

Thornton Wilder never claimed to be "one of the new dramatists we are looking for". He was content to have "played a part in preparing the way for them. I am not an innovator," he claimed, "but a rediscoverer of forgotten goods". He fought against the conventional nineteenth-century theatre "box set" and the stilted language. At the beginning of *The Skin of our Teeth* he makes fun of old-fashioned playwriting but, he says, "the audience soon perceives that he is seeing two times at once. The Antrobus family is living both in prehistoric times and in a New Jersey commuters' suburb today." Our production has had its difficult moments in rehearsal, with rather more illness among the actors than one could wish for. However, it could be said to have reflected the message of the play. The chastened cast reckons that it has got through to the first night, in fact, by the skin of its teeth.

**WARNING!**  
**STROBE LIGHTING WILL BE USED BRIEFLY**  
**AT THE BEGINNING OF ACT III**

#### *FUTURE PRODUCTIONS*

May 14-15-16

**DEATH AND THE MAIDEN**

by Ariel Dorfman

This play emerged from South America and received its world première at the Royal Court Theatre in 1991 with Juliet Stevenson in the lead.

The action centres round a woman who encounters a man who had brutally tortured her during her imprisonment as a political prisoner. The play is a tense, taut exercise in psychological menace.

Directed by Ian Beckett

July 9-10-11

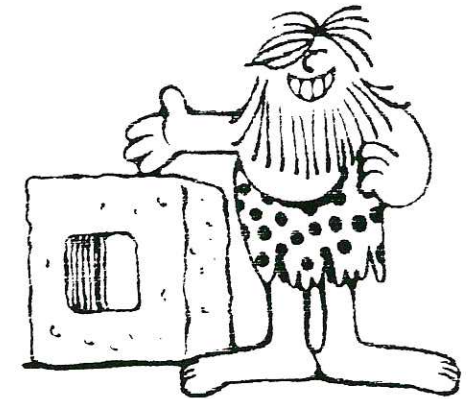
**UNCLE VANYA**

by Anton Chekov

Directed by Jack Mitchley

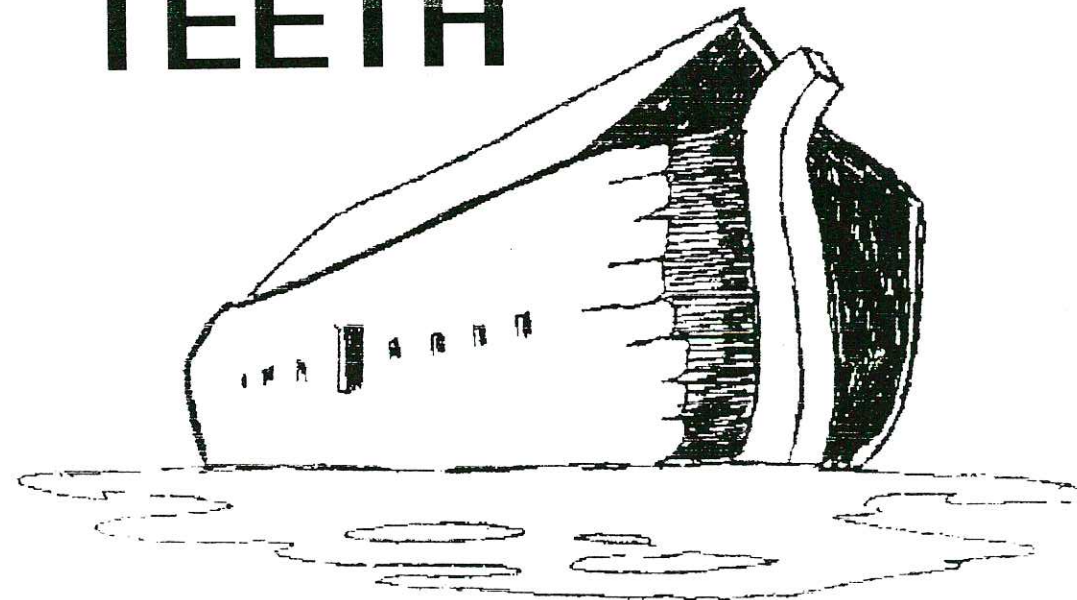
**MOOT HOUSE PLAYERS ACKNOWLEDGE WITH GRATITUDE  
THE SUPPORT WHICH THEY RECEIVE FROM THEIR  
PARENT-BODY, THE MARK HALL AND NETTESWELL C A.**

# THE



# SKIN OF OUR

# TEETH



1998

MOOT HOUSE PLAYERS  
present

# THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH

by Thornton Wilder

*Characters in order of appearance:*

ANNOUNCER	Gordon Hewlett
SABINA	Vanessa Smith
MR FITZPATRICK	Doug Sheppard
MRS ANTROBUS	Jennifer Southwell
DINOSAUR	Rebecca Sheppard
TELEGRAPH BOY	Doug Sheppard
GLADYS ANTROBUS	Nikki Robinson
HENRY ANTROBUS	Leslie Asser
MR ANTROBUS	John Truman
FORTUNE TELLER	Yvonne Mitchley
SANDWICH BOARD CARRIER	Rees Thomas

Other parts by Susan Higgins, Alex Asser  
and members of the company

The play directed by Jon McNamara

## SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Act I Home, Excelsior, New Jersey

Act II Broadwalk, Atlantic City

Act III Home, Excelsior, New Jersey

*There will be one major interval between Acts I and II, during which refreshments will be available in the foyer and the 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 created by Tony Edwards and designed by Bett Hewlett;  
built and painted by members of the cast  
Lighting and sound designed by Christopher Driver;  
operated by Simon Brewer  
Costumes by Laws and members of the company  
Properties by Michael Caswell and members of the cast  
Stage Management by Gordon Hewlett

## NOTES ON THE AUTHOR AND HIS PLAY

Thornton Wilder (1897-1975) was born in Wisconsin and spent much of his early life in Shanghai, where his father was the US Consul-General. He graduated from Yale and spent two years at the American Academy in Rome, basing his first book on his experiences there. In 1927 his short and quite remarkable book, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, established him as a leading novelist. By 1931, however, he had turned his attention to the theatre when he published his collection of experimental one-act plays, which included *The Long Christmas Dinner*. Employing the techniques which he had experimented with in those plays, Wilder wrote his full-length play, *Our Town*, in 1938. This was set on a bare stage, using the minimum of furniture - not so very different, after all, from the theatre of Shakespeare - but the effect in the thirties was stunning. "One of the most important theatrical experiences of this generation," reported the critic of the Chicago Tribune. It remains a most effective piece of theatre and was last seen in the West End in 1991 with Alan Alda leading a cast which included Jemma Redgrave. Wilder's next play, *The Merchant of Yonkers*, was not a success, running for only 39 performances. Years later he revised it and it eventually reappeared successfully in 1954 as *The Matchmaker*. It was, however, to enjoy even greater success in 1964 when it was turned into the hugely popular musical, *Hello, Dolly!*

*The Skin of our Teeth* (1942) was written in the year following the catastrophic Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor which brought the United States into the Second World War. We can imagine the devastating effect this must have had on the American people who had been accustomed to viewing wars as events which happened in other countries to other people. Wilder caught the mood of the times and wrote tonight's play which records man's and woman's resilience when confronted by the many disasters that mankind has had to face over the centuries. He comes to the encouraging conclusion that we just survive "by the skin of our teeth".