



Newsletter June 2023

Well, what do you do while waiting for a delayed plane to arrive and allow you to board and take off? Easy! You finish off the newsletter.

What a great weekend ! At FEATS2023 we enjoyed 'proper' FEATS weather : the sun shone and the sky was blue. Furthermore we saw high quality theatre. It was lovely to be back in Bad Homburg seeing old friends and meeting new ones. There was a full programme of plays on the main stage and activities on the Fringe. What with all this and the entertaining and constructive adjudications of Ben Humphrey it was a weekend not to be missed. Sorry for those of you who did ! You can see photos of the weekend on the FEATS Facebook page.

Many congratulations to the FEST Organising Committee for pulling off a very successful festival. To help a little with the finances they decided to have a raffle every evening with tickets costing €1, half the proceeds to go to FEST, the other to each evening's winner. On the last evening €396 had been collected and this was made up to €400 by a member of the audience. When it came to drawing the winning ticket, said lady was invited up onto the stage and managed, to everyone's amazement – and amusement, to draw her husband's ticket!

I am so glad it was not my job to decide on the winners, though Ben seems to relish it. But I notice that none of the first three placed groups had a rug... Here are the winners and, following, the write-ups produced once more by my good friend Annie Dawes. Thank you, Annie for such detailed and interesting commentaries.

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| 1 st Place : | Founders' Trophy | De WAANzin, Ghent | <i>Desperados</i> |
| 2 nd Place : | ECC Centennial Cup | NEAT, Stuttgart | <i>Almost, Maine</i> |
| 3 rd Place : | BATS Trophy | EYT, Brussels | <i>Chaos</i> |
| Best Actor : | David Bumedi | NEAT, Stuttgart | Steve in <i>Almost, Maine</i> |
| Nominated : | Yorgos Filippakis | BSS, Brussels | Mal in <i>Yellow</i> |
| | Peter Wilding | BSS, Brussels | Tony in <i>Yellow</i> |
| | Rick Blake | ESOC, Darmstadt | Roger in <i>Lady Luck</i> |
| Best Actress : | Elizabeth Goetze | ENTITY, Munich | Wanda in <i>Wanda's Visit</i> |
| Nominated : | Alannah Burns | Semi-Circle, Basel | Marissa in <i>Capri</i> |
| | Shannon Damery | ATC, Brussels | Mrs Martin in <i>Baby Boom</i> |
| | Tracey Bollier-Timberlake | LWTC, Lucerne | Judy in <i>Darlings you were wonderful</i> |
| | Carolin Schuetze | Entity Theatre, Munich | Marsha in <i>Wanda's Visit</i> |
| | Elena Gallego | NEAT, Stuttgart | Glory in <i>Almost, Maine</i> |
| | Ruby May | EYT, Brussels | Chiarra in <i>Chaos</i> |
| | Muna Zubedi | BUSC, Brussels | Azar Vahidi in <i>For the sake of the Cobblestone street which takes me to you.</i> |
| Best Stage Presentation: Grand Duchy Trophy | | ENTITY, Munich | <i>Wanda's Visit</i> |

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| Nominated : | DeWAANzin NEAT, Stuttgart EYT, Brussels | <i>Desperados</i> <i>Almost, Maine</i> <i>Chaos</i> |
| Marcel Huhn/Bruno Boeye Award Stage Management | DeWAANzin | <i>Desperados</i> |
| Nominated | EYT, Brussels BUSC, Brussels | <i>Chaos</i> <i>For the sake of the Cobblestone street which takes me to you.</i> |
| Best Original Script | Sepideh Tafazzoli, BUSC, Brussels | <i>For the sake of the Cobblestone street which takes me to you.</i> |
| Nominated | Semi-Circle, Basel | <i>Capri</i> |
| Adjudicator's Discretionary Award | Semi-Circle, Basel | <i>Capri</i> |
| Nominated | DeWAANzin, Gent EYT, Brussels | <i>Desperados</i> <i>Chaos</i> |

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Friday 26 May 2023

American Theatre Company, Brussels ***Baby Boom* by Lia Romeo**

A simple but effective set for our opening production - we are shown a bedroom, a sofa, a front door - the comfortable home that belongs to Mr and Mrs Smith, a young married couple living in suburban comfort, but with one massive omission in their domestic bliss. Their dialogue is somewhat surreal but we easily learn that they are sadly disappointed, in fact heartbroken, to have been unable to become parents. They have all the equipment, unconditional love and relationship stability necessary for welcoming a baby into their otherwise perfect lifestyle but, having previously lost a baby, parenthood has not been granted to them.

Can they believe their eyes, then, when a baby is abandoned in its Moses basket on their doorstep? Surely it's meant to be, that Mrs Smith takes the baby in and raises it as her own. But as her own what? Wrapped lovingly in a baby shawl is not a gurgling infant but a full-sized rifle. The absurdity of the situation hits the audience fully, but Mrs Smith is immediately overcome with maternal love for the gun. She dresses it and cares for it as if it were her own child, the little bonnet on the end of the gun barrel looking incongruous as she cradles her child. Mr Smith needs some convincing. "What should we call it?" she says. "I think we should call the police", he replies.

The farcical situation is entertainingly played out with Mr Smith becoming excited about the prospect of having a child named after him. He has dreams of taking his son hunting with him. In fact, he had had ambitions of becoming a soldier, but that was not to be. With careful logic, they work out that the baby is a boy and decide that it will be called Charlie after its dad, Mr Smith. Maybe they could even, eventually, go to the local gun store and buy a sister for Charlie, wouldn't that be wonderful!

The normalisation of gun ownership in America is evident in this play and the neighbour, Mrs Martin, is eventually convinced of the normalness of the Smiths' baby. However, after a playful ramble, the story takes a tragic turn when Mr and Mrs Smith are looking after her baby for her one day. Charlie the gun - who, it is always claimed, is totally innocent - causes a fatality. The lightheartedness of the play turns to distressing desperation with the development of this hideous nightmare.

Throughout the piece, the well designed and operated lighting - with beautiful silhouetting on a vivid blue backdrop - accompanied seamless scene changes, with the actors themselves moving props efficiently and swiftly, thus aiding the smooth flow of the storytelling. The music was well chosen and the production moved like a dream - until the nightmare! A play full of witty dialogue, playfully performed, presenting us with many thought-provoking topics of conversation.

Shannon Damery, playing Mrs Martin, was nominated for the Blackie Award for Best Actress.

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Brussels Shakespeare Society
***Yellow* by Geoffrey Mamdani**
An original script

What a dynamic opening for this originally written play! With his feet up on his desk and headphones on, the office boss is belting out “Yellow” and is totally oblivious to the world around him - an ordinary-looking office - giving us a full-on gutsy air guitar solo. He is far from cool in his portrayal, possibly reliving in his own mind his faraway youth. As the play progresses, we find him to be a blustery old fart, easily falling prey to the crime of inappropriate behaviour and conversation gambits. My friends in the audience wondered if the actor had based his buffoonish character on a recently deposed UK PM ?

This fast-paced play amazed us with its many-faceted arguments and social questioning. It was obvious to the audience that the playwright had very many personal opinions to air, and all were aired with heartfelt sincerity by the exceptionally talented cast.

I am embarrassed to say that the frenetic pace of the dialogue prevented me from being able to record all the opinions put forward and I wish I could remember just a few of the outstandingly apt quotes from the play. But my enjoyment of the piece was certainly not diminished by my lack of comprehension and I silently congratulated myself on picking up on the Shakespearean connection, the character of Mal having been duped into wearing Ali G-style yellow joggers to impress his ex-boss, Olivia.

The main storyline of the play concerned a young woman in a new job at a law firm, being required to defend a known defrauder of innocent people. Against a simple set of desks and office furniture, with mandatory indoor plants and copious props in the way of set dressing, this fast-moving piece retained our interest from beginning to end, using as it did the whole of the stage in a flurry of ethical argument and counter-argument on the principles under discussion.

If I may be permitted a small criticism, I would love to have seen steaming hot coffee being poured from the jug, so that empty cups would not have been waved around so precariously when underlining speeches.

The spotlight on Mal sadly deciding to abandon the yellow joggers was a poignant ending to a very powerful production.

Yorgos Filippakis playing Mal and Peter Wilding playing Tony were both nominated for the Blackie Award for Best Actor.

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Lucerne World Theatre Company
***Darlings, You Were Wonderful* by Derek Lomas**

Always popular at a drama festival is the play about an amateur theatre company putting on a play. We all recognise fellow Thespians amongst the cast, or at least we think we do. This production shows us the backstage drama of a play about to take part in a festival, so it hits home on even more counts.

I have to disagree with the Adjudicator (he told us that we were allowed to differ from his opinion) in that I

found the opening of the play to be a little messy. There were those of us in the audience who were unsure when the play had started. Many productions open with an actor already in character on stage and with the house lights up but, for some reason, it was a stuttering start for me.

The backstage was well represented by a large and beautifully lit dressing table through which we were able to see the actors preparing for their roles, the frame of the mirror being glass-free. The cleaning lady (also playing an acting part in the play-within-a-play) had her work cut out keeping the place spic and span and, my goodness, did she give that dressing table a good old dusting. However I wonder whose job it was to clean up after the biker-girl threw up in her own crash helmet?

We saw frantic preparations for the play interspersed with petty jealousies and rivalries. At one point, it is even unsure that the play, apparently a little known Spanish drama, can go on but of course we all know the old adage and, not only does it go on, appropriate costumes and wigs being duly donned, but it is well received and the director can once more bathe in reflected glory. A play for six female actors and a subject matter dear to all our hearts, who could ask for more?

Tracey Bollier-Timberlake playing Judy was nominated for the Blackie Award for Best Actress.

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Satuary, 27 May 2023

ESOC Theatre Group, Darmstadt
***Lady Luck* by John Lewis**
An original script

Our second original script, this time charting the disruption between friends that a winning lottery ticket can cause. The play opens on a conventional interior with a couple about to sit down for a meal at stage right. There is a centrally placed sideboard, and a seating area stage left. Unfortunately the set design had not allowed for our Adjudicator's obsessive need to see a rug wherever possible, to delineate the acting area. This omission may be forgiven, however, as we find during the course of the play that this interior set serves as the home of the first couple, Christine and Martin, and doubles up as that of the second couple, Linda and Roger. Throughout the action, the scenes switch from one home to the other and back again, with much rearranging of sideboard clutter, large pot plants, cushions and throws. The Adjudicator wondered if a split stage with use of dedicated lighting would have saved the laborious scene changes and ultimately have been more effective.

However, the action of the play romps along. We learn that Christine and Martin have a less than harmonious relationship - he forever on his phone, she yearning for a new kitchen. Their dinner conversation revolves around the question of what to give their friend, Roger, for a birthday present. They decide upon buying him £20 worth of lottery tickets.

We then see the second couple, Roger and Linda, in "their" home. They are much more at ease with each other and quite content with their modest way of life. The differences between the couples' relationships are highlighted when they celebrate Roger's birthday and the lottery tickets are given him. Imagine Martin's horror, then, when it is revealed that one lottery ticket has won many millions of pounds for Roger. He dreams of buying a sports car, having a new kitchen, going on a cruise, buying two houses..... However, he outrages Martin by making him the puny offer of a week in a wellness hotel as recompense for having bought him the winning ticket. Martin insists on a much larger share of the winnings and his normally frantic body language turns to wild convulsiveness as he becomes more and more enraged at the perceived injustice of the situation, his uncontrollable envy having led him to deface with a phallic symbol the bonnet of Roger's newly acquired Porsche.

The police are called in when Linda is reportedly kidnapped for ransom, but we discover that her kidnap has been faked in order to give the ransom money to Martin. Instead, Martin is given the Porsche, as Roger and Christine discover true love together, and Linda wins the heart of the policeman, DS Harrison.

I would not have been able to come up with so many well-known songs about money, but this team did, and very well placed they were too throughout the whole extremely entertaining production.

(I must remember some of the quotes:- "Real men don't shop" and "People of our age don't make love, they screw".)

Rick Blake playing Roger was nominated for the Blackie Award for Best Actor.

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Entity Theatre, Munich
***Wanda's Visit* by Christopher Durang**

A man and woman, Jim and Marsha, stand on each side of the apron, with closed tabs behind them, describing to us in monologues their life as they see it - a little humdrum, nothing spectacular or out of the ordinary, with routine tasks taking up their time. When the curtains open, we see the interior of their simple home, presented on an almost bare stage with the minimum of furnishings. And this was all that was required to set the scene for this beautifully absurdist piece. A platform leads to their front door. And through that front door bursts the antithesis of ordinary - Wanda, a vision of unloveliness and an old school flame of Jim's. Having invited herself to stay with Jim and Marsha, all hell breaks loose as Wanda shamelessly attempts to rekindle said flame in every possible way.

From Wanda's explosive entrance, with overenthusiastic and inappropriate huggy-huggy physicality (that's how you make an entrance!) to her constant belittling of Marsha, Wanda sets each scene on fire. Her tornado-like approach to re-seducing Jim is in dramatic contrast to her frequent breakdowns and tearful episodes of neediness, which give dull, polite Marsha the opportunities she needs to play the straight guy as a foil to Wanda's fiery, selfish temperament.

The bathroom scene - yes, we see the three of them together in the bathroom - is skilfully created by a complete cube of clever lighting upstage of the platform. The small table and chairs become a restaurant scene (that was a set move worth watching!) and, when needed, also the bedroom. Wanda somehow manages to inveigle her way into the matrimonial bed, stealing the covers from Marsha and Jim, and spends the night recounting her abominably outlandish and shamelessly promiscuous life in an attempt to win sympathy. A ticking clock and lighting breaks signify the nighttime whiling away, with Wanda changing position, always to the discomfort of the bed's rightful owners, and picking up on yet another hideous recollection in mid storyline.

We presume Jim is too nice a guy to hurt Wanda's feelings, but really - that back rub?? A deft Heimlich manoeuvre saves Wanda's life but the two henchmen who have been after her finally catch up with her, and Jim and Marsha are left to their ruminations on life. "Blessings come in unexpected ways", they say. "But, if only we were happy". I think the whole theatre was happy after that uproarious piece of fantasy.

Carolyn Schuetze playing Marsha was nominated for the Blackie Award for Best Actress.

Elizabeth Goetze playing Wanda was awarded the Blackie Award for Best Actress.

This production was nominated for the Grand Duchy Trophy for Best Stage Presentation.

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Bonn University Shakespeare Company
***For the Sake of the Cobblestone Street That Takes Me to You* by Sepideh Tafazzoli**
An original script

A plain stage with two opposing judges representing Safety and Liberty stand with the witness box of Azar

Vahidi centred between them. Ms Azar is trying unsuccessfully to give the details of the horrific murder of a young girl during recent uprisings in Iran. Her words are not being listened to. Instead she is being given thirty minutes in which she must finalise her claim.

A powerful presentation, aided by voice-overs and projected images, the play brings home to us the desperation of an oppressed people on the edge of civil war. Evidence is being gathered against the police, who have been ordered to open fire on civilians. This is denied as being baseless accusation but Liberty wants to hear her out, although Safety says that emotionally charged statements bring no proof.

Ms Vahidi puts her case forcefully and believably. She gains everyone's vote of confidence but, in her telling of the story of the young man who is shot, leaving a wife and small daughter, we can feel her unbearable grief when we learn that the man was her husband, innocently walking home from a day's work. This tragic episode makes her the rightful representative of those who suffer.

Ms Vahidi's monologue to the audience is an impassioned outpouring of pure poetry. Whilst speaking the thoughts out loud of those experiencing their last moments of life, we hear the deafening sounds of rioting and shootings. This time it is she herself whose life is ended.

This immensely powerful production ends with a cobblestone lane spreading out across the apron of the stage as we hear the voices of protestors crying out for justice and compassion.

Muna Zubedi playing Azar Vahidi was nominated for the Blackie Award for Best Actress.

The script of "For the Sake of the Cobblestone Street That Takes Me to You" was awarded the William Valk Award for Best Original Script.

This production was nominated for the Marcel Huhn/Bruno Boeye Award for Stage Management.

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Sunday, 28 May 2023

New World Theatre Club, Luxembourg
Last Chance Saloon by Shari Gledhill

An excellent choice, our Adjudicator affirmed, to play this piece as a tab scene, the open stage at the Kurtheater being so vast and this play requiring just two capable actors, a tall table and two high barstools. Add to those basic requirements an excellently chosen and well executed sound and light design, and we have a slick and entertaining presentation.

The play opens with appropriate background piano bar music and cocktail lounge chatter, which gradually diminish as we meet an elegantly dressed woman, Karen, seated on her own, nursing an exotic beverage. She is joined by a man, a stranger to her (?). He is shy, awkward, polite, nervous. He attempts the hopeful chat-up we women have all heard, actually saying at one point, "Do you come here often". He is Antonio, a fire fighter, married - although, as the Karen points out, the groove on his wedding ring finger shows he is distanced from his wife. His explanations are so ambiguous and inconclusive, it's a wonder Karen continues to treat him so politely.

For her part, Karen takes to downstage to tell her story out front. Accompanied by skyblue lighting and sounds of seagull cries, she recounts how her husband, an obsessive gambler with insurmountable debts, left her by walking out into the North Sea. Six months later, he was apprehended in Australia (cue orange lighting and sounds of a didgeridoo) having remarried. He is now in prison for bigamy. I was clearly visualising the whole story in vivid colour.

So Karen and Tony have a lot in common - they have both been deserted by their spouses and, what a surprise, they both have two sons. Tony takes advantage of the coincidence to dangle hotel room keys in

front of Karen and suggest they nip upstairs for a quick one. The whole charade has been his idea, to inject a little romance (that was a romantic suggestion?!) into their marriage, having been unable to comprehend why Karen doesn't want him any more. We learn that Karen is totally unable to allow him even to touch her, as she is desperately worried about a lump she has discovered in her breast. Tony melts with love, relief and heartfelt sympathy. He will comfort and support her and see her through whatever the future may hold.

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English Youth Theatre, Belgium
***Chaos* by Laura Lomas**

To fill a stage the size of the Kurtheater's surely takes more than the three square boxes with which the scene is set - oh yes, and seventeen dynamic young performers, totally committed to their art, to flood this great space with their boundless energy and enthusiasm. Add to this the expertly projected images and titles, with each of the multitude of scenes being heralded by a single high-pitched musical note, and the result is compelling.

The characters in the piece are all named, however it is the imagery and the relationships between them that remain in the memory. All the scenes, both interconnected and disconnected one with the other, express the feelings, anxieties, concerns and strains of modern life to which we can all relate and which are experienced most intensely by young adults today.

The phenomenal emotional maturity of these young performers is impressive. The overall impression of the play is one of tumultuous outpouring of thoughts and emotions, dealing with such relevant topics as bullying, sexuality, suicide, depression, rejection, vulnerability, futility, frustration. The whole piece is expertly choreographed without a single moment of hesitation or even slight misstep, not even during the masterful lengthy ball bouncing! All the monologues, duologues and group pieces are smoothly and skilfully executed. This is an impactful ensemble piece which we will remember and reflect upon for a long time to come.

"If the world is in chaos, then it means there's no order and, if there's no order, then it basically means that anything is possible".

This production was awarded the BATS Trophy for 3rd Place.

Ruby May playing Chiarra was nominated for the Blackie Award for Best Actress.

This production was nominated for the Grand Duchy Trophy for Best Stage Presentation.

The choreography of this production was nominated for the Don Luscombe Discretionary Award.

This production was nominated for the Marcel Huhn/Bruno Boeye Award for Stage Management.

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New English American Theatre, Stuttgart
***Almost, Maine* by John Cariani**

Set in the mythical town of Almost in Maine, where folk enjoy the spectacle of the beautiful and romantic Northern Lights (magnificently reproduced for us in gorgeous full colour on the rear wall), this is a charmingly quirky play comprising five short vignettes, loosely interrelated and representing love stories between couples, but of a different kind to the amorous and happily ending tales we usually encounter.

The first twosome is a somewhat inhibited and slightly awkward couple, Pete and Ginette, who share a bench and, with the help of the mystical effect of the nighttime sky, share love too - or at least their

version of what love might be for such a seemingly well-suited pair.

Next we meet a young woman being approached by the owner of the land (East) on which she has decided to camp. The dialogue is pure fantasy that makes total sense, but this seeming contradiction is perfectly in line with the young woman's (Glory's) non-realistic conversational style. She tells East that her heart broke and her new heart doesn't love her husband. So she has killed her husband by breaking his heart and has brought his ashes to this special place to say goodbye. She needs a repair man to mend her broken heart. We know that East is a 'Mr. Fixit' and he blurts out "I love you". Who wouldn't, she's adorable.

A more domestic scene for the next vignette. We are in a boarding house where Steve is sitting perilously close to Marvalynn's swinging ironing board. No matter if she clunks him a few times on the head, as he suffers from a rare genetic disorder, congenital analgesia - an insensitivity to pain. He therefore spends his time writing up lists of things that can hurt you and things to be afraid of. Ironing boards becoming one of them. The wonderfully absurd dialogue for this piece is believable and completely convincing, and we love the fact that the couple finally find comfort in each other.

The next couple have just been skating and are putting on their shoes in the locker room. Only she has mislaid one shoe. She's angry at her partner and we eventually find out it's because he hasn't remembered that today is their anniversary, a very familiar scenario for a lot of us! Some lovely dialogue with Phil who wrongly identifies a planet as a star and is snappily told you can't wish on a planet! In the midst of their bickering, the mythical Northern Lights works its magic once more and Marcie's lost shoe drops from the skies.

Our final pairing brings Hope to the home of Daniel, an old flame. Their long ago love story had led to Daniel proposing marriage, but she had never given her answer. Regretting this deeply and having tracked him down after many years, she is now ready to answer "Yes". To start with, Hope does not recognise Danny but he only has to remove his glasses for her to see that it is indeed her one true love from so long ago. Unfortunately a woman's voice rings out from inside the house and Hope's hopes are cruelly dashed.

The play returns to Pete and Ginette and plays out with some beautifully atmospheric music, taking all our hearts away with it.

"Almost, Maine is a town that's so far north, it's almost not in the United States—it's almost in Canada. And it almost doesn't exist. Because its residents never got around to getting organized. So it's just...Almost."

This production was awarded the ECC Centennial Cup for 2nd Place.

Tom Wahrlich playing East was nominated for the Blackie Award for Best Actor.

David Burmedi playing Steve and also Phil won the Blackie Award for Best Actor.

Elena Gallego playing Glory was nominated for the Blackie Award for Best Actress.

This production was nominated for the Grand Duchy Trophy for Best Stage Presentation.

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Monday 29 May 2023

Theater de WAANzin, Ghent
Desperado by Ton Kas and Willem de Wolf
Translation by Dirk Crommelinck and Katrien Wernel

I can imagine that the adjudicator must have wondered what on earth the theatre group would do with a script like this. The dialogue is full of incomplete sentences, half thoughts, repetitive meaningless

expressions, circular in motion to say the least. But he had never before had the pleasure of seeing de WAANzin in action! And never before has the expression “bursting on to the stage” been more apt. The four would-be cowboys rampage on to the stage, yee-hawing and whooping all the way, so keen are they to start their weekend of freedom in their Wild West retreat in deepest Belgium. They bring with them rucksacks containing all the gear they need - checked shirts, waistcoats, Stetsons, even chaps and boots. All that's missing are their horses but, don't worry, four bilious green plastic bar stools on rocking legs will take them as far as they need to go. That and a copious supply of Leffe Belgian beer, stacked in a tower ten crates high to one side of the stage. It's hard to believe but the only other props are four hockey sticks which take turns in providing the fab four (Bert, Leo, Harrie and Robin) with rifles, canoe paddles, barbecue skewers, tomahawks, fishing rods.

The ear-splitting music helps whoop up the rock'n'roll atmosphere and intensifies the excitement of the four on stage. So adrenalized are they to get started that they race to get into their cowboy get-ups, never once letting up on the excited chitchat. This is an escape for them from their humdrum lives. It's where they come to life.

Smoother country western music takes over, cuing the boys to take up a proud stance facing the audience full on, looking mean and ornery, in charge, not to be messed with. The pauses, full of broody intent and silent threatening warnings, are masterful. Then suddenly we're treated to a western style jig, then the barstools line up to become a four-man canoe as they paddle downriver, we are treated to a near-Full Monty-style routine (I loved Bert's seductively slow turning boot toe), all four giving us non-stop twaddle-filled dialogue which nonetheless tells us all we need to know about them. Even though they yearn for the wildness of their cowboy weekends, their home and work lives are far from exciting or fulfilling. There is a definite sadness behind all their bluster.

The play whirls on, the chairs surrounding a bonfire with the lads barbecuing, using their sticks of course. But it's not long before a red Indian war dance around the fire ensues, each new idea evolving seamlessly from the last. With limitless imagination, this production takes us with breakneck speed from one rollicking escapade to the next. Obviously the hockey sticks have to become rifles and the audience is aimed at as if it were prey and then the rollickers gallop off into the sunset on their green plastic horses. Too much for them, they all have to stop and line up against the back wall to have a pee in true cowboy style. Wonderfully well chosen snatches of music play to back up each new scene - at one point we are treated to The Proclaimers' "500 Miles" and then we get a dead slow but perfectly executed line dance, again facing straight on to the audience, poker straight faces - this is serious stuff. But not before Harrie has been shamed and humiliated by one of his buddies recounting embarrassing gossip heard in the bar-room about his sex life - in front of everyone! The anger, shame, frustration, disappointment, feeling of being let down is so agonisingly deflating, but he'll be back for the next weekend away at Wild West World, wouldn't miss it!

Who knew there was an expression:- "That look - like pigs being shown a card trick."? It's new to me but I won't be forgetting it.

This production was awarded the Founders' Trophy for 1st Place.

Dirk Crommelinck was nominated for the Blackie Award for Best Actor.

This production was awarded the Grand Duchy Trophy for Best Stage Presentation.

The physicality of this production was nominated for the Don Luscombe Discretionary Award.

This production was awarded the Marcel Huhn/Bruno Boeye Award for Stage Management.

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Anglophone Collaborative Theatre of Stuttgart
***A Subsonic Romance* by Stuart Marlow**
An original script

The curtains opened to a beautiful applause-worthy interior scene with large, elegant windows and a door - all projected on to the back walls, the furniture in the apartment being set in front of the tabs. But the atmosphere in the flat is less than harmonious. Paula is kept awake all night by Robbie's chinchillas scratching in their cage, there are regular train noises, her cat ate her pet fish, aggressive cat hairs upset Robbie and, top of the list of complaints, there is a rocket testing centre close by which blasts off at regular intervals.

Both Paula and Robbie are scientists but unfortunately they are not too clever with people and relationships. His conversation with a historian "friend" tells us that there are those who believe that the testing centre is disturbing ancient warrior spirits. Her conversation with her Italian "friend" gives an excuse for him to snort cocaine on stage.

It is decided that they need to record the test blasts. Sorry, I couldn't get to grips with why this was necessary. Paula and Robbie end up agreeing that they are too similar for this to work so they will stay together in a platonic relationship.

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The Semi-Circle Basel
***Capri* by Roger Bonner**
An original script

We have furniture again set front of tabs, including a very smart desk, chair and armchair. Sinatra's "Isle of Capri" warbles out beautifully and we have a projected backdrop of Capri itself with actual rolling waves complete with sound effects. Sunny, bright, light and warm, this is absolutely gorgeous 'wish you were here' stuff.

Adrian Fuller is a crime author but he's suffering writer's block. Opening a bottle of wine might help the creative juices flow - or maybe not. The cork has got rammed down into the neck of the bottle. This could have been an absolutely disastrous props failure, especially as the wine is offered to another actor later and is also the subject of further action in the play. But Adrian continues unshaken, manfully miming pouring the wine, and not losing a moment of flow in the production. Bravo that man!

On with the plot:- We learn that Adrian's novels have featured three young female victims, when a doctoral student, Marissa Portland, visits to interview him. They discuss his work and the possible causes of death of the victims - carbon monoxide fumes from fermenting grapes (is that even possible?) when suddenly she accuses him of drowning her sister. She has poisoned his wine (see? It was integral to the plot) and, while he squirms in agony on the floor, it is revealed that all the women who have died in his novels have been killed by him, including his own wife. He doesn't have the imagination to enable him to create stories without first experiencing the actions himself. These are all real killings. Marissa covers her tracks, remembering to wipe clean everything she might have touched, and leaves. The picture of Capri on the rear wall dramatically shatters like a broken mirror and, as a sad version of the Isle of Capri song is heard, Adrian picks himself up of the floor and ends his book, "Die Well", the paperback cover of which appears on the back screen.

What a fabulous final flourish to a fantastic FEATS festival!

Alannah Burns playing Marissa Portland was nominated for the Blackie Award for Best Actress.

The script of "Capri" was nominated for the William Valk Award for Best Original Script.

The final scene of this production was awarded the Don Luscombe Discretionary Award.

[illegible]

In writing this report, it is not my intention for it to be a critique, but rather a straightforward account for those FEATs goers who were unable to be there this time, in order to give some idea of what was enjoyed.

Having attended many FEATS over the years, I know you will agree with me that this one at Bad Homburg was up there with the best - from both the organisational point of view as well as the artistic one. The general running of the festival was meticulously efficient, resulting in a very smooth operation, and the participating groups rewarded the organisers' efforts by presenting pieces of theatre of the very highest standards. To cap it all, the insightful comments, adjudications and GoDA gradings given by Ben Humphrey made this a festival to remember. And I'm not forgetting the excellent printed programme and the fun daily raffle - Dympna and Marc, that showed the height of audacity to draw your own winning number!

Feel like sending me a comment? Write to me at:- annie.dawes@orange.fr

See you all in Antwerp in May 2024!
Annie xx

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In the past FEATS winners were eligible for entry to the UK All Winners Final. However, the rules have changed and we are waiting to hear if any of the FEATS 2023 entries are eligible.

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I would like to wish you all a very happy and restful summer whether you stay at home or go off to distant shores.

WHAT'S ON IN THE THEATRE

| <u>When</u> | <u>Who</u> | <u>What</u> | <u>Where</u> | <u>Information</u> |
|---------------------|-------------------|---|--------------------------------|---|
| <u>June</u> | | | | |
| 6 – 10 | ATC, Brussels | <i>Baby Boom & Accelerated Intimacy</i> | Warehouse Studio | info@atcbrussels.com |
| 6-10, 14-17 | Hamburg Players | <i>The Children</i> | Theater en de Marschenerstraße | tickets@hamburgplayers.de |
| 8 – 12 | Entity Players | <i>Bombshells</i> | Theater und so fort | https://tinyurl.com/EntityBOMBHELLS |
| 12 – 13 | Tagora, Strasburg | <i>Improv. Show</i> | Cube Noir | https://myweezevent.com/tagora-presents-impo-at-the-cube |
| 16, 17, 18 | BATS, Antwerp | <i>A Night at the Movies</i> | Theater der FENIX, Mortsel | https://tickets.roodfluweel.be/bats |
| 24-26 | AATG, The Hague | <i>A Night on Broadway</i> | Wassenaar Theater | www.aatg.nl |
| <u>September</u> | | | | |
| 8,9,14,15, 21,22,23 | FEST, Frankfurt | <i>Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike</i> | Kulturhaus, Frankfurt | Committee@festfrankfurt.org |
| <u>November</u> | | | | |
| 17,18,19 | FEST, Frankfurt | <i>Death of a Salesman</i> | Kulturhaus, Frankfurt | committee@festfrankfurt.org |
| <u>December</u> | | | | |
| 1,2,3 | FEST, Frankfurt | <i>Death of a Salesman</i> | Kulturhaus, Frankfurt | committee@festfrankfurt.org |
| <u>January</u> | | | | |
| 19 – 21 | AATG, The Hague | <i>Treasure Island Panto</i> | Die Rieuwe Regentes Theater | www.aatg.nl |

Information for inclusion in the newsletter should be sent to :

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