

**GENEVA ENGLISH DRAMA SOCIETY**  
**Playreadings 2006-2007**  
**For the latest information: [WWS.GEDS.CH](http://WWS.GEDS.CH)**

version: 20 September 2006

**5 September**

**Opening Event :**

***If You're Glad, I'll be Frank***

by Tom Stoppard

performed by the GEDS committee

In this short comic play, a man discovers his long lost wife has now become the talking clock. He seeks in vain to try to free her from the clutches of the Post Office hierarchy.

**19 September**

***A Listening Heaven***

by Torben Betts

arranged by Rachel Nisbet

A pitch-black comedy from this exciting new writer, "A Listening Heaven" shows the painful unraveling of a very conservative English family's inability to grieve for their dead eco-warrior son. It was first produced in 1999 to critical acclaim at the Stephen Joseph Theatre in Scarborough, where Betts was the resident dramatist.

Characters: 2 Males, 4 Females

**3 October**

***Pelleas & Melisande*** by Maurice Maeterlinck; translation into English by Hugh Macdonald;

adapted and arranged for this playreading by Margaret Byskov

The play is one of the masterpieces of French Symbolist drama. Set in an imaginary land in medieval times, it centres around the tragic love of Pelleas for Melisande, who is married to Pelleas' brother. Impressionistic dialogue conveys an aura of melancholy and magic; words evoke emotions, not ideas, and the characters' speeches are marked by silences and many repetitions of phrases, creating the effect of a litany. Debussy's opera of the same name follows the play closely.

Characters: 5 Males, 2 Females

### **17 October**

*The Lady in the Van* by Alan Bennett  
arranged by Catherine Harari

The humorous and moving tale of Miss Shepherd, an eccentric old lady who, by a bizarre series of twists and turns, lived in the author's garden for many years.

Characters: 8+ Males, 4 Females

### **31 October**

*Popcorn* by Ben Elton  
arranged by Patrick Riley

Elton turns his savage wit to an examination of violence in art. Scout and her lunatic of a boyfriend Wayne are the mall murderers, randomly killing people. Bruce Delamitri is a well known director of violent films and winner of best Director Oscar. The Mall murderers are huge fans of Bruce's films and they decide that since they are obviously doomed for what they have done, the director of these violent movies can be their scapegoat.

Characters: 4 Males, 5 Females

### **21 November**

*Don't Drink the Water* by Woody Allen

Somewhere behind the early 1960s cold-war iron curtain, the Hollander family cause an international spying incident when Walter photographs a sunset in a sensitive region. In order to stay out of jail, the Hollanders take refuge in the American Embassy, which is temporarily being run by the absent Ambassador's diplomatically incompetent son, Axel.

Characters: 12 Males, 4 Females

performed by The EDGE (GEDS youth group)

for more information contact Ted Talbot

### **5 December**

*The Cocktail Hour* by A.R. Gurney  
arranged by Frances Favre

With a mixture of gentle comic poignancy and dramatic tension, one of America's leading contemporary playwrights here examines the problems that arise when John, a leading playwright, returns home to ask his parents' permission to produce his latest work, a play about his family. "The Cocktail Hour" had a long and successful run in New York and successful tours in both the UK and Australia.

2 Males (40s, 70s); 2 Females (40s, 60s)

### **19 December**

*Arms and the Man* by George Bernard Shaw  
arranged by Kareen Klein

This is one of Shaw's Plays Pleasant. The play opens when a Swiss mercenary from the Serbian army bursts into the bedroom of Raina, a young Bulgarian woman, who is engaged to Sergius, a Bulgarian war hero. She agrees to hide the "chocolate-cream-soldier", and this decision triggers a re-thinking of her romantic ideals. A couple of scheming servants, as well as Raina's watchful parents complete the picture.

Characters: 3 Females, 4 Males

### **9 January**

*Address Unknown* by Katherine Kressmann Taylor  
arranged by Maeve Jamet

In 1932, San Francisco art-gallery owner Max Eisenstein, a Jew who grew up in pre-Nazi Germany, bids farewell to his longtime friend and business partner Martin Schulse, who returns with his family to Munich, where he becomes a Nazi.

Characters: TBC

### **23 January**

*Crimes of the Heart* by Beth Henley  
arranged by Neil-Jon Morphy

A marvellously black comedy about three sisters with quite different personalities and whose lives reunite when the youngest of them, Babe, has just shot her husband. The oldest sister, Lenny, takes care of their grandfather and is turning into an old maid, while Meg, who tries to make it in Hollywood as a singer/actress, has had a wild life filled with many men. Their reunion causes much joy, but also many tensions.

Characters: 2 Males, 4 Females

### **6 February**

*The Bald Soprano* and *The Lesson*

by Eugène Ionesco  
arranged by Nathalie Reichert

"The Bald Soprano" (a.k.a. "The Bald Prima Donna" and "La Cantatrice Chauve") is a hilariously maniacal assault on the banality of English suburbia. A family is discussed, every member of which is called Bobby Watson; a young couple is alarmed to find that they have been married for years. For such people, words can have no meaning. It was the first play written by Eugène Ionesco and premiered on May 11, 1950. Since 1957 it has been in permanent showing at the Théâtre de la Huchette in Paris.

Characters: 3 Males, 3 Females

“The Lesson”: The Professor's private lesson begins well: his pupil seems remarkably gifted. Suddenly he discovers she cannot subtract. He persists in forcing her to understand and the lesson gets more frenzied as it goes on.

Characters: 1 Male (middle-age), 2 females (18, middle age).

## **20 February**

*Flow my Tears, the Policeman Said* by Linda Hartinian from the novel by Philip K. Dick

arranged by Patrick Riley

Popular variety show host Jason Taverner wakes up one morning in a world where he never existed. Nobody knows his fame and all computer data on him have been purged. America has become a police state and Felix Buckman, the policeman of the title, is convinced Taverner is plotting against the authority of the state—why else would he destroy all documentation of his identity? This intense, bizarre, and fast-paced work explores identity and the recognition of love, loss and grief.

Characters: 5 Males, 7 Females

## **6 March**

*Look Back in Anger*

by John Osborne

arranged by David and Debbie Farrar

Jimmy Porter, frustrated and bitter in his drab flat, lives with his middle-class, impassive wife Alison. Also sharing the flat is an amiable Welsh lodger who keeps things tenuously together. A love triangle develops involving Alison's snooty best friend. “Look Back in Anger” (1956) was a strongly autobiographical piece based on Osborne's unhappy marriage and life in cramped accommodation in [Derby](#). In [1958](#), the play was adapted for film and like the play was directed by Tony Richardson, seen as one of the "Angry Young Men" group of emergent British novelists and dramatists who focused on working class themes.

Characters: 3 Males (25, 60), 2 Females (25).

## **20 March**

*Equus* by Peter Shaffer

arranged by Ann Oakley

*Equus* centers on the explosive encounters between 17-year-old Alan Strang, who has blinded six horses, and Martin Dysart, the middle-aged psychiatrist who agrees to treat him. The play is structured like a mystery, as Dysart struggles to determine what drove Alan to commit the crime.

Characters: 5 Males, 4 Females, 6 horses

### **3 April**

***The Skin Game*** by John Galsworthy  
arranged by David Wark

Galsworthy wrote a great deal more than just the world-famous Forsyte Saga, the marvellous roman fleuve that won him the Nobel Prize in 1932. He also wrote powerful, commercially successful dramas of social conscience. "Strife" exposed the evils – on both sides - of industrial dispute. "Justice" helped Winston Churchill to ram through prison reform. "The Skin Game" (slang for bare-knuckle fighting) has enjoyed successful recent revival, because it's about the murderous passion for property our greedy Norman ancestors cursed us with. It tells what happens when a comfortable country gentleman sells a few acres to one of the newly-rich industrial class created by World War 1 – a new war, fought in microcosm, that involves everybody, young and old, rich and poor, in escalating conflict. He builds it steadily, with the same quiet power that pervades his novels, to a moving and shocking climax.

Characters: TBC

### **17 April**

***Translations*** by Brian Friel  
arranged by Jack Martin

In Baile Beag, an Irish-speaking community in County Donegal, a detachment of the Royal Engineers engaged on behalf of the British Army and government are making the first Ordinance Survey. Lieutenant Yolland falls in love with Maire, a peasant girl, and with Ireland -- but things don't remain idyllic for long. Set in 1833.

Characters: 7 Males (20s-middle age, 60s), 3 Females (20s).

### **15 May**

***The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie***  
adapted by Jay Presson Allen  
from the novel by Muriel Spark

Jean Brodie, teacher at the Marcia Blaine Academy, incurs the disapproval of her colleagues by her unconventional teaching methods, her favouritism among her pupils, and also by her admiration for Mussolini and Italy. Scandals - and murder - abound. Set in the 1930s.

performed by The EDGE (GEDS youth group)  
for more information contact Ted Talbot

## **5 June**

*A Busy Day* by Fanny Burney  
arranged by Valerie Antonietti

An heiress returns from India, her fiancé following. She is about to tell her nouveau riche family the good news but the family of her fiancé has other ideas. Mayhem and mistaken identities cause a hugely busy day of comedy and romance in the gaming houses, parks and salons of Regency London. Fanny Burney wrote this satiric comedy while in exile during the Napoleonic Wars (1800-1801) but never saw it performed in London. The first production was in the mid-1990s.

Characters: 7 Males, 7 Females

## **10 June**

*Special event at Chateau de Prangins:*

*Blithe Spirit* by Noel Coward  
arranged by Chuck Slovenski

Novelist Charles Condomine invites into his placid country home an eccentric lady medium in order to learn the language of the occult. Little does Charles or his second wife, Ruth, dream that the séance staged by the medium will summon back Charles' first wife, now "passed over" for seven years. But the lady from beyond appears and torments Charles by reminding him of their days and nights together. Only Charles can see or hear her. A floating vase, handed to her out of thin air, finally convinces Ruth that Charles is not losing his mind that his first wife is indeed in the room. The first wife has a ghostly plot in mind: if she can get Charles into an automobile accident and make a ghost of him, life in the spirit world will have more appeal for her. Mistakes occur, however.

Characters: 5 Females (young, 45, middle-age) 2 Males (40, middle-age)

## **19 June**

*Closing Event – to be held in the Lewis's garden :*

*Agadir*  
by David Lewis  
arranged by David Lewis

A cross-cultural and inter-generational love story unfolds between a sixtyish WHO secretary and a young Arab. Set during a week's package holiday over the New Year period.

Characters: 1 Male, 1 Female

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