



kanata theatre

Presents

OTHERWISE ENGAGED

by Simon Gray



EARL OF MARCH SCHOOL

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday,
January 19-22, 1983 at 8pm sharp

All seats reserved \$4.00, \$3.00
Weds. Thurs. only students seniors \$2.00
for all tickets, call box office 592-1715

Play opens next week

Otherwise Engaged is Kanata Theatre's second major production this season. Written by Simon Gray, it's a sophisticated comedy centered on Simon Hench, whose motto is the kind that causes people to go quietly mad around him while he remains "otherwise engaged" from the demands of relatives, friends and associates.

Directed by Brooke Keneford, *Otherwise Engaged* will be performed Jan. 19-22 at the Earl of March School. Curtain time is 8 p.m.

Simon Gray has written a number of novels and television plays. His stage plays include *How Child* (1957), *Death Tackle* (1969), *The Floor* (1970) and *Spotted* (1971).

Chris Robinson plays the lead role of Simon Hench and others

in the cast include Drew Williams, Gwendy Tolley, Brian Welch, Greg Ramsey, Tony Beak and Brenda Robinson. The production's director, Brooke Keneford, and set design and construction is by Ron MacIsaac.

Fighting for *Otherwise Engaged* will be done by Bob Henry and Steve Sweet. Peter Smith is looking after the sound effects and costumes will be coordinated by Pat Keneford. Paula Wilkie is in charge of props, courtesy of Brooke Keneford and the stage manager will be Tom Holmes.

All seats for Kanata Theatre productions are reserved (\$4.00 and \$1.00). At Wednesday and Thursday evening performances, tickets are \$2.00 for seniors and students. For tickets, call 592-1715.



Brian Welch argues with Gwendy Tolley in a scene from the sophisticated comedy *Otherwise Engaged*, to be presented by Kanata Theatre, Jan. 19-22. photo: Steve Sweet

Keneford directs engaging comedy

Kanata Theatre presents *Otherwise Engaged* by Simon Gray, January 19-22, 8 p.m. at the Earl of March School.

Directed by Brooke Keneford, this second major production of Kanata Theatre's 1982 season is a sophisticated comedy centered on Simon Hench, who is portrayed by Chris Robinson.

Simon Hench is the type of person who causes people to go quietly mad around him while

he remains "otherwise engaged" isolated by a barrier of indifference. All Simon wants is to be left alone, untroubled by the external pressures and the problems of others that would disrupt his carefully planned and ordered life.

As love, change and collapse around Simon, they are only fleeting concerns. Why should he care? He has "machines" for making coffee, a table covered

with booze, crates of wine in the cellar, all the books he wants, the best he can on the bloody market, a whole bloody house just for him and his very little wife. Simon's only complaint is that the world has an irritating habit of breaking into his orderly routine.

Others in the cast include Brenda Robinson, Brian Welch, Gwendy Tolley, Tony Beak, Greg Ramsey and Drew Williams. For tickets call 592-1715.



OTHERWISE ENGAGED

by
SIMON GRAY

Produced by Special Arrangement with
SAMUEL FRENCH LTD.

Directed by
BROOKE KENEFORD

CAST

(in order of appearance)

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| Simon Hench | CHRIS ROBINSON |
| Dave | GREG RAMSEY |
| Stephan Hench | DEWY WILLIAMS |
| Jeff Golding | BRIAN WELSH |
| Davina Saunders | GWENDY TOLLEY |
| Wood | TONY BEAK |
| Both | BRENDA ROBINSON |

The action of the play takes place in the living-room of the Hench's house in Islington.

ACT I A morning in Summer.
ACT II Immediately following.
TIME The present

There will be one intermission during which the bar will be open.





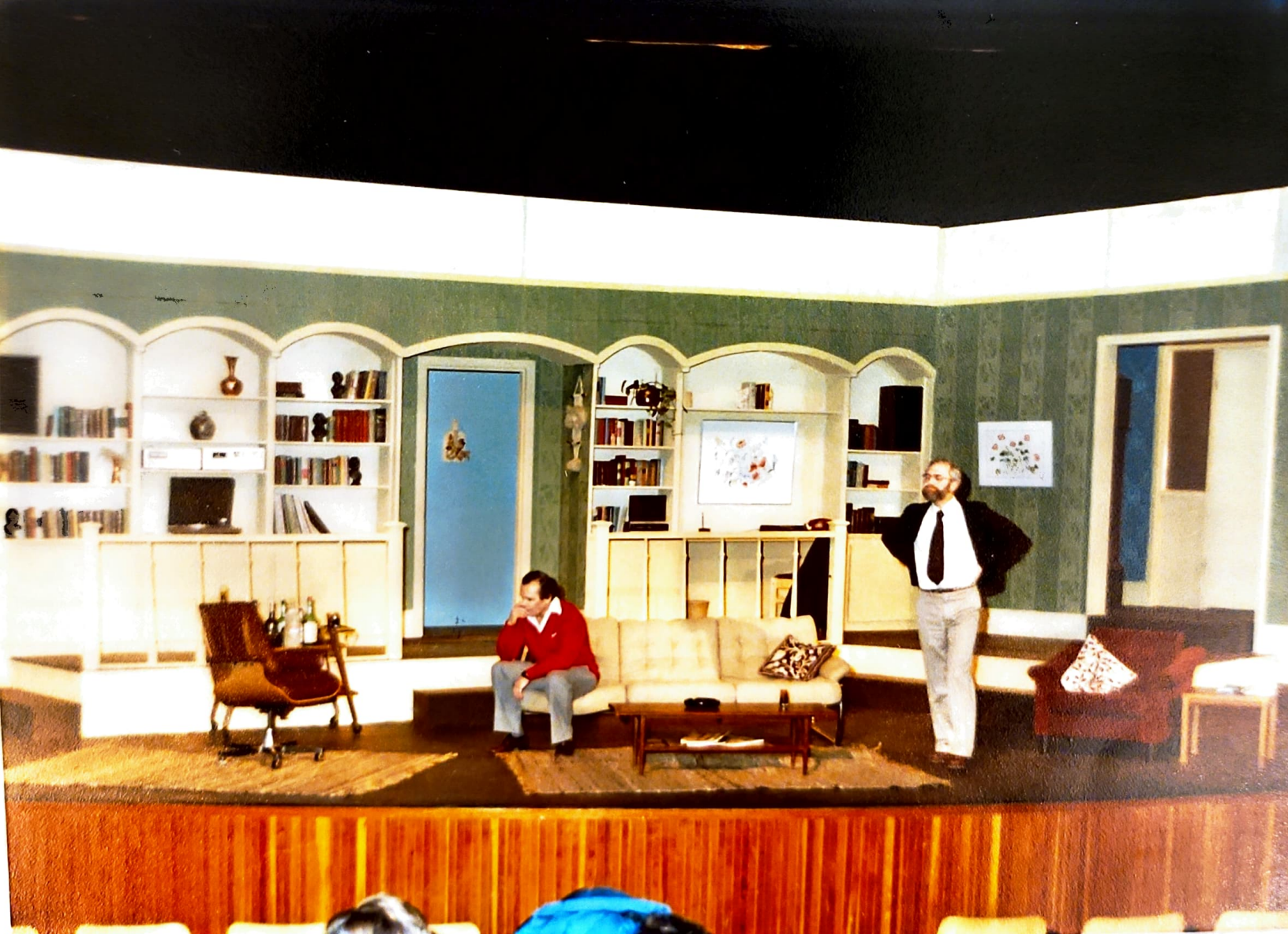












Entertainment

Kanata's approach too serious for 'Otherwise Engaged'

By Audrey M. Ashley
Citizen Staff Writer

Kanata Theatre's *Otherwise Engaged* isn't the kind of fare you usually find at suburban community theatres.

The Kanata Theatre can take credit for a certain amount of courage in showing to stage it, because it represents a departure from the standard Broadway comedy in that it reflects some unrealistic trends in present society.

It's a comedy with a dark side to it for its hero, a man who moves in literary circles, is heartless and utterly self-centred. He is exceedingly bored and bored about his wife's extra-marital affairs, which parallel his own, but since he appears to feel nothing

Theatre review

Otherwise Engaged
Kanata Theatre
Earl of March High School
Jan. 19-22, 8 p.m.

very deeply, there's no virtue in such broad-mindedness. The play is a series of encounters, between Simon Hench and his brother, a rather unsuccessful public-school teacher, with the young but who is his tenant, with a hard-drinking, hard-sweating friend, the friend's mistress, the fiancée of Simon's own mistress, and finally, with Simon's wife.

(I think there is what is experimentally called an "open" marriage.) The trouble is, all of the Kanata cast are obviously far too nice

to be mixed up in this sort of thing.

Chris Robinson, as Simon, quite obviously isn't the kind of guy you'd want to be. Although he does live his life as a man who despises men and loathes women, he's not nearly as sharp as they ought to be. His far too easy

going, leaving the impression of a nice man who simply hasn't the energy or the desire to be a hero.

Brian Welch, as a man who despises men and loathes women, isn't nearly as sharp as they ought to be. His far too easy

while being repelled by her conversation.

(In the London production Davina spent a good part of her time on stage distracting the audience with her bare bosom. Kanata is a little more circumspect and settles for a skin-colored lace bra.)

Brooke Keneford's direction depends heavily on the civilized veneer through which these characters conduct their lives, shying away from anything beneath the surface.

Everybody is very serious. Nobody seems to have fun with the witty lines, but maybe that will come later, after the first night traumas are over.

Nor do the performers react to each other very much beyond waiting politely for their turn to speak to one another, despite the outrageous things that are being said.

The play itself seems to run out of steam rather than coming to a tidy end, as though the playwright had exhausted all the possibilities inherent in the various permutations of people.

Ron Maslin has designed a comfortable-looking set representing the living-room of a house in London's Islington district, and Pat Keneford has provided appropriate costumes.

Play proves too much to handle

by Steve Chadwick

Lacking a play like Simon Gray's *Otherwise Engaged* as a difficult undertaking, generally beyond the scope of an amateur theatre group, The Kanata Theatre must be lauded for its ambition, but unfortunately, despite best intentions, it just could not carry off this black and sometimes raucous comedy.

The fault lay largely with Chris Robinson's failure to get a proper grip on the lead character, Simon Hench. Simon is a heartless worm who wraps himself in a cocoon of creature comforts to insulate himself from the outside world.

Robinson did manage to capture some of Simon's callous disregard for the affairs of his fellow man. After a slow start, he warmed to the part but he never fully embraced it.

Robinson failed to arouse the contempt the audience should feel for a dispassionate, self-absorbed cad like Simon even though he did manage some wonderful expressions and demonstrated a fine sense of comedic timing.

Perhaps director Brooke Keneford should share some of the blame for not providing Robinson with the proper focus for his interpretation.

The supporting cast was generally adequate. However, Brenda Robinson who played Simon's long-suffering wife Beth was the exception. Although her staid appearance in the second act was all too brief, she did manage to breathe some genuine emotion into the play.

Dewi Williams as Simon's brother Steven, gave a solid, unspectacular portrayal of a man plagued by self-doubt, a familial contrast to Simon's arrogant self-assurance.

Gwendolyn Letley never seemed to be quite comfortable as Davina, a thoroughly pleasant woman who thinks nothing of using her physical attributes or the men they attract, to advance her burgeoning writing career. In fairness to Letley, next to the lead role, hers was the most difficult. She did succeed in instilling an intense dislike for her character.

Greg Ramsay, as Simon's student boarder Dave, while certainly possessing a strong physical presence, performed with too much swagger and bravado to fit the part.

Again, more guidance from director Keneford appears to have been necessary to contain his young charge's well-intended exuberance.

Ron Maslin's set was well-designed and thoughtfully constructed. The book cases, stereo and amply-stocked bar are all important elements in Simon's comfortable domain.

The costumes by Pat Keneford should have been done with more care given to the nature of the individual character. Simon's bright red golf sweater was not appropriate for a man of sizeless black T-shirt, grimy jeans and sneakers looked more like a Canadian high school rocker than an English university student versed in composer

Wagner's religious preferences. Finally, when Davina removed her top to reveal a lacy camouflage, Simon may act shocked, but the audience could hardly be asked to consider the undergarment as risqué.

Playwright Gray had intended Davina's "topless" scene to be played with bare bosom but the Kanata Theatre group decided to cover up for modesty's sake.

There were also great liberties taken with much of the play's dialogue. Although still considered raucous by some patrons judging from the furious scribbling on cards provided for comment, much of the coarse language was toned down.

The wonders of such adulteration is required to make a play "presentable" then perhaps it should never have been selected in the first place.

Questions of morality and artistic integrity aside, *Otherwise Engaged* which ran from Jan. 19 to 22 at the Earl of March auditorium proved to be too much to handle.



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"Deathtrap" set



Kanata Theatre in rehearsal for Ira Levin's *Deathtrap*, to be performed March 9-12. Shows 8:12 p.m. Chris Deebie as Clifford Anderson, Liane Freedman as Helga Ten Dorp. photo Steve Sweet

If you haven't already seen ... pick up the phone right now. *Deathtrap*, and if you haven't, it's Kanata Theatre at its very best. It's the ultimate thriller.

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In rehearsal for Ira Levin's *Deathtrap*, to be performed by Kanata Theatre March 9-12, at Earl of March. From left to right: Liane Freedman as Helga Ten Dorp, Rosemary Keneford as Myra Bruhl, Stephen Jones as Sidney Bruhl. photo Steve Sweet

'Deathtrap' opening is next week

The first English production of Ira Levin's master piece, *Deathtrap*, will be performed by Kanata Theatre March 9-12, at the Earl of March High School. If you like "thrillers" done well, then this is one production you mustn't miss. It's Kanata Theatre at its best, with an excellent cast, directed by Jim Holmes, and a set designed by Phil Lawless that will be the envy of any theatre company.

The lead role of Sidney Bruhl is played by Stephen Jones and Sidney's wife, Myra, is played by Rosemary Keneford. Liane Freedman portrays Helga Ten Dorp, Chris Deebie is Clifford Anderson and Pat Carroll is the lawyer, Porter Milgrim.

The production crew for *Deathtrap* has been working hard the past few weeks and

Kanata Theatre would like to thank some local teens who turned out last week to help with set painting.

All seats for *Deathtrap* are reserved, at \$4 and \$3. On Wednesday and Thursday nights there's a special \$2 price for seniors and students. Curtain time is 8 p.m. For tickets or information, call the box office at 592-1715.



Kanata boy in NAC play

Justin Haynes, son of Kanata residents Martin and Jenny, was selected for a part in the current National Arts Centre production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

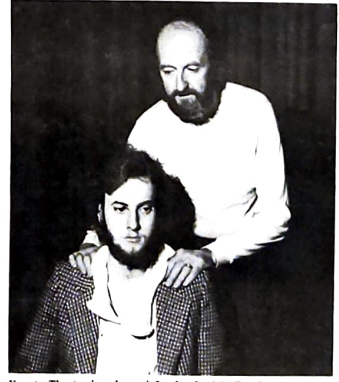
A grade 4 A pupil from Roland Michener School, Justin was recommended by a grade 4 classroom teacher, Carol Hay, in addition for the NAC Shakes-

peare special children's workshops. From his performance there, he won a part as an earth fairy, Peaseblossom, in the Shakespeare play.

A Midsummer Night's Dream is now in performance at the Studio at NAC. It is running in repertory with Anton Chekhov's comedy *The Wood Demon* in

the Studio until April 30 at 8 p.m. and Saturday matinees. Wanda Cannon is cast as Titania, Queen of the Fairies, in the foreground, top centre Justin Haynes, Peaseblossom, and other fairies from Ottawa schools - Cobweb, Bevan Hughes, Moth, Bryn Morgan, and Mustardseed. Timothy Adams.

New play a "thriller"



Kanata Theatre in rehearsal for Ira Levin's *Deathtrap*. Stephen Jones (standing) as Sidney Bruhl and Chris Deebie (sitting) as Clifford Anderson. photo Steve Sweet

If you like "thrillers", then Kanata Theatre's production of Ira Levin's *Deathtrap* is one night out you can't miss. Call your friends, book your babysitter and phone the box office now for tickets.

It's the first English performance of this play in the Ottawa area and one that's guaranteed to keep you in suspense.

Stephen Jones plays the lead role of Sidney Bruhl and Rose Keneford is Myra, Sidney's wife. Liane Freedman is Helga Ten Dorp, Chris Deebie is Clifford Anderson and Pat Carroll portrays the lawyer, Porter Milgrim.

Deathtrap is directed by Jim Holmes and the unusual set has been designed by Phil Lawless.

Performance dates for *Deathtrap* are March 9-12 at the Earl of March High School. Curtain time is 8 p.m. and all seats are reserved. For tickets call 592-1715.