

A3 DRAMA FESTIVAL

La Cigolli in the Jeffreys Room; *Hay Fever* in the Music School and *Death* in the Social Club. Yes, an epidemic — of Drama. It was the A3 Festival. A weekend of pulsating creativity and all pupil-powered. It started with a tiff between certain free artistic spirits and that body of staff reactionaries, the Drama Committee. This tiff was like a gritty irritant in the shell of that smooth oyster known as Bryanston.

- Never mind the grit, look at the pearls.
- Never mind the fancy writing, get to the point.

The A3 Festival was a weekend full of theatrical and musical activity which left the Coade Hall in the dark. Instead performance and events took place all over the school. Several performers took part in more than one event: more than one performer gave four stage performances in twenty-four hours. Amazing. Not since the 1977 Jubilee Celebrations has there been so much happy activity.

- I am not happy. I came five minutes before the performance and it was packed and I could not get in.
- I am furious. I came *ten* minutes before the performance and the play had *started* and I could not get in.
- I want to see the Headmaster.
- You can't: he's in there, the play's started and he can't get out.
- Well you let him know I think this is disgraceful. I am beside myself with fury. Fury, d'you hear?

Proceedings began with an intimate, meticulously planned production of Noel Coward's "Hay Fever" in the Edwin Evans Music Room. The performance began dead on time and the casual latecomers — an all-too-common species — were firmly told they could not come in. This set a pattern for the weekend: plays started on time or early as each venue was crowded long before curtain up. Even punctual spectators met with shut doors and disappointment.

- I want to see Chekhov's "The Bear"
- It's not on.
- Yes, it is. In the Coade Hall.
- No, it isn't.
- Well, where is "The Bear"?

Back to "Hay Fever". Directors Alex Hall and Fiona Bailey had obviously taken immense trouble to get every little detail just right. The cast had been well and efficiently rehearsed and showed admirable discipline and poise when placed almost eyeball to eyeball with the audience. All the cast were good: I particularly liked Margaret Lampard's tetchy maid, Frances Child's elegant and properly histrionic Judith Bliss; Murray Black was a splendidly be-blazered silly ass; Alison McLean had the right waspishness for the Bliss daughter and Fiona Sorotos maintained a cool disengagement when faced with the outrageous Bliss family. A meal was served and consumed on stage, scenes were shifted before all eyes and the whole production was admirable in every way.
