

FUTURE PROGRAMME

January 28-29-30 1999 at 7.30 pm

THE OWL AND THE PUSSY CAT WENT TO SEA

by **David Wood**

adapted from the writings of Edward Lear

This charming adaptation by a dramatist who has specialised in work for children, was last presented by the company in 1979, when it won all hearts.

The play gives plenty of scope for spectacle and magic which should delight the very young. For the adults there are the words of one of the finest writers of nonsense which this country has produced. A quite irresistible combination.

Directed by Bett Hewlett

Please note the above dates which, unfortunately, were wrongly printed in our season's programme.

March 18-19-20 at 8.00 pm

ABSENT FRIENDS

by **Alan Ayckbourn**

Directed by Jon McNamara

May 13-14-15 at 8.00 pm

THE PRICE

by **Arthur Miller**

Directed by Tony Edwards

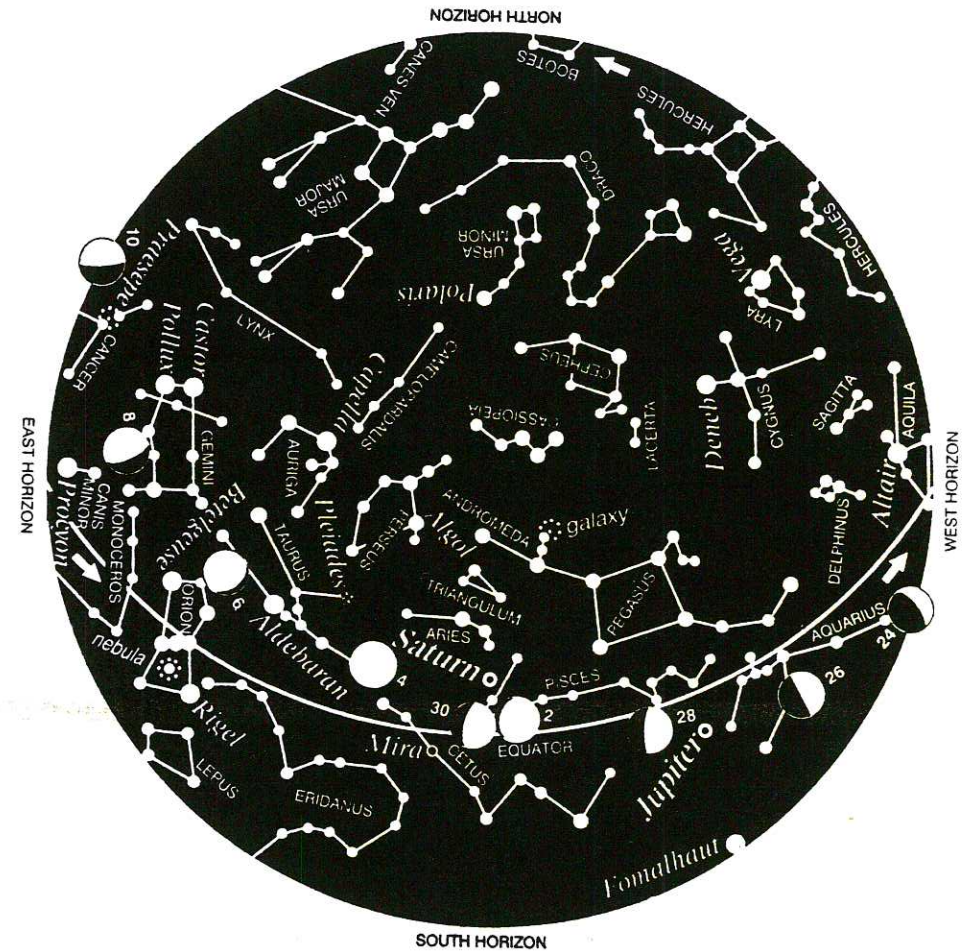
July 8-9-10 at 8.00 pm

IVANOV

by **Anton Chekov**

Directed by Jack Mitchley

VENUS



OBSERVED

MOOT HOUSE PLAYERS ACKNOWLEDGE WITH GRATITUDE
THE SUPPORT WHICH THEY RECEIVE FROM THEIR
PARENT-BODY, THE MARK HALL AND NETTESWELL C A.

1998

MOOT HOUSE PLAYERS
present

VENUS OBSERVED

A seasonal comedy by Christopher Fry

Characters in order of appearance:

HEREWARD, <i>Duke of Altair</i>	..	Gordon Whittle	
EDGAR, <i>Marquis of Charlock, his son</i>	..	Douglas Sheppard	
HERBERT REEDBECK, <i>his bailiff</i>	..	Jon McNamara	
CAPTAIN FOX REDDLEMAN, <i>his butler</i>		Gordon Hewlett	
DOMINIC, <i>son to Reedbeck</i>	..	Michael Caswell	
BATES, <i>footman to the Duke</i>	..	Rees Thomas	
ROSABEL FLEMING, <i>an actress</i>	} <i>ex-mistresses</i>	Una Smith	
JESSIE DILL		} <i>to the</i>	Rosemary Caswell
HILDA TAYLOR-SNELL		} <i>Duke</i>	Yvonne Mitchley
PERPETUA, <i>daughter to Reedbeck</i>	..	Vanessa Smith	

The play directed by Jack Mitchley

- Scene I The Observatory Room at Stellmere Park, the Duke's residence; the morning of Hallowe'en
 II The Temple of Ancient Virtues in the Park; after lunch
 III The Observatory Room; late that night
 IV The Temple; later still

There will be one major interval between Scenes II and III, during which refreshments will be available in the foyer and bar. The bar has a club licence, and members of the audience with a ticket for tonight's performance are entitled to use its facilities.

Setting devised by the director and decorated by Bett Hewlett
 Set built by Tony Edwards and members of the company
 Lighting and sound designed by Christopher Driver;
 operated by Simon Brewer
 Properties by Keeleys of Dobbs Weir; telescope by Paul Regeli
 Arms and armour by Michael Caswell
 Stage staff: Paulene Leggatt and Ian Beckett

HE AUTHOR AND HIS PLAY

Christopher Fry (born 1907) is still with us and active even in his nineties. He made his first spectacular entry into the London theatre in 1946; suffered, if anything, over-praise for a few years and then sank into relative obscurity, submerged - theatrically speaking - by a wave of fashionable inarticulateness. Fry's magic webs of words do not belong to the theatre of non-communication which has obsessed some of our dramatists in recent years, but he has never stopped working, particularly in the film world.

None of his work has ever had the audience appeal of his early comedies, *A Phoenix Too Frequent*, *The Lady's Not For Burning* and the present play, but posterity may find that his specifically religious work - notably *A Sleep of Prisoners* - is the most enduring. In the meantime, the Players are very happy to have this opportunity of presenting his second major comedy, which was commissioned in 1950 by Laurence Olivier for his season at the St James Theatre in London. To some degree, it is a vehicle for a "star" player but, equally, it has *ensemble* scenes which are almost Chekovian in treatment.

The players have given *Venus Observed* once before, in 1970, and Yvonne Mitchley survives from that cast but is now playing a different role, whilst others, Tony Edwards, Robin Harcourt and Jill Williams, are still, happily, working for us in various capacities.

Venus Observed forms the Autumn play of Fry's quartet of seasonal comedies . . . *The Lady's Not For Burning* (Spring), *A Yard of Sun* (Summer), *Venus* and *The Dark is Light Enough* (Winter). These four plays were spread over some 20 years in the writing but *Venus* is by far the most classically minded in the sense of references to the myths of Greece and Rome. The world has moved away from a classical base and we make no apologies for appending a short summary of the basic myth involved in the framework of this comedy. Perhaps the memories of some of the older members of our audience will be stirred!

The Legend of the Apple of Discord or *The Judgment of Paris*
The gods and goddesses of Olympus were assembled for the marriage of Thetis, a sea nymph, to Peleus, a mortal. Eris, goddess of Discord and Strife, furious at not receiving an invitation to the ceremony, threw among the guests a golden apple inscribed For the Fairest. This title was immediately claimed by Hera, Athene and Aphrodite - three of the most powerful goddesses present - and they appealed to Zeus, father of the gods and husband of Hera, to settle the dispute. Feeling that this task was, to say the least, a little delicate, Zeus hastily decreed that Paris, son of Priam of Troy, should make the judgment. The three travelled to Mount Ida and offered Paris gifts to influence his decision. Hera offered power, Athene success in war and Aphrodite the hand of the most beautiful woman in the world. Not surprisingly, Paris chose Aphrodite's gift and was awarded Helen of Troy, who was already married to Menelaus; the result was the Trojan War.