes and the shameless milking of century old jokes. Any resemblance to reality is, of course, purely coincidental.



*Happy Very Special Birthday*

*to*

*A Very Special Lady*

*(who does not want any fuss made)*

*With very best wishes and thanks from  
the club for all that you have done -and  
all that you continue to do*

# ECC Social Event

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Join us for a Theatrical ...



**Friday 17 June – 8pm**

**The Bar Room of The Warehouse  
Rue Waelhem 69a, 1030 Schaerbeek**

**Teams of 4 welcome!** And there will be a prize for the team with the most original name! But if you don't have a team to join, turn up anyway! We'll find a team you can join!

There will be a bar and light refreshments available: No entry free!

If you would like to join us, just turn up on the night – but signing up by clicking [HERE](#) will give us an idea of how many bottles of wine to open!

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## Directors Wanted

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**We are now looking at our production schedule for the next couple of years, and are looking for directors with ideas to come forward!**

**We would welcome approaches by directors with suggestions not just for full-length plays, but also for one-act productions which could be part of an evening similar to our recent *Dinner before Death*.**

**For further information, or to put forward an idea, please contact our Chair, Lyn, at [chair@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com](mailto:chair@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com)**





# MONTHLY PLAY READINGS

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**Please Note Change of Date: 11<sup>th</sup> May**

Janet Middleton will lead us in reading:

## **The Hard Problem**

**By Tom Stoppard**

We will meet Chez Barbara

Rue Louis Hymans 20, 1050 Ixelles

Tom Stoppard's much awaited latest play was received with mixed reviews. The 'Hard Problem' of the title is the consciousness: What is it? Where does it exist? Is it the same as the brain? This will perhaps be a more challenging evening than some we have had, and raise more questions than answers.

If you intend to come please register via Doodle by clicking [Here](#)

Or ring Mary on 02 345 8583.

For those of you who are new to the play reading group, we meet at 7.45pm aiming to start reading at 8. We have drinks and nibbles, and a small contribution in the form of a bottle or something to eat is always welcome!

Although Mary and Barbara are still very much our guiding lights, Mary is no longer ringing around to remind people. However, every month Janet emails a reminder to people who have attended in the past and wish to be on the mailing list for these reminders. **If you would like to be added to the ECC Play Reading Email List, please email Janet at [ecco@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com](mailto:ecco@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com)**

**How to Doodle:** All you have to do is click on the link above, add your name to the list under 'Table View', click in the box to show you are coming (or do nothing if you're not!) and then 'Save' your entry. If you have any problem with this, please do not hesitate to contact Janet - or simply ring Mary.

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**The next play reading will be on the traditional 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of the month: 1 June**

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## **CAST AGM**

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As the body with responsibility for the running of the Warehouse complex, CAST is very important to the success of the productions of all the groups. Therefore it was reassuring to see a good turn out at the recent CAST AGM. Issues covered included:

- Election of officers, including a new Treasurer to replace Roisín who had done an excellent job for many years.
- A decision to revolve the responsibility for issuing of Warehouse keys around the groups: the ECC will be the first group to take on this responsibility. And Lyn Wainwright and Hugh Dow offered to resolve the problem of the non-functioning lock.
- Discussion about how the state of the courtyard is being resolved.
- A reminder that we are only entitled to two car parking spaces and should respect this

**Please Note:** Because of the current state of the cobbles in the courtyard we would remind people to pay particular attention when entering and leaving the Warehouse. We would also remind you that participants in ECC productions and events do so at their own risk, and that we cannot be held responsible for any injuries received.

# AUDITIONS: Cinderella

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We are delighted that once again this winter there will be another ECC Panto.

## *Cinderella*

**11-15 January 2017**

**Auditions will be held**

**2-6pm**

**Sunday 5 and Saturday 18 June**

**The Warehouse Studio Theatre, Rue Waelhem 69a, 1030 Brussels**



All are very welcome to come along, and should prepare a song to sing too (please don't be put off by this – non singers are welcome as well, but if you can only even vaguely attain a tune you'll be in the chorus!)

If you are unable to make either of these dates please contact Cath at [cath.howdle@gmail.com](mailto:cath.howdle@gmail.com)

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## FORTHCOMING PRODUCTIONS/EVENTS

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|-------------------------------------|--|
| <b>ECC</b>                          | <b>FEATS</b><br><b>5-8 May</b>                   |
| <b>BLOC</b>                         | <b>Bloc Busters</b><br><b>26-29 May</b>          |
| <b>Brussels Shakespeare Society</b> | <b><i>Twelfth Night</i></b><br><b>21-25 June</b> |

**Click on the name of the theatre group above to go directly to their website.**  
**For more information and auditions see also [www.theatreinbrussels.com](http://www.theatreinbrussels.com)**

### **YOU MIGHT ALSO BE INTERESTED IN:**

Utopolis, Mechelen, has for some time been screening **NTLive**, but they are now also screening other English productions. [Click here for further details](#)

**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: <http://www.ffact.be/#>