



ECCO: November 2018



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If you have any
contributions for ECCO,
please send them to
ecco@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com

The next Ecco will come
out in January 2019

Message from the Chair

And another season gets off to a great start..... the ECC's production of *The Father* directed by Heli Parna was a great success. It was a very accomplished, moving production and I, like many others the night I was there, was moved to tears. Well done Heli, Bryony and the team. It was exciting as Chair of the ECC to see new talent on display, as this was Heli's first time as director. The committee hopes she enjoyed it enough to work with us again soon.

Our focus now turns to our next production, the panto – *Robin Hood & Babes in the Wood* in January. Director Andy Fisk and his team are hard at work and having lots of fun in the process. Tickets are already selling well, so please don't forget to get yours to ensure you get a good seat! See further details later in this ECCO.

Before that is our wine tasting evening on 16th November organized by Janet and Tim Middleton and our ECC Christmas Party on 7th December – details to follow.

Thank you all for your continued support of the ECC and please don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any comments or feedback on what we are doing.

Kerry Lydon, ECC Chair

chair@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com



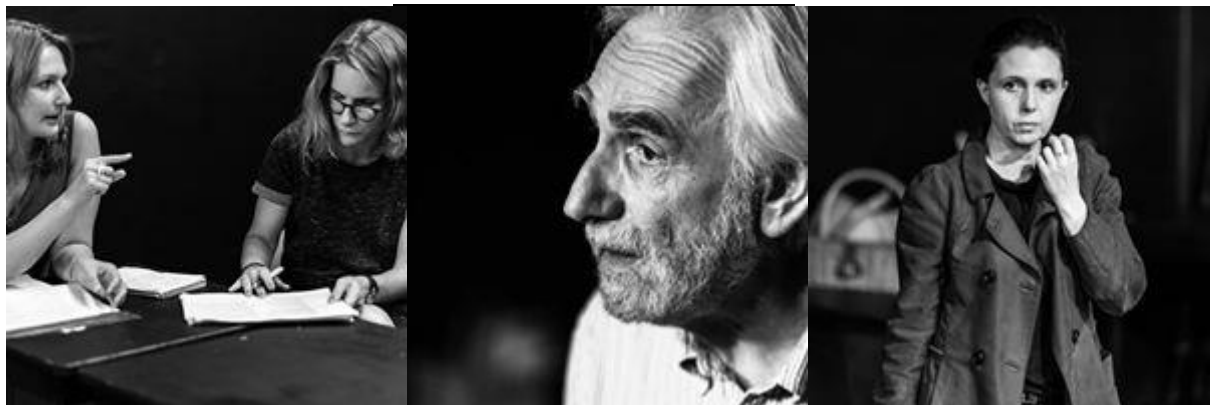
REVIEW



Review of *The Father*, directed by Heli Pärna

“Don’t you recognize me?” “Don’t you remember?” Recognition and remembrance, or the absence thereof, lie at the heart of Florian Zeller’s family drama *The Father*. Director Heli Pärna brings these values to the fore in a production which left both a smile and tears on this reviewer’s face.

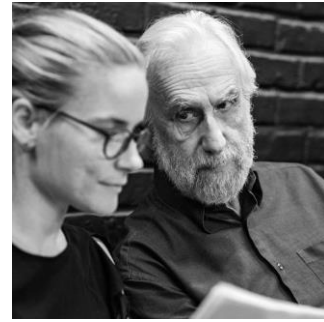
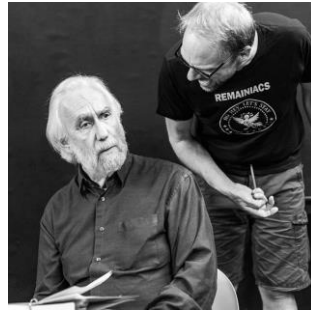
This is above all a play about identity and how the insidiousness of dementia slowly but surely deconstructs the lives we build for ourselves. Protagonist and patriarch André, skillfully portrayed by David Steen with a twinkle in his eye, is losing his sense of self. The genius of Zeller’s play comes in making the audience see the world through André’s eyes: disorienting, unfamiliar, and at times, downright terrifying. In fact the play’s very structure emulates André’s disordered mind, disintegrating and reordering itself from one moment to the next, leaving him feeling “like I’m losing all my leaves”.



Steen’s portrayal shifted between bouncy enthusiasm and bemused confusion, deftly capturing André’s charms and fears in equal measure. Despite the weighty subject matter, Steen managed to inject a level of lightness into the character, particularly in his interactions with patient, compassionate carer Marie (Hannah T. Berz), and his deadpan humour delivered some much-needed laugh-out-loud moments.

The rest of the ensemble cast was just as strong. Petra Kupka in particular shone as Anne, the daughter struggling to shake free from comparisons to her absent sister Elise (to whom one immediately suspects the worse has happened), whilst still doing her duty towards her ailing father. Kupka played the part with a striking combination of tenderness and frustration, skillfully capturing Anne’s despair at being pulled in two different directions. The twin characters of Pierre and Man (Chris Jones and Martin Henry respectively) reinforced this impossible choice.

I would be remiss not to mention the outstanding use of lighting in this production. Used to delineate the gaps and leaps in André’s memory, or to differentiate dreams from reality, the blackouts and spotlights served as a visual guide for the audience. The luminescent clock intermittently projected onto the floor of the theatre was particularly striking, bridging the space between audience and on-stage action, encapsulating the non-linear passage of time in André’s mind, and adding a sense of impending threat to the unfolding of events.



A sense of space is key in this play. André's limited grip on reality hinges on his sense of being at home in his flat, whether or not he is in fact he is actually there. The set is skillfully used in this context; it starts out looking like something out of a painting but is gradually stripped back as the play progresses, echoing the increasing instability of André's memories and inability to rely on his surroundings as an anchor to the past.

There is an inevitability to the play's ending, when André's mental dislocation results in his physical relocation to a care home – but it is no less poignant for that reason. In the final encounter between André and a sympathetic but anonymous nurse (played by Kirstie Millar as patronizingly compassionate), you could almost hear a pin drop in the theatre; the audience was unified in heartbroken empathy for this shell of a man.

As the cast took their bows to rousing applause, I was reminded of Matthew Arnold's description of old age as being "frozen up within, and quite the phantom of ourselves". This sentiment was present throughout Heli Pärna's beautifully bittersweet production, and she should be congratulated for her skillful handling of such a sensitive subject.

Finally, it is important to mention that 2€ from every ticket sold was donated to Alzheimer's Europe.

Méabh Maguire

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In Rehearsal
The Pantomime!
Robin Hood
and The Babes in the Wood
18-20 Jan 2019



Our trusty panto team have been busy rehearsing since September, on weekday evenings for adults then a full-on Sunday morning with all the kids, warming up their vocal chords, mastering their dance moves, and honing those oh so terrible jokes, to bring you yet another fun-packed performance. Some of the pictures in the article below give you a small taste of what goes into preparing these shows.



ECCO also had an exclusive interview with **director Andy Fisk** and **script writer/choreographer Josephine Draycott**, telling you everything you wanted to know about this panto but were afraid to ask. : -)

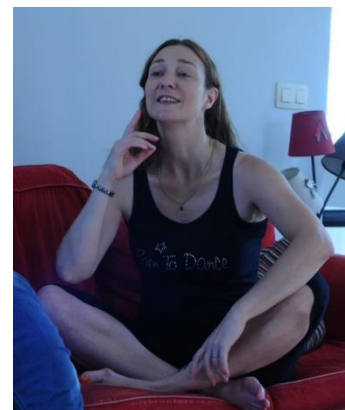
The interview by Lilian Eilers

Why did you choose this panto?

“Robin Hood is one of the traditional pantomimes and one we haven’t performed yet as the ECC. The script is simply fantastic: we started with an original script by Dom Mattos and Cath Howdle, and then built our own Brussels script –Josephine did the rewrite with edits from Cath and the odd comic one liner from my own Internet search! We think it’s the best script we’ve had for a Brussels panto yet. Good script and good cast, what more do you need?”

Why did you decide to direct this year?

“This is in fact my directorial debut. I love being on stage and have had several principal panto roles on the Brussels stage: Dame, Good Guy and Bad Guy. So I believe this is the moment to give back. And we wrote in a cameo role for me at the end of the show...director’s perk!”



What’s so special about humour in pantos?

“Panto jokes are aimed at a double level -- kids jokes interlaced with adult jokes -- so we tread a fine line to ensure everyone is entertained. The skill of panto writing is that the jokes

stay on the 'right side'. They also need to be delivered as deadpan as possible, which requires skilled acting. We try to avoid too many double entendres ... but it's very hard.

It's fascinating to see which jokes get the biggest laughs – it's never the ones you expect. Political and Brussels references always work. We encourage improvisation by the cast as we put the scenes together, so the script improves further during rehearsals."

Was casting this production difficult?

"The casting was difficult in a good way: we had double the number of people showing up for auditions than last year. Sixty people auditioned for principal roles, and I had to listen to about 80 renditions of "We are The Champions"! In the end, we cast 23 principles and 30 chorus members.



We are always aiming to raise the bar. We have a big chorus full of great singers and dancers and a fantastic set of principals including a few newcomers to our Panto family. We're casting the next generation! This year we have a mixture of ages in the Merry Men: two adults and six teenagers. The Babes in the Woods are 10 and 11. We are also introducing a new role for us, a mini-Dame who is 11 years old. And this year we'll also have one of the great Panto traditions - a horse!

But putting on a show is not just about the Actors, right?

Absolutely not. I have an incredible team helping me. Kerry Lydon is my producer and I have two assistant directors and three choreographers. I have an experienced back stage team – lights, sound, stage management and props – and a super dedicated costumes team. And what always impresses me is the enthusiasm of the parents – helping with rehearsals and always ready to help front and back of the house during the shows themselves.

We're five years in on our journey. This is number 6 and I hope it'll be the best Panto yet – but I have big shoes to fill. Our reputation is spreading - we were over 92% sold last year, and we've already sold 20% of this year's tickets three months before the show ... so I do suggest booking now to get the best seats!

Robin Hood and the Babes in the Wood will be performed in Auderghem Cultural Centre from January 18-20, 2019.

Tickets are €16 for adults, €12 for children and are available from www.thelittleboxoffice.com/ecc.

AGM and Play Reading evening

On Monday 15 October a number of us gathered for the ECC's AGM combined with a short play-reading session.

We hope that those who came along enjoyed meeting members of the committee, and the committee were pleased to see them and only sorry that regular AGM attendees Mary and Barbara were unable to join us this year: you were missed ladies.

Business over (see the *official report below* for details of the not-so-mundane activities during the AGM, as this year a major decision was made which affects the constitution of the ECC), we settled down to the play reading - after a little break to fill our glasses, nibble some crisps etc.

Not being sure how long the AGM would go on for I decided to select some short plays, and chose three from *Lives of the Saints* by David Ives. I am incredibly grateful to Hamburg Players for bringing this collection of short plays to my attention when they performed, to great acclaim and the genuine delight and amusement of the audience, *Soap Opera*, when FEATS was in Brussels. *Soap Opera* is about a washing machine repairman who falls in love with a Maypole washing machine, but, seeing that their love was doomed takes her to a smart French restaurant to end their relationship.

Arabian Nights is a three-hander which started us all laughing out loud as the Interpreter gives flamboyant, literal and incorrect interpretations of Norman's conversation with Flora. Needless to say this all takes place in perfect English but there is a twist at the end when the interpreter and Norman seamlessly switch roles. It was wonderfully funny and we felt would give a director and actors loose reign to present a thoroughly over-acted performance!

Our final piece, *The Mystery at Twickenham Vicarage*, gave me the opportunity to cast Sara as Sarah; for the reader cast as the murdered body to look daggers at me for several pages and for everyone to drag up their plummiest, over-the-top English upper class accents. It was hysterical! A wonderful end to the evening as we laughed our way through this ridiculous comedy! It was the unanimous decision of the group that we very much hope that one day this short piece will be presented at FEATS so that we can all enjoy seeing it in performance. Oh, and should it be the ECC that decides to do it, then well, we all want to be in it

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AGM – Minutes

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

15 October 2018 – 7.30 pm

The Warehouse, Rue Waelhem, 1030 Brussels

Apologies: Anna Holmen, Tim Middleton, Barbara Blackwell, Mary Pritchard,

Present: Sara Hammerton, Kerry Lydon, Janet Middleton, Fiona McGinnis, Fiona Muir, Lyn Wainwright, Julian Oliver, Andy Ing, Steve O'Byrne, Cornelia Lüth, Jeffrey Carter Bryony Ulyett,

1. Adoption of the minutes of the minutes of the 2017 AGM

Proposed: Fiona McGinnis Seconded: Lyn Wainwright

2. Chair's Report: Kerry Lydon

Right after the AGM last year we staged Life reflected, an evening of poetry directed by Malinda Coleman. Tickets sales proved to be low and publicity was difficult as it was a challenge to explain to the audience the concept as it was so experimental. Malinda had assembled a very talented group of actors and a delightful selection of texts, which reflected on different stages of life. The show was a great success and appreciated by all including many people who had not thought they would enjoy "an evening of poetry". I am happy that we have the resources to stage experimental shows that can appeal to a wide variety of audiences. Congratulations to all involved.

In January we put on our panto Snow White, directed by Conrad Toft. The ECC is enjoying a growing reputation among the international community for producing a fun-filled panto, giving opportunities for all ages to get involved. Conrad assembled an experienced cast and crew, and with invaluable help from the parents of the children involved, this was the most successful panto yet selling over 2,500 seats over the 5 shows bringing in a substantial amount of money into the ECC coffers. The expenses were slightly higher this year due to a larger cast, but we were still able to donate EUR1,500 to the Giraffe Project who were our chosen charity this year. The funds from the panto help to finance our other productions, pay for the upkeep of the Warehouse and give us the opportunity to finance other projects (more of which later). Rehearsals are currently underway next door for the next panto – Robin Hood and Babes in the Wood directed by Andy Fisk which will be performed at the CCA on 18-20 January 2019.

In May and June 2018 we were treated to the long-awaited production of Amadeus by Peter Schaffer directed by Stephen Challens at the Bozar. Sadly, due to the good weather, a calendar clash with the Urine Town by Bloc and the World Cup, the tickets sales were not quite what we hoped. It was a pity as Stephen had a perfectly chosen cast who delivered the show expertly, particularly Geoffrey Mamdani in the lead role of Salieri. The lighting and sound designed by Andrew Williams and Steve O'Byrne respectively set the atmosphere perfectly and the costumes designed by Fiona McGinnis and team completed the beautiful look of the play. Congratulations to all involved especially Stephen and Geoffrey who won BUTTIES for Best Director and Best Actor respectively in July.

We have also continued to have well attended social evenings last season, starting with our first Burns' Night in January – where we had traditional poetry readings led by Hugh Dow and Eileen Sutton and a whisky tasting organised by Tim Middleton. We have also had Just a Minute expertly hosted by Jonathan Goldsmith and Fiona McGinnis and a quiz organised by me and Adam Brown. These evenings are always a good opportunity to get together old and newcomers to share a drink and a chat!

I would also like to thank Janet Middleton who continues to organise our monthly play readings. These are always well attended and give rise to new plays that we can perform in the future and helps to nurture new talent both on and off stage.

Our very own Anna Holmen has been the chairman of CAST this season and can tell you all a little more of what CAST has been doing this year.

One of the things I think we can all be very proud of this season was the Youth Theatre Summer school organised by Steve O'Byrne in July this year. For many years the committee has discussed organising a Summer School for youngsters over the school

holidays and investing some of our panto income. This year, Steve, took up the challenge on behalf of the committee and a five-day Summer School took place in July this year. 34 children attended the workshop and they learned acting, lighting, sound, prop building, publicity, graphics, singing, dancing and stage management. Steve assembled a number of experienced teachers and the children were divided into small groups to learn. The week culminated in putting on a short play in front of parents and guests. The feedback we have received has been very positive and we hope to have another stage in Summer 2019.

Talking of next Season, we have three new directors working on shows for season 2018-2019 beginning with Heli Parna directing the Father by Florian Zeller next week. Heli has received lots of help from more experienced members of the team to make sure she feels comfortable in her new role. Tickets are selling fast!

In January as already mentioned, having been in the last five pantos, Andy Fisk is taking up the role of director – again, he has an experienced team to help him out.

In April, Diana Campillo will be directing the 39 Steps in the Studio.

I am happy that we are investing time and resources into new directors and giving our community the opportunity to grow.

I have enjoyed my first year as Chair and would like to thank all the committee for all their hard work that they have put in this year and hope we can all continue to bigger and better things!

3. Treasurer`s Report: Fiona McGinnis

Fiona presented the accounts, showing that there had been a surplus this year. The figures are attached.

Last year we made a charitable contribution to the Oasis project and the Giraffe project. This year, the production of "The Father" is contributing 2€ per ticket to Alzheimer's Europe, and a further donation will be made by Panto.

It was agreed to make this the charitable contribution of the year.

The final accounts were proposed and seconded and are available on request from committee@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com.

4. Report from Committee

a. CAST – Lyn Wainwright

It was reported that projected investments into air conditioning for the studio had not been confirmed due to the fears of the syndic that they would be too noisy. The good news is that investments will instead be made into renewing the lighting system with LED lighting which will produce no/little heat. A new fridge will be purchased for the studio to replace the one which is no longer working very well.

b. FEATS – Andy Ing

It was reported that the ECC is still planning on submitting the Impotence of Being Frank by Joe Wilde, which was performed successfully as part of a Wilde Night Out at the studio in 2017. As original scripts are now limited (picked at random), a "plan b" might be necessary.

5. Committee

Kerry stated that most of the current committee wished to remain in place although Anna Holmen and Bryony Ulyett both are stepping down.

The nomination form had been circulated in ECCO and on Facebook. There being no other nominations, a show of hands meant the following were elected unanimously:

Name	Position
Kerry Lydon	Chair
Sara Hammerton	Secretary
Fiona McGinnis	Treasurer
Andy Ing	Committee
Janet Middleton	Committee
Lyn Wainwright	Committee
Steve O'Byrne	Committee
Boff Muir	Committee

6. Articles of Association

Kerry explained that the Committee had agreed to update the articles of association, with the help of Jeremy Zeegers (a lawyer). All present agreed that it is important to ensure that persons holding key roles that are difficult to fill are not cut short unless necessary. In particular, Fiona McGinnis as (the ECC's excellent and professional) treasurer will no longer be asked to step down after three years.

7. Any Other Business

Mary Pritchard and Barbara Blackwell both expressed apologies for their absence. Lyn Wainwright expressed the difficulty of starting meetings at 7:30

There being no other business, the Chair closed the meeting, which was followed by a play reading, organised by Janet Middleton. (see report above).

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ECC Social Events:

- Wine Tasting

ECC Wine Tasting evening

Friday 16th November

The Bar Room, The Warehouse

69a rue Waelhem, 1030 Brussels



- Christmas Party – save the date



The ECC will hold its annual Christmas Party on Friday 7th December 2018. Details of the venue and start time will be announced soon, in an ECCO Newsflash.

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Monthly Play Readings

Wednesday 7 November

Lyn Wainwright and Julian Oliver will lead us in reading

The Memory of Water

By Shelagh Stephenson

We will meet Chez Lyn and Julian

**13 rue Nisard Bte 1
1170 Watermael-Boitsfort**

7.45pm for an 8pm start

Three sisters and their partners gather at the home of their recently dead mother and revisit the past in a poignant and often hilarious way.

The play focuses on how each sister deals with the death and how it directly affects them but each having different memories about the same events there is constant bickering about whose memories are true. All their hidden lies and self-betrays reach the surface as they act out this tragi-comedy.

If you would like to join us please sign up on the Doodle here:

<https://doodle.com/poll/gk9rqubcmdr6m5k4>

How to find us:

Leaving the centre of Boitsfort follow the Boulevard de Souverain in the direction of Auderghem and take the first turning on the right which is rue Nisard. Then almost immediately turn right following the sign for 'Les Fougères'. This has a notice which says 'Propriété Privé' which can be a bit off putting but persevere. Follow the road up the hill passing several apartment blocks until you arrive at the last one, number 13, which is where we live.

Please ring bell marked Oliver-Sully

There is also a gate at the entrance which will be open until 8pm. If you arrive after 8pm please ring the bell at the gate and you will be buzzed in.

Tram & Buses: 17, 95, 8 Wiener

New members are always welcome to join our group, and there is no requirement to be with us every month.

We usually meet on the first Wednesday at the month, at 7.45pm for an 8pm start. This is a purely social event, and you are very welcome to bring along something small to eat or drink to share with others – not a meal, just nibbles!

Ideas for plays to read and offers to host are also very welcome!

Can You Help our Play Reading Group?

Mary and Barbara have gamely hosted us for many, many, years – but now it really is time for them to be given some time off! **Many thanks** to those who have offered to host from time to time ... is there anyone else who would be willing to let us invade their sitting room from time to time?

It would also be great to hear from anyone willing to lead a play reading – with or without a play in mind! We have a list of plays you can choose from!

Just contact ecco@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com. Many thanks. Janet

FORTHCOMING PRODUCTIONS/EVENTS

ATC	<i>God of Carnage</i> Nov 8-10 & 13-17, 2018
BLOC	<i>Oklahoma!</i> Nov 22-25, 2018
BSS	<i>Hamlet</i> Nov 28 – Dec 1, 2018
ECC	<i>Robin Hood & the Babes in the Wood</i> Nov 18-20, 2019

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