

March 7, 8 and 9, 1968

**SOUTHAMPTON UNIVERSITY
THEATRE GROUP**

presents

The Public Prosecutor

by FRITZ HOCHWÄLDER

Translated by Kitty Black

Directed by R. D. Bonwitt

Fritz Hochwälder

Fritz Hochwälder received little more than an elementary school education. At an early age he was apprenticed to learn the trade of an interior decorator—and so received not the least important part of his training as a dramatic author. Indeed, the very term 'author' is one which he only reluctantly uses of himself: 'I am happy to remain un-literate, to put plays on the stage in my own way—unliterary, unpretentious, popular plays.' And it is above all as a 'maker of plays,' a craftsman of well-constructed plots with a sure instinct for dramatic situation and for the effective handling of the stage, that Hochwälder stands out in an age which threatens to lose sight of the intrinsic needs of drama in its obsessive experimentation with anti-illusionist techniques, 'epic' theatre and other hybrid art forms.

If his training as a craftsman contributes much to the precision and sheer competence in his handling of his medium, it is Vienna, the scene of his birth, childhood and youth, to which Hochwälder owes that indefinable sense of theatre which is so often lacking in the more exclusively literary products of the German dramatic muse. For Hochwälder, 'theatre is by no means literature. . . . From its beginning as well as at its zenith, the theatre has always had greater affinity with the circus than with the seminar, with clownery than with the scholar's study. Often theatre ends as literature. Where it begins as literature, it usually doesn't last long as theatre.' It is not difficult to detect in these words an echo of the conviction held by Austria's greatest playwright, Grillparzer, that the text of a drama is not all that different from the libretto of an opera. They are words which betray an unmistakable debt to the whole popular tradition of Viennese theatre—to a heritage which, from Stranitzky, Nestroy and Raimund down to Hofmannsthal and Schnitzler, has done more than any other in German-speaking countries to establish the theatre as the true and indispensable medium of drama.

But it was still as an interior decorator, who dabbled in writing plays as a hobby, that Hochwälder left Vienna at the age of 27 and took refuge from the Nazi invasion of Austria by illegally crossing the border into Switzerland, where he has been domiciled for the greater part of his life. Only then, and because he was forbidden by the immigration authorities to ply a trade, did he seriously—and not without reluctance—turn his hand to 'making' plays as his sole means of livelihood. After the war his reputation was soon internationally consolidated by the acclaim which greeted the widespread translation and performance of **Das heilige Experiment**. In London the successful run of this play in 1955-56 under the title **The Strong are Lonely** had been preceded two years earlier by a television performance of **The Public Prosecutor**, voted the second best programme of the year, a football match taking first place—a fact that Hochwälder would surely have been the last to deplore! The Public Prosecutor is a fine and typical example of Hochwälder's dramatic art. The theme of private and collective guilt, shared by many of his other plays, is none the less topical for being developed in historical rather than contemporary terms. When the inhuman algebra of the Reign of Terror is propounded with such dramatic cogency and inevitability, there is no need to spell out the analogy with more recent political bloodbaths. For this is more than a mere *pièce à thème*, it is also a brilliantly executed dramatic construction. In the words of a German critic, 'the machinery of destruction is rendered so visible that the play's cool, unadorned architecture has the effect of a mathematical paradigm in the art of drama.'

E.E.P.

THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR

CAST IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Grébeauval

Roger Mitchell

Fouquier-Tinville

Everard O'Donnell

Tallien

Ian Portman

Sanson

Oliver Britton

Montané

Tony Leek

Thérésia Tallien

Jenny Castle

Fabricius

Peter Cook

Héron

Toby Hazan

Guards

Martin Kay, Richard Cullen

PATRONS :

the play takes place in the office of the Public
the French Republic in the prison of the

The Arts Festival Committee would like to express
gratitude to the following for their generous patronage

THE PUBLIC

CAST IN ORDER OF

Grébeauval

Fouquier-Tinville

Tallien

Sanson

Montané

Thérésia Tallien

Fabricius

Héron

Guards

M

ACTION :

The action of the play takes place in the office of the Public Prosecutor of the French Republic in the prison of the Conciergerie.

Act One : 10 o'clock on the morning of August 20th 1794.

Act Two : Later the same afternoon.

Act Three : The same night.

There will be two intervals of 15 minutes each when the fully-licensed Theatre Bar will be open.
Coffee, soft drinks and chocolates are also available.

PROSECUTOR

OF APPEARANCE

Roger Mitchell

Everard O'Donnell

Ian Portman

Oliver Britton

Tony Leek

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Peter Cook

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Martin Kay, Richard Cullen

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FOR SOUTHAMPTON UNIVERSITY THEATRE GROUP

Stage Manager
Set designers
Lighting designer
Lighting operator
Sound
Set constructed by

Antony Paddle
Tom Welch
Dave Hoare
Paul Jennings
Pete Scott
Mick Brett
Gordon Williams
Pete Jackson
Hilary Jackett
Rosalind Kings
Gill Wenger
Ann Froude
Pam Harrison
Julie Newman
Anna Thorpe
Sally Liddon
Caroline Stubbings
Carol Unwin
Bristol Old Vic

Set painted by
Properties
Wardrobe

Prompter
Make-up
Business Manager
Production Secretary
Costumes lent by

We would like to thank the "Fox and Hounds"
of Bursledon for the loan of two chairs.

FOR NUFFIELD THEATRE

Licensee
Business Manager
Technical Manager
Chief Electrician

D. A. Schofield
Joan H. Abbs
G. L. S. Batty
Derek Jones

In accordance with the requirements of the licensing authority :

- 1 The audience may leave at the end of the performance by all exit doors.
- 2 All gangways, corridors, staircases, and passageways which afford a means of exit shall be kept entirely free from obstruction.
- 3 Persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways except in positions authorised by the licensing authority and in the numbers indicated in the notices exhibited in those positions.
- 4 The safety curtain shall be lowered and raised at each performance in the presence of the audience.

The management reserves the right to refuse admission, also to make any alteration in the cast which may be rendered necessary by illness or other unavoidable causes.

The taking of photographs in the Theatre is forbidden