

# **A HISTORY OF DRAMA AT KGS**

## **1952 - 1960**

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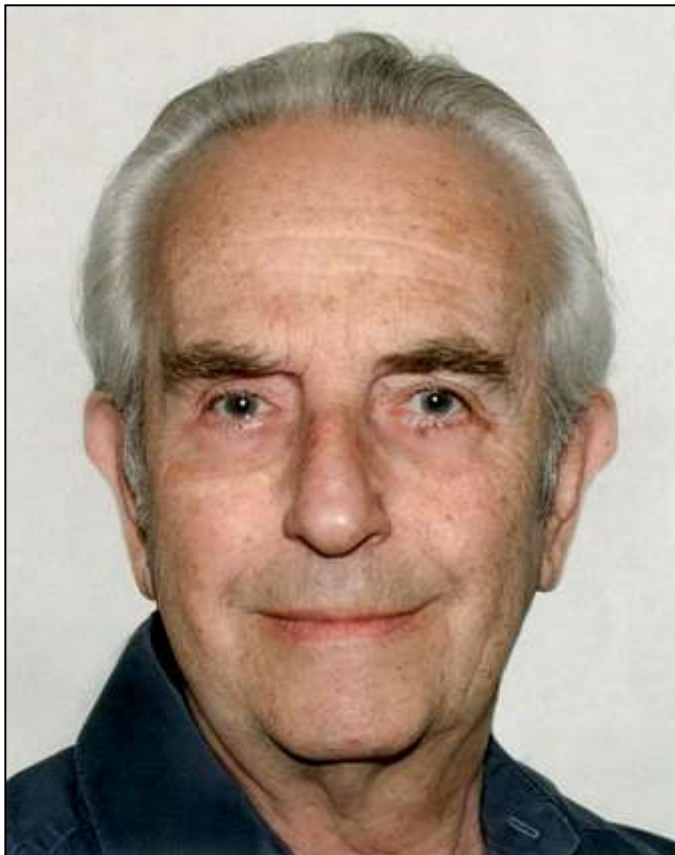
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I must start by thanking Alan Parish for the tremendous amount of work he put into preparing my History of Drama for the Old Boys' website. It was not easy piecing together all my pages of script – some typed on an old-fashioned typewriter, some digital, some hand-written. Then there have been all the photographs, programmes, and other pieces from my archives that have had to be scanned in. It has taken then best part of a year.

I would like to acknowledge my debt to the Editors of *The Kilburnian* over the period in question and those who wrote reviews of the plays and other articles. As for the photos, at this remove in time it is not possible to credit everyone. Mostly they are by the physics teacher, the late Mr E (Ben) Leavey. He also made the many close-ups of the Hamlet cast especially for me. Those photos of *Hamlet* taken from above, ie. from the lighting box, were by B Riley. The photos of full casts and staged scenes were taken by local Willesden professional photographer J Debenham, whom the school used throughout the fifties. If you took a photo not credited, please let me know.



I have tried to name at least once everyone in the photos. If your name has been left out, it is not because you were playing a lesser part. Everyone was important in creating the plays. Please let me know if you were not credited and maybe we can have an update in the future. The photos of the school hall are mine, from my visit in 1989 a few days before the school was closed.

And lastly, albeit long after the final curtain, a huge thank you to all the actors, technicians, and producers who made all the productions possible over these years.

**ALAN SCHNEIDER**

2014

## INTRODUCTION

When I was selecting photos for display for the centenary dinner, it made me realize what an extraordinary period this was for drama and music. As I went through my photograph albums, magazines and programmes I thought it might be interesting to write something about this period in KGS history. What has evolved is an extensive review, because each production or musical occasion really does merit so much detail, together with personal recollections and anecdotes. I hope this review will bring back some memories for those who were at KGS at the time, and also be of interest to those who were there before or after.

I will write the names of those at school who were pupils without title, and those who were staff with a Mr or Mrs or Miss. This does produce a bit of a stiff effect at times, but it will help to make clear who's who. I will write first names where I know them, otherwise the initial – this is not in any way an indication of preference. Restriction on space prevents listing every participant in a play, but if anyone would like further details of some particular event I will be happy to supply them. I hope there are no mistakes, but please write in if there is anything I have left out which you think should be included, or if you find anything not right, or if you can answer the occasional query I have raised.









**Mr Wright's first production: The Tempest 1950**



**Mr Wright's second production: Henry IV part 1**

**Second left: Terry Wale**

## AS YOU LIKE IT

Before I went to KGS I do not think I had seen a play. Pantomimes yes, but not a play and certainly not Shakespeare. So, December 1952, seated near the back of the hall, the dimming of the lights and the raising of the huge dark brown velvet curtains was quite something. The play was *As You Like It*. I remember the brightness of the stage and the assured playing of the senior boys in the school who as a first year I hardly knew. J Payne played the Duke, F Snook, Frederick, and I Spellman was Jaques. There were also names that were to make their mark in later productions. These included Norman Holmes as William, R Hill as Celia, Jack Harris as Phebe and Philip Southwood and Tony Huckwell, who were young pages and sang a duet arrangement of Hey Nonny. Touchstone was played by Maurice Faigenblum, Rosalind by Duncan Drown, and Orlando by G Beeney. I remember these very well. They were my first Shakespearean clown and amorous lady and lover. The wrestler was played by J Hennesy, even as a schoolboy a giant of a fellow. There was no possible way you could believe that the tall but slender proportions of Orlando could have beaten this wrestler. But that, it seemed, was part of the fun of drama. I think we called it suspension of disbelief later on.

The stage manager was D Ricks and Derek Sampson was among the lighting technicians. Mr Robert Whitmore made and painted the scenery, principally a backcloth. He was an absolute master of backcloth painting. The canvas was unrolled down the art room wall and the picture took shape little by little during the autumn term. Mrs Chirgwin – Rosemary – did the make-up, about which more later on.

The play was produced by Mr Peter Wright. He had come to KGS in 1950 and had produced *The Tempest* and *Henry IV Part 1* in the previous two years. His powers as a producer, his skill in casting, and his ability to see real talent were to provide us with the wonderful productions in the next few years.

The Creighton Hall stage was an ideal shape for Shakespeare, with its side arches, and much more depth than most school stages. Normally it was bare, but for the plays and concerts it was draped with dark brown velvet curtains – two enormous tabs (the falling curtains at the front of the stage), several wing and proscenium drapes, and then two sets of curtains to pull right across the stage, one about a third of the way back, and the other against the back wall. I am not sure when the apron stage was first used; Kilburnian 127 makes special mention of it in its review of *As You Like It* so perhaps this was the first time.

KILBURN GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Forty-Third Annual  
Shakespearean Production  
1952

*"As You Like It"*

DECEMBER 8th at 4 p.m.  
DECEMBER 9th, 10th & 11th  
at 7.15 p.m.



## The Characters

A banished DUKE .....	J. P. H. D. Payne
FREDERICK, his brother, and usurper of his dominions .....	F. Snook
AMIENS } JAQUES } lords attending on the banished Duke	{ D. E. Elvin I. Spellman
LE BEAU, a courtier attending upon Frederick .....	R. R. Bain
CHARLES, wrestler to Frederick .....	J. A. W. Hennessey
OLIVER } JAQUES } sons of Sir Rowland de Boys .....	{ P. E. V. Frost J. D. Bostock
ORLANDO }	G. E. M. Beeney
ADAM } DENNIS } servants to Oliver .....	{ B. Cohen J. Pritchett
TOUCHSTONE, a clown .....	M. J. Faigenblum
SIR OLIVER MARTEXT, a vicar .....	B. Silver
CORIN } SILVIUS } shepherds .....	{ J. B. Stein E. N. Pearson
WILLIAM, a country fellow, in love with Audrey .....	N. P. Holmes
ROSALIND, daughter to the banished Duke .....	D. K. Drown
CELIA, daughter to Frederick .....	R. A. R. Hill
PHEBE, a shepherdess .....	J. Harris
AUDREY, a country wench .....	D. Kirkbride
Pages to the banished Duke ...	A. R. Huckwell and P. H. Southwood
Lords, foresters and attendants .....	J. S. H. Cohen, B. Eagles, P. E. Krivaczek, M. J. Peattie, D. Potten, G. J. Sharman, N. S. Strauss, D. B. Workman

**The action of the play takes place at Oliver's house, at  
Duke Frederick's court, and in the Forest of Arden.**

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There will be one interval of fifteen minutes.

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**STAGE MANAGER:**

D. T. Ricks, assisted by D. H. Hunt.

**STAGE ASSISTANTS:**

M. C. Pargiter, M. J. Esten, M. H. Green, L. J. Lockett  
and R. J. I. Taylor.

**PROPERTIES:** J. H. Smith.

**LIGHTING:**

R. I. McLeod, G. W. Bryant and D. Sampson  
(under the direction of Mr. A. J. W. James)

**PROMPTER:** A. T. Parish.

**CALL-BOYS:**

P. E. G. Le Saux and M. B. Elster.

**MAKE-UP:**

Mrs. Chirgwin and Mr. R. Whitmore.

**MUSIC:**

Mr. D. Merlyn-Smith and M. A. Whitehead.

The **SCENERY** designed and executed by Mr. R. Whitmore.

The **PLAY** produced by Mr. P. K. Wright.

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**Smoking is not permitted in the Auditorium.**



**As You Like It - cast 1952**

**Back row: ?, D E Elvin, ?, ?, ?, ?, M J Peattie, B Eagles, J Pritchett, P Kriwaczek**

**Third row: B Silver, ?, ?, ?, ?, N Holmes, ?, J P H D Payne, ?**

**Seated in second row: P E V Frost or J D Bostock, R A R Hill, D K Drown, G E M Beeney**

**Front row: A R Huckwell, ?, ?, J A W Hennessey, ?, M J Faigenblum, P H Southwood**

**Those who need to be identified are:**

**F Snook  
I Spellman  
R R Bain  
B Coden  
J B Stein  
E N Pearson  
J Harris  
D Kirkbride  
J S H Cohen  
D Potten  
G J Sharman  
N S Strauss  
D B Workman**

## THE TAMING OF THE SHREW

The play for 1953 was *The Taming of the Shrew*. For this production there was a little choir to sing madrigals, and this provided me with my first backstage experience of a school play. More to the point, it enabled me to see four performances of Terry Wale playing Katherina. Terry was already on the road to becoming a professional actor. When he was thirteen he played Puck in Tyrone Guthrie's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Old Vic, so the school stage held no problems for him. In 1951 he had been in *Henry IV Part 1* as Lady Percy or Mortimer (I have only a photo, not a programme) but he was not in *As You Like It*, presumably because he was at the Old Vic at the time.

Terry's voice had a slight huskiness to it which had a unique and lovely velvety tone. I still remember the way he acted and spoke the 'sun and moon' scene. Waiting to sing the madrigal, I used to watch him through the doors of the right side entrance by the little side corridor where the make-up (Deputy Head's) room was. He played it for all it was worth and the effect was tremendous.



KILBURN GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Forty-Fourth Annual  
Shakespearean Production  
1953

*“The Taming  
of the Shrew”*

DECEMBER 7th at 2.30 p.m.  
DECEMBER 8th, 9th and 10th  
at 7.15 p.m.

# THE CHARACTERS

(IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

## *In the Induction:*

CHRISTOPHER SLY, a drunken tinker .....	<del>H. I. Stern</del> <sup>D. J. Reid</sup> <i>Reid</i>
The Hostess of an alehouse .....	A. R. Huckwell
A Lord .....	M. J. Peattie
First Huntsman	C. P. Joseph
Second Huntsman	} attending on the Lord {
First Servant	
Second Servant	
A Page	
Players .....	P. E. G. Le Saux
	C. H. Dean
	J. Joseph
	J. M. Levy
	J. C. Margetts, J. E. Golding, D. E. Elvin.

## *In "The Taming of the Shrew":*

LUCENTIO, son of Vincentio, in love with Bianca .....	B. Eagles
TRANIO, his servant .....	M. B. Elster
BAPTISTA, a rich gentleman of Padua .....	M. J. Faigenblum
GREMIO	} suitors to Bianca {
HORTENSIO	
KATHARINA	} daughters to Baptista {
BIANCA	
BIONDELLO, another servant to Lucentio .....	J. C. Margetts
PETRUCHIO, a gentleman of Verona, suitor to Katharina .....	P. E. Krivaczek
GRUMIO, his lackey .....	N. P. Holmes
Servants in Baptista's house .....	{ J. Joseph
	{ D. E. Elvin
CURTIS, a servant in charge of Petruchio's country house .....	C. B. Sampson
NATHANIEL	C. H. Dean
PHILIP	} other servants to Petruchio {
JOSEPH	
NICHOLAS	
PETER	
A Pedant of Mantua .....	R. R. Bain
A Tailor .....	G. S. Fletcher
A Haberdasher .....	K. J. Shoham
VINCENTIO, an old gentleman of Pisa, father to Lucentio .....	K. J. Boutell
An Officer .....	<del>D. J. Reid</del>
A Widow .....	D. K. Drown



*The action of the play takes place in Padua, and at Petruchio's house in the country.*

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There will be one interval of fifteen minutes.

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STAGE MANAGERS:  
D. Sampson and D. L. Fryer.

STAGE ASSISTANTS:  
R. J. Taylor, V. I. Bendall and R. S. Cohen.

PROPERTIES: G. D. Chant.

LIGHTING:  
G. W. Bryant and N. S. Strauss  
(under the direction of Mr. A. J. W. James).

PROMPTER: D. L. Fryer.

CALL BOYS:  
H. M. Coleman and M. Sugarman.

MAKE-UP:  
Mrs. Chirgwin and Mr. R. Whitmore.

MUSIC:  
Arranged by Mr. D. Merlyn-Smith.

SOUND EFFECTS: J. H. Smith.

THE SCENERY designed and executed by Mr. R. Whitmore.

COSTUMES  
by Messrs. C. I. Samuels, 30 Rupert Street, W.1,  
arranged by Mr. C. B. Moller.

BUSINESS MANAGER: Mr. A. Minchin.

THE PLAY produced by Mr. P. K. Wright.

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*Smoking is not permitted in the Auditorium.*

Terry Wale left KGS to go to the Webber Douglas drama school. In 1962 he played Puck again, this time a non-singing role in Britten's opera of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Royal Opera House. I saw him once more. On New Year's Eve of 1979 we took our daughter to a performance of *Toad of Toad Hall* at the Old Vic, where Terry was playing Ratty. Because it was New Year's Eve after the performance the actors came into the auditorium in their costumes to meet the children. I could not resist speaking to Terry and saying I remembered his Kate. He still had his Ratty mask on, so I did not actually see him, but he sounded astonished to meet someone from those days.

Producing *The Shrew* had its own drama when D Reid had to take over the part of Sly at the last minute, and did so with a determination to make the most of it, ending the surtain calls in a drunken collapse on to the stage with a thud like a sumo wrestler. Petruchio was played by Paul Kriwaczek, Lucentio by Brian Eagles and Baptista by M J Faigenblum. John Cohen played Hortensio and Jack Harris Bianca. The servants were played by Michael Elster, Norman Holmes, Charles Sampson and Colin Dean. D Drown played the Widow, and Tony Huckwell the Hostess. Kilburnian 128 stressed the farce side of the production and said the last night was pure Keystone Cops. The writer (un-named but probably the then Editor Alan Wilson) added "Seldom has one dispersed from the Creighton Hall more happily entertained".

Derek Sampson was one of the stage managers, and G Bryant and N Strauss did the lighting. The lighting for the plays was always very effective, a miracle of basic and very ancient physics. The few spots that were used were run through two rheostats which must have been the first used anywhere. They were situated in the little area above the left (facing the stage) archway, where the operators had to crouch on a platform a few feet square. When I went back to the school in 1989 before it finally closed down, the lighting box was still there, complete with the original rheostats.

The photo on page 16 shows Mr Whitmore's set – a curtained doorway on the left, a window on the right, and between a colonnade through which was a view of a square in Padua. A new name to mention is that of Mr Minchin as Business Manager. He was to look after the ticket sales for many years, and did this tricky job with expertise and patience.

Although the play was the highlight of the drama year there were at this time other drama activities. In 1953 there was an Easter Soiree and in May a concert for the Luke fund, both of which included recitations. Paul Kriwaczek and Douglas Fryer told *The Yarn of the Nancy*





**Mr Whitmore's set**



**Far left on couch: D Reid      Seated behind table: Paul Kriwaczek as Petruchio**  
**Seated at table on right: Terry Wale as Katherine**



**Centre standing at the back: Jack Harris, Brian Eagles, John Cohen, Duncan Drown**  
**Seated in the middle: Michael Elster, Terry Wale, Paul Kriwaczek, Norman Holmes**

*Bell*, and there were two mime pieces with several participants. I Spellman gave John of Gaunt's speech (*Richard II*), and G Beeney Henry V's speech from act three. There was

also a drama afternoon, Easter 1954, with a mixture of mime and plays by various forms. One of the items was a play called *Thread o'Scarlet*, written by G Bell. If this is Graham Bell he would only have been in the third year then, but the play is down as a sixth form play. If anyone can throw any light on this – was there another G Bell? – please let me know. There may have been other daytime drama occasions but this is the only one for which I have a programme.

There was an annual award for Drama at Speech Night in the form of the Hicks Bolton Spakespeare Prize. My first Speech Night programme is for 1953 (first years were not invited to Speech Night so I don't have the 1952 programme) and in that year the award went to Duncan Drown, Maurice Faigenblum, G Beeney and I Spellman. In 1954 the recipients were Terry Wale, and Derek Sampson for stage management.

## HENRY IV PART II

The next play was not until February 1955. Mr Wright chose *Henry IVth Part II*, the first time this work had been presented as the KGS play. The cast was immense, and also for the first time, roles were not only double cast but actors swapped round parts as well. Looking at the programme I cannot always make out who played what, the casting is so complex – and some seventy names are listed.

The production was dominated by the two Falstaffs, Maurice Faigenblum and John Cohen. The former was short, naturally round and jolly, the latter, more powerful a figure, a Falstaff that could have been a soldier. The King was played by Paul Kriwaczek and Brian Eagles, both giving very thoughtful and sombre impersonations. Prince Henry was shared by Duncan Drown and Michael Elster who also played other princes and earls when they were not taking the principal roles. Tony Hill played Lancaster, Jack Harris Westmoreland, and Graham Bell acted for the first time on the school stage playing Warwick with a black beard and moustache. Colin Dean was a Lord Chief Justice and Peter Le Saux Poins. Christopher Bain played Lady Northumberland and Steven Walzer Lady Percy.

D Reid followed his drunken Sly with a drunken Bardolph and Norman Holmes was Pistol. Norman was Head Boy and renowned for his ear splitting shout. His last entrance was made from the back of the hall with a yell that must have made the front row jump out of its seats, let alone those at the back. He received a round of applause for this feat; no one else could have done it so there was only one Pistol. Doll Tearsheet was played by Tony Huckwell and Philip Southwood, and of the Gloucestershire men Charles Sampson played Silence, and Brian Winston Wart. Daniel Sperber was one of those who played Mistress Quickly. For those who did not know Danny, he spoke with a variety of accents, from polished English to good old Kilburn to Yiddish, usually with a continuous mixture of all three and this was how he played Mistress Quickly.

The stage manager was Derek Sampson (who died a few years ago) and the lighting technicians included Norman Strauss and Derek Hunt.

For the set, Mr Whitmore split the stage in two; on the left was a castle wall and window, and on the right the inn and a wonderfully painted street scene.

The Speech Night at the end of 1955 saw the Shakespeare Prize awarded to fourteen people, reflecting the large numbers that had made this production such a success.

KILBURN GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Forty-Fifth Annual  
Shakespearean Production

**The Second Part of  
HENRY THE FOURTH**

During the week  
7th - 12th FEBRUARY, 1955



# THE CHARACTERS

RUMOUR, the Presenter .....	A. A. C. Danesh-Haeri
KING HENRY the Fourth .....	{ B. Eagles P. E. Krivaczek
PRINCE HENRY, afterwards crowned King Henry the Fifth	{ D. K. Drown M. B. Elster
PRINCE JOHN OF LANCASTER	{ sons to King Henry the Fourth { R. A. R. Hill M. B. Elster D. K. Drown
PRINCE HUMPHREY OF GLOUCESTER	
PRINCE THOMAS OF CLARENCE	
EARL OF WARWICK	J. M. Joseph
EARL OF WESTMORELAND	{ G. S. Bell J. Harris
GOWER	{ of the king's party { K. W. Bendall M. J. Coveney
HARCOURT	
LORD CHIEF JUSTICE .....	{ C. H. Dean B. D. Milton
His servant .....	G. B. Searl
EARL OF NORTHUMBERLAND	B. Silver
SCROOP, Archbishop of York	{ rebels against the king { D. L. Fryer B. Wein G. I. E. Cole R. P. S. Schupack
LORD MOWBRAY	
LORD HASTINGS	
LORD BARDOLPH	
SIR JOHN COLEVILLE	A. D. Latter
LADY NORTHUMBERLAND, wife to the Earl .....	C. N. Bain
LADY PERCY, their daughter-in-law and widow to Hotspur .....	S. D. Walzer
TRAVERS	{ retainers to Northumberland ..... { M. B. Elster D. K. Drown
MORTON	
Porter to Northumberland .....	A. D. Latter
A Messenger .....	H. King
POINS .....	P. E. G. Le Saux
SIR JOHN FALSTAFF .....	{ J. S. H. Cohen M. J. Faigenblum
BARDOLPH .....	D. J. Reid
PISTOL .....	N. P. Holmes
PETO .....	M. L. Schmeising
MISTRESS QUICKLY, hostess of the Boar's Head Tavern in Eastcheap .....	{ D. Sperber J. Valentine
DOLL TEARSHEET .....	{ A. R. Huckwell P. H. Southwood
Page to Falstaff .....	M. J. George
Musicians .....	{ J. Schuldenfrei R. Hertsis L. J. Keen M. P. Bateman
Drawers in the Boar's Head Tavern .....	{ W. C. T. Read D. Brookman
FANG, a sergeant .....	M. E. Napier

SNARE, his yeoman .....	M. B. Treadwell
SHALLOW } Gloucestershire justices .....	{ S. H. Israel
SILENCE } .....	{ M. J. Woulds
	C. B. Sampson
DAVEY, servant to Shallow .....	H. King
MOULDY } .....	{ A. J. Hulse
SHADOW } .....	{ D. T. Fitzwilliam
WART } countrymen of Gloucestershire { .....	{ B. N. Winston
FEEBLE } .....	{ G. E. M. Bill
BULLCALF } .....	{ M. E. Napier

Lords, attendants, bystanders and soldiers: D. W. Bowles, J. V. Collins, R. I. Duke, A. G. Eeles, F. K. Gladden, W. J. Hutchins, M. Jacobson, M. Protherough, K. A. Schweitzer, P. Stephenson, C. R. Symons, B. White.

Choristers: D. H. Hunt, A. T. Parish, H. King, N. G. Spooner, D. W. Speller, R. Johnson, C. Sampson, R. Burd, D. J. Bramson, P. E. Page, D. J. Morgan, A. Worwood, J. E. Golding, A. Huckwell, P. Southwood, K. J. Shoham.

(In the case of characters with the names of two actors bracketed against them, each actor will play the part at three performances.)

The action of the play takes place in various parts of England.

There will be one interval of fifteen minutes.

STAGE MANAGER: D. Sampson.

STAGE ASSISTANTS:

R. J. I. Taylor, A. G. Eeles, T. J. P. McMahon,  
R. S. Cohen and A. R. Maizels.

PRODUCTION MANAGER: H. M. Coleman.

PROPERTIES: C. P. Joseph.

LIGHTING: N. S. Strauss, D. H. Hunt and A. C. Bull  
(under the direction of Mr. A. J. W. James).

PROMPTER: G. W. Rose.

CALL BOYS: T. J. Sutton, M. R. Rose and K. W. Bendall.

MAKE-UP: Mrs. Chirgwin and Mr. R. Whitmore.

MUSIC: Arranged by Mr. D. Merlyn-Smith.

SOUND EFFECTS: J. M. Levy and A. T. Parish.

THE SCENERY designed and executed by Mr. R. Whitmore.

COSTUMES (see note overleaf)

WIGS by "Bert."

BUSINESS MANAGER: Mr. A. Minchin.

THE PLAY produced by Mr. P. K. Wright.

*Smoking is not permitted in the Auditorium.*



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*Note on the costumes*—This year we have hired the majority of our costumes from the London Federation of Boys' Clubs, to whom we are indebted for their moderate terms and for advice and assistance freely given. We are also glad to announce that a start has been made on building our own wardrobe. Those costumes made for this production are the result of much work in the last few weeks by Mesdames Brookman, Newlands, Rumsey and Woulds; they were made to designs provided by Mr. Whitmore. Mr. C. B. Moller has as usual undertaken the task of measuring candidates for costumes, whether hired or made. We hope to be able to enlarge our wardrobe from year to year and shall welcome offers of help from other parents.

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#### A NOTE ON THE PLAY

The two parts of "Henry the Fourth" were undoubtedly meant to be performed together, or with only a day or so between them. Our last performance of the First Part was over three years ago! Perhaps, therefore, a reminder of the events which lead us into Part Two will not be out of place.

Part One tells of the rebellion of certain leading nobles, in particular the members of the Percy family—Northumberland, his son, Hotspur, and his brother, Worcester—and of their virtual defeat at the hands of the royal forces, led by the King and the Prince of Wales, at Shrewsbury in 1403. Interwoven into the historical plot are various escapades in the riotous lives of Sir John Falstaff and his companions, Poins, Bardolph and Peto, with whom the Prince of Wales, to the dismay of his father, spends so much time that he has none left to devote to learning the craft of kingship. We hear of the Prince's determination to reform, and when we last see him his conduct at the battle of Shrewsbury, during which he has killed Hotspur, has ensured his partial restoration to the King's grace. However, he is still some way from casting off his old companions, and Falstaff, though the hollowness of his boasts has been exposed in a way that would have brought down a lesser and less resourceful man, is as confident as ever of continued royal favour, and "looks to be either earl or duke."

Perhaps the best introduction to the play we are performing can be found in the title-page of the Quarto edition of 1600, which describes it as "The Second part of Henrie the fourth, continuing to his death, and coronation of Henrie the fift. With the humours of sir Iohn Falstaff, and swaggering Pistoll."

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**Centre on steps: Left: Tony Hill as John of Lancaster, W Read as Drummer  
Front far left: K Schweitzer as Lord**



**"I know thee not, old man"  
Duncan Drown as Henry IV  
Norman Holmes standing on stool far left as Pistol  
J Cohen as Falstaff  
Graham Bell with moustache under the archway as Warwick**





**Seated in second row: Brian Eagles in centre as Henry IV, Graham Bell fourth from left, Michael Elster fifth from left, Tony Hill eighth from left**

The Kilburnian 131 wrote a perceptive sentence in its review of the play: "Bell, as Warwick ... a good natural presence and a faculty of appearing absorbed in the action when without anything to do or say; ..." I do not know how Mr Wright discerned Graham Bell's potential. Warwick is not a large part. Certainly he would have heard him read other parts, and would have known of his superb memory, and maybe even then Graham knew he wanted to be a professional actor, and this came through in his acting of Warwick. But Mr Wright knew he had not only the right person to share the lead in *Coriolanus*, but that he had his Hamlet for the following year.



**Mr Whitmore's set**





(Photo: Staff Photographer)

## FALSTAFF IN CREIGHTON HALL

**F**OR forty-five years pupils of Kilburn Grammar School, Salusbury Road, have presented an annual Shakespearean production. Their choice this year was the second part of Henry IV—to quote the programme note: “continuing to his death and the coronation of Henrie the fifth. With the humours of Sir John Falstaff, and swaggering Pistoll.”

The high reputation that the school enjoys for its fine acting and faultless production was once again strengthened by a performance involving great skill and concentration.

Because of the wealth of talent available this year, Mr. P. K. Wright, the producer and the school's senior English master, has cast two boys to play the principal parts. Each performance involves nearly 90 boys.

There are six performances, including two matinees, to be played, the longest run ever attempted by the school. That this has been organised at the request of the hundreds of parents and friends who attend each year, is further evidence of the quality of the school's work.

Tuesday's matinee performance was attended by pupils from neighbouring schools in Middlesex and London, and at the risk of repetition, the performance has to be good that will keep a hall packed with young boys and girls from fidgeting for three and a quarter hours.

The players moved and wore their excellent costumes with a high degree of confidence. Rarely did speech falter, and high praise indeed should go to the boys who had to portray men at least four times their actual age.

As did B. D. Milton, a sober and serious Lord Chief Justice, M. J. Woulds as Shallow, and D. L. Fryer as Scroop.

Of the lesser characters, Pistoll, played with great dash and fine voice by N. P. Holmes was a great swaggerer.

### The Princes

The Princes, John, Humphrey and Thomas, played by R. A. R. Hill, D. K. Drown and J. M. Joseph, were excellent, speak-

ing their lines in clear, forthright manner and wearing their costumes and armour with distinction.

The same could also be said of Northumberland, Mowbray, Hastings, Bardolph and Colville, the rebels, played by B. Silver, B. Wein, G. I. E. Cole, R. P. S. Schupack, and A. D. Latter.

Doll Tearsheet, not an easy role to play before a young audience, was tackled in fine manner by A. R. Huckwell. Another equally good, and often highly amusing performance came from J. Valentine as Mistress Quickly.

### Convincing death scene

King Henry the Fourth was played on this occasion by P. E. Krivaczek. A young boy, he portrayed the ageing and troubled king with great skill. His voice had that noble melancholy of a man who has to rule.

He was particularly convincing in his death scene. Each wearied gesture of the hand cleverly supporting his dying words.

The part of Prince Henry was played by M. B. Elster. Here was the young prince who devoted little time to learning the craft of kingship, but instead resorts to the villainy and wasteful ways learned in the company of Falstaff and his companions. This young man played his part well. He gave his role the feeling so necessary for its success.

### Faultless Falstaff

Now what of Sir John Falstaff, brave Jack Falstaff true Jack Falstaff? Did he fit the prince's description, “that villainous, abominable misleader of youth, that old, white-bearded Satan?”

Expertly padded, his nose

cherry red, J. S. H. Cohen, fitted the description perfectly. Master Cohen grunted and wheezed, smacked his lips as he gave a faultless interpretation of this most ribald scoundrel of all times. His voice bellowed and boomed round the hall, and with hands clasped about his fat belly, he strode across the stage.

### Others in cast

Other principal characters were: B. Eagles as King Henry; D. K. Drown as Prince Henry; C. H. Dean as the Lord Chief Justice; M. J. Faigenblum as Falstaff; D. Sperber as Mistress Quickly; P. H. Southwood as Doll Tearsheet; and S. H. Israel as Shallow.

Other players were: A. A. C. Danesh-Haeri, G. S. Bell, J. Harris, K. W. Bendall, M. J. Coveney, G. B. Searl, C. N. Bain, S. D. Walzer, H. King, H. Seaton, P. E. G. Le Saux, D. J. Reid, M. L. Schmeising, M. J. George, J. Schuldrenfrel, R. Hertsis, L. J. Keen, M. P. Bateman, W. C. T. Read, D. Brookman, M. E. Napier, M. D. Treadwell, C. B. Sampson, H. King, A. J. Hulse, D. T. Fitzwilliam, and B. N. Winston.

Lords, attendants, bystanders and soldiers: D. W. Bowles, J. V. Collins, R. I. Duke, A. G. Eeles, F. K. Gladden, W. J. Hutchins, M. Jacobson, M. Protherough, K. A. Schweitzer, P. Stephenson, C. R. Symons, B. White.

Choristers: D. H. Hunt, A. T. Parish, H. King, N. G. Spooner, D. W. Speller, R. Johnson, C. Sampson, R. Burd, D. J. Bramson, P. E. Page, D. J. Morgan, A. Worwood, J. E. Golding, A. Huckwell, P. Southwood, K. J. Shoham.

### Behind the scenes

Stage manager, D. Sampson; stage assistants, R. J. I. Taylor, A. G. Eeles, T. J. P. McMahon, R. S. Cohen and A. R. Maizels; production manager, H. M. Coleman; properties, C. P. Joseph. Lighting: N. S. Strauss, D. H. Hunt and A. C. Bull (under the direction of Mr. A. J. W. James). Prompter, G. W. Rose; call boys: T. J. Sutton, M. R. Rose and K. W. Bendall; make-up, Mrs. Chirgwin and Mr. R. Whitmore; music arranged by Mr. D. Merlyn-Smith; sound effects, J. M. Levy and A. T. Parish; the scenery designed and executed by Mr. R. Whitmore; business manager, Mr. A. Minchin.

## CORIOLANUS

*Coriolanus* followed *Henry IV* only ten months later, in December of the same year, 1955. The cast list numbered an immense eighty-four names. And that was not the final total. Although there were many people to take part in the crowd scenes, even more were needed to create a real epic. So on the nights of the performances boys coming to see the play, including some who had recently left, found themselves pounced upon entering the hallway and pressganged along the corridors to a costume room where they were fitted out with whatever would make them look like a revolting populace and then onto the stage flailing fists and staves with everyone else. Those crowd scenes were very impressive.

The part of Coriolanus was shared between Michael Elster and Graham Bell. Michael was more of the politician and Graham more of a soldier swinging to further extremes as the situations changed. Both looked mighty imperious. Aufidius was played by Jack Harris and Menenius by Colin Dean.

Peter Wayth recalls an amusing exchange during a stage rehearsal (He played 3<sup>rd</sup> Rhubarb speaker – not even a spear!). It was either Graham Bell or Michael Elster, I forget which, who was rehearsing and it went like this:

Coriolanus: *"Forty thousand men go to their beds like graves.."*

Mr Wright: *"No, no – it's 'Forty thousand men go to their graves like beds.'"*

Coriolanus, without the least hesitation: *"You don't know their wives."*

I thought it brilliant wit for an 18 year old.

Volumnia was shared by Raymond Brody, in his first play, and Brian Conway. Brian Winston played Valeria and David Leigh and Stephen Walzer were Virilia. These dramatic female roles were very difficult for boys to play with realism and that they did so added much to the success of the production. Generals and Tribunes included Charles Sampson, Tony Hill, David Fireman (he who joined the Foreign Legion). Duncan Drown, Paul Kriwaczek and Norman Holmes played senators or servants. Philip Southwood was prominent in the riots, and other players of Romans included Maurice Fireman, William Read, Jeffrey Reed and Graham E Bill. Amongst the soldiers and people were Michael Roseblade, Robert Burden, John Acklaw, Peter Wayth and Michael Merrett – a veritable role call of present OCs. Tony McMahon was the stage manager, and Norman Strauss led the lighting crew.

There was no doubt that in Graham Bell we had an actor of immense gifts. His Coriolanus held the stage throughout, and for the first time we heard the power and clarity of his voice. His acting created extra excitement because we knew he would be Hamlet.



Mr Victor Callaghan assisted in a production for the first time. His participation in the school drama scene was to be invaluable in the next years, not just in assisting Mr Wright, but in bringing Shaw to the stage of KGS, introducing many of us to new plays and ideas in theatre, and then producing two plays of Gabriel Chanan. But more of that anon.

Mr Whitmore's set was a large archway in the city, walls to the left, a platform behind a wall at the back of the stage, and a backcloth of the Forum. I think this was the first time the heavy front curtains were not used, and if memory serves right, the inner curtains were not drawn across before the start of the play, so that the set was always on view – quite an innovation for that time.

Another small innovation was that instead of the traditional two records – 78s – of *The Wasps* overture and Holst's *St Paul's Suite* – we played something closer in mood to the play: Beethoven's *Coriolan* Overture, no less. Music and sound effects were looked after by Alan Parish.

As always, there was a matinee performance for the girls from BKHS opposite. They were an excellent audience, but on this occasion, at the death of Coriolanus (Michael Elster), laughter began to ripple through the hall with each row in succession standing up and then sitting to allow the row behind to see. I was watching from the very back of the hall and could not make out what was happening. Then all was revealed. Coriolanus had died lengthwise across the stage, with his back to the audience. His Roman armoured miniskirt had risen up to his waist, and there for all the girls to see, through a hole in his Y-fronts, was a boy's bare bum. Never was a play's success so assured. Should anyone doubt this, I do have a photograph of the moment.

Coriolanus saw my first involvement with a school play, on props: property man, as the programme put it. It gave me an exciting insight into some aspects of the world of professional theatre. The original plan for the production was to have real armour and swords for all the principals and soldiers, and so one afternoon I accompanied Michael Elster to the West End where we visited the famous property hire firms of Whites and Baptys. I don't know if they are still in business today. We were taken into the store rooms and spent hours amidst thousands of suits of armour and helmets, swords, and spears, choosing everything we wanted for *Coriolanus*. We placed our orders and then went to get a supply of body make-up for the crowd people at the showrooms of Leicheners in Leicester Square, long since gone. Leicheners greasepaint was an essential part of an actor's profession in those days, before the introduction of the bland pancake, and when make-up played an essential part in the presentation of a character. The showroom had the full range of

KILBURN GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Forty-Sixth Annual  
Shakespearean Production  
1955

**“ CORIOLANUS ”**

**DECEMBER 12th & 13th at 2.15 p.m.**

**DECEMBER 14th, 15th & 17th at 7.15 p.m.**

# THE CHARACTERS

in order of appearance

Leader of Roman citizens in revolt .....	J. Valentine
Another citizen .....	W. T. C. Read
MENENIUS AGRIPPA .....	C. H. Dean
CAIUS MARCIUS,	{ G. S. Bell
afterwards Caius Marcius Coriolanus	{ M. B. Elster
A Roman Senator .....	S. C. Melsom
COMINIUS	{ A. D. Latter
{	{ P. E. G. Le Saux
Generals against the Volscians	
TITUS LARTIUS	{ R. A. R. Hill
{	{ C. R. Symons
SICINIUS VELUTUS	{ M. A. Lock
{	{ C. B. Sampson
Tribunes of the people	
JUNIUS BRUTUS	{ D. Fireman
{	{ A. R. Huckwell
TULLUS AUFIDIUS, General of the Volscians .....	J. Harris
Volscian Senators .....	D. K. Drown, P. Kriwaczek
VOLUMNIA, Mother to Coriolanus .....	{ R. Brody
{	{ B. L. Conway
VIRGILIA, Wife to Coriolanus .....	{ D. Leigh
{	{ S. D. Walzer
A Gentlewoman .....	L. I. Casper
VALERIA, friend to Virgilia .....	B. N. Winston
A Volscian soldier .....	M. L. Roseblade
A Roman herald .....	P. C. Walker
A messenger .....	A. D. Kelman
Officers of the Senate .....	D. J. Bramson, S. H. Israel
Roman citizens who give their votes to Coriolanus in the election for the Consulship: D. G. Holland, A. R. Lawrence, D. T. Fitzwilliam, J. F. Barnes, R. A. A. King, M. C. Barnes	
Another Roman Senator .....	S. Creggy
A Patrician Roman .....	M. Fireman
A Roman Aedile .....	P. H. Southwood
NICANOR, a Roman in the pay of the Volscians .....	W. C. T. Read
ADRIAN, a Volscian .....	N. G. Coward
Servants to Aufidius .....	D. Brookman, G. E. M. Bill, N. Holmes
Another messenger .....	T. R. Eilfield
Lieutenant to Aufidius .....	J. P. Reed
Another Volscian soldier .....	D. Brookman
Young MARCIUS, son to Coriolanus .....	{ D. M. W. Moont
{	{ K. F. Temple
Conspirators with Aufidius .....	M. B. Treadwell, P. M. Dean, D. Brookman

Other Roman and Volscian Senators, Patricians, Aediles, Officers, Soldiers and Citizens: R. Johnson, J. T. Duthie, M. J. Burlem, E. R. Golding, D. B. Taylor, C. R. Smith, V. Flintham, E. W. Durrant, T. R. Eilfield, A. L. Harris, P. W. Deady, R. Burden, J. C. Hanson, B. White, S. L. Glicksman, A. Worwood, P. M. Mayes, G. W. Rose, J. T. Acklaw, P. W. Hoade, M. P. Freeman, K. S. B. Rose, R. M. A. Midson, P. J. Wayth, M. N. W. F. Merrett, D. G. McDonald, M. H. Broad, G. H. Hillier, G. T. Lewis, M. J. R. Fasham, L. W. Murrell, M. E. Green, D. C. Austin, P. W. Hedge-land, E. T. Ryan, R. R. Gilder.

(Actors whose names are bracketed together against one character take the part at alternate performances.)

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The action of the play takes place, in about 490 B.C., in Rome and its vicinity, and in and around Corioli and Antium, cities of the neighbouring Volscians.

There will be one interval of fifteen minutes.

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STAGE MANAGER: T. J. P. McMahon,  
assisted by A. R. Maizels and K. W. Bendall.

PRODUCTION MANAGER: H. M. Coleman.

LIGHTING: N. S. Strauss, assisted by A. C. Bull, B. S. Riley and T. J. Sutton (under the direction of Mr. A. J. W. James).

PROMPTER: M. N. Meade.

CALL-BOYS: G. Klooger, A. E. E. Judge and G. G. Watkins.

WIGS and MAKE-UP by "Bert."

MUSIC and SOUND EFFECTS: A. T. Parish.

PROPERTY MAN: A. Schneider.

(Some of the properties have been hired from Robert White & Sons.)

BUSINESS MANAGER: Mr. A. E. Minchin.

COSTUMES supplied by the London Federation of Boys' Clubs.

THE SCENERY designed and executed by Mr. R. Whitmore.

THE PLAY produced by Mr. P. K. Wright,  
assisted by Mr. V. Callaghan.

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Smoking is not permitted in the Auditorium.



everything they made – including free make-up charts which I still have – and experts to tell you how to get whatever effect you wanted. It was a little world of make believe, and it was quite something for me as a young boy to have visited it.

Unfortunately the cost of all the armour and weaponry came to what today might be several hundred pounds. Mr Wright was not amused, and we had to cancel most of what we had ordered. Instead, I had to make many suits of strip armour using a plastic material and silver paint, which sufficed even if they were not the last word in authenticity. But we did hire real armour and swords for Coriolanus and Aufidius.

One last memory of this play. Each year Mr Whitmore asked someone to make a lino cut for the school play plasters. I was asked to do Coriolanus. Never having done a lino cut before, I was unaware of the time consuming task it was, and therefore the need for a design of modest proportions. What I came up with was a huge picture of the battle; it took weeks to complete, much to the consternation of Mr Whitmore, and was the largest lino cut produced in the art room. Placed on the notice board on the hall steps railings in Salusbury Road, its gory violence might have helped to sell a few more tickets.



**Mr Whitmore's set**



**Graham Bell as Coriolanus**



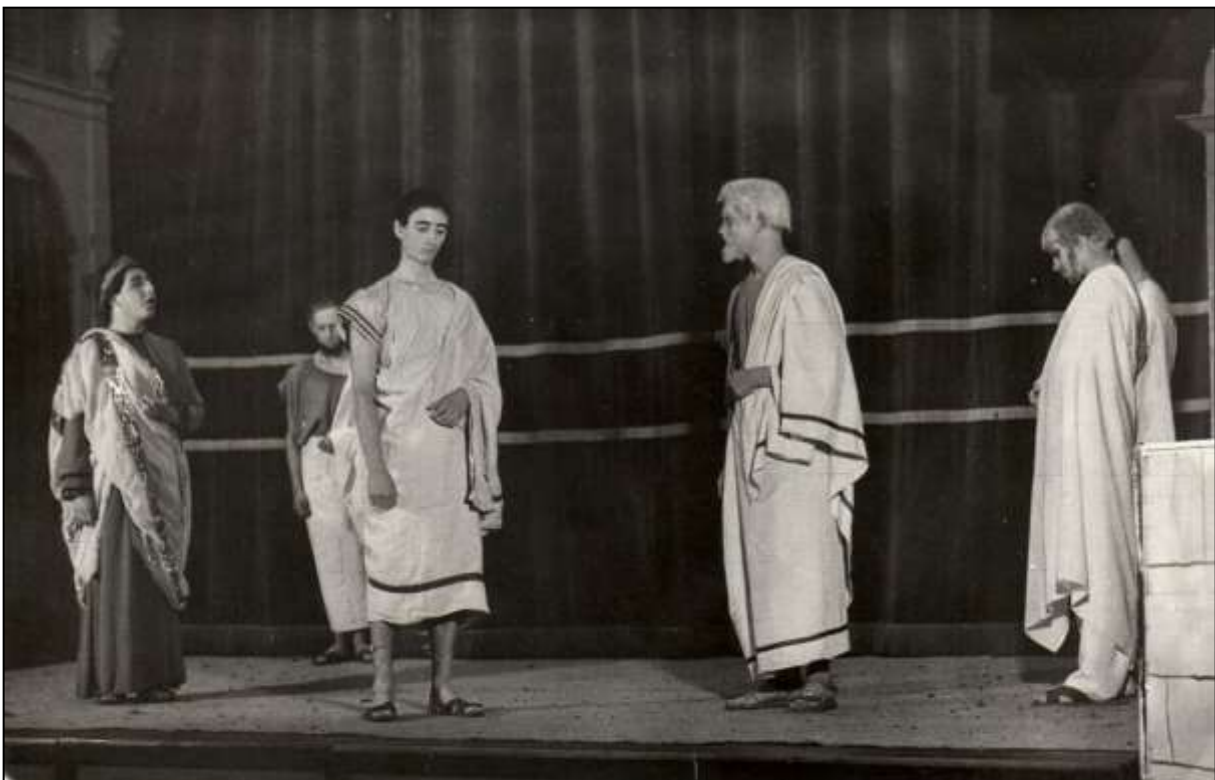
**Coriolanus 1955:**     **Graham Bell as Coriolanus**  
                                  **Behind him on the steps: Colin Dean as Menenius Agrippa**







**Far left: Colin Dean as Menenius    Centre: Michael Elster as Coriolanus**



**Far left: Raymond Brody as Volumnia    Centre: Michael Elster and Colin Dean**

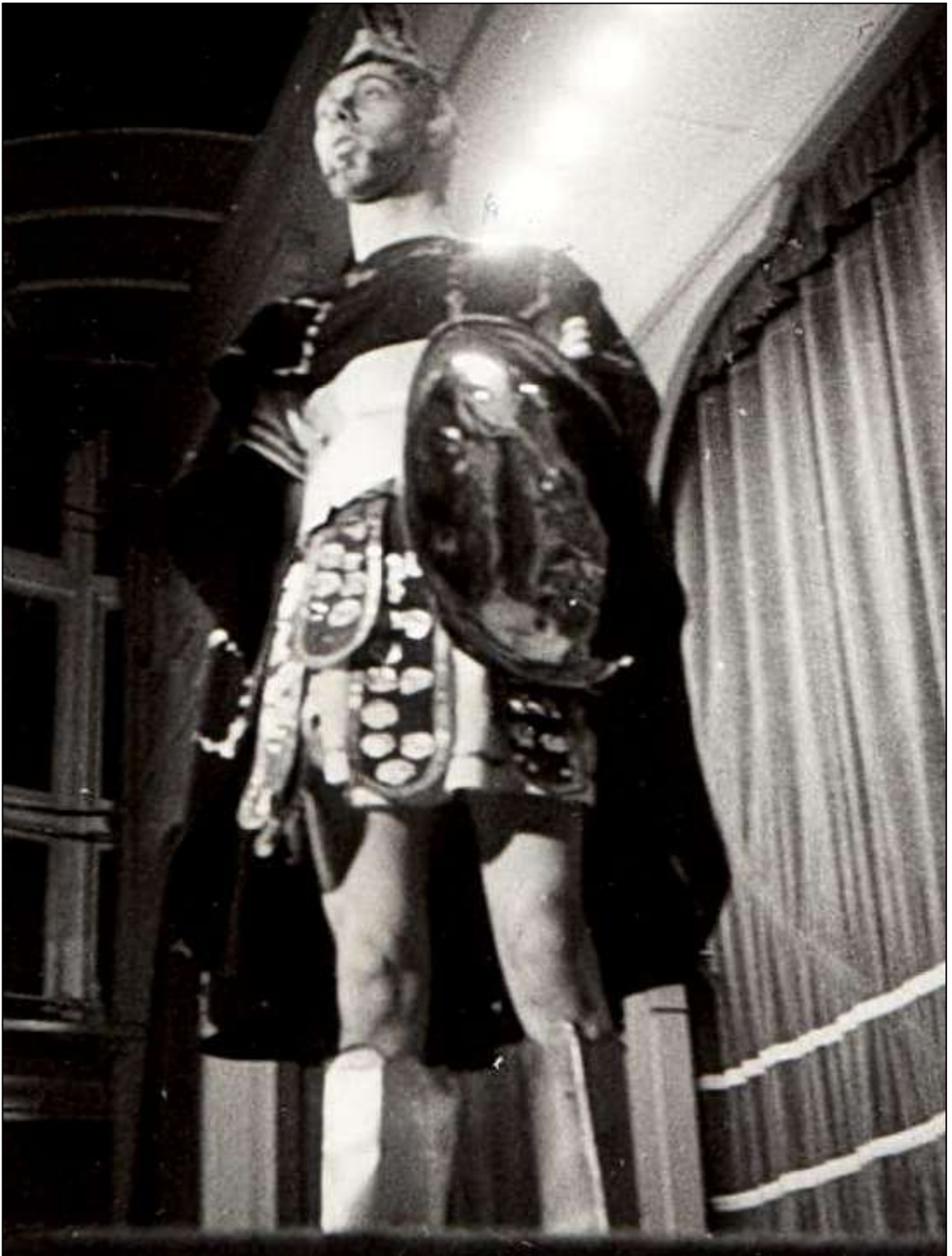




**Centre: David Leigh as Virginia    Right: Michael Elster**



**The riot scene**



**Jack Harris as Tullus Aufidius**





## VISITS TO STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

Although I will write in detail about visits to the theatre later on, I will mention here two visits to Stratford-upon-Avon before we leave 1955. One was in October of this year to see *Macbeth*, and the other the next year to see *Love's Labour's Lost*. There were at this time two Old Boys who had become professional actors at the Shakespeare Theatre. Antony Brown was in *Love's Labour's Lost*. He is mentioned at this time in Kilburnian 134 as A E Brown. I do not know anything about him or when he was at KGS. Can anyone fill this gap? Leon Eagles, who was in *Macbeth*, was the elder brother of Brian Eagles. I think it may be him and not Brian who is in the photograph of *Henry IV Part 1* from 1951 that I have. Does anyone remember when he left KGS? I know he and his brother looked very much alike because I saw Leon in the eighties in a TV studio and even then the similarity was striking. Leon died at the end of 1997.

In the next part of my story I will write about the venture into Shaw, *Hamlet*, with its tour in Germany, and the plays that followed.

## ARMS AND THE MAN

During my account of *Hamlet* I broke the chronological order, and so I left out what was to be a new event at KGS – a staff play.

We knew that *Hamlet* was going to be the next school play, and the preparation was going to take every minute available.

It was then a great surprise when a staff production was announced for the summer. This was an entirely new venture for KGS. Mr Wright had a great passion for Shaw, and the play was to be *Arms and the Man*.

The costumes came from Samuels, a famous professional theatrical costume company. I went there with Mr Wright to choose the costumes. And here I will digress a moment. In OB News 110 Raymond Legate recalled the old green Wolsley Eight car that belonged to Mr Merlyn-Smith. I am afraid I hastened its end. Mr Wright borrowed the car to go to Samuels.

Not having been in such a classy car before, I thought if there is a running board why not use it and emerge in style. As I stepped on it this entire section of the car collapsed into a pile of rust. The car went on for a while longer, but not much. Fortunately Mr Wright was able to persuade the irate owner there was a funny side to it.

His power of persuasion saved the day again when a rehearsal had been planned for a Saturday afternoon. I arrived early to find the doors to the school locked. Mr Wright came along and, somewhat puzzled, went to see the caretaker in his cottage. John, a tall thin fellow with a bony face and a severe crewcut, was usually quite amiable. Today was different. He was not getting paid for overtime, etc. After a few minutes of verbal skirmish he invited Mr Wright into the cottage to discuss the matter further, as they say. I went in too, having sworn not to utter a word. Tea and cake was served, and the politics and ills of the world, the local council – Willesden – and the school in particular were thoroughly analysed for nearly an hour. Everybody (we had been joined by Mr Callaghan half way through) having agreed on everything, John suddenly stood up and said *“Well, I suppose I’d better open up for you now.”*

*Arms and the Man* was performed on July 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, 1956. It was a joint production with BKHS, and Mrs Jean Seabrook was co-producer.

Mr Vic Callaghan played Bluntschli. He gave a lovely performance, striking with his red hair and beard, quietly spoken. He made the intellectual arguments of the lost soldier seem the most natural way to break down the reserve of any young girl.

Major Petkoff was played by Mr John Beaglehole, the history teacher who had come to KGS just a year before. He had a naturally gruff voice and suited the part well. Louka was played by Mrs Sara Corrin, wife of Stephen who died last year. Her mother was played by Mrs Margo Rowlands, who I think was also from BKHS. The manservant was played by Mr Sharad Sathaye, who was teaching geography at the time. The small role of the officer was played by a friend of Mr Wright from outside the school, which suggests that relatively few members of staff wanted to act.

Who played Raina? A young lady named Sarah Spragg. Somebody had been inspired to invite to KGS students from the Royal Academy of Music who were taking drama and teacher training courses, to give them real classroom experience. I don’t know what they got out of it, but the sight of an alluring young lady standing in front of us, we who had never experienced a female teacher since primary school, gave English lessons a new emphasis.

Sarah was the first of these students that I recall. Tall, dominating, a little serious, but still with an aura of a young girl, she made an ideal Raina for Mr Callaghan's chocolate soldier.

Mr Wright played Major Saranoff. What was the producer of our plays like as an actor? On stage he looked a very big man, very strong, almost overpoweringly so. His voice was loud and his acting bold and deliberate. Three strides could take him across the stage. His concentration on the other characters and what was going on around him never wavered for a moment.

There may have been other ways of playing the role, but this was a lesson in how to hold the stage. No more so than on the second night. Repeating yet again the words "I never resign", he folded his arms and sat on the *chaise longue*. This could not take his weight two nights running, and with a resounding crack gave way. Fortunately it was quite low, so to most of the audience it was not too obvious that he was only inches from the floor. But on stage everyone looked at him and would have burst into laughter had he not remained ramrod straight, arms folded, his face showing total oblivion of anything untoward. He kept complete control of the stage and all around him in the true tradition of the old actor/managers. I think that is a good description. His acting was of a fast disappearing style, but was well worth watching, and could teach you a wealth of stagecraft.

I saw him on stage a few years later in a repertory company production of *The Crucible*. He played in the same style, which suited the part of the husband, and he was really very good.

The sets were designed by Mr Whitmore, the stage manager was T McMahon, the lighting by Alan Bull, and P Hedgeland helped me with the props. I painted a poster for the play of the chocolate soldier and his box of chocolates, but this disappeared before I could take it down. Does anyone still have it, by any chance?

K.G.S. STAFF & FRIENDS  
IN  
ARMS AND THE MAN  
BY  
GEORGE BERNARD SHAW



THURSDAY  
& FRIDAY

JULY 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup>  
1956

AT  
7.30 p.m.

IN THE CREIGHTON HALL  
KILBURN GRAMMAR SCHOOL  
SALUSBURY RD N.W.C.



\*\*\*\*\*  
P R O G R A M  
\*\*\*\*\*

CHARACTERS in order of their appearance:-

Raina Petkoff	Sara Spragg
Catherine Petkoff, her mother	Margo Rowlands
Louka, maid in the Petkoff household	Sara Corrin
Captain Bluntschli	Victor Cellaghan
A Russian Officer	Roy Waters
Nicola, the Petkoff manservant	Sharad Sethaye
Major Paul Petkoff, husband to Catherine	John Beaglehole
Major Sergius Saranoff, engaged to Raina	Peter Wright

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The Play produced by Jean Seabrook and Peter Wright.

Set Designs by Robert Whitmore.

Stage Manager: T.J.P. McMahon.

Lighting: A.C. Bull.

Properties: A. Schneider and P.W. Hedgeland.

Costumes: Aubrey Samuels, and the London Federation of Boys' Clubs.

Wigs by "Bert".

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A M M E  
+++++

The scene is laid in the house and garden of the  
Petkoffs, in a small town near the Dragoman Pass,  
Bulgaria.

ACT I: Raina's Bedroom, November, 1885.

ACT II: In the garden of the Petkoffs' house, 6th March,  
1886.

ACT III: The Library, after lunch on the same day.

There will be two INTERVALS of ten minutes each.

NO SMOKING IS ALLOWED IN THE AUDITORIUM.

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Chocolates and Ices will be sold during the intervals.  
Please deposit your paper and cartons in the receptacle  
provided for this purpose round the Hall.

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## HAMLET

*Hamlet* approached. The last production had been in 1923. Mr Wright had first hoped to produce it with Terry Wale, but Terry left earlier than expected. Now with Graham Bell he had the perfect Hamlet, a host of fine players for the other roles, and Vic Callaghan to coach and produce with him. Preparation began soon after *Coriolanus* was finished, as *Hamlet* was an enormous undertaking. Other plays can be well done or very good, but *Hamlet* can be nothing less than superb or it is a disaster. It would take every moment available.

It was then a great surprise when a staff production was announced for the summer. This was an entirely new venture for KGS. Mr Wright had a great passion for Shaw, and the play was to be *Arms and the Man*. So as not to digress from the main story of this article, I will relate the details of the staff play in a further issue.

Rehearsals for *Hamlet* started as soon as the autumn term began. There was a definite excitement in the air. We knew from Graham Bell's performance of *Coriolanus* that we had a super Hamlet in the making, and a host of actors who could play every part as required. Also it must not be forgotten that whilst today there seems to be a new production of *Hamlet* every month, in the fifties the only playing of *Hamlet* we had seen was not on stage but Olivier's film. When early in the year some of us went on a school visit to a production by Peter Brooke with a cast of leading actors, we thought it was absolutely awful, even with Paul Scofield acting, speaking, sets, production, everything. We could not wait to see our own production of the play.

Mr Callaghan assisted Mr Wright in the production and I recently asked him for some of his memories. The following is almost verbatim:

"The idea was to aim at a quasi-Elizabethan production: bare stage, actions downstage as conducted at the Globe, and emphasis on speaking lines as though they meant what they said. Especially the Ghost – no head in bucket effect, just a bit of green light, the illusion to be created by the language. The action was to be continuous, occupying about two and three quarter hours. Entrances, as at the Globe, were arranged logically so as to create an imaginary interior, eg nobody comes from opposite to where they went off. Sword fights, meant to be displays of skill for Shakespeare's audience, were to be better by far than current form in theatre. Sheila Williams, a student from the Royal Academy of Music, did some coaching, especially the female parts. Broadly speaking Peter (Wright) produced, I directed through him, plus some coaching and gluing on of innumerable beards –



full sets, trimmed when in place so they looked convincing, unlike those seen in the professional theatre, which were pathetic usually.”

The design as always was by Mr Whitmore, just one set – a backcloth of an interior castle wall with an archway and window, and a low platform running in front of it, at the centre of which a step led down onto the stage. This was all, except that the alcoves either side of the stage were perfect for a Globe type production. Changes of scene were effected by drawing a curtain across all or part of the backcloth and by lighting. The usual brown velvet curtains were replaced with black drapes.

Dominating the set were two thrones on the platform. These were of a medieval design. They were made by Mr Callaghan’s then brother-in-law at the London / Old Times Furniture Co. They were immensely strong but also collapsible so that they could be easily toured and stored. Mr Callaghan later told me that, having designed the raised platform for the set, he was helped in the construction by Dr Anderson, a name that might not be familiar to many. He was at KGS for only two years, to set up the biology lab (superb it was too) and introduce A-level Zoology and Botany.

The costumes for Hamlet and the ghost came from the Old Vic, and the others from the London Federation of Boys’ Clubs.

There were an unprecedented seven performances of *Hamlet*, the first being a school matinee on December 7<sup>th</sup> 1956. The first evening performance was on December 10<sup>th</sup>, followed by two more matinees and three evening performances on six consecutive days.

For Graham Bell this was an absolutely extraordinary feat. His performance, acting or voice, did not tire or falter once, which shows what a magnificent technique he already had.

The first scene of the play always provides pace and excitement. The second scene, when we meet virtually everyone else, must exceed the first in winning the attention of the audience otherwise you know you are in for a very long evening.

Graham, in his fine black velvet costume once worn by Olivier dominated and held the stage from the moment he appeared. As the scene began he sat downstage by the stage right alcove. His first speech set the speed of his playing – a fast crystal clear clarity of delivery of the words, often with that magnificent baritone ring that he had.

His “To be”, starting on the step upstage, was quietly contemplative. His “Bloody bawdy villain” was one of the most powerful sounds I have heard from an actor and it never became a shout. He practised it day after day for months so that in performance his voice never failed. It was this dedication to detail that made his Hamlet unforgettable.

The following is my appreciation of Graham after his death in 1998:

Graham Bell died suddenly in September 1987. He was at KGS from 1951 to 1958, after which he went to drama school and then started his professional acting career as a member of the Old Vic Company. In the sixties he turned to television work on the presentation side, and joined Anglia TV, where for many years he presented his own early evening programme of East Anglian local news. This programme was extremely popular and Graham became a very well known TV personality.

For those at KGS at the time, Graham will be remembered for his performances in the school plays. He started by taking the role of Warwick in *Henry IV part II* which was produced in February 1955, followed in December of that year with *Coriolanus* (sharing the role with Michael Elster). Leading roles in the plays were usually taken by sixth formers but Graham was still in the fifth year, yet he had already developed a very individual bite and power to his acting.

There was no doubt that with Graham's acting strength, stamina and memory, 1956 would at last bring us Hamlet.

We looked forward eagerly, but no-one was prepared for what burst upon us. This was no promising schoolboy performance. Graham's Hamlet was tremendous. His was a classic romantic Hamlet. Intense, powerful, spoken beautifully, he delivered the words with superb speed and clarity, at times with a volume that was stunning, and he looked superb in Olivier's old costume.

Speed was also the essence of the fight. Arranged by a professional actor, Graham and Philip Southwood (Laertes) practised every day for a term in the gym. The result was a stage duel of such ferocity that I still have not seen it surpassed.

His success as Hamlet was not achieved without real hard work. He would spend many a lunch time in a room developing the vocal power he needed, going

through lines such as 'bloody bawdy villain' over and over again until he knew he could make the effect he wanted. We would talk about acting and vocal techniques, many similar to those for opera singing, which was my interest. He had no illusions about easy success or stardom as a professional actor. I once suggested to him that he would surely not want to be in a musical or cabaret. His immediate reply "Acting will be my living. I'll do anything" is something I have never forgotten.

Overnight he achieved pop-idol status with the girls opposite. They chased him in their dozens, along the streets, on the station, even to his home. He took all this in calm good humour. Within school he evoked a new enthusiasm for drama and the stage, and he was awarded the Hicks-Bolton Shakespeare Prize from 1956 to 1958. This trophy was given jointly to a number of people each year, but only Graham received it three years running.

*Hamlet* was such a success that the production was invited by the British Council to tour north Germany and Belgium in the Spring of 1957.

Before it left there was a special performance at school in April. The end of 1957 saw Graham in *Love's Labour's Lost*. Dressed in a multi-coloured costume, he proved he had the skills required for romance and comedy as well as tragedy. A scene from the production was filmed by the BBC and televised as part of an educational programme.

In all these productions there was a great rapport with Graham from all the cast, and the masterful direction of Mr Wright and Mr Callaghan, and I will write about this in a later edition. (Mr Callaghan came to our centenary dinner.)

On leaving school Graham went to the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, during which time he made his first appearance in a TV play as a butler, and then began his professional career. It was not long before he was at the Old Vic, first in an Oxford Playhouse production of *The Oresteia* and then as a member of the Old Vic Company, playing the young Shakespeare roles.

It is easy to look upon school plays and the acting of one's friends with exaggerated enthusiasm. It was after all tremendous fun, and the critical faculties of school days are easily swayed. But no-one who saw Graham's early professional performances would have been left in any doubt that we



remembered correctly. His stage presence was immediate and his voice was rounder and even more powerful. His delivery of a line in *The Eumenides*, in which he played Apollo, when he turns on the Furies – “Get out of my sanctuary” – still rings in my ears.

In the acting profession there is a saying that everyone gets one break. Graham had his right at the beginning, but then ironically it was taken from him. When the National Theatre was formed, the Old Vic company disappeared and Graham did not join the new company. I am not sure how long it was before he turned to TV, which in those days was an exciting and creative medium. There he found a new career and eventually great success and popularity with his local news programme.

But I will continue to remember him as a superb classical actor, and I am sure that had he continued on the stage, he would have been amongst our finest actors today. Graham's family know that he has been well remembered by those who knew him at school. His sister tells me that he was thinking of returning to the stage. If only that had been so.

What follows is a letter (slightly abridged) from a friend of Mr Wright, a noted author. It was actually written after the special pre-tour performance a few months later, but it is in place here. Even allowing for some exaggeration amongst friends, I think it (and others I will quote later) will show that our memory of how tremendous Hamlet was is not false.

From Muriel St Clare Byrne 20<sup>th</sup> April 1957:

“Dear Mr Wright, I wouldn't have missed your *Hamlet* production for worlds. It is years since I have heard such a full and satisfying text – in fact, not since the good old days of the Vic's *Hamlet in its Eternity*, and your young man is magnificent. He seems to have everything – presence, carriage and movement, economy of gesture but no fear of it, good speech, real passion, good timing, variety and the power of husbanding his resources for the big moments, a really mobile countenance and expressive eyes, a first rate intelligence, the capacity to project a personality sympathetic to his audience; in fact it is ridiculous that one should be able to run on cataloguing all these excellences in a boy not yet 17 (am I right?) and one almost trembles for his future.

I long to know what is planned for him, or do I say by him? Of course, I can see the producing hand and discretion at work everywhere. What a joy it must have been to have such a 'natural' to produce. And the amazing thing is that it impressed my young Oxford man just as much as it did me. If a boy can get away with it with a young designer who has never seen a live Hamlet before, and with a venerable antique whose first Hamlet was Forbes Robertson's, he should do great things.

You had some excellent supporting performances – Laertes, Claudius, Ophelia. I have completely fallen for the latter. I was particularly impressed by your lucid handling of the play scene, and everyone concerned with the fight deserves the highest praise.”

Yes, dare it be said today, Ronald Steinberg's Ophelia was very easy to fall for. He was young – in the second year – and quite short, and a little quiet by nature. Any boylike step was hidden by the extremely long dresses. His small expressive face was set off by a blonde wig. Made-up with a rosy complexion, he really was a very young, very fragile, very pretty girl. In the mad scenes the rosy complexion became crazed with eyes sunken into deep shadows and with the garland in her hair, this Ophelia presented a poignant and unforgettable image. So much so that it came alive again over thirty years later.

Few people ever knew, apart from his close friends, and Mr Wright and Mr Callaghan, that Ronny Steinberg was going through a terrible trauma as his parents were getting divorced – in those days a far more serious and opprobrious circumstance than the common event of today. The crisis came just a few weeks before the first night. There was a very real possibility that he would drop out of the play. Despite the double casting this would have led to postponing the production. But Ronny had great courage and went on to play Ophelia without a hint of his own private grief, except perhaps there was something in his playing that touched the heart.

Without Graham there would have been no *Hamlet*. But with him there were some superb performances that made the production as a whole so successful. The other role that was not double cast was that of the King, played by Raymond Brody. He was a younger King than was normally presented, and this worked very well both in terms of the play and in that playing an older man in a straight part is immensely difficult for a young player with a young voice. Raymond's voice was higher than Graham's so contrasted well. He was very confident in his villainy without appearing evil. He spoke the speech after the play scene very well. Except for the night when Graham, waiting in the wings, saw Raymond getting up,

as he thought. Thinking he had missed his cue he rushed on. The King was in fact kneeling down about to say his speech, which was completely lost.

The Queen was played by Richard Gee and David Leigh. They both played the part quietly and calmly, letting the lines carry the drama. Laertes was played by Philip Southwood and Michael Schmeising and I have to confess that although I saw all the evening performances and a matinee I can only recall Phil. He was perfect in the part, the exact age, swaggering, a gentle brother to the live Ophelia and a frighteningly vengeful brother to the dead one.

The duel was stunning. It was arranged by the professional actor Mr Roger Gage. Mr Callaghan tells me he had recently been in a TV pirates story. He obviously knew about swordplay. This was no three strokes and a wrestling match job. He arranged about ten minutes of almost non-stop sword fighting, each actor using both foil and a dagger simultaneously.

Once worked out, Graham and the two Laertes practised the duel in the gym every day until every move was not only perfect but played at such a speed as to make this the most exciting duel I have ever seen on stage to this day.

One move in particular was breathtaking. After several strokes Hamlet had to bring his foil across his body, swing it round in an arc and cut across Laertes' neck. Laertes stopped it by bringing up his dagger in his left hand with the foil only inches away. Had he missed he would have lost his head. They were so well rehearsed that the move never went wrong. But Phil told me his heart sank every time the move came.

Ophelia was also played by D Barton. Larger than Ronny Steinberg, he did not convey the same childlike effect, but played the part well.

Polonius was played by Charles Sampson and Brian Conway. Both played the old man very successfully.

Horatio was played by Jeffrey Reed and Stephen Walzer, Rosencrantz was played by John Acklaw and Brian Winston, and Guildenstern by John Berger and Stuart Creggy. The Ghost was played by D Morgan and Frank Gladden. The two Osrics were totally different. Keith Brody was slim and quietly spoken, very much the courtier. Anthony Huckwell was solidly built, and played a far more menacing Osric, someone you did not meddle with.



Harvey Bernard and Howard Ripka played the Player King, and Keith Barber and W Chesnick the Player Queen. Other Players included John Hawley and Stuart Elgrode. The First Gravediggers were Graham E Bill and David Fitzwilliam and the two Seconds were David Brookman and Robert Burden. Fortinbras was played by Maurice Burlem. Peter Wayth was the Sailor and Christopher Bain the Priest. William Read, Michael Roseblade and Peter Packham were officers on watch.

There were nearly seventy names in the cast list and space precludes mentioning them all, but they all played their part in making *Hamlet* a success.

The schools audiences were always appreciative but *Hamlet* produced a totally unexpected reaction. Overnight Graham became the romantic idol of the girls of BKHS. Day after day they ran after him as he came to school and when he left. They followed him along the road, to the station, and some even to his home. He signed hundreds of autographs.

None of this affected him a jot. He took it all as good fun. What did satisfy him was knowing that the success of *Hamlet* did so much good for the school, giving KGS pride in the achievement, and creating a surge of interest in drama.

Make-up as always was by Rosemary and her husband, Mr Chirgwin, assisted by Mr Whitmore, and this year by Mr Callaghan. I think the student Ms Williams also helped with making up the ladies of the court. As Mr Callaghan recalled, the beards were not ready made ones – these were still very expensive – but were all made from the strips of crepe hair that had to be teased out and steamed, roughly cut and glued on, and then trimmed into shape. Every performance.

Amongst the technical people the stage manager was T McMahon assisted by Alan Maizels, B Riley, and Trevor Sutton. Sound effects were by A Lawrence assisted by Neville Wrench. Props were by P Hedgeland. The prompters were Daniel Sperber and W Hutchins.

The business manager was Mr Minchin; the tickets cost three shillings and two shillings, with reductions for pupils.

KILBURN GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Forty-Seventh Annual  
Shakespearian Production  
1956

THE TRAGEDY OF  
**H A M L E T**  
PRINCE OF DENMARK

DECEMBER 10th, 12th, 14th & 15th  
at 7 p.m.

DECEMBER 7th, 11th & 13th at 2.15 p.m.

## CHARACTERS

in order of speaking

BERNARDO	} Officers .....	{	C. F. Chipperfield, D. T. Fitzwilliam
FRANCISCO			W. C. T. Read, M. L. Roseblade
MARCELLUS			P. F. Packham, W. C. T. Read
HORATIO, friend to Hamlet .....			S. D. Walzer, J. P. Reed
CLAUDIUS, King of Denmark .....			R. Brody
POLONIUS, Lord Chamberlain .....			B. L. Conway, C. B. Sampson
LAERTES, son to Polonius .....			M. L. Schmeising, P. H. Southwood
HAMLET, son to the late, and nephew to the present King .....			G. S. Bell
GERTRUDE, Queen of Denmark and mother to Hamlet .....			R. Gee, D. Leigh
OPHELIA, daughter to Polonius .....			B. D. Barton, R. P. Steinberg
Ghost of the late King Hamlet .....			F. K. Gladden, D. J. Morgan
REYNALDO .....			E. G. Rooke
ROSENCRANTZ	} Courtiers .....	{	J. T. Acklaw, B. N. Winston
GUILDENSTERN			J. Berger, S. Creggy
1st Player (King) .....			H. G. Bernard, H. L. Ripka
4th Player (Prologue) .....			J. G. Hawley, T. H. Postlewaite
2nd Player (Queen) .....			K. S. Barber, W. Chesnick
3rd Player (Lucianus) .....			S. J. Elgrod, R. G. Wicksman
FORTINBRAS .....			M. J. Burlem
Captain to Fortinbras .....			A. J. Gunter
1st Gravedigger .....			G. E. M. Bill, D. T. Fitzwilliam
2nd Gravedigger .....			D. Brookman, R. Burden
A Priest .....			C. N. Bain, E. R. Golding
OSRIC, a courtier .....			K. Brody, A. R. Huckwell
Sailor .....			P. J. Wayth



Lords, Ladies, Players, Soldiers, Musicians, Messengers, Pages:

A. C. Bull, A. R. Maizels, J. F. Barnes, M. C. Barnes, D. Bray,  
T. J. P. McMahon, A. R. Lawrence, G. I. E. Cole, J. C. Osborn,  
J. C. M. Strachan, L. J. Keen, R. Hertsis, P. J. Spenceley, T.  
Usher, J. D. Gladstone, E. A. Joyce, R. V. Wilson, T. O. Brown,  
K. F. Temple, D. C. Austin, B. Gibbins, C. J. Hall, E. G. Nice,  
J. S. Skelker.

(Where two actors are named against one character  
the performances are shared.)

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The action of the play takes place in and around  
the Castle of Elsinore, Denmark.

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There will be one interval of fifteen minutes.

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THE PLAY produced by Mr. P. K. Wright,  
assisted by Mr. V. Callaghan.

THE SET designed and executed by Mr. R. Whitmore.

Sword-fight arranged by Mr. Roger Gage.

STAGE MANAGER: T. J. P. McMahon, assisted by G. I. E. Cole  
(under the direction of Mr. D. Robinson).

PRODUCTION MANAGER: M. A. Lock,  
assisted by C. Baker.

LIGHTING by A. C. Bull, assisted by A. R. Maizels, B. S. Riley and  
T. J. Sutton (under the direction of Mr. A. James).

PROPERTIES: P. W. Hedgeland, M. E. Green and C. D. Mayers  
(under the direction of Mr. D. C. Measham).

(Thrones by Old Times Furnishing Company. Some properties  
supplied by the Old Vic and by Stage Properties Ltd. Swords and  
daggers supplied by Bapty's. Other properties have been made by  
members of the school.)

MUSIC under the direction of Mr. D. Merlyn-Smith.

SOUND EFFECTS by A. R. Lawrence, assisted by N. S. Wrench.  
Sound effects records kindly lent by Mr. J. Leigh.

PROMPTERS: D. Sperber and W. J. Hutchins.

CALL-BOYS: A. E. E. Judge, J. Aston and G. W. Phillippo.

MAKE-UP by Mrs. Chirgwin and Mr. R. Whitmore.

Business Manager: Mr. A. E. Minchin.

COSTUMES for Hamlet and the Ghost supplied by the Old Vic.  
Other costumes supplied by the London Federation of Boys' Clubs.  
Wigs by "Bert."

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Smoking is not permitted in the Auditorium.



**Graham Bell**



**Jeffrey Reed as Horatio**





**Raymond Brody as Claudius**





David Leigh as Gertrude



**Ronald Steinberg as Ophelia**



**Philip Southwood as Laertes**



**Brian Conway as Polonius**

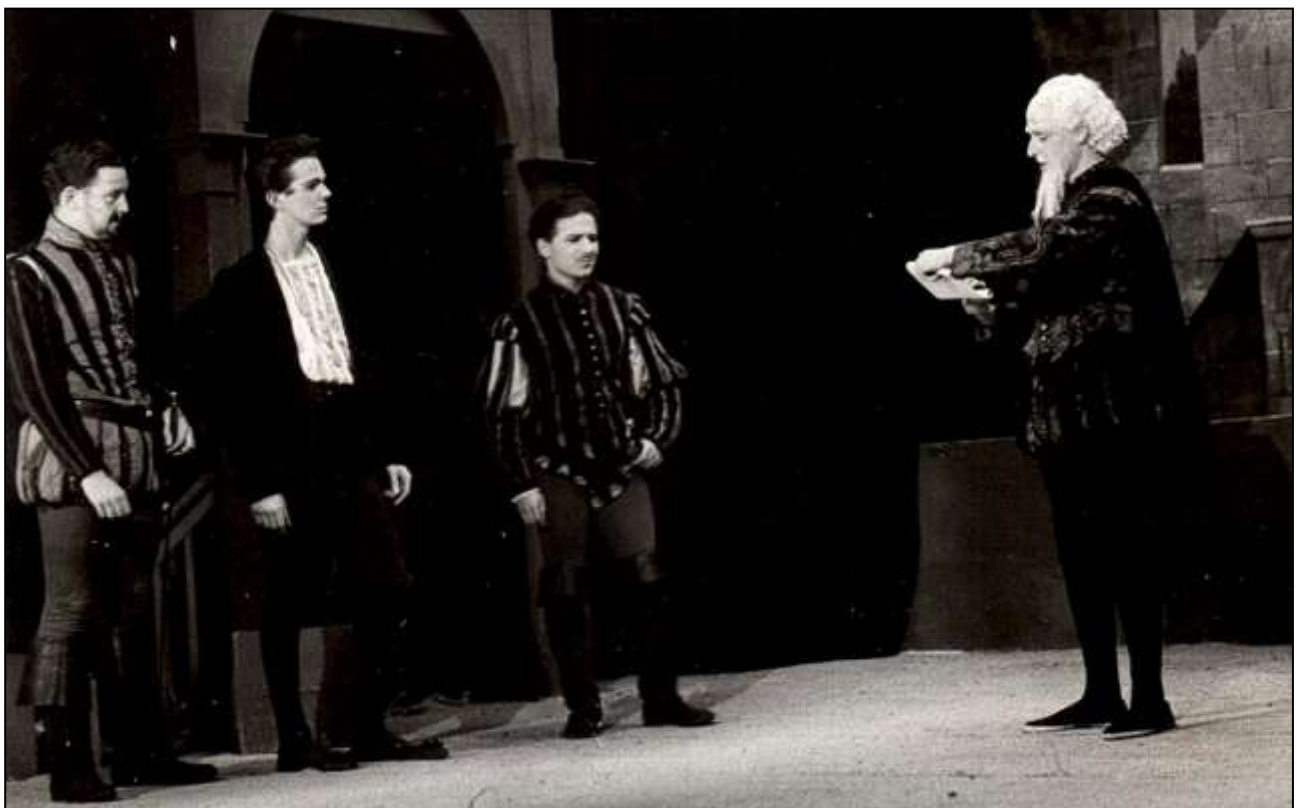




**Second from right: Anthony Huckwell as Osric**

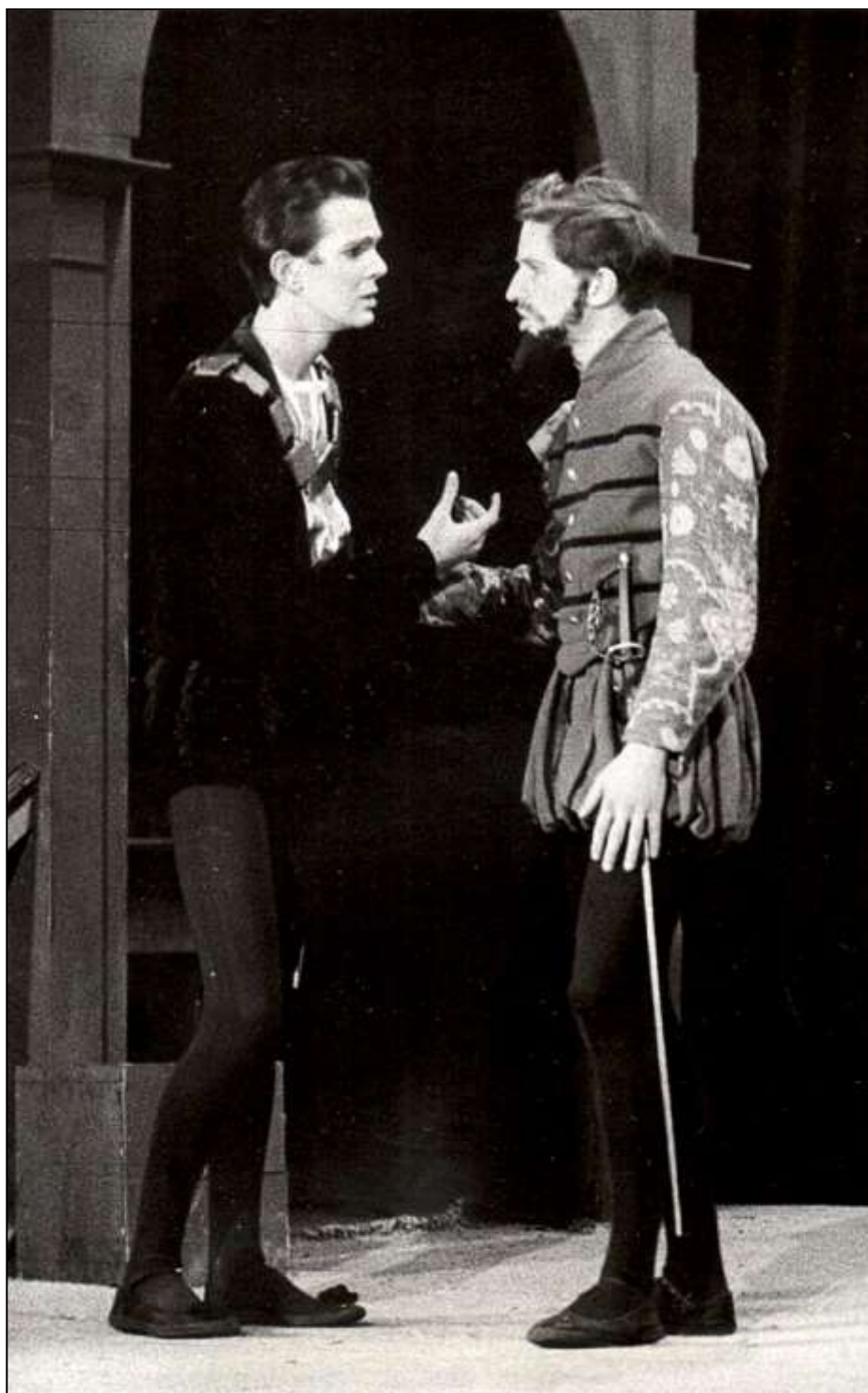


**Behind the King: Michael and Jeffrey Barnes**



**Left to right: Stuart Creggy (Guildenstern), Graham,  
Brian Winston (Rosencrantz) Brian Conway**









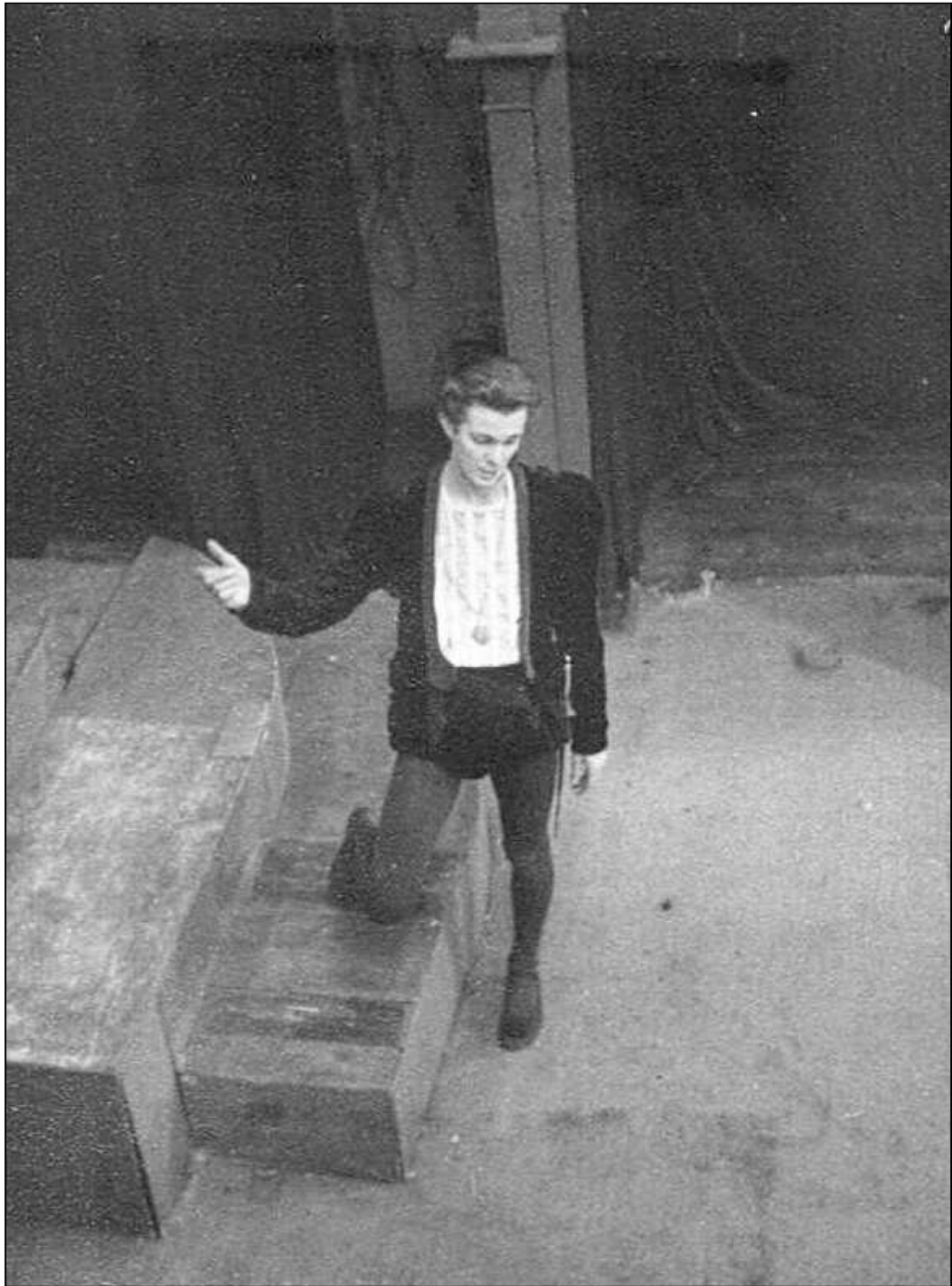




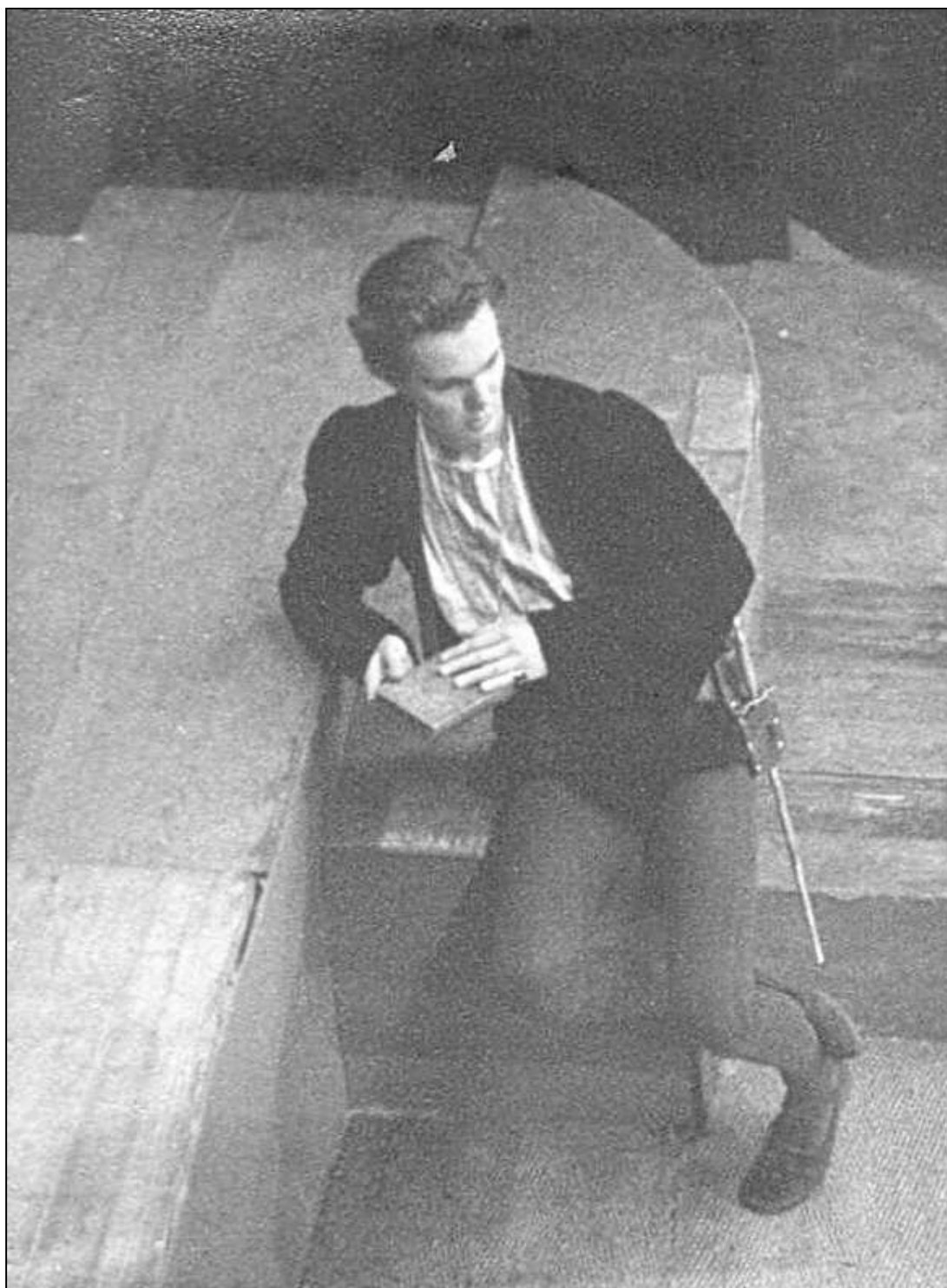


**Keith Barber as the Player Queen**



















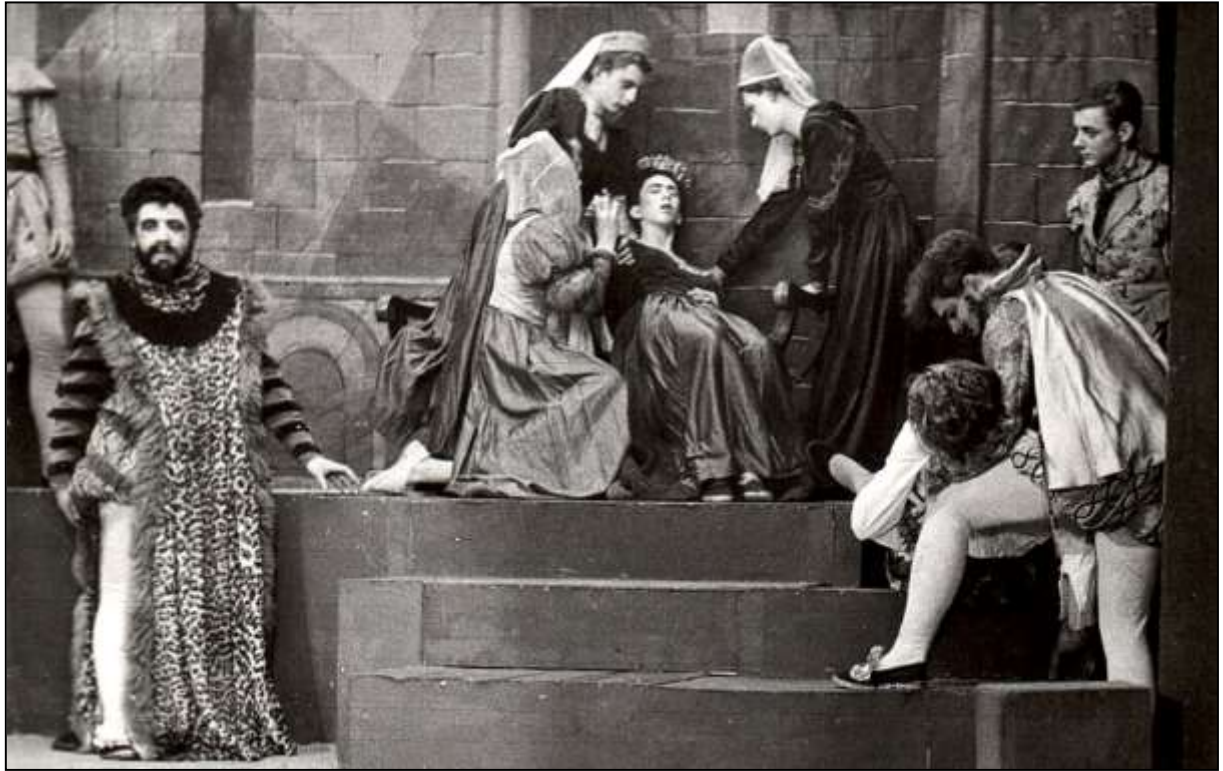














**Hamlet Group Photograph**

<b>Standing back left:</b>	<b>K Brody – Osric</b>
	<b>M Schmeising – Laertes</b>
	<b>C Sampson – Polonius</b>
<b>Seated at back:</b>	<b>R Gee – Queen</b>
<b>To left of Claudius:</b>	<b>D Morgan or F Gladden as Ghost</b>
	<b>P Southwood also as Laertes</b>
<b>Second row standing:</b>	<b>J Acklaw – Rosencrantz</b>
	<b>J Berger – Guildenstern</b>
<b>First row seated:</b>	<b>H Bernard – Player King</b>
	<b>W Chesnick – Player Queen</b>
<b>First row far right:</b>	<b>G Bill and D Brookman – Gravediggers</b>
<b>Far right:</b>	<b>W C T Read as Marcellus</b>





**Left to right: B Conway – Polonius, B Barton – Ophelia, Graham Bell – Hamlet,  
P Southwood – Laertes, D Leigh – Queen, D Morgan or F Lgadden – Ghost,  
R Brody – King, J Reed - Horatio**



**Rosemary Chirgwin making up David Leigh**

WILLESDEN CHRONICLE, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 21, 1956

## GRAMMAR SCHOOL BOYS IN 'HAMLET'

### Unforgettable performance

**I**T would be difficult to praise too highly the latest Shakespearian presentation by boys of Kilburn Grammar School. They gave seven performances, starting on December 7, of that lengthy and exacting production, "Hamlet," cutting it only by half an hour, and finishing on Saturday night.

It is a number of years since I last had the pleasure of witnessing a play by these talented young performers, and I found the standard even higher than I remembered it.

Quite unforgettable was G. S. Bell in the title role (I understand he has theatrical aspirations). His delivery was notable for its clarity and passionate sincerity, his stage presence was excellent—in short he is obviously a gifted lad with natural acting ability.

#### SHARED ROLES

Some of the performances were shared, so I can only speak of the boys who took the various roles on Friday night.

Great credit is due to the producer, Mr. P. K. Wright, who was assisted by Mr. V. Callaghan, for the way the young actors were taught to deport themselves, for the very real meaning they imparted to the difficult lines, and for their ease of movement and posture.

So closely did B. L. Conway emulate the movements and voice of an old man that it was hard to realise that Polonius, the meddling Lord Chamberlain, was a youth.

A forceful and colourful characterization of Claudius was given by R. Brody, and D. Leigh was his queen, Gertrude—perhaps a little stiff, but regal and impressive, with a touch of rich elegance.

#### MOVING

Remarkably unselfconscious was B. D. Barton, who gave a touching performance as Ophelia, the poor lady who became crazed after her

father's untimely demise and her lover's apparent betrayal.

P. S. Southwood, as Laertes, her brother, did not overact in a part which held many traps, but held the balance nicely, and J. P. Reed did well as Hamlet's devoted friend, Horatio.

A spine-chilling performance was given by D. J. Morgan, as the spectre on the battlements, ghost of Hamlet's father, and others who acquitted themselves well were C. F. Chipperfield (Bernardo), W. C. T. Read (Francisco), P. F. Packham (Marcellus), E. G. Rooke (Reynaldo), J. T. Acklaw (Rosenkrantz), S. Creggy (Guildenstern), the two gravediggers, D. T. Fitzwilliam and R. Burden, A. R. Huckwell (Osric), H. G. Bernard (a player), and M. J. Burlem (Fortinbras).

#### LARGE CAST

They were well supported by a large cast which included J. G. Hawley, T. H. Postlewaite, K. S. Barber, W. Chesnick, S. J. Elgro, R. G. Wicksman, A. J. Gunter, G. E. M. Bill, D. Brookman, C. N. Bain, E. R. Golding, K. Brody, P. J. Wayth (some of these took the roles at alternative performances), A. C. Bull, A. R. Maizels, J. E. Barnes, M. C. Barnes, D. Bray, T. J. P. McMahon, A. R. Lawrence, G. I. E. Cole, J. C. Osborn, J. C. M. Strachan, L. J. Kenn, R. Hertsis, P. J. Spenceley, T. Usher, J. D. Gladstone, E. A.

Joyce, R. V. Wilson, T. O. Brown, K. F. Temple, D. C. Austin, B. Gibbins, C. H. Hall, E. G. Nice, J. S. Skelker.

Those sharing main roles were D. T. Fitzwilliam (Bernardo), M. L. Roseblade (Francisco), W. C. T. Read (Marcellus), S. D. Walzer (Horatio), C. B. Sampson (Polonius), M. L. Schmeising (Laertes), R. Gee (Gertrude), R. P. Atinberg (Ophelia), F. K. Gladden (Ghost of the late King Hamlet), B. N. Winston (Rosenkrantz), J. Berger (Guildenstern), H. L. Ripka (first player).

#### SWORD FIGHT

The highly impressive sword fight, climax of the play, was arranged by an expert, Mr. Roger Gage.

A fine job was done with make-up by Mrs. Chirgwin and Mr. R. Whitmore.

The set was designed and executed by Mr. R. Whitmore, stage manager was T. J. P. McMahon, assisted by G. I. E. Cole, under the direction of Mr. D. Robinson, and production manager was M. A. Lock, assisted by C. Baker. Lighting was by A. C. Bull, assisted by A. R. Maizels, B. S. Riley and T. J. Sutton, under the direction of Mr. A. James, while properties were by P. W. Hedgeland, M. E. Green, and C. D. Meyers, under the direction of Mr. D. C. Measham.

Mr. D. Merlyn-Smith was musical director and sound effects were by A. R. Lawrence, N. S. Wrench and J. Leigh.

Among guests at Friday's performance were Mr. Hicks Bolton, a former mayor, who still gives the school's Shakespeare prizes every year, and who was for many years chairman of the school governors before the war; Mr. F. W. Wyeth, borough education officer; Mrs. S. Gillett, borough librarian and Mrs. Gillett, and Miss Dawney.

M. W.



The following is a review by Old Boy R Beaver who was the first KGS Hamlet in 1923:

### ***“HAMLET” 1923 and 1956***

“Full thirty times hath Phoëbus’ cart gone round  
Neptune’s salt wash and Tellus’ orb’d ground,  
And thirty dozen moons with borrowed sheen  
About the world have times twelve thirties been”

Indeed, it is more, for thirty-three years have elapsed since Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* was last performed on the stage of the Creighton Hall, and there can have been but few amongst the audiences of December 1956 who saw the previous production in December 1923. Certainly only one member of the School Staff – who happened to be a pupil in 1923 – could claim to have seen both; and the producer of the first *Hamlet* Mr John Lodge, and his henchman, Mr John Ware, are both deceased. It gave me very peculiar pleasure to be invited to witness the final performance on the Saturday evening, and perhaps I may be forgiven for indulging in some reminiscences and comparisons. In order to do justice to the performers I should have seen both casts, and I can only express my apologies to the “second strings” whose performances I did not have the pleasure of witnessing.

My first impression was of a larger stage than we had in 1923, larger because of a wider “apron”. Looking back, it is difficult to realise how we ever managed to produce Shakespeare without an apron stage – yet such difficult and space-needing plays as *King Lear* and *The Tempest* were done before the “manual training” class constructed the first apron about 1921. I well remember the speaker of the epilogue in that year being pushed through the curtains and explaining in blank verse,

“Much virtue, truly, in a apron stage.”

which produced a long round of applause. Incidentally, I noticed that the custom of having an epilogue, written either by the producer or by one of the players, and spoken by a leading character, has been dropped. Perhaps it is just as well. The epilogue certainly provided a commentary on school activities, but it was a peculiarly inappropriate way of ending the performance of a tragedy such as

*Hamlet*, and I know I felt very uncomfortable about having to rise from a corpse-strewn stage and speak a somewhat frivolous epilogue which I had composed myself.

To return to the stage. We used to use the apron for small scenes, played in front of the curtain. This not only gave the impression of a change of scene, but enabled actual changes of scenery and furniture to be made behind the curtains whilst the apron act was in progress. I was much struck by the absence of a curtain in the present production. It certainly enabled the play to proceed with greater fluency, and the skilful variations of the fighting enabled one to forget that the same backcloth, steps and platform were there all the time. The placing of Ophelia's grave was also a stroke of genius. In the 1923 production we use the draped base of a vaulting horse, in the middle of the stage. It was most realistic – but was not easy to jump into convincingly!

It must often be the case, I suppose, that schoolboy productions of *Hamlet* tend to be one-man shows. I am sure this was not the case in 1923, when there was quite a strong supporting cast in which Claudius, Polonius and the Player-King gave outstanding performances. But if a boy is good enough to play Hamlet he is almost bound to overshadow the rest of the cast. I have nothing but praise for Graham Bell's Hamlet. He has a beautiful voice and an easy stage manner. His soliloquies were impressively spoken and his varied moods were portrayed with sympathy and intelligence; he was equally good in the lighter vein of the exchanges with the King after the death of Polonius and in the heavy ranting at Laertes by the grave-side. It was a most accomplished performance.

Of the other members of the cast whom I saw I was most impressed, I think, by R Brody as Claudius and R P Steinberg as Ophelia. Possessed of an appropriate figure and a good voice, Brody carried himself regally, even if he did not always look and sound quite old enough. Ophelia, after a somewhat halting start (what a pity her dress wasn't shorter!) was quite charming. This is surely one of the most difficult of all Shakespeare's female parts for a boy to play – other, perhaps, than those in which the poor girl – like Julia in the *Two Gentlemen* – has to dress up as a boy” – but Steinberg sustained it well and the mad scene was really most moving. I wished, however, that the little ditties had been sung to the traditional airs instead of being spoken.



Philip Southwood was a robust Laertes, and Brian Conway portrayed the “weak hams” of Polonius even if the make-up and the voice were a little too young. I was least happy, I think, with the Gravediggers. Is it really necessary to assume a coarse Cockney accent in order to be amusing? (The sailor did the same thing.) I suppose that the gravediggers in Kilburn might have such an accent, but no performance of *Hamlet* that I have ever witnessed, either amateur or professional, have I heard such speech, and it jarred, especially since on the whole the diction of the entire cast was good.

*[Certainly post-war the Gravedigger was played coarse. However, what Mr Beaver and most of the audience could not have known was that Graham Bill was not putting on an accent. I thought he was an excellent gravedigger. Alan Schneider]*

Finally, a word of congratulation to the Producer, Mr Wright. He had “cut” the play very skilfully to manageable length, and I was delighted to see Fortinbras in full – a feature which we also had in 1923 but one which is not always seen on the professional stage. I hope he felt that his out-of-school-hours had been adequately rewarded. I did: and it is quite clear that the very high standard of Shakespeare productions which the School has set for so many years is being well maintained. And now, what next? After our *Hamlet* of 1923 we went to the other extreme with the *Comedy of Errors*, and I turned comic in the part of Dromio of Syracuse. It was good fun – and I commend it to the Producer’s notice.

**R Beaver**



More photographs were taken of *Hamlet* than of any other production. Photos were taken from the wings by Brian Winston and from the lighting box by B Riley, and someone took a wonderful photo of the second scene from the prompt corner. But the most comprehensive coverage of the play was by Mr Leavey, the physics teacher, during one of the matinees. He caught some of the very best moments. I asked him to make enlargements of many of these photos to create close-ups of all the main characters, and he made a wonderful set of photos for me, which I treasure still.

In fact, I asked him for two sets, because Rosemary wanted a special photo album for the school as well. And this is how Ophelia came to life again.

Nigel Williams, the son of Mr David Williams, who was Head in the fifties (and until 1966) is a most successful novelist and playwright. He wrote a play in about 1990 that was produced on BBC TV. I forget the title but it was a drama about a family splitting up, with the crisis coming at Christmas time just when their son was playing a part in the school play. The play was *Hamlet*, the part Ophelia. The Head must have told Nigel what happened to our Ophelia at some time, and he must have held it in his memory for all those years.

When we saw the boy in the play, there was our Ophelia. Not something similar, but exactly our Ophelia in size, dress, and make-up right to the same eye shadows, and the same garland in the hair. This likeness could not have been achieved just by verbal description; someone must have seen the photos. So I wonder if the school's play photo album (with photos going back to the early fifties) has survived – perhaps Nigel Williams may even still have it.

Nigel is the splitting image of his father apart from a shock of curly hair and an upright stance. He has in various articles over the years referred to his father, and he might be able to tell some interesting tales on those years of the school when his father was Head. Perhaps he could be invited as a guest to a future Dinner?

KILBURN GRAMMAR SCHOOL

*Benefit Performance*

*of*

THE TRAGEDY OF  
**HAMLET**  
PRINCE OF DENMARK

*in aid of the German Tour with the Play*

**THURSDAY, 18th APRIL, 1957,**  
**at 7 p.m. prompt**

Price 1/-

**CHARACTERS**  
in order of speaking

BERNARDO	} Officers .....	{	M. J. Burlem
FRANCISCO			H. L. Ripka
MARCELLUS			W. C. T. Read
HORATIO, friend to Hamlet .....			J. P. Reed
CLAUDIUS, King of Denmark .....			R. Brody
POLONIUS, Lord Chamberlain .....			C. B. Sampson
LAERTES, son to Polonius .....			P. H. Southwood
HAMLET, son to the late, and nephew to the present King .....			G. S. Bell
GERTRUDE, Queen of Denmark and mother to Hamlet .....			R. Gee
OPHELIA, daughter to Polonius .....			R. P. Steinberg
Ghost of the late King Hamlet .....			D. J. Morgan
REYNALDO .....			D. T. Fitzwilliam
ROSENCRANTZ	} Courtiers .....	{	M. B. Elster
GUILDENSTERN			M. B. Treadwell
1st Player (King) .....			H. L. Ripka
4th Player (Prologue) .....			J. G. Hawley
2nd Player (Queen) .....			K. S. Barber
3rd Player (Lucianus) .....			P. H. Southwood
FORTINBRAS .....			M. J. Burlem
Captain to Fortinbras .....			H. L. Ripka
Gentleman .....			J. G. Hawley
1st Gravedigger .....			D. T. Fitzwilliam
2nd Gravedigger .....			G. E. M. Bill
A Priest .....			D. J. Morgan
OSRIC, a courtier .....			D. Brookman
Sailors .....			W. C. T. Read, G. E. M. Bill



Lords, Ladies, Players, Soldiers, Musicians, Messengers, Pages:  
M. C. Barnes, D. Bray, A. R. Lawrence, R. Hertsis, R. V.  
Wilson, K. F. Temple, C. J. Hall, H. E. Astill, J. Aves.

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The action of the play takes place in and around  
the Castle of Elsinore, Denmark.

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There will be one interval of fifteen minutes.

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THE PLAY produced by Mr. P. K. Wright,  
assisted by Mr. V. Callaghan.

THE SET designed and executed by Mr. R. Whitmore.

Sword-fight arranged by Mr. Roger Gage.

STAGE MANAGER: A. R. Lawrence.

LIGHTING by A. R. Maizels and T. J. Sutton.

PROPERTIES supplied by the Old Vic and by Stage Properties Ltd.

Swords and daggers supplied by Bapty's.

SOUND EFFECTS by A. R. Lawrence.

Sound effects records kindly lent by Mr. J. Leigh.

PROMPTER: W. J. Hutchins.

MAKE-UP by Mrs. R. Chirgwin and Mr. V. Callaghan.

Business Manager: Mr. A. E. Minchin.

COSTUMES for Hamlet and the Ghost supplied by the Old Vic.

Costumes for Claudius, Gertrude and Ophelia, and cloaks, designed  
and executed by Miss Eve Sheppard. Other costumes supplied by  
the London Federation of Boys' Clubs. Wigs by "Bert."

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Smoking is not permitted in the Auditorium.



# School will produce 'Hamlet' in Germany

WHEN the talented Kilburn Grammar School Dramatic Society leave England on Easter Monday for a trip to Germany, they will become the first local school drama group to act on the continent.

The society will present their Christmas success of "Hamlet," in which 16-year-old Graham Bell is the outstanding star.

"Hamlet" was such a hit last year that the headmaster, Mr. D. F. Williams, was asked by the German Director of Education to send the cast on a tour of schools in the Schleswig-Holstein area.

Since that first request, all further correspondence has been conducted in German by the school's two German masters, Dr. W. Isaacs and Mr. E. Wowiheim.

Altogether 31 boys of the cast, masters Mr. Peter Wright, producer, and Mr. Victor Callaghan, assistant producer, and school secretary, Mrs. R. Chirgwin, make-up artist, will travel to Kell, the first stop.

The tour will last a week, during which the play will be presented at five different places. The party will be accommodated at the homes of German schoolchildren.

## GREAT EXPERIENCE

Mrs. Chirgwin told the Citizen: "I think it is a wonderful thing for the school and a splendid experience for the boys. They will pay their own fares, about £10, to Germany, but then the hospitality of the Germans will take care of them."

Once again Graham Bell will take the role of Hamlet, and he will also wear Sir Laurence Olivier's Old Vic costume. "Graham is a wonderful actor and should go a long way," praised Mrs. Chirgwin.

"But the only trouble now is hiring all the costumes, which is going to cost more than £40. We are hoping parents will help to defray the cost," she said.

The cast, who will meet audiences of all kinds, are made-up by Mrs. Chirgwin — who has the difficult task of making some boys look like women.

In preparing for this memorable visit the school authorities

have got to clear up insurance, bookings, re-hiring costumes and rehearsing during the Easter holidays — which start on April 10.

And then to Germany — complete with rapiers, daggers and wigs.



GRAHAM BELL — the Kilburn Grammar School-boy, who will play Hamlet with the school Dramatic Group, when they tour Germany at Easter, is seen dressed in Sir Laurence Olivier's Old Vic Hamlet costume.



EDUCATIONAL SUPPLEMENT

LONDON April 26 1957

## VENGEANCE AT LENGTH

Yet another *Hamlet* awaited us at Kilburn on April 18 when the boys of the grammar school rehearsed a nearly integral version which they have been performing before audiences in six German towns this week.

Begun in confused darkness and later relieved by a single back-cloth, the production, though well-intentioned and eschewing fussiness, could boast but little dramatic enlivenment before Polonius's delivery of his homilies in Act II. These, however over-bleated, authentically prophesied that the comic relief was in safe hands.

To succeed in the title role, however, needed intelligence, presence, and genius, and this Hamlet possessed these first two qualities. In spite of a voice of which only a small part of the compass was actually pleasing, the actor, intoxicated with the sublime length of his part, enforced his deliberate *adagio* against a production that was surely intended to be matched in *presto* time. This treatment was highly effective in the soliloquies, where several rather Olivier-like echoes were achieved. For the rest it tended, for all its intelligence, to monotony of delivery.

Support was adequate: a Claudius of ripe looks and well-oiled vocal apparatus, an Horatio suitably lacking in authority, a surly and unlikeable Laertes, and a finely drawn First Gravedigger. The all-male cast sported a wooden and un-regal Gertrude but a memorably fragile, doll-like Ophelia.

## 16-year-old 'lead' will wear an Old Vic costume

Thirty boys of Kilburn Grammar School will be travelling to Kiel and other Danish-frontier towns of Germany next month to give performances of Hamlet. Mr. Peter Wright, 43-year-old English master and producer of the play, said today:

"This is the school's 47th Shakespearian production. The seven performances of Hamlet we gave last December were so successful that we were anxious to take it on tour.

"Fortunately the headmaster was able to arrange for us to present the play in a number of towns in Germany."

### Excited

Most excited boy in the school is 16-year-old Graham Bell, of Kingsbury, who plays Hamlet.

When the tour opens in Kiel, on April 24—his birthday—he will be wearing one of Sir Laurence Olivier's costumes from the Old Vic.

The king is being played by 16-year-old Raymond Brody, of Canons Park.

The boys' parents are meeting some of the expenses, but the hire of some of the costumes will have to be paid for and to meet the cost the school are presenting a special benefit performance of the play on April 18.

### Nothing but the best

Said Mr. Wright: "In presenting the play we have cut very little of the text.

"We have a fixed set with no front curtains. And this is how the play will be produced in Germany.

"The people in the towns on the Danish border have a very high regard for Hamlet, so nothing but the best will do."



SATURDAY APRIL 20 1957

## GRAMMAR SCHOOL "HAMLET"

### PRODUCTION TO TOUR GERMANY

Occasions when the full text of *Hamlet* is heard in the theatre are rare; some cuts are so firmly established that, when the lines are restored, the audience can momentarily recapture their first response to the play.

At Kilburn Grammar School, where a benefit performance of *Hamlet* was given on Thursday in aid of a German tour, the text was left almost intact. Voltimand and Cornelius had gone and a few couplets were missing, but even so the performance lasted almost four hours. It could easily have lasted much longer if Mr. P. K. Wright had not driven his production along at a cracking pace. A permanent setting was used, and a couple of pages doubled on and off to shift properties in full view of the audience, for there were no curtains. The cast, too, were given a free run; although in a few sections—the duel, and the mime between the Player King and Queen for instance—movement had been most carefully prepared, there was a minimum of stage business. Spare gestures and simple groupings allowed the text an uninterrupted flow.

Having saved time by these means Mr. Wright was able to free his cast from obsession with the clock; after a perfunctory scramble through the first scene there was no gabbling. Nor was there much growth of dramatic urgency; speeches in general were delivered intelligently at a pace that suited the formal and reflective passages well enough, but there was no welling up of excitement towards the peaks of the action. The play's scene was without a climax, and Claudius was slain indiscriminately, not with revengeful satisfaction.

The responsibility for the production's slackness largely rests on G. S. Bells, whose Hamlet though beautifully poised and spoken with great sensitivity corroded tragedy with self-conscious languor.



## THE GERMAN TOUR

It had long been an ambition of Mr Wright to take a school play abroad, and none could have been better than *Hamlet*. The German tour was brought about by the Head's contacts in Schleswig-Holstein, and the performance in Brussels by a friend of Rosemary there. The German authorities paid for board and keep in the German towns and made an additional contribution to the costs of the tour. Nonetheless, everyone who went had to pay about ten pounds to cover fares, and that was no small sum.

There were thirty boys, twenty six cast and four technicians. Mr Wright and Mr Callaghan, Rosemary, and Mr Leslie Venn, who was an Old Boy and deputy head of Kensal Rise primary school. He went along at his own cost. (One does wonder why no other member of KGS staff could be found.)

*Hamlet* was given a special single performance on April 18<sup>th</sup> 1957 to raise money to pay the costs of costumes, transportation, insurance, etc. Top price tickets were five shillings.

There had of course been much rehearsing since December and what may have been weaknesses in the original performances were smoothed out. Also there were changes of cast, both changes of role and newcomers, and this would be their only pre-tour performance.

Graham had the same costume for Hamlet but there were superb new costumes for the King and Queen, and a new dress for Ophelia, all designed and made by Miss Eve Sheppard, another friend of Mr Wright.

After three months it was wonderful to see *Hamlet* again. There was no feeling of *deja-vu*. It was as thrilling as before. It would not be unfair to say that of all the marvellous performances of plays in the fifties, this performance must be the pinnacle of the school's dramatic achievement. It is therefore a good reason to list the cast in full. Interestingly, for the first and only time for a school play (or indeed any occasion), in the programme sheet printed for the tour names were given in full:

Bernardo and Fortinbras	Maurice Burlem
Francisco and Player King	Howard Ripka
Marcellus	William Read
Horatio	Jeffrey Reed

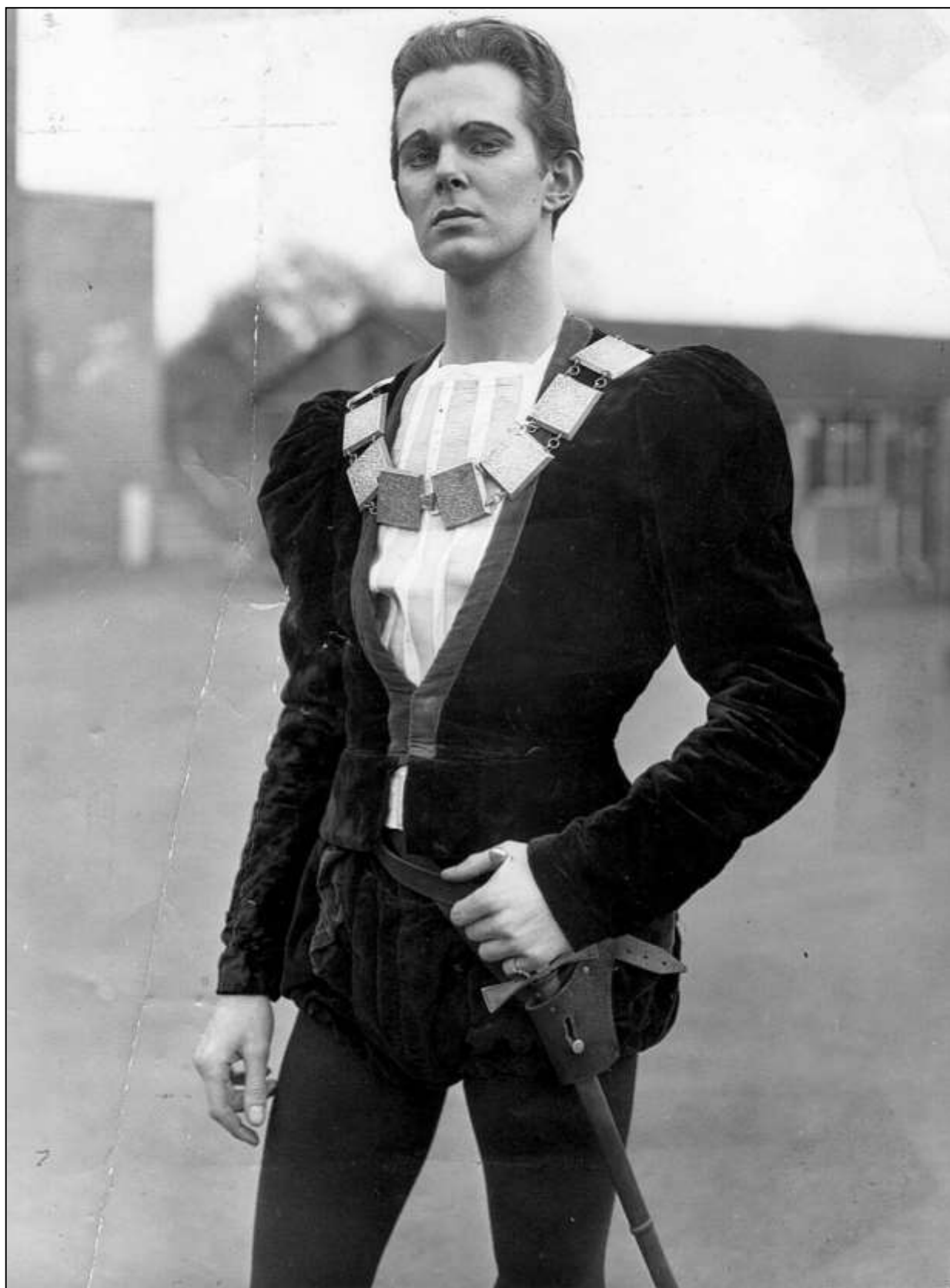


Ghost	David Morgan
Claudius	Raymond Brody
Polonius	Charles Sampson
Laertes	Philip Southwood
Hamlet	Graham Bell
Gertrude	Richard Gee
Ophelia	Ronald Steinberg
Rosencrantz	Michael Elster
Guildenstern	Michael Treadwell
Player Queen	Keith Barber
Player Prologue	John Hawley
First Gravedigger	David Fitzwilliam
Second Gravedigger	David Brookman

All other parts were doubled by the above. Courtiers, Soldiers, etc were Michael Barnes, Desmond Bray, Roger Hertsis, Roger Wilson, Keith Temple, Colin Hall, Harold Astill, and John Aves

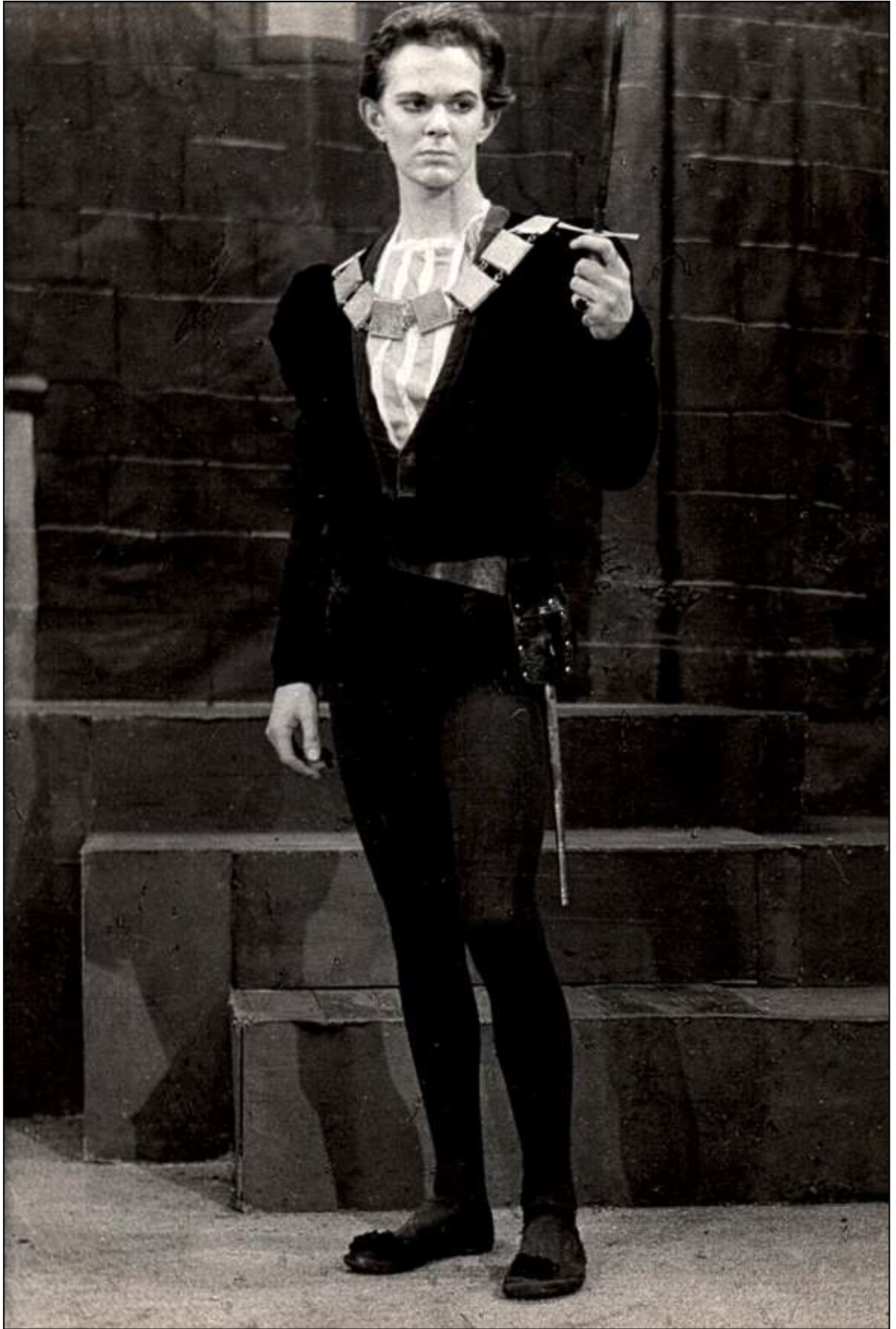
The stage manager was Alan Lawrence, who also went on as a soldier, lighting was by Alan Maizels and Trevor Sutton, and the prompter was William Hutchins.











## Michael Elster aus London . . .

Zu Gast aus England — „Those foolish teddy-girls!“ — Sehr angetan von Schleswig

SN. Wie wir gestern bereits berichteten, führten englische Schüler aus Kilburne (London) Shakespeares „Hamlet“ im NLTh auf. Ein junger Leser der SN beobachtete seinen englischen Hausgast sehr interessiert. Seine Eindrücke bringen wir im Auszug:

„Das Verhalten meines Gastes — er hieß Michael Elster — war beispielhaft für das seiner Kameraden. Er war sehr stolz darauf, in London, der größten Stadt der Welt, zu wohnen. Er hatte bereits mehrere Flugreisen nach Jerusalem, Belgien, Spanien und Frankreich unternommen, war aber bescheiden genug, um nie unaufgefordert ein Wort über seine immerhin ungewöhnlich erscheinenden Erlebnisse zu verlieren. Fremdartig erschien mir auch, daß er über unsere Familie die gleiche ausführliche Auskunft verlangte, wie er sie mir über die seinige gewährte. Geheimnisse irgendwelcher Art liebte er nicht. Wenn meine Eltern sich während der Mahlzeit über irgend etwas unterhielten, horchte er sofort auf und blickte mich auskunftserwartend an. Als wir ihn fragten, ob er gegen eine Ausrüstung Deutschlands mit atomaren Waffen sei, bejahte er eifrig. Vielleicht spricht daraus immer noch die Furcht vor einem zu starken Deutschland. Er legte Wert darauf, daß wir erkannten, daß er sehr viel von den Deutschen halte. Über die großen Deutschen wußte er sehr gut Bescheid, besonders über Wagner und Mozart. Immer wieder betonte er, was für eine große Ehre es ihnen bedeute, daß ihnen das Schleswiger Theater zur Verfügung gestellt worden sei — das beste, in dem sie bisher gespielt hätten. Sein Interesse für den Schleswiger Dom war so groß, daß wir seinen Wissensdurst kaum befriedigen konnten. . . Auch in London gebe es Halbstärke. Weil sie so gekleidet sind wie die Menschen z. Z. Eduard VII. — kurz Ted genannt —, heißen sie im Volksmund „Teddy boys“. Als sich nach der Vorstellung die Schleswiger Backfische um die Autogramme rissen, meinte mein Gast kopfschüttelnd: „those foolish teddy-girls!“ (diese närrischen Backfische!) Im übrigen fanden die jungen Damen, soweit unsere Gäste sie kennen-

lernten, lebhaften Anklang. Falls er einmal heiraten sollte, meinte mein Student, wolle er sich seine Frau aus Deutschland holen. . . . Bei normalem Bildungsgang ist der englische Schüler mit der Universität fertig, wenn wir das Abitur haben — mit 21 Jahren. Kennzeichnend für den englischen Charakter ist dabei auch, daß den Schülern weit mehr Rechte und Pflichten überlassen werden als uns. Ein „monitor“ — man könnte es mit „Vertrauensschüler“ übersetzen — darf auch bei entscheidenden Problemen mitbestimmen. Wenn bei Festlichkeiten Lehrer und Schüler auch gleichgestellt sind, so stellen die Lehrer bei Entscheidungen doch eine Autorität dar, der unwidersprochen gehorcht wird.

Günther B.

Kilburn Times May 10 '57

## ‘HAMLET’ BOYS BACK

The party of boys from Kilburn Grammar School who have been touring Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, performing „Hamlet“ in German schools, returned triumphant to Kilburn on Saturday.

„The tour went beyond all our expectations,” said producer Mr. Peter Wright, an English master at the school. He added: „The stages were not of the type we are used to, but we overcame all our difficulties by quick adaptation.”

On their way home from Germany, the boys stopped in Brussels where they performed part of the play for the Belgian Television. The next day, the Belgian viewers saw the play and a film of the boys touring Brussels.

Secretary of the school, Mrs. R. Chirgwin, who went on the trip as „mother and make-up artist,” told one of our reporters that the school has already had invitations to make similar tours in Germany and Belgium next year.



THE TRAGEDY OF  
**HAMLET**  
PRINCE OF DENMARK

PERFORMED BY THE BOYS OF KILBURN GRAMMAR SCHOOL,  
LONDON,

in SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN, GERMANY, . . . .

in KIEL	on	Wednesday,	24th April,
in NEUMINSTER	on	Thursday,	25th April,
in EUTIN	on	Friday,	26th April,
in RENDSBURG	on	Saturday,	27th April,
in SCHLESWIG	on	Monday,	29th April,
in FLENSBURG	on	Tuesday,	30th April,

and in BRUSSELS, BELGIUM,  
on Friday, 3rd May, 1957.



CHARACTERS  
in order of speaking

BERNARDO		.....	Maurice J. Burlem
FRANCISCO	Officers	.....	Howard L. Ripka
MARCELLUS		.....	William C. Read
HORATIO, friend to Hamlet		.....	Jeffrey Read
CLAUDIUS, King of Denmark		.....	Raymond Brody
POLONIUS, Lord Chamberlain		.....	Charles Sampson
LAERTES, son to Polonius		.....	Philip Southwood
HAMLET, son to the late, and nephew to the present King		.....	Graham Bell
GERTRUDE, Queen of Denmark and mother to Hamlet		.....	Richard Gee
GHOST of the late King Hamlet		.....	David J. Morgan
OPHELIA, daughter to Polonius		.....	Ronald P. Steinberg
REYNALDO		.....	David Fitzwilliam
ROSENCRANTZ	COURTIERS	.....	Michael B. Elster
GUILDENSTERN		.....	Michael B. Treadwell
1st Player (King)		.....	Howard L. Ripka
4th Player (Prologue)		.....	John G. Hawley
2nd Player (Queen)		.....	Keith S. Barber
3rd Player (Lucianus)		.....	Philip Southwood
FORTINBRAS		.....	Maurice Burlem
Captain to Fortinbras		.....	Howard L. Ripka
Gentleman		.....	John G. Hawley
1st Gravedigger		.....	David Fitzwilliam
2nd Gravedigger		.....	Graham E. M. Bill
A Priest		.....	David J. Morgan



This then was the tour company except for Roger Wilson who became ill on the eve of departure. But the tour almost never departed. Raymond Brody fell and broke his arm. Fortunately he was able to hold the plastered limb in a not too obtrusive way and the tour went on.

The tour performances lasted from 24<sup>th</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> April 1957 in Germany, with six performances in six different towns in one week., and a performance in Belgium on 3<sup>rd</sup> May – for which the school had to get special dispensation from the local council to allow the boys and staff to start the term late, can you imagine.

I am not going to write about the tour because I know John Hawley has written an article for the Newsletter and far better to read about it from someone who took part. The only other writing about this tour was a detailed report by Mr Wright in Kilburnian 138, which follows:

### LITTLE EYASES ABROAD

The uncertainties attached to the trip nearly daunted us: to take a school *Hamlet* to a foreign country and to give six performances in six different towns in not many more days seemed at times a foolish notion. Should we be able to revive the December production in time and with enough polish to present it to our audiences without blushing for its defects? How should we be able to pay for the transport of ourselves and our costumes and props? And who would be responsible for our keep during the tour? These and some other important questions had to be resolved before we could take the decision to go.

The idea of a tour abroad had been in my mind for some years: this year the choice of play, the enthusiasm of the cast to travel, and the Headmaster's contacts in Schleswig-Holstein, all seemed propitious enough, and we decided to risk it. Negotiations with the Kultusministerium of Schleswig-Holstein were opened in the early days of the New Year, and a general agreement on the scheme was quickly reached. The details took much longer to work out. In fact, when we left Victoria on Easter Monday we were by no means certain that the final arrangements would be satisfactory from our point of view: the last letter we had received had proposed, for example, that the performances should take place at eleven o'clock in the morning: were the audiences to go without their lunch, or were we expected to give a sort of pantomime version of *Hamlet*? Still, we knew that we were expected, and that whilst we were to be responsible for



mounting the production and getting ourselves there, the Germans would feed and house us and transport us inside Germany; and this relieved us of our main anxieties.

So off we went, twenty-nine boys, Mrs Chirgwin, Mr Callaghan and myself (there should have been thirty boys, but unfortunately R Wilson, of 2B, was a casualty at the last minute, and was unable to travel. He that played the King was also careless enough to fall downstairs two days before our departure, and spent the entire trip with his arm in plaster (which I suppose added a touch of mystery to the character). An unofficial member of the group was Leslie Venn, an Old Creightonian who had sent us many of our leading actors from Kensal Rise School, where he is Deputy Head: he chose to spend part of his holidays in this unorthodox way, and we were very glad to have him. He took entire charge of the packing and unpacking of costumes and props at each staging-point (I use the word in two senses) until he was forced to leave us in order to keep the beginning of term (we ourselves had been granted two days' extension by the Middlesex authorities, which was later increased by a day to allow us to give a performance in Brussels on our way home). He also gave considerable assistance to Mrs Chirgwin and Mr Callaghan in the arduous and always urgent business of make-up.

It would, I think, be tedious to give a day-by-day chronicle of the trip: indeed, at this stage many of the details have been forgotten; in any case a general perspective is probably of greater interest. We played in six towns, beginning at Kiel, which we reached after a twenty-four journey via Dover, Ostend and Cologne, and ending the German part of the tour at Flensburg, on the Danish border. We were taken from place to place by coach, and wherever we spent a night or more (it was never more than two in one town) we were given individual hospitality in the families of pupils or staff from the local schools. (In such conditions friendships are quickly made: I understand that some will be renewed during the summer holidays, either at home or away.)

The excellence of the arrangements for both repose and movement was conspicuous everywhere: indeed, it was the only constant factor in our conditions. Each new stage brought fresh problems, which had to be solved with the utmost rapidity, especially as the hour of performance had in most cases been advanced from eleven to ten o'clock in the morning! (Professionals shudder at the thought of playing "cold" like this, and with reason; but our actors

were apparently unaffected, and performed with surprising gusto.) In no case did the stage we were given resemble our own in the Creighton Hall in any important respect. Most of them were in school halls, but the absence of a “school play” tradition meant that they were not in themselves at all suited to a production of the character of our *Hamlet*. Two of them, for example, were appreciably smaller than ours at KGS, where already we felt seriously constricted in certain scenes; two others were rather larger than ours, but were designed as platforms for assembly, prize-givings and similar occasions, and not as stages for dramatic performances, and were consequently deficient in the normal stage exits and entrances, which had to be contrived by making detours through the audience and by similar devices. Then again, the lighting arrangements were invariably quite different from those on our own stage, and our electricians needed far more time to get acquainted with them than was ever available.

But everywhere the utmost efforts had been made by the schools – pupils and staff – to provide the nearest possible approach to the conditions we had been used to at home, details of which we had been sent in advance: platforms had been erected, thrones had been hired or borrowed (we had, in fact, taken our own, as we thought their provision might present problems), curtains had been rearranged, and in one case special lighting equipment had been made by the science department. In Kiel we were given a hall attached to a restaurant, which was almost like playing in a real theatre; and in Schleswig, whither a certain reputation had apparently preceded us, we actually *did* have the town theatre put at our disposal, a privilege of which we were very sensible. It was a joy to get the feel of a properly designed theatre, with none of the cramping and frustration caused by lack of space backstage and on stage, and inadequate dressing-rooms and make-up facilities, such as we experience every December at home! (Paradoxically, I think the actors gave their best performances in the less favourable conditions of some of the school stages, perhaps because these demanded more from them.) The lighting equipment made our new switchboard at KGS look like a child’s toy; unfortunately we had too little rehearsal time to make the best use of it, and even the limited effects we were able to produce had to be operated under the control of a professional technician, whose services the theatre kindly placed at our disposal. But the best feature of this stage, apart from its size, was, for us, the generous curved apron-stage, which carried the actors well forward into the auditorium, and gave them a sense of intimacy with the audience that a more conventional theatre would have denied them.

Not that it was otherwise in the school halls. All the technical problems of devising exits and entrances where there were none, of adapting movements to fit shape and size of stage (a real headache in the fencing scene: one set of curtains nearly got brought down on the heads of the duellers), of etherealising the Ghost without the aid of dimmers, seemed quite unimportant once the performances had been launched and contact with the audience established. This was unexpectedly easy to do, partly, I think, because the stages were *not* designed to erect a barrier between the people on them and the people in the body of the hall; this was specially true of the big open platforms at Eutin and Flensburg, whose freedom allowed continuous and uninhibited communication with all parts of the large audiences. But we also found the German audiences, about whose capacity to understand Elizabethan English we had had serious misgivings, astonishingly receptive: indeed, I think they were no more surprised by our performances than we were by theirs. True, many of them were either students or teachers of English, but even so three and a half hours in a foreign tongue is a great deal to listen to with attention and understanding; and they appeared to emerge with both unimpaired.

One almost permanent member of our audience – she missed only one performance – was Miss Davies, British Vice-Consul in Kiel, who had been our liaison with the German authorities in the first place. She came so often, she assured us, because she liked coming; but she also rendered us many a good service when we were too tired to cope with the many little problems that arose from time to time, and we are grateful to her for this and for the way in which her perfect German made the arrangement of important details so much easier than it would otherwise have been. I recall with particular gratitude her offer (gladly accepted) to drive back in her car from Flensburg to Schleswig, where the thrones had been carelessly left in the theatre; and her invaluable assistance in finding us accommodation on the train from Flensburg to Brussels.

We were of course sorry to leave Schleswig-Holstein, of which we had really no more than a swift and vivid glimpse between performances; here and there a rather longer look: at the huge canal locks at Kiel, or the remarkable railway viaduct at Rendaburg, and from Flensburg a hasty excursion into Denmark; but mostly it was the flat green lake-studded landscape familiar to our ancestors the Angles, who are supposed to have come from these parts, and whose ghostly echoes could be heard (however inaccurately) in the Plattdeutsch so reminiscent of Tyneside.



TO BRITISH CONSUL  
in BELGIUM

13th June, 1957.

Dear Sir,

I should like to thank you very much for your efficient help in letting the Belgian schools and their students know about the performance of "Hamlet" by the Kilburn Grammar School boys on May 2nd last, in the Atrium Theatre, Brussels.

The cast of the play and the teachers accompanying the party were very impressed with the enthusiasm and appreciation of their Belgian audience, and we do hope that your students were helped in their studies by our performance.

Yours sincerely,

HEAD MASTER

Monsieur Van den Borre,  
Directeur-General en  
Ministere de l'Instruction publique,  
Rue de la Loi, Bruxelles.

But we were eager to get to Brussels, where a performance in a small theatre had been arranged by a friend of Mrs Chirgwin's, Professor Jean de Herdt, a great Shakespeare enthusiast, who had taken immense trouble to collect for us an audience of students and senior school pupils, and to arrange hotel accommodation on terms that we could afford: he used his influence with the Belgian Ministry of Education for both purposes with excellent effect. He also gave us a most enjoyable trip round Brussels, himself enlightening us of points of interest in impeccable English – a “conducted tour” with a difference. An additional difference was that the tour was observed and recorded by a team from the headquarters of Brussels Television, who had also been present at the performance to film part of the nunnery scene: we enjoyed sitting in a local café in the evening and seeing ourselves on the screen during a sort of News Review in Flemish. We had been given to understand that the same film might find its way into a programme over here, but have heard nothing further.

And so home, and to the end of this skeleton account. I would like to take this opportunity of commending the little *eyases* for the admirable way in which they coped with all the difficulties that beset a touring company: they slid easily into every new situation, and no one, not even the youngest, appeared ruffled by the unexpected. Thanks, too, to Mrs Chirgwin and Mr Callaghan for their unremitting efforts throughout the tour: the appearance of the actors as regards both costume and make-up (yes, beards as well) owed a great debt to their deft touch.

The rest ought to be silence; but, as Hamlet said (and wisely was it said): “*Who maintains 'em?*” Unfortunately the answer to this is complicated. The position is briefly this: the parents of the boys who made up the company (in some cases the boys themselves, and not their parents) paid a sum which, it was estimated, would cover the cost of the return fare, hire of costumes, and insurance. Cost of hiring wigs and properties, and expenses involved in travelling, such as registration of luggage, would, we hoped, be covered by the money raised at the special benefit performance held at the school on 18<sup>th</sup> April. Unfortunately, there was more to be paid out than we had bargained for, although in Germany we had no worries about our keep. The hire of the costumes was increased because we stayed away an extra two days; and the break in Brussels involved extra cost in registering luggage. Again, we had had some costumes made by Miss Eve Sheppard, whose excellent work will, we hope, be of use to many generations of KGS actors. The *Hamlet* thrones that were specially made for us, too, will be of

inestimable value so long as there is a Shakespeare tradition at Kilburn. May I thank all those parents and others who responded so nobly to our initial appeal for funds and at the same time point out to others that this, our first venture if the kind, cost more than we had calculated? Even the five hundred marks so generously contributed by the German authorities, whose financial responsibility really ended at hospitality and transport, did not quite tide us over.

Finally, a word of thanks to the Headmaster, without whose contacts in Germany the trip would have been quite out of the question. He frequently, when negotiations seemed to be dragging or awkward, allowed me to talk him out of his doubts, and I hope he is as glad as I am that he did so. Perhaps, he will also consider favourably a similar undertaking next year.

**Mr P K Wright**

After the tour, Miss Edith Davies, the Cultural Attaché at the British Consulate in Kiel, wrote to Mr Wright:

“Thank you very much for coming. I do hope you think it was worthwhile. I KNOW it was. I was privileged to witness the enraptured faces of the young Germans who were your audience and for whom you have made this tremendous effort.

By your coming, you have infinitely helped – in the space of a week – the work I have been labouring at for many years. I am most grateful.”

There were articles in the local paper about the tour, and a very full review of the special performance. For the first time some of the national press was invited – The Times and Times Educational Supplement, in the hope that their coverage might give added publicity. But this was a mistake since despite some perceptive comments these critics were obviously not pleased having to review a school play, and one thought the tour already over.

I will end the story of *Hamlet* by quoting more letters written to Mr Wright and Rosemary after the performance on April 18<sup>th</sup>. I imagine very few people ever saw these letters. I have copies of them because when I was making the school play photo album Rosemary gave me the letters to put in it. But first I took them home and, these being the days before photocopying, my mother typed them all out for me.



They make a fine epilogue to *Hamlet* at KGS. One I have already quoted. Here, abridged, are the others.

From Miss G Blumenthal, English lecturer at Queen's College and Morley College:

"Dear Mrs Chirgwin, I can not tell you how excited and thrilled I was by your production of *Hamlet*. I cannot remember having ever been so moved by the character of Hamlet himself, or by the pathetic and lovely little Ophelia. I sincerely wish I could have brought my students to this beautifully spoken and intensely alive production. No praise is too high for the producer, and as for your young man who played Hamlet, suffice it to say here that I found his interpretation the most satisfying that I have ever witnessed on any stage in England."

From Don Woodman, Head of Portadown College, Northern Ireland:

"Dear Rosemary, Thank you for the magnificent show. I came away staggered by the brilliance of (a) the production itself and (b) of Hamlet himself. How delightful to see those easy movements lending life to soliloquy and dialogue. The duel scene was as good as anything done by professionals – it was superb. As to Hamlet – I can't find adjectives good enough for him. Starting at brilliant, I work up to speechlessness. And this is not flannel. Such poise, restraint and power, and such an apparently effortless mastery of the enormous part. It was a superb piece of craftsmanship. We return to the producer, because every boy understood his words and spoke with amazing accuracy and clarity."  
(NB: Don Woodman was a KGS Old Boy.)

From Bram Bootman, Producer:

"Dear Peter, I had more real theatrical enjoyment that night than for many a moon because of the whole hearted spirit of achievement that came across. Your young man gave a most intelligent and brilliantly thought out presentation of this role. Next to him I would place the King and the pathos of your little Ophelia I found quite heart rending. I am still wondering at the speed and ease with which the players scene and the duel scene came across on that small stage. You have every reason to be proud of your achievement."

The Kilburn Times review was very good. It ended:

“The fight between Hamlet and Laertes was brilliantly performed. I have seen nothing better. When it was over, the atmosphere of tragedy and desolation swept down from the body-strewn stage and over the breathless audience.”



I hope that these pages have brought back some memories and helped to convey to Old Boys of other years just what an effect *Hamlet* had, for those who took part in it and for those like myself who just revelled in the beauty and power of the production and the acting of Graham Bell. At the Centenary Dinner Old Boys looked at the photos I put on display and said things like: "*Hamlet* was great". And so it was.

Next time I will write about the last of the annual Shakespearean productions, and two very special new

## LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST

What could follow *Hamlet*? In dramatic terms only *Lear*, but was this a role that Graham Bell could take on? In terms of memorizing and sheer stamina there would be no problem. But playing an old man, especially with his ringing clear voice was a different matter. Trying to change his voice to a growl could well have harmed it. And it was less than six months since the tour of *Hamlet*, perhaps a bit soon to take on a production of *Lear*. In the event Mr Wright chose *Love's Labour's Lost*. At first there was a feeling of disappointment in that this did not seem to provide a powerful enough role for Graham.

The cast had three leading romantic men and three women. Add another four leading characters and you have ten leading roles to direct. Mr Wright with Mr Callaghan, working together, as on *Hamlet*, could have given us a production of great understanding and delicacy. Unfortunately here appeared a dark cloud. Mr Wright did not want Mr Callaghan to take part in the production. To this day, Mr Callaghan tells me, he knows no reason for ending what had been a most successful working partnership, as well as a friendship. I suspect that the usual director's dislike of anyone else's suggestions was the reason. Whatever, I am sure that had Mr Callaghan contributed to *Love's Labour's Lost* it would have given it the shine that some scenes occasionally lacked. Most depressing was that Mr Callaghan took no part in any further Shakespearean production for the rest of his time at KGS.

A few years before he died Vic told me what really happened. Mr Wright wanted to leave teaching and become a professional theatre producer. He asked Vic to join him as his assistant. Vic, with a large family and no capital to fall back on in such a precarious profession declined the offer. In any case, he told Mr Wright that if he was going to go into professional production it would be in his own right and not as somebody's assistant. Sadly, a year later, this was also to be the reason that Mr Wright did not support Vic as his successor as Head of English. As far as I know, Mr Wright never did become a professional producer.

The play was performed in December 1957, two matinees and three evening performances. For the first time for some years there was no double casting. The three Lords were Graham Bell, Peter Schuldenfrei and Stephen Walzer. The three Ladies, Ronald Steinberg, Brian Barton and Keith Barber. David Leigh was the King and Arnold Kosiner the Princess. Alan Ereira was only in his third year yet, as Don Armado, was already dominating the stage. The comic characters were taken by names who had played in the two previous tragedies. Raymond Brody played Holofernes, Brian Winston – Sir Nathaniel, Philip

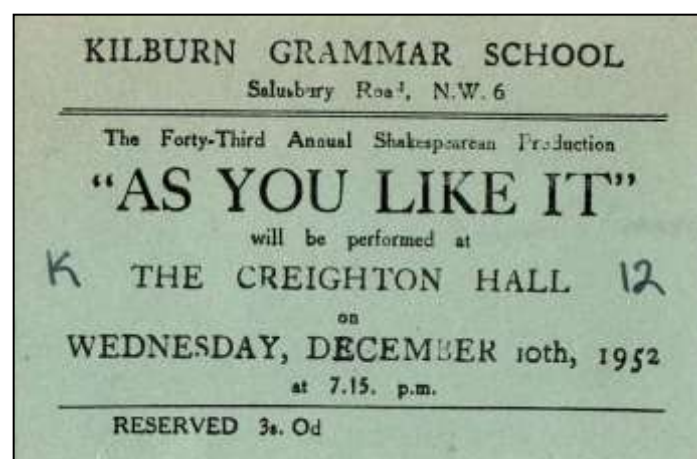


Southwood – Costard, and William Read – Dull. Two newcomers on the comical side were Stephen Wilson as Moth and R Willer as Jaquenette. Boyet was played by Christopher Bain, John Hawley was a Lord as was John Schuldenfrei, twin brother of Peter. Was this the first time twins appeared in a school play? Brian Gibbins was a forester. In the non-speaking roles there were R V Wilson from the *Hamlet* production, and Michael George, whose big moment was to come. The stage managers were T J P McMahon and G Cole, and the lighting was by Alan Maizels and Trevor Sutton. Properties were by Colin Mayers, and yet again Daniel Sperber was the prompter.

I think the play was a great success and Maurice Fireman's review in Kilburnian 140 was far too harsh and did not reflect that the production was very enjoyable. Yes, more time could have been given to the speeches and individual characterization of the Lords and Ladies, but they all looked good and moved around with ease on what, when all of them were together, could have been a very crowded stage.

In their final year, this was the last school play for Graham Bell, Raymond Brody and Philip Southwood. Their contributions to the school play and the school itself were immeasurable.

Lastly, mention must be made of Mr Minchin, who had been Business Manager – selling the tickets and looking after the money since 1953. I know he continued to do the tickets until 1959, and maybe after that as well.



A 10

KILBURN GRAMMAR SCHOOL  
SALISBURY RD. N.W.6.

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The Forty Fifth Annual Shakespearean Production

**"KING HENRY IV"**

PART II  
at the School, on  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY, 8th. 1955  
7 - 15 p.m. Reserved 2s 6d

KILBURN GRAMMAR SCHOOL  
SALISBURY ROAD, N.W.6

H 7

*The 46th Annual Shakespearean Production*

**"CORIOLANUS"**

*at the school in the*  
CREIGHTON HALL

on SATURDAY, 17th DECEMBER, 1955

7.15 p.m. Reserved 3/-

KILBURN GRAMMAR SCHOOL  
The Near Shavians in  
*ARMS AND THE MAN*  
*in the* CREIGHTON HALL *at the* SCHOOL

on  
FRIDAY JULY 13th 1956  
at 7.30. p.m.

Reserved 2s.6d Children 1s.6d. E.14

KILBURN GRAMMAR SCHOOL  
 C13 SALUSBURY Rd. N. W. 6  
 The Forty Seventh Annual Shakespearean Production  
**HAMLET**  
 at the school on  
**WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 12th. 1956**  
 7. p.m. Reserved 3s.—0d.

KILBURN GRAMMAR SCHOOL  
 SALUSBURY Rd. N.W.6  
 Benefit performance, in aid of German Tour, of  
**HAMLET**  
 To be held in the Creighton Hall at the school  
**THURSDAY 19th. APRIL 1957.**  
 Reserved 5s.—0d. 7. p.m.  
 H 13

F1 KILBURN GRAMMAR SCHOOL  
 SALUSBURY Rd. N.W.6  
 The 48th. Annual Shakespearean Production  
**LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST.**  
 To be held at the school on  
**WEDNESDAY DEC.11 th. 1957.**  
 Reserved 3/6. 7.15 p.m.



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 K I L B U R N   G R A M M A R   S C H O O L .  
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 \*\*\*\*\*  
 +        47TH        +  
 +        ANNUAL        +  
 +   SHAKESPEAREAN   +  
 +   PRODUCTION.   +  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 +        "HAMLET"        +  
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Dear Parent,

The ANNUAL SCHOOL PLAY will take place in the CREIGHTON HALL at the School on MONDAY, WEDNESDAY, FRIDAY and SATURDAY, 10TH, 12TH, 14TH, and 15TH DECEMBER at 7.0 p.m. sharp. This is the forty-seventh of our School Shakespearean performances and the first production of "Hamlet" since 1923, so we are anxious to see the same enthusiastic audiences.

Tickets are available at 3s/- and 2s/- (all seats numbered and reserved). Young people of school age may have tickets at the reduced rates of 2s/- and 1s/6d. All applications for tickets should be made direct to Mr.A.Minchin, who will be selling tickets from Monday, November 26th onwards, between 1.20 and 1.45 p.m., and at 4 p.m. in ROOM 2.

As an acknowledgement of this letter, will you kindly fill in the slip at the bottom.

Yours sincerely,

D.F.Williams.

HEAD MASTER.

12.11.56.

The performances were not the end of the production. I do not have the exact dates, but either during the performance week or a day or so after, a BBC television unit came to the school. The BBC Schools Department was making a programme in a series about English drama, and they were going to film a scene from our play. For those of us who did not know about television filming, which I think was everybody, there were some surprises. They used only a third of the stage, including an alcove, and a stage depth of only a few feet. A full day's shooting gave about two minutes of programmable film, which was the norm for those days. There were cameras and trolleys and floodlights and microphone booms and control desks – the hall became a veritable studio. The scene chosen was a mock play, involving as it did most of the lead characters and some comedy. It was done as a rehearsal, with Mr Wright on-stage and there was no costume or make-up.

At the same time, or maybe on an earlier day, a recording was made by the BBC Radio German Service as a follow up to the German tour of *Hamlet*.

The TV programme went out at 2.05 pm on January 17<sup>th</sup> 1958, under the programme title of *Characters in Action*. Someone provided a television – the caretaker? – and the cast and others including myself sat round it in the hall to watch our play on telly. We were surprised at how little was shown, and how ineffective it looked compared with the real thing, but in what was a short programme covering several aspects of the theme, the item was good. I wonder if it still exists in the BBC's archives.

Not only was that the end of *Love's Labour's Lost*, it was also the end of Mr Wright's era of school play production, as he was joining the great 1958 exodus from KGS. Teachers, whose pay was pitiful, suddenly realised they would earn unheard of riches in the new comprehensive schools with their thousands of pupils, or in Higher Education, and they were away. Others were retiring.

Mr Wright came to KGS in 1950 and produced eight plays. He had the ability to make Shakespeare on the stage immediate and exciting. He had the fortune to have superb players, some of whom would become professional actors, and the knack to spot them and to get the best from them. He worked everybody hard and left nothing to last minute inspiration. "Bad Dress Rehearsal, Bad Performance" he would boom out from the hall to anyone who suggested a particular performance would be "alright on the night". His productions were not just another play but a focal point of the year. Taking part in them, in roles big or small, or as a technician, created a special camaraderie.

He was leaving on a peak of success and we were of course immensely sorry to lose him. How would he fare producing plays in his new school – Holloway Comprehensive? We soon had a chance to see. Within only a few months of arriving there Mr Wright produces a staff play – *The Government Inspector*. There was no stage to speak of, all movement had to be in a line. Yet it was very funny, the farce being done with split second timing, and it seemed to us an incredible achievement to get this out of people he hardly knew.

He was always friendly but at the same time maintained the teacher-pupil relationship, even as a producer, and once with unfortunate results, which I will relate later. He was known as “Lefty”, and there was always a mystery as to how true this was. It was in fact very true, but he never let a hint of dogma intrude into his productions. If only that were true of theatre today. There was also a rumour that he had been secret agent in Europe in the war but no-one ever dared to ask him. I looked after the school’s Properties collection, and in a cupboard there was a large map of the Balkans – I used it for *Arms and the Man*. But it was no ordinary paper or canvas map. It was a silk map that folded into a minute space. Just like the Special Operations agents used.

The next school play was not until March 1959. It was *Twelfth Night* and was produced by a new member of staff, Mr Kerry. Being a mixture of romantic and comical, it seemed too similar to *Love’s Labour’s Lost* – contrast would have been preferable. We expected the production to be in a different category from Mr Wright’s productions and this was indeed so. The backcloth was more or less as it was for *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, only the river had changed course. Some of the heavy old brown drapes found their way back. There was a mixture of experienced players, and new ones taking on parts for the first time. David Leigh played the Duke and Ronald Steinberg his third female role, Viola. It was a pity to see experienced players such as these standing around with their arms folded or swinging by their sides. Alan Ereira was Malvolio. He seemed to be developing a style of his own and once again dominated his scenes. Stephen Wilson played Olivia.

The notable newcomers were Michael George as Aguecheek and B Kern as Belch. They carried the play. This was Mick George’s only role, as he was in his final year, and it was a most engaging piece of character playing. The disaster came with the casting of Feste. Keith Barber had made a fine Player Queen in *Hamlet*. He looked right as Feste, but unfortunately he could not sing, utter even one note in any way, and that he was given this role and not another was no good for the play and unfair on Keith. If I remember correctly in the end somebody recorded the song on tape and the recording was played over the sound system. This would not have been convincing with the best of apparatus, let alone the primitive system that was there. A great pity. Tragically, Keith died a year or so later in a

motorbike accident. (Strangely, at about the same time, Alan Howlett, who left in 1959, also died in a motorbike accident.).

Of the smaller parts, Peter Packham played the Captain. The stage manager was Brian Winston, the lighting was by Daniel Gruneberg. John Rickard, Michael Fasham and Colin Mayers. Properties were by A Kelman and the prompter was Gabriel Chanan.

In chronological order the next production on stage was Gabriel's play, but for the sake of continuity I will go straight to the last Shakespeare production. That it was to be the last was announced by the Head at the Speech Day in November. It was going to be the fiftieth production and it was decided, by who we never knew, that was enough.

*Henry IV Part 1* was performed in December 1959. I did not see this production, which was a pity if only because I missed Ronald Steinberg's first male role – Poins. This was Ronnie's fourth play, as it was for David Leigh, who played Hotspur. Alan Ereira was Worcester and Stephen Walzer King Henry. Other players were Arnold Kosiner as Henry and M Willis as John. Amongst newcomers R Powell played Blunt.

What was very interesting was the coming together of the generations. David Leigh's younger brother played Lady Percy, so the two brothers played husband and wife, an event which gained publicity in the local paper with a photo of them both. This may have been the first time that brothers both took leading parts in the same production. Jack Faigenblum played Falstaff. He was the younger brother of Maurice Faigenblum who was such a memorable Falstaff in 1955. Sadly, Jack died a few years ago.

I will briefly mention the last school plays, for the sake of completion, with the use of the History. The next play, in 1961, was *Oedipus Rex*, with Alan Ereira still going strong as the King. I was glad I returned to see this (partially I think because Brian Winston's younger brother Geoffry was doing properties). Mr Kerry had relinquished play productions and *Oedipus* was produced by Mr Barry Fell. In 1962 there were two productions – *An Enemy of the People* and then – surprise – *Henry V*. The last four productions were *The Government Inspector*, *Henry IV part II*, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* and *Cymbeline*. That was 1966, and would appear to be the last play of the Kilburn Grammar School. I hope someone will write about these last few years in detail.



KILBURN GRAMMAR SCHOOL

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*Forty-Eighth Annual  
Shakespearian Production  
1957*

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**‘ LOVE’S  
LABOUR’S  
LOST ’**

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**DECEMBER 10th and 12th,  
at 2.15 p.m.**

**DECEMBER 11th, 12th and 14th,  
at 7.15 p.m.**

## CHARACTERS

<b>Ferdinand</b> , King of Navarre .....	D. LEIGH
<b>Berowne</b> .....	G. S. BELL
<b>Longaville</b> .....	S. D. WALZER
<b>Dumain</b> .....	P. SCHULDENFREI
<b>Dull</b> , a Constable .....	W. C. T. READ
<b>Costard</b> , a Clown .....	P. H. SOUTHWOOD
<b>Don Adriano De Armado</b> , a braggart .....	A. EREIRA
<b>Moth</b> , a boy, page to Armado .....	S. R. WILSON
<b>Jaquenetta</b> , a country wench .....	R. M. WILLER
<b>The Princess of France</b> .....	A. H. KOSINER
<b>Rosaline</b> .....	R. P. STEINBERG
<b>Maria</b> .....	B. D. BARTON
<b>Katharine</b> .....	K. S. BARBER
<b>Boyet</b> , a Lord attending on the Princess .....	C. N. BAIN
<b>Another Lord</b> .....	J. G. HAWLEY
<b>A Forester</b> .....	B. GIBBINS
<b>Sir Nathaniel</b> , a Curate .....	B. N. WINSTON
<b>Holofernes</b> , a PEDANT .....	R. BRODY
<b>Marcade</b> , a lord attending on the Princess ...	J. SCHULDENFREI
<b>Lords, Musicians, Pages, Villagers:</b>	
P. H. George, L. J. Keen, R. J. Harman, R. V. Wilson,	
R. J. S. Keylock, A. P. Duke, W. D. Evans, D. B. Jones,	
R. J. Cowell, M. J. George.	

**The action of the play takes place in the park  
of the King of Navarre's palace.**

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There will be one interval of fifteen minutes  
before the last Act.

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**The Play** produced by Mr. P. K. Wright.

**The Set** designed and executed by Mr. R. Whitmore.

**Stage Manager:** T. J. P. McMahon, assisted by G. I. E. Cole  
(under the direction of Mr. D. J. Robinson).

**Production Manager:** Mr. D. C. Measham.

**Lighting** by A. R. Maizels and T. J. Sutton  
(under the direction of Mr. A. James).

**Properties:** C. D. Mayers.

**Music** under the direction of Mr. D. Merlyn-Smith.

**Sound Effects:** A. D. Kelman.

**Prompter:** D. Sperber.

**Call-Boys:** A. E. E. Judge and J. P. Mans.

**Make-up** by Mrs. Chirgwin and Mr. R. Whitmore.

**Business Manager:** Mr. A. E. Minchin.

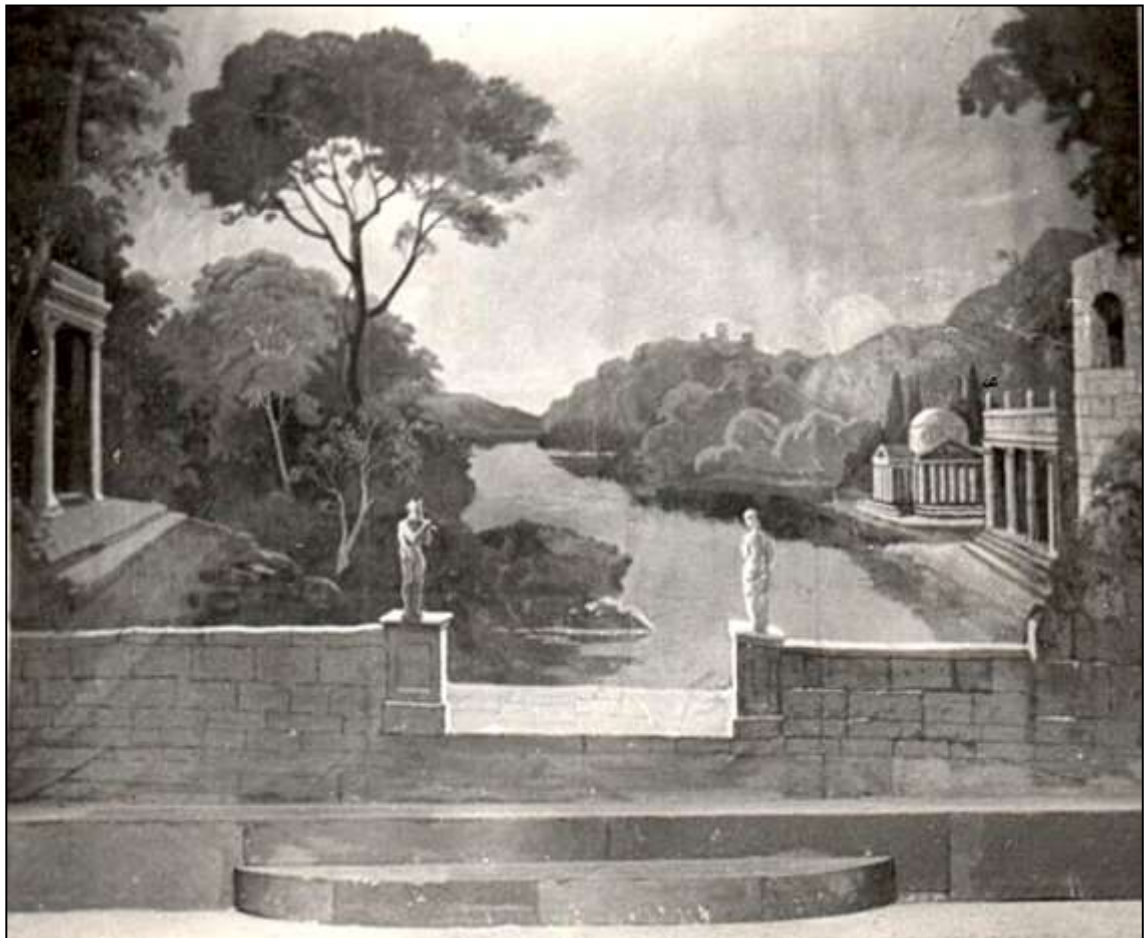
**Costumes** supplied by the London Federation of Boys' Clubs  
and from our own wardrobe. Wigs by "Bert."

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SMOKING IS NOT PERMITTED IN THE AUDITORIUM







**Mr Whitmore's set**



**Left: Stephen Walzer    Second from Left: J Schuldenfrei**



**D Leigh, C Bain, D Barton, A Kosiner, K Barber, R Steinberg**





**At the back: William Read**



**A Ereira, R Brody, B Winston, S Wilson**







A Ereira, R Willer, P Southwood, W C T Read







**S Wilson and A Ereira**







KILBURN TIMES

## BOYS WERE GIRLS

### Shakespeare at Kilburn G.S.

THE labour was certainly not lost on Kilburn Grammar School's 48th annual Shakespearean production, "Love's Labour's Lost." Not the most popular of Shakespeare's comedies, this presentation succeeded by its polish and smooth flow.

Fine characterisations were many, not least those by younger pupils charged with proving that while boys will generally be boys they can on occasion be girls.

Among the "female" players, R. P. Steinberg as Rosaline, waiting on the Princess of France, was especially convincing in voice and manner. Playing opposite him—or her—G. S. Bell, as Berowne, attending the King of Navarre, gave a masterly performance.

#### BRIGHT COSTUMES

Noteworthy, too, was the sustained buffoonery of P. H. Southwood, as Costard, a clown.

Bright costumes, many supplied by the London Federation of Boys' Clubs—added spectacle to the qualities of good voice and diction.

Mr. P. K. Wright produced the play. The fifth and final performance is being given tomorrow (Saturday) evening.

Cast: D. Leigh, G. S. Bell, S. D. Walzer, P. Schuldenfrei, W. C. T. Read, P. H. Southwood, A. Ereira, S. R. Wilson, R. M. Willer, A. H. Kosiner, R. P. Steinberg, B. D. Barton, K. S. Barber, C. N. Bain, J. G. Hawley, B. Gibbins, B. N. Whiston, R. Brody, J. Schuldenfrei, P. H. George, L. J. Keen, R. J. Harman, R. V. Wilson, R. J. S. Keylock, A. P. Duke, W. D. Evans, D. B. Jones, R. J. Cowell, M. J. George.

RADIO TIMES January 10, 1958

### 2.5 FOR THE SCHOOLS

Michael MacOwan

introduces

#### Characters in Action

A series of stories  
from English drama

Acting Shakespeare can delight all nations, ages, and talents. In this programme students of the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art and boys of Kilburn Grammar School are seen at work on Shakespeare productions, and an extract from the Japanese film version of *Macbeth* is shown. A short excerpt is also included from each of the programmes that are to be seen later in the series.

Film editor, Barry Toovey

Produced by RONALD EYES

WILLESDEN CHRONICLE

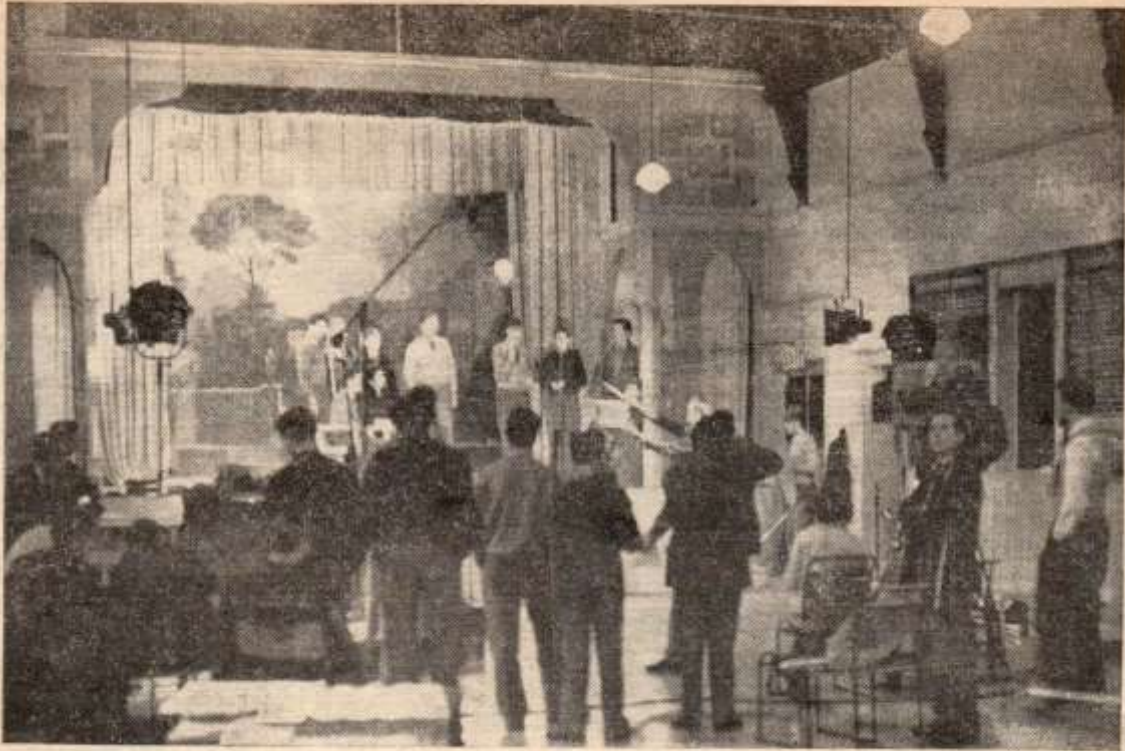
### School Play filmed

A B.B.C. television film unit was at Kilburn Grammar School all day last week, filming a "rehearsal" of the school play, "Love's Labours Lost." The play was produced the previous week, but the film of the mock rehearsal will be used in a school's educational programme on January 17 next year.

A recording had been made by the B.B.C. German service during one of the productions, and last year the school took their production of "Hamlet" on tour in Germany.



## School play for television



S.B.C. cameramen, in Croughton Hall, Kilburn Grammar School, making a film for TV of a rehearsal of the school play, "Love's Labour Lost." The film will be shown on Schools' TV. Staff Photograph No. 3009

## K.G.S. SHAKESPEARE AGAIN



Staff Photograph 291  
They might look like girls because they HAD to look like girls for the parts they took in the school play. They are all boys—Kilburn Grammar School students. (Left to right): Peter Vog (14), Arnold Kosinier (14), Ronnie Steinberg (13) and Brian Barton (15).

## VISITS TO PLAYS

I want to recall some other activities which were very much part of drama at KGS. First and foremost were the trips to Stratford-upon-Avon. These were not specifically KGS trips - far from it. Someone somewhere had the idea to hire a train, with as many carriages as a steam engine could pull, fill it to capacity with school pupils from all over London, and arrange a direct journey to Stratford (a change was the norm). This trainload of boys and girls swept all before them as they engulfed the town centre. There were a few hours to spare before the matinee, and on one trip I remember in particular, a wonderful summer's day, several of us hired a boat and rowed up and down the river with not a care in the world. After the play, *Love's Labour's Lost*, the train journey home became a scene ranging from wonderful good fun to a veritable orgy. If asked to name some of my most treasured memories of KGS, this trip would be one of them.

The plays were good too, Olivier and Vivien Leigh in *Macbeth* in 1955. The next year was *Love's Labour's Lost*, with Alan Badel, Geraldine McEwan, Harry Andrews, Prunella Scales. In 1957 we went to see *The Tempest* with Gielgud. I did not go in 1958 – perhaps there wasn't a trip. My last visit was in 1959 to *King Lear* with Charles Laughton, Albert Finney, Ian Holm, Robert Hardy, and a young Diana Rigg as a servant. The following year the visit was to see *Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

There were visits to school matinees at The Old Vic – *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Barbara Jefford and Keith Michell in *Anthony and Cleopatra*, and *The Way of the World* and *The Country Wife* in the West End. But far more important were the visits 1957-1960 to the Vanbrugh Theatre, which was opposite Senate House. This little theatre (now rebuilt) belongs to RADA and is where the students perform. The tickets were obtained by the Dramatic Society, and Mr Callaghan always came with us.

The productions were tremendous, above all the first one I saw – *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. This was the first time I had seen a play by Brecht, and I was bowled over by this totally new world of theatre. Natella was played by Sian Phillips, and she is still the best Hedda Gabler I have seen when we went to that play later on. The other plays I saw at the Vanbrugh were Brecht's *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, and *The Three Sisters*. The latter however was eclipsed by the Moscow Arts Theatre when they came to London with their production which we saw at the old Sadler's Wells theatre in 1958. This too was a revelation, as it showed us that Chekov was full of energy and farce, not what we had expected.

I have written about these visits in detail because they gave us an opportunity to see plays and actors we may never have gone to see by ourselves, and so set the mould for our own



theatre-going in the future, a process which only recently the Director of The National Theatre said was a thing of the past. Young people are not becoming involved with theatre-going or concert-going, with the possible consequence that the Arts could disappear in a decade or so. (I wrote this in 2000 since when the National Theatre has led the way in encouraging young people to go to the theatre.) Our school served us well.

Indeed, in 1959 a Sixth form Society was formed, and together with old boys and some girls from BKHS there were many visits to the theatre, not on school tickets but paying the full price. The Kilburnian notes visits to *Brouhaha*, *Irma la Douce*, *West Side Story*, and *The Long, the Short and the Tall*, *The Lily White Boys*, and *The Hostage*, all of them leading and innovative productions of their time.

I particularly remember a visit to *Roots* in the West End. The theatre was almost empty, and we were transferred from the gallery to the front row of the Dress Circle! It seemed as though Joan Plowright was talking just to us ("Us" included David Ryden, Brian Proctor, Chris Bain, and Daniel Gruneberg.)

After the success of *Hamlet* the Dramatic Society, which had disappeared in previous years, was revived. There was also an attempt to revive the Film Society by joining the two together, and a programme of play readings and films was set out for 1957-58.

The play readings took place after school on Friday evenings. At first we sat round the table on the stage in the hall, but when this became too cold in the winter, John the caretaker allowed us to sit in the Head's study, around the dying embers of the coal fire. We were even allowed to use two pieces of coal, which we delicately turned through the evening. The plays we read included *The Doll's House*, *Watch on the Rhine* (Hellman), *Winter's Journey* (Odets), *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and Fry's *Venus Observed* and *The Lady's Not for Burning*. Mr Callaghan was always with us, Graham Bell and Raymond Brody too. I remember Jeff Barnes used to come along. Rosemary took a role more than once, and Sheila Williams, the new RAM student, also sat in with us. It was a shame that more people did not come to these readings, which provided an opportunity to discover plays and have a go at reading parts. They also provided highly enjoyable evenings with many a good laugh.

In 1959, the Dramatic Society separated from Film, continuing successfully with play readings and theatre visits. In Kilburnian 147 Summer 1960 David Leigh wrote that the Society had won second prize in a national competition run by the Reynold's Newspaper. The entry was a fifteen minute tape recording of an extract from *She Stoops to Conquer*. This prize was worth £20, no mean sum in those days. He wrote that some of the money was spent going to see *The Caretaker* and *Rhinoceros*.

The Film Society had begun very successfully in late 1956 with a showing of *Children of Hiroshima*. There had been no showings since that time and we hoped the new programme of classics for 1957-58 would prove attractive, but this was not the case, and the season had to be abandoned. The end of the fifties was one of the most exciting for new films, especially from abroad – Sweden, Poland, Japan. There seemed a lot of people with a love of film now, and encouraged as ever by Mr Callaghan, Brian Winston, Gabriel Chanan and myself, tried one last time to revive the Film Society as a joint venture with BKHS. We had access to one of the world's greatest film distribution companies, Contemporary Films, which was owned by Brian Winston's uncle. This gentleman had the incredible foresight to foster our interest in film by letting us have copies for little or no cost. It was quite an experience going up to the Soho office and walking away with three or four reel tins of some great classic under our arms.

The first screening was in the autumn term of 1959 – *Ashes and Diamonds*. It took place in the girls' school as our projector had broken down, though I think that may have been a ruse to get round another hall hire problem. This time the society was successful, and a tremendous new season of films was planned by J Whelan who took over. These were all shown over the year, and another equally exciting season was planned for 1960-61. That programme was presented for a subscription membership, and was incredibly good value- 7/6d for nine shows over the year. Screenings were opened to old boys and friends. I believe the Film Society continued to be successful. It certainly exerted a strong influence, because I see that the name of the last Head Boy in 1968 was D W Griffith.

A mention of Speech Day here. Every year the Hicks Bolton Shakespeare Prize was presented to the leading players in the previous play. (Mr Hick Bolton had been a Chair of the Governors in years past.) I won't name the individual recipients as all the leading players received a prize one year or another, though I must note that in 1954 the Prize included Derek Sampson as stage manager. Usually there were two to four recipients, but after *Henry IV part II* there were fourteen.

The speakers at Speech Day were normally worthies of education, but the fifties saw two exceptions. In 1954 we had the writer Nigel Balchin, and in 1956 the actor Bernard Miles. For the younger generation I should explain that Bernard Miles was one of the comedy turns that my generation grew up with, on the radio of course. His Devonset farmer would be on one variety show or another at least once a week. Then around 1960 he built the Mermaid Theatre by the Thames, and for years its productions, often with himself, were some of the best to be seen. Seeing him on the school stage was quite something.

KILBURN GRAMMAR SCHOOL

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*Forty-Ninth Annual  
Shakespearean Production  
1959*

# “Twelfth Night”

**MARCH 10th and 12th,  
at 2.15 p.m.**

**MARCH 11th, 12th and 14th,  
at 7.15 p.m.**



## CHARACTERS

in order of speaking

<b>Orsino</b> , Duke of Illyria .....	D. LEIGH
<b>Curio</b> .....	} gentlemen attending on the Duke { D. A. CLARKE
<b>Valentine</b> .....	
<b>Viola</b> .....	R. P. STEINBERG
<b>A Sea Captain</b> , friend to Viola .....	<del>J. BERGER</del> P. F. PACKHAM
<b>Sir Toby Belch</b> , uncle to Olivia .....	B. E. KERN
<b>Maria</b> , Olivia's gentlewoman .....	M. F. WILLIS
<b>Sir Andrew Aguecheek</b> , suitor to Olivia .....	M. J. GEORGE
<b>Feste</b> , a clown, servant to Olivia .....	K. S. BARBER
<b>Olivia</b> .....	S. R. WILSON
<b>Malvolio</b> , steward to Olivia .....	A. EREIRA
<b>Antonio</b> .....	R. J. COWELL
<b>Sebastian</b> , brother to Viola .....	A. L. HARRIS
<b>Fabian</b> , servant to Olivia .....	J. P. BEEDHAM
<b>First Officer</b> .....	T. R. EILFIELD
<b>Second Officer</b> .....	P. F. PACKHAM
<b>A Priest</b> .....	R. J. POWELL

### Gentlemen, Musicians, Seamen, Servants:

A. D. Miller, P. H. Jay, P. N. Marshall, P. J. Ansorge,  
D. N. Robins, A. E. Judge, R. A. Barnes, D. E. Blumenfeld,  
G. C. King, C. W. Prockter, D. J. Sklan, P. I. Leigh.

The scene is Illyria. The Duke Orsino is in love with the Lady Olivia, who rejects him. Viola, rescued from a shipwreck in which she believes her twin brother was drowned, enters the Duke's service disguised as a youth. She is sent to woo Olivia on Orsino's behalf and Olivia falls in love with her. The arrival of the twin brother, Sebastian, adds to these romantic complications the confusions of mistaken identity. Meanwhile Sir Toby Belch and Maria plot the gulling of Malvolio, Olivia's austere and aspiring steward, by means of a forged letter. . . .

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THERE WILL BE ONE INTERVAL OF FIFTEEN MINUTES

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**The Play** produced by Mr. J. E. Kerry.

**The Set** designed and executed by Mr. R. Whitmore  
assisted by Mr. B. H. Turner.

**Production Manager:** Mr. B. Fell.

**Stage Manager:** B. N. Winston.

**Lighting** by D. S. Gruneberg, J. F. Rickard, M. J. Fasham and  
C. D. Mayers (under the direction of Mr. A. James).

**Properties:** A. D. Kelman, A. E. Beagley and P. J. Hobbs.

**Music** arranged and directed by Mr. D. Merlyn-Smith.

**Sound Effects and Recordings:** A. C. Wills.

**Prompter:** G. Chanan.

**Call Boys:** D. M. Stern and D. B. Wolfson.

**Make-up** by Mrs. Chirgwin and Mr. R. Whitmore.

**Business Manager:** Mr. A. E. Minchin.

**Costumes** supplied by Aubrey Samuels and from  
own wardrobe. Wigs by "Bert."

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SMOKING IS NOT PERMITTED IN THE AUDITORIUM





**Ronald Steinberg as Viola**



**Alan Ereira as Malvolio**





David Leigh as the Duke



**B Kern as Belch**





David Leigh and Ronald Steinberg





**Far left: Keith Barber as Feste    Seated: Stephen Wilson as Olivia**



**Far left: Michael George as Aguecheek**

KILBURN GRAMMAR SCHOOL

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*Fiftieth Annual*  
*Shakespearean Production*  
1959

# HENRY IV

(PART ONE)

**DECEMBER 7th, 8th and 10th,  
at 2.15 p.m.**

**DECEMBER 9th, 10th and 12th,  
at 7.15 p.m.**

## KING HENRY IV

(Part One)

CAST in order of appearance

King Henry IV .....	S. D. WALZER
Prince John of Lancaster, son to the King .....	M. F. WILLIS
Earl of Westmoreland .....	D. M. MOONT
Sir Walter Blunt .....	R. J. POWELL
Henry, Prince of Wales .....	A. H. KOSINER
Sir John Falstaff .....	J. M. FAIGENBLUM
Poins .....	R. P. STEINBERG
Earl of Worcester .....	A. EREIRA
Earl of Northumberland .....	D. B. WOLFSON
Henry Percy, surnamed Hotspur, .....	D. LEIGH
son to Northumberland	
Bardolph .....	R. M. JONES
Gadshill .....	G. S. PEARL
Peto .....	D. J. SKLAN
First Traveller .....	P. H. JAY
Second Traveller .....	S. SOLOMONS
Lady Percy, wife to Hotspur .....	P. I. LEIGH
Messenger .....	P. J. ANSORGE
Francis, a drawer .....	P. E. GOUGH
Vintner .....	D. N. ROBINS
Mistress Quickly, hostess of a tavern in Eastcheap ...	D. N. STERN
Sheriff .....	H. W. LINDERMAN
Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March .....	J. F. BARNETT
Owen Glendower .....	T. O. BROWN
Lady Mortimer, his daughter, .....	T. W. RICHARDS
wife to Mortimer	
Earl of Douglas .....	M. J. LEITCH
Sir Richard Vernon .....	B. P. BURFORD
Lords, Citizens, Drawers, Soldiers, Servants:	
C. W. Prockter, R. E. Anson, J. L. Eckstein, M. A. Litman,	
M. L. Nussbaum, T. A. Smith, G. G. Greenaway, D. C.	
Gladwin, R. Barnes.	



The Scene: England in the year 1403. It is four years since Henry IV became King of England by deposing his cousin, Richard II. The men who helped him to the throne, the Earl of Worcester, and the Earl of Northumberland and his son, Harry Percy, are now in conflict with him. Faced with these troubles, the King looks in vain for support from his eldest son. The Prince of Wales apparently prefers pint-pots to politics, and the company of Sir John Falstaff to the council of ministers.

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THERE WILL BE ONE INTERVAL OF FIFTEEN MINUTES

---

**The Play** produced by Mr. J. E. Kerry  
Assisted by Mr. A. B. Fell

**The Set** designed and executed by Mr. R. Whitmore  
Assisted by R. D. Siskin and G. C. King

**Stage Managers:** B. N. Winston, S. G. Barrett and L. Keen

**Lighting** by C. D. Mayers, P. J. Hobbs, M. R. Wilson, B. Coull and  
S. H. Grummitt (under the direction of Mr. A. James)

**Properties:** D. A. Grant, M. J. Cook and A. R. Grinham

**Wardrobe:** A. D. Kelman, B. A. Fireman and J. F. Moont

**Music** arranged and directed by Mr. D. Merlyn-Smith

**Sound Effects and Recordings:**  
E. T. Ryan, B. D. Barton and A. Enfield

**Prompter:** M. E. Green

**Call Boys:** A. Phillippo and M. L. Nussbaum

**Stage Crew:** R. J. Batt, R. J. Hunt, R. G. Lonney,  
M. M. Jefford and A. P. Janering

**Make-up** by Mrs. Chirgwin, Mr. R. Whitmore, Mr. B. H. Turner  
and Mr. R. K. Hands

**Business Manager:** Mr. A. E. Minchin

**Costumes** supplied by Aubrey Samuels, Robert White Ltd.,  
and from own wardrobe. Wigs by "Bert."

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SMOKING IS NOT PERMITTED IN THE AUDITORIUM









## GABRIEL CHANAN'S PLAYS

In Spring 1959 Gabriel Chanan started to write a play, originally as an entry for an award. As it took shape Mr Callaghan saw that it would be very effective on stage and by the summer term it was ready. It was called *In the Looking Glass*. Not very long, it had a running time of about an hour. Of course we wanted an audience, and the Head agreed to a matinee near the end of term. The cast was for four young men and three young women. Mr Callaghan approached BKHS and asked if there were three girls who would care to be in the play. Auditions were not on, we would take who volunteered. And so one fine day in June three girls appeared at the far end doorway of the hall. And they were a producer's dream. Instantly we could see each one fitted one of the parts to perfection.

They were Anna Pearson, who played the leading role of Ellen, Carol Silver who played the part called Woman, and Gloria Ellery who was the Waitress. Then came a problem. Anne and Carol learned their lines in days. Gloria did not want to have a speaking part – she had only come to be with her friend Anne. But her twinkling mischievous eye, her stance and her demeanour were perfect for the part. Mr Callaghan persuaded her to persevere. The part was not a big one but the short scene held some of the best writing. He coached her, not line by line but word by word and syllable by syllable and in the end she got it.

The leading male role, called Alan, was played by Richard Gee. The roles of First Man and Second Man were played by Jeffrey Reed and Stuart Elgrod, and the role of the Modern Type was played by David Ryden. Richard and Jeffrey had not been in a play since *Hamlet*, and it was good to have them back on stage again. Stuart and David had never been in a play before.

*In the Looking Glass* is set in modern times ie the end of the fifties. Briefly, Alan is a young artist suffering from all he needs to express but unsure of what artistic form he should adopt. Ellen is his girlfriend who is very sympathetic but does not understand his dilemma. Out of the audience come the two Men and the Woman, who are the personification of middle class reaction and comment throughout on the artist's words. The Waitress appears in a moment of fantasy.

It was beautifully written in Gabby's very individual style, which his many prose and poetry pieces in Kilburnians illustrate. Mr Callaghan started to produce the play and soon decided that passages of music should be played from time to time to add to the stage effect. This transformed the whole play, and suddenly we knew we had something special. To play the music we had Frank Usher on the piano and John (Jack) Schuldenfrei on the accordion.

They had that wonderful ability to play anything by ear, and the choice of songs was wideranging. For the theme of the play we had the tune from the film *Touchez pas le Grisbi*. Others were *Hushabye*, *You're the Cream in my Coffee*, *Buddy Can You Spare a Dime*, *Stardust*, *Frankie and Johnny*, and several more. Remember all this was fifteen years or so before *Pennies from Heaven*.

Brian Winston was the stage manager and Michael Fasham and John Rickard did the lighting. As rehearsals continued it became increasingly important to us that we should have an evening performance for our friends. The Head would not agree to this, but Rosemary came to the rescue. She had already sent to the local council office a list of dates booking the hall for evening rehearsals. She phoned the office and told them that we had forgotten one date. Since they had no idea when the matinee was, they agreed to our having the hall for "rehearsal" the evening after the matinee performance.

And so on 21<sup>st</sup> July 1969 *In the Looking Glass* was performed. The matinee was for an audience of senior pupils from our school and BKHS. It was preceded by a short concert of which I can remember no details, and there was a gym display at the same time. Never mind, we had our audience, and the play went splendidly. To see a modern play expressing current concerns and attitudes on the school stage was an achievement in itself, and as far as I know it was the first play written by a pupil to be performed at KGS, and the first KGS stage production to cast girls from BKHS. The review in *Kilburnian* 145 records "Although the theme of the play was rather intellectual ..... it received a loud ovation at the end of the performance."

We set ourselves up for the evening. We could not openly advertise the evening performance since officially it was not happening. But we had contacted many many old boys and friends, and likewise in the girls school, and hoped we might get a few dozen people turning up. Instead we had an audience of about a hundred. That in itself gave the evening a *frisson* before the play started.

Richard Gee as Alan spoke each line to give full meaning to every word. Dressed in jeans and pullover and with his smart hairstyle, he presented the exact picture of a young man with artistic yearnings. Anne Pearson was ideal as Ellen. Dressed also in jeans and sweater, she was very pretty with hair flowing down her shoulders, slim, a slight pout, creating just the image of a girl of the fifties that the play required. She had a singing type of voice that gave an air of mystery to her lines and was lovely to listen to.

Jeffrey, Carol and Stuart represented the middle class attitude and were just right for the acerbic comments they had to make. Jeff wore a sports jacket and had a moustache, Stuart

# "IN THE LOOKING GLASS"

A PLAY

BY

GABRIEL CHANAN

PRODUCED BY Mr. V. CALLAGHAN

## CAST.

ALAN	-	RICHARD GEE
ELLEN	-	ANNE PEARSON
1 <sup>st</sup> MAN	-	JEFFREY REED
2 <sup>nd</sup> MAN	-	STUART ELGROD
WOMAN	-	CAROL SILVER
WAITRESS	-	GLORIA ELLERY
MODERN TYPE	-	DAVID RYDEN

PIANO ACCOMPANIMENT BY FRANCIS J. USHER  
WITH ACCORDIAN PLAYED BY JACKIE SCHULDENFREI

PRODUCTION MANAGER: BRIAN WINSTON  
GENERAL MANAGER: ALAN SCHNEIDER  
LIGHTING MANAGER: MICHAEL FASHAM  
JOHN RICKARD

PERFORMED BEFORE A PRIVATELY INVITED  
AUDIENCE IN THE CREIGHTON HALL, K.G.S.,  
ON THE EVENING OF TUESDAY, 21<sup>st</sup> JULY,  
1959





**Gabriel Chanan**

**Photograph taken in 1959-60**



**Richard Gee**



**Jeffrey Reed**



**David Ryden  
and Gloria Ellery**

wore a city suit with bowler hat, and Carol wore a smart outfit. Dave was the Teddy Boy, complete with his cigarette holder. As for Gloria, she had a black dress, a frilly white cap and an apron, and she looked and spoke like a Lyon's Corner House waitress to the last tea.

Mr Callaghan's production was perfect, calm, no histrionics, nothing to interfere with the words and music. In our wildest dreams we could not have hoped for such a successful evening. The audience enjoyed the performance immensely and afterwards there was a little time to chat and even dance to music played by Frank and Jack. When we had to leave the hall a large number of us went to *La Caravella*. For those who don't know, this was one of the original frothy coffee bars, on the corner of Walm Lane and Willesden Lane, and we spent many a conversational or contemplative hour there over a cappuccino and rum baba. This evening it was a real party.

But this was not the end. The Waitress Gloria and the Young Man Dave Ryden found each other off stage as well as on and soon became engaged. Shakespeare never achieved this. They married after university. It did not last for ever, but they had a good run.

The end of term 1959 was the end of school for my year. Gabriel Chanan and Brian Winston stayed on another year for their Oxford scholarships and I stayed on to try for some more science, or so I said. Mr Callaghan asked Gabriel to start straight away on a new play for the following year. He suggested it should be full length, and be ready for rehearsal before the end of the Spring term. Gabriel delivered on both counts. The new play was called *Beat*.

*Beat* was about a group of beatnik drop-outs who inhabit a basement under a shop in a railway arch. It gave uncanny foresights of the sixties to come – the alternative society, the battles between mods and rockers, the breaking up of the old order of the fifties. It was twenty four pages long with every line solidly filled. Some of the speeches would have been a challenge to professional actors to learn.

Gabriel himself was the narrator, and Richard Gee played Scef, his final lead in a play. David Leigh played another lead role called Ben. About to leave KGS, I felt I could not go without playing one part on the stage, so I took the role of The Old Man in the Nightmare. The rest of the men were played by the new echelon of actors: Joe Barnet, Paul Gough, Michael Leitch, Brian Burford, Tom Brown, Peter Vogl, and Michael Cole.

Once again we asked for three girls from BKHS. They were Janet Wright, Jeane Grant, and Sandra Krafchit. As with last year, there was one problem. Janet and Jeane fitted into roles perfectly. But Sandra suffered from vertigo. The play is set in a basement, and to get this



# BEAT

BY

GABRIEL CHANAN

PERFORMED ON THE EVENING OF  
THURSDAY JULY 14<sup>th</sup> 1960  
BEFORE AN INVITED AUDIENCE  
IN THE CREIGHTON HALL.

THE PLAY PRODUCED BY MR. V. CALLAGHAN

## THE PARTS

NARRATOR  
BOB  
SCOT  
OTHERS  
ETHEL  
CRIMINAL  
ROCK ROBERTS  
FORSYTH  
FRED  
OLD JOE  
OLD JOE'S WIFE  
(also FATHER IN PROLOGUE)  
OLD MAN IN THE NIGHTMARE  
POLICEMAN

## PLAYED BY

- GABRIEL CHANAN  
- DAVID LEIGH  
- RICHARD GEE  
- JOE GARNET  
- JANET WRIGHT  
- PAUL GOUGH  
- MICHAEL LEITCH  
- BRIAN BURFORD  
- JEANE GRANT  
- TOM BROWN  
- SANDRA KRAFLIT  
- ALAN SCHNEIDER  
- PETER VOGEL

FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS PRODUCTION THE PART OF OTHERS  
WAS SHARED BY A SECOND ART: WOLF - MICHAEL COLE.

LIGHTING - COLIN DAYERS  
SOUND RECORDING - MICHAEL WILSON

effect there was a small block of four steps to give the impression of coming down into a lower level. She couldn't go up or down steps. Undaunted, Gabriel rewrote her lines so that she could be on stage all the time, coming out from behind a sofa when required.

The music this time was different; Mr. Callaghan with the assistance of Michael Wilson made a tape of *musique concrète* – weird sounds with no connection to music. I must say I found it very unpleasant, but it created the right atmosphere. The lighting was by Colin Mayers, and I did the stage management.

Remembering what happened last year, we booked the evening performance as a rehearsal in advance this time. We also remembered how people wanted to dance to the piano and accordion playing after last year's play, and so we booked enough time in the hall to have a dance session after the show.

The performances, matinee and evening, were very successful. Richard played as he always played, quietly with every word and meaning clear. I enjoyed playing the Nightmare scene with him. For the weird Old Man I grew my hair to my shoulders, put on ghostly make-up, and sat at the front of the stage pulling the hairs out of my legs. The new players had some real outlandish characters amongst them that added to the play's effect no end. Mr. Callaghan's production was very clever in creating a dramatic form for this very unusual play.

We once more had a fine audience of friends for our evening performance. When the play was finished we plugged in a record player and dancing commenced. The sight of an audience having sat through a play jumping up and dancing was quite something, and the perfect end to another great evening. Vic told me he would recall that scene with astonishment and delight – everyone rocking away, the girls' fluted skirts flying up to their waists. A sight to behold in the school hall indeed.

And so to the end of my days at KGS. For myself and Gabriel Chanan and Brian Winston and Jeffrey Reed and Richard Gee this was the final curtain. For us to leave was in the normal course of events. But Mr. Callaghan was also leaving, and this was a loss the school should never have incurred. His teaching and guidance and enthusiasm and encouragement over not only all the arts but all aspects of life was wonderful then and has remained invaluable to us to this day. It struck us as very sad that no more KGS pupils would receive this.

There is one more aspect of the fifties to write about and that is the number of people who became professional actors or went into film and television. I have already written about Graham Bell, and Terry Wale, earlier on. Raymond Brody went to LAMDA the same time as Graham. He has had a career in theatre and films and appears on TV, usually as a lawyer.

Bernard Holley left in 1957. He never played a part in a school play – or rather he got as far as rehearsals in *Hamlet*. As he walked across the stage something fell out of his pocket. He snatched it up but the eagle eye of Mr. Wright saw the forbidden cigarette packet. The result of the altercation that followed was that Bernard was no longer in the play. That's what we call a big mistake. Bernard went to Rose Bruford drama school, and within a few years was a household name as PC Newcombe in *Z-cars*. Bernard often appears on TV, recently in *Birds of a Feather*. He has a very full biography on the internet.

On the film side, Michael Elster went to the Polish Film School at Lodz in about 1958. When he came back he won a competition with an anti-hanging documentary called *Rope* and he wrote the subtitles for Polanski's *Knife in the Water*. I am told that he does not enjoy good health now.

Brian Winston went into TV, starting with *World in Action* for Granada. After some years he went to the USA and became Chair of Communications at Pennsylvania State University. On returning to England he created a similar faculty in Cardiff and again most recently for Westminster University.

Alan Ereira went into TV production, and is director of BBC Education TV. His series on the wild life of USA was superb.

One name that will not be known to many is Peter Finch. He left in 1955, went into the merchant navy, travelled around, and in 1973 joined the staff of Equity, the actors' trade union. He became Assistant General Secretary and retired in 1999.

Ronald Steinberg did not go into the theatrical profession as such. He became a barrister. I met him in Lincoln's Inn about 1964, now a strapping six foot three. As a barrister he worked on the defence team for the Krays. But he gave up what was obviously going to be an outstanding career. He changed his name to Stewart, went to New York, and opened a school, run on the lines of an English Grammar School. It was called York Preparatory School and apparently was very successful. This school still exists but Ronald Stewart is no



longer the Principal. The image of Ronald walking down the ranks of children for assembly in mortarboard and gown seems so theatrical that I had to include him.

Gabriel Chanan continued to write and had two or three books published, but as far as I know he wrote no more plays. He still writes, particularly poetry, and runs an arts centre in Windsor.

One more name that can't be left out is Michael Cockerell who left in 1959. He never set foot on the stage, but with the controlled calm of his style and skill as an interviewer and as a director of TV political documentaries he is without rival.

So ends the drama side of my review of the Arts at KGS in the fifties. It has been very long, but, by going into detail, I hope I have brought back some memories for old boys from one end of the decade or the other. The school stage was a wonderful place of theatre and song. When I went back in the last days of the school as it was in 1989 the stage was totally unchanged. I stood and admired its simplicity and the effect it had even then. Incredibly, the original rheostats that we had used in the fifties were still in the lighting box above the alcove by the window. I looked down into the Hall and I was surprised how big a space this was. As school pupils who were in it every day we took it for granted. Looking at it now with a professional viewpoint I found it daunting. To play in this space, filled with an audience, would have been no easy job. It confirmed just how good all the people were in all plays.

*Editor: Alan has added a postlude to this article. He says:*

This History was written in 2000. Since then, Graham Bell and Raymond Brody have died. More recently Stuart Elgrod, Michael Fasham, David Ryden and Norman Holmes have also died. (Please see past editions of the Newsletter for full appreciations). Vic Callaghan eventually went to teach at Manchester Polytechnic. Over the years he wrote many superb poems, though only one or two were published. Vic died in 2009.

Richard Gee was the first solicitor to become a judge. He went to live in the USA a few years ago. Jeffrey Reed I believe went into company management. Others, who did lighting - including Daniel Gruneberg, Trevor Sutton, Colin Mayers, John Rickard - followed technical professions as far as I know. Brian Winston after many years as Professor of Film and Communications at Pennsylvania State University returned to England and is now the Lincoln Professor at Lincoln University. He lectures on film, sits on competition juries and opens film schools all over the world.

Gabriel Chanan wrote two novels early on but his career has been in advising governments and organizations on education and improving social conditions here and overseas, for which he received an MBE in 2009. I am pleased to say he has recently written a new play, about Shakespeare, which has all of his old style and flow of language. I hope he can find a company to produce it.

As for myself, I trained to be an opera singer, and in early years performed in musicals and pantomime as well. I started working with the leading opera and ballet companies as an actor in the eighties. In early days often a soldier, later as little cameo characters in productions at the Royal Opera House. It was my schoolboy dream to be on the stage of Covent Garden (as ROH was then called). My dream came true, and I am still there. Fame and fortune no, but the never-ending pleasure of being onstage in some of the most wonderful productions of opera and ballet and with many of the greatest singers and dancers over the past thirty-five years.

**THE END**

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