



ECCO: July 2019



In this edition:

Next Production:

Sleuth

Review:

Pygmalion

Review: ECC FEATS

entry *The Impotence of Being Frank*

ECC Youth Summer School July 2019:

Arthurian Legends

July Play Reading -3

July: The Mouse that Roared

Forthcoming productions

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

ecco@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com

The next ECCO will come out in September 2019

Message from the Chair

Another Season comes to an end and we would like to thank you all for your continued support. Since our last newsletter, the ECC has performed *Pygmalion* directed by Emily Bowles and also taken *The Impotence of Being Frank* directed by Hugh Dow to FEATS in Munich (more of both later in this issue). Also, since I last wrote, the Committee is very sad to have said goodbye to Brussels AmDram stalwart Adam Brown who passed away on 7 May. Adam had been involved in theatre in Brussels for almost 40 years enchanting audiences on stage and as a Director and also helping keeping things running behind the scenes. He will be missed by all.

We have been busily preparing the next season for you and are happy to announce that the next productions will be *Sleuth* by Anthony Shaffer directed by Alexandre Diaconu in September followed by *Panto Beauty and the Beast* in January. In addition, we plan to have a few social evenings at the Warehouse to ensure that our community can come together socially outside the confines of performing! We hope to see you at one of our events soon.

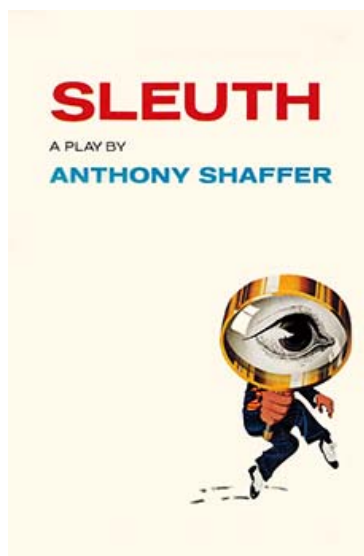
Kerry Lydon, ECC Chair

chair@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com

Next Production

SLEUTH by **Anthony Shaffer**

23 September – 6 October 2019



The ECC will kick off its 2019-2020 season with Anthony Shaffer's Masterpiece "SLEUTH". Alexander Diaconu will direct the production, to be performed at The Warehouse Studio Theatre from 23 September to 6 October 2019.



The ultimate game of cat-and-mouse is played out in a cosy English country house owned by celebrated mystery writer, Andrew Wyke. Invited guest Milo Tindle, a young rival who shares not only Wyke's love of the game but also his wife, has come to lay claim. Revenge is devised and murders plotted as the two plan the ultimate whodunnit.

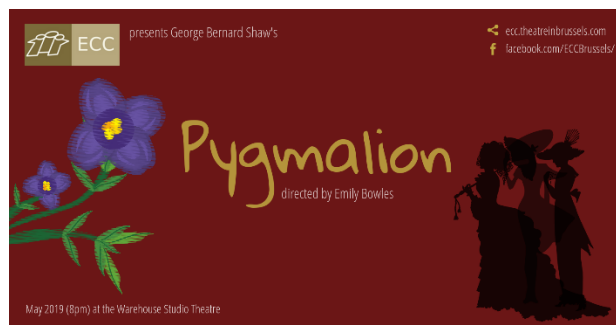
You tube trailer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qCjDoglrOk&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR39QxnJc1Q62ON-Wzej1ezlBEzxi4NR0LZj5LLAhellalrla4WXCdMIkQ>

REVIEW

Pygmalion

Our last ECC production, George Bernard Shaw's **Pygmalion**, directed by Emily Bowles, at the Warehouse Studio Theatre from 2-11 May is reviewed here by a member of our audience, Vanessa Stephen.



Is there a more unpleasant English Language literary creation than Professor Henry Higgins, a malign, manipulative, mummy's boy? Possessed of a character that steamrollers all before it, Chris Jones set about breathing life into Shaw's monster with an energy and purpose that risked sweeping everyone else aside; until confronted with Hannah Riley's Eliza Doolittle, who matched him blow for blow in an explosive second Act.

On the face of it *Pygmalion* is a Comedy of Manners that pokes fun at the middle classes and their veiled attempts to ape the perceived superiority of the upper classes. However, *Pygmalion* is a complex, layered play that explores themes of class, gender and morality in pre WWI England as well as the triumph of the essential self over modulated tones and pretty dresses.

The ECC's decision, driven by the play's director Emily Bowles, to strip away the saccharine accretions of the 1920s and the 1938 screenplay in favour of the unvarnished original laid bare these themes and brought proceedings to a sudden unambiguous end. It was unthinkable that this Eliza would return to

Higgins, she had his elocution methods to tout and if that failed she could always marry Freddy Eynsford-Hill, played all a fluster by Simon Budden, who worshiped the ground she walked on.

Shaw's feminist credentials were clearly on show in this production. The men were presented as an unrestrained narcissist (Higgins), polite but foolish (Colonel Pickering, Simon Smith), ridiculous (Freddy Eynsford-Hill) and roguish (Alfred Doolittle, Conrad Toft) whilst the key supporting female characters Mrs Pearce (Marianne Farrar-Hockley) and Mrs Higgins (Sandra Lizioli) exuded no-nonsense common sense and compassion, providing the moral fibre to the production.

The roles of Mrs and Miss Clara Eynsford-Hill are difficult to play because their faded gentility is perhaps the most dated aspect of the play and their travails are not familiar to a modern audience; alternatively it was always Shaw's intention that they should come across as rather stupid? Anna Holmén and Hattie Easton convincingly inhabited this dying breed and provided the necessary ballast at the tea party. Clara's affected drawl whilst adopting the "new small talk", to the horror of her mother, was well observed.



In a play that can all too easily give way to the comedic, the cast played it straight, from the appalling Alfred Doolittle's attempts to flog his daughter for five pounds to the tea party and the infamous "Walk? Not bloody likely" towards the end of the first Act. It is a measure of how much the world has changed that when Mrs Patrick Campbell uttered the word "bloody" at Her Majesty's Theatre in 1914 it was thought she risked her career (Richard Huggett 1969). "Bloody" was no laughing matter then and begs the question, what would Eliza have to say now to elicit a similar level of shock?

The staging and lighting of the play was excellent given the constrained space and the in-the-round layout. In the age of supposedly 'naturalistic (mumbled) speech' all cast members spoke clearly and without amplification.

And a final commendation to the cast members that doubled up as set changers. It's not easy to ensure consistency when working in the dark. It was a job well done.

Vanessa Stephen

FEATS REVIEW

FEATS, the Festival of European Anglophone Theatrical Societies, is an annual competition between English-speaking amateur theatrical groups resident in mainland Europe to see who can put on the best production. This year the ECC took their revamped production of “The Impotence of Being Frank” by Jo Wilde to the competition, held in Munich from 30 May to 2 June. No prizes were won, but it did get nominated for two of them – Best Actor for Brian Holland as the humble, loyal Police Constable Beasley and Best Original Script for Martin Westlake (Jo Wilde being his nom de plume). Indeed the script was warmly praised in the review published in the FEATS newsletter (see below), which describes the dialogue as “sharp, snappy and fast moving”.

Director Hugh Dow reflects on the experience of taking the ECC entry to FEATS in Munich



We took *The Impotence of Being Frank* to FEATS in Munich. I staged the play entirely differently from the last time - instead of three sets on one stage I had one set doing the work of three. I wanted the props to be in on the joke.

Nagging everyone to speed up became ever more pressing as we realised we were in danger of running over time (50 minutes). Which in the end we did; but by seconds.

I was enormously lucky in having an experienced (at FEATS) backstage crew. You’ve got two hours to get in, set lights and sound, dress rehearsal if you can, and get out again. Conrad and team pulled it off like good’ uns.

We were nominated twice which was nice and the adjudicator, Jan Palmer-Sayer, was kind about the whole preposterous farce. The audience laughed a lot which didn’t help the timing and I declare I heard a couple of whoops at the end.



Great fun. Very team-forming. Great job by cast and crew alike. And fun to meet up with ex ECC-ers Alison Sandford and Nickie Harrison.

And fell a little bit on love with Bavaria. Jolly and sunny and clean and efficient.

Hugh Dow.

And here, in full, is the review of
The Impotence of Being Frank published in the FEATS newsletter.

“On a darkened stage, a couple (Mary and Frederick Grass - apt name!) arrive outside a house, apparently to collect their friend for an evening out together. They find him slumped next to a glass of whisky and a bottle of aspirin and a suicide note. They manage to rouse him and he admits to having written the suicide note for someone else. Reading in a newspaper about the death of Ernest, they decide to tip off the police anonymously. With much confusion of identities and actions, the play romps on through a crazy police investigation. The style of the writing throughout has a staid, Victorian flavour about it, but of course cannot possibly achieve the distinctive wit of “a trivial comedy for serious people”, even though at one point the line “a humbug!!!” is uttered. The comedy is riotously fast-paced, helped along by such wonderful characters as PC Beasley, a loyal and well-meaning sidekick of the Detective Inspector, and Mrs Mulligatawny, Frank’s mother, who knits blue baby booties throughout the interrogation whilst sitting astride her exercise ball, dressed in shocking pink gym gear. The police investigation of the scene of the crime is carried out using a rolled out sheet of black paper, with the body shape marked out in white. Love it! Frank remains cool and calm throughout the interrogation, whisky glass held aloft. The dialogue is sharp, snappy and fast moving so please forgive me for not having followed all the twists and turns of the plot, the running gag about the importance of the open window being a case in point. The DI (in his odd socks) is so brilliant that he is able to determine the identity of the mystery caller by the unique combination of his nose and cough, even when “leading a red herring up a garden path”. Finally all the suspects are invited to the police station, resulting in a Poirot-style gathering of all concerned for the Detective Inspector to reveal the denouement - at great length and very entertainingly. In his inimitable

way, he proves to us all that the window, open or otherwise, is not suspicious and that the perpetrator came in through the door. In an amazing twist, we learn that Frank was writing the note for himself - as he is in fact Ernest; Frank and Ernest being truly identical twins who often switched places with each other, and Ernest had died of natural causes so - finally! - we get to hear of “the impotence of being Ernest” although, it is announced, that “the impotence of being Frank is better than the importance of being Ernest”. (We’d all been waiting for that one).”

YOUTH THEATRE SUMMER SCHOOL 2019

(8-12 July and 15-19 July 2019)



First Week Full – Still Places for Second Week

More than 40 children are signed up to this year’s adventure exploring **Arthurian Legends**. The first week is full but there are still places left for the second week - from 15 to 19 July. The week’s activities will be based around a central theme and will include acting, singing and dancing rehearsals. Additionally, there will be a series of workshops on some of the back-stage aspects of theatre, such as hair and make-up, costumes, sets, props, sound, lighting, publicity, programmes, and more. The aim is to give a short performance for parents on the Friday afternoon, with the children getting involved back-stage, if they wish to do so!

Venue

The Summer School will take place at the Warehouse, Rue Waelhem 73, 1030 Brussels.

Times

The day’s activities will run from 9h until 17h each day with supervised child minding from 8h in the mornings and until 18h each evening.

Prices

The cost for the week will be €175 per child with a reduction for any siblings (€150).

[Click here for online registration.](#)

Please contact **Steve O’Byrne**, on the ECC committee, if you have any questions.

July Play Reading

Wednesday 3 July

Graham Andrews will lead us in reading

The Mouse That Roared

Based on the novel by Leonard Wibberly

We will meet chez Tim and Janet Middleton

Rue des Atrebatas 27

1040 Brussels

7.45pm for an 8pm start

Following the success of last month's film-inspired play reading (*The Ladykillers*), Graham Andrews has been enthused to lead us in another similar comedy, the 1959 film, ***The Mouse that Roared***.

The minuscule European Duchy of Grand Fenwick is bankrupted when an American company comes up with a cheaper imitation of Fenwick's sole export, its fabled Pinot Grand Fenwick wine. Crafty Prime Minister Count Mountjoy devises a plan: Grand Fenwick will declare war on the United States, then surrender, taking advantage of American *largesse* toward its defeated enemies to rebuild the defeated nation's economy.

This is a Peter Sellers comedy: of course this is not going to go to plan and silliness is bound to ensue!!

Please register if you are coming by signing up on our Doodle: <https://doodle.com/poll/62h2svcid7rxauyk>

Hope to see lots of you on the 3rd.

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 of every month. This is a purely social event and you are 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.

FORTHCOMING PRODUCTIONS

<u>ECC</u>	<i>Sleuth</i> by Anthony Shaffer, 23 September to 6 October 2019, Warehouse Studio Theatre
<u>ATC</u>	<i>Whose Afraid of Virginia Wolf</i> by Edward Albee, 8-12 October 2019, Petit Théâtre Mercelis
<u>ITG</u>	<i>Our Few and Evil Days</i> by Mark O'Rowe, 5 to 9 November, Petit Théâtre Mercelis
<u>BLOC</u>	<i>Kiss Me Kate</i> , 21-24 November 2019, Auderghem Cultural Centre

**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**

ECC PRIVACY POLICY

In line with the General Data Protection Regulation the ECC has adopted a **Privacy Policy** to give you a clear understanding of what information we collect about you, how we collect it (from you directly and from third parties), how we use it, and how we keep it secure. [Full details of the ECC Privacy Policy are on our web site: http://ecc.theatreinbrussels.com/?page_id=1954](http://ecc.theatreinbrussels.com/?page_id=1954)

You can contact us at any time to access the information we hold about you on privacy@ecc.theatreinbrussels.com