

A HISTORY OF DRAMA AT KGS

1952 - 1960

PART 3

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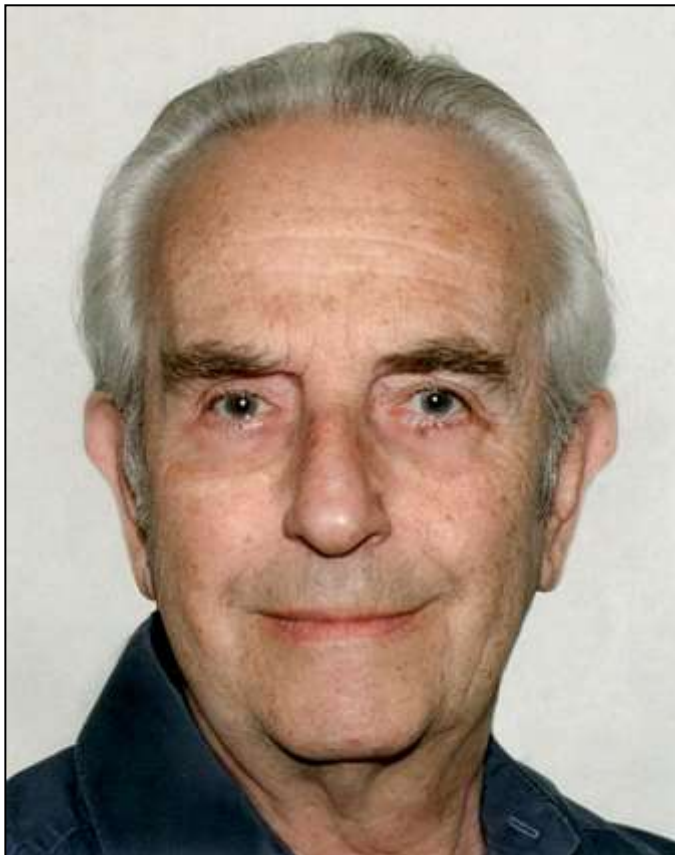
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

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.

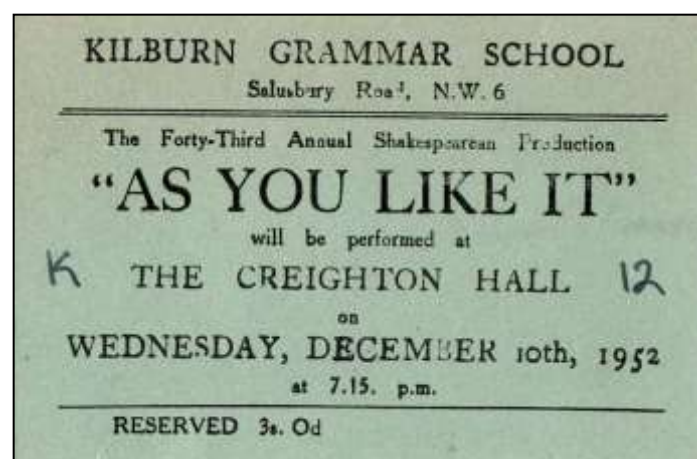
The play was performed in December 1957, two matinees and three evening performances. For the first time for some years there was no double casting. The three Lords were Graham Bell, Peter Schuldenfrei and Stephen Walzer. The three Ladies, Ronald Steinberg, Brian Barton and Keith Barber. David Leigh 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.

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 Savians 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.

 K I L B U R N G R A M M A R S C H O O L .

 + 47TH +
 + ANNUAL +
 + SHAKESPEAREAN +
 + PRODUCTION. +

 + "HAMLET" +

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 17th 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

*Forty-Eighth Annual
Shakespearian Production
1957*

**‘ LOVE’S
LABOUR’S
LOST ’**

•

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

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

CHARACTERS

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

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

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.

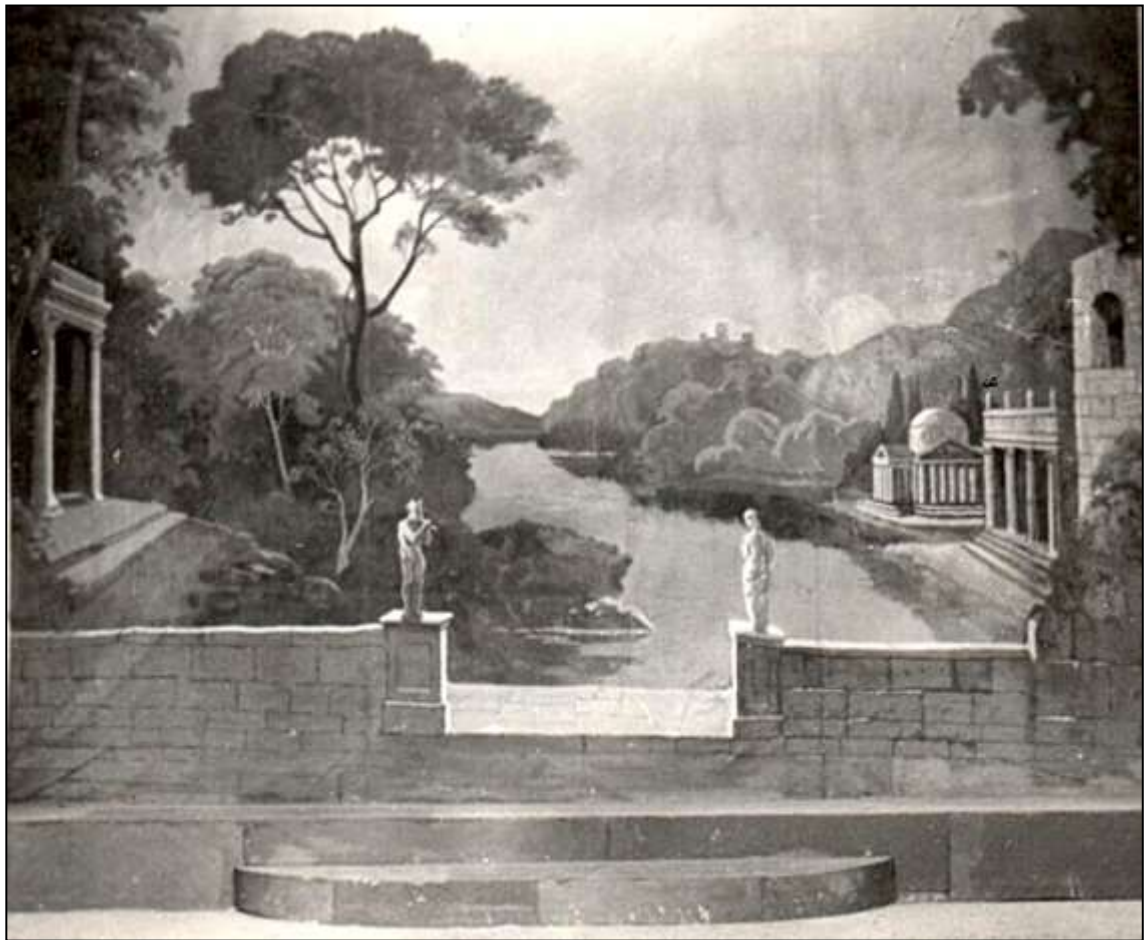
Make-up by Mrs. Chirgwin and Mr. R. Whitmore.

Business Manager: Mr. A. E. Minchin.

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

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

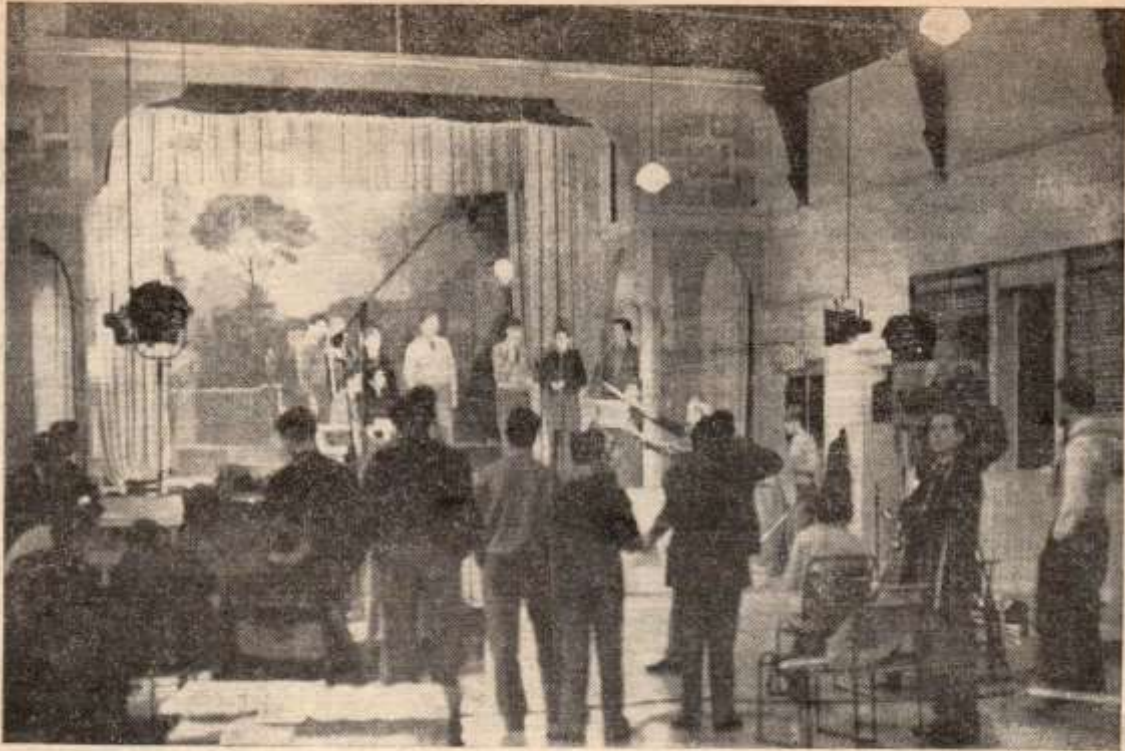
WILLESDEN CHRONICLE

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

*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

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

THERE WILL BE ONE INTERVAL OF FIFTEEN MINUTES

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."

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

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.

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."

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 21st 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 st MAN	-	JEFFREY REED
2 nd 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, 21st 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 14th 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
FREDA
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 MAYERS
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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