

MORE EDINBURGH FESTIVAL PRODUCTIONS

'Questa sera si recita a soggetto'

WAS it sheer perversity that made Giorgio Strehler produce Pirandello's "Questa sera si recita a soggetto" as an archly jazzed up drama boxed securely within the proscenium arch? It would have

'QUESTA SERA SI RECITA A SOGGETTO'

By Luigi Pirandello. Presented by the Piccolo Teatro di Milan at the Royal Lyceum, Edinburgh, on August 31. Scenery by Luciano Damiani, costumes by Ezio Frigerio, music by Gino Negri.

Dr. Hinkfuss Marcello Moretti
The Heavy Woman, who will play the part of Ignazia, known as La Generala

Giulio Dandolo
The Low Comedian, who will play the part of Palmiro

La Croce, known as Sompognetta Antonio Battistella

Fortunato Valentino Fortinasse
Totina Renzo Ridoni

Dorina Gabriella Giacobbe
Nene Ornella Vanoni

The Leading Man, who will play the part of Rico

Verri Tino Carraro
Sarelli Ottavio Fanfani

Pomari Enzo Tarascio
Nardi Franco Graziosi

Mangini Giulio Chazakettes
Pomoni Ezio Marano

The Chanteuse Marina Bonfigli
First Customer Checco Rissone

Second Customer Andrea Maitenzi
Third Customer Gianfranco Mauri

Fourth Customer Raoul Cossoni
Directed by Giorgio Strehler.

been impossible for the member of the audience with no knowledge of the text of the play or of any true production of it to appreciate what nonsense Signor Strehler's production made of it. Where Pirandello had demanded the participation of the audience we had silence; where he had stipulated simultaneity of action we had a sequence of scenes pathetically played one after another; where he called for a projected film with dubbed sound, we had taped sound and live actors miming the opera—and all within the proscenium frame. In fact, if Signor Strehler had set out deliberately to falsify Pirandello's work he could have done little more—and perhaps that less effectively—than he did for us at Edinburgh.

"Questa sera si recita a soggetto" is the concluding section of Pirandello's Trilogy of the Theatre (the other plays are "Six Characters in Search of an Author" and "Each in His Own Way") and in it he seeks to establish the rôle of the producer and to probe the nature of the unique creation that is every performance of a play. Can one improvise upon a theme? What happens to the actor in the process? What is the significance of the techniques of theatre? What are the aesthetic principles to be deduced from the art of the theatre? What is the nature of the experience of "alienation" from his own creation that the artist knows? How, how successfully, with what plangent, beautiful agony can we communicate or fail to communicate with one another? The questions, the enigmas and the gnomic riddles tumble over one another in this rich play, cast in a challengingly original mould. We should have been invaded, assailed, surrounded physically and cut-off by this play. It should have raged in our midst. Instead it rested primly within the prison of the proscenium arch, utterly meaningless.

Error of Judgment

It was an error of judgment and insight to substitute the meaningless "Lucia di Lammermoor" (homage to Edina?) for "La forza del destino" or "Un ballo in maschera" (Pirandello's suggestions—though he modestly does not insist on either) because quite clearly Pirandello's symbolism leans upon association of "La forza del destino" and this play. The two Leonoras—for "Il trovatore" is also a key source—merge in Mommina, just as Pirandello puns from Manrico to Rico Verri. And since the triumphant conclusion to this richly blending symbolism comes in the death of Mommina as she sings the "Farewell, Leonora!" aria (and this, by the way, is the title of the short story, one of Pirandello's, from which the play is improvised) one is at a total loss to understand why Signor Strehler had Mommina sing again the not (at this point) very relevant piece she had sung a little earlier. And why substitute something irrelevant, inappropriate and impotent for Hinkfuss's misquotation from "La forza del destino"?

Signor Strehler rehearsed his production until five minutes before curtain-up on the first night, and he gave us a tremendous piece of theatre and a charmingly old-fashioned play in the new manner by one Giorgio Strehler. The disembowelled corpse of Pirandello's original proved a stimulating medium for a most moving performance of Mommina by Valentina Fortunato and a diabolically precise sequestration of Sompognetta by Antonio Battistella. Tino Carraro comprehended with exciting power the whole range of Rico Verri, combining with Signora Fortunato to make the Jealousy Scene a great moment of poetry in the theatre. The part of Dr. Hinkfuss was cut to the ribbons of triviality and to Marcello Moretti one can only extend condolence and love.

FREDERICK MAY.

Gerry Gibson, a 21-year-old Belfast comedian, has been signed up for pantomime by Peter Webster Enterprises.