

own narrative voice aged from four to fifty. It was at first jarring to find her interrupting her tale with some rather kitschy pop songs, but her delivery soon overcame any stylistic doubts. The bare staging, relying on the performance, is typical of the work of director Sohn Jin-Chaek.

On a completely different scale was Lee Youn-Taek's *Three Beautiful Soulmates*, performed by his Street Theatre Troupe in the fine modern amphitheatre of the Namsan Drama Centre. The piece uses the full resources of traditional Korean theatre, music, drumming, and acrobatic dance (it starts with a traditional mask-drama). Yet with energetic doubling from its cast of two dozen, it achieves an epic Western, almost Boubil and Schonberg effect with the broad sweep of its narrative, which explores a key moment in Korean history through the different paths taken by a trio of monks. Highlights of a most ambitious production were the performance of actress Kim So-Hee and the lighting of Cho In-Gon. It's no surprise that this production carried off most of last year's theatre awards. Lee Youn-Taek is perhaps best known for his 1989 play *Ogu: a Ritual of Death*, which continues to play to full houses in Seoul.

Young director-playwright Park Keun-Hyung, another regular award winner, has had success with a more domestic play, *Kyung-Suk's Father*, a tragic-comic study of a common Korean problem, the absentee paterfamilias. By setting the story in and around the Korean War, Park gives the play a not completely earned political resonance, but much of the audience's pleasure comes from its comic elements, with some particularly fine supporting performances. The moment when the Holy Ghost arrives to sort out the muddle of Kyung-Suk's family, which has by now acquired two fathers and two wives, suggests a certain desperation on the part of the author, but the slapstick-realist style of the production, something I am beginning to recognize as particularly Korean, just about covered it.

In the Seoul Performing Arts Festival, apart from *Three Beautiful Soulmates*, Korean productions included versions of *Mother Courage* and *4.48 Psychosis*. On the international side there was Russia's Formalny Theatre (of *School for Fools* fame) with *Between Dog and Wolf*, another piece of scenic poetry. I caught Tel Aviv's Cameri Theatre with a bold devised piece, *Planter*, which translates roughly as *Tangle*. Its mixed cast of Jewish and Arab actors, directed by Yael Ronen, found rich dramatic material in the irreconcilable problems facing their country. Our Iranian delegation seemed to take special pleasure in the show.

And that is part of the richness of a meeting like this, where many views of theatre and the world can come together, not always in harmony but usually with respect as a guiding principle. We worked hard, too, setting up the mechanism

for a world exchange of theatre journals, and forming the IATC's first Asian members' board. A feisty group of new critics, graduates of our seminar programme, came up with some bright ideas on how the Association might develop in its next fifty years, and at the other end of the scale Eric Bentley, who at the age of ninety had travelled from New York to receive our first Thalia Prize, given for the impact on critics of his writings, was still full of provocation and pizzazz.

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Ian Herbert

A Farewell to Peter Hepple

Peter Hepple, who died on 12 October 2006, had been an Advisory Editor of *New Theatre Quarterly* from the first issue of the relaunched journal back in 1985, and worked with us in the late 1970s during the old *Theatre Quarterly*'s successful campaign to recreate a British Centre of the International Theatre Institute, of which he remained a council member. Here, in a tribute first published in *The Independent* on 14 October 2006, Ian Herbert remembers the man in the mac who was welcomed everywhere.

IN OVER half a century of reviewing and reporting on the entertainment industry, and twenty years as Editor of *The Stage*, Peter Hepple accumulated an unequalled knowledge of cabaret, variety, bands, theatre, and dance. He knew a fair amount about football, too.

Born in Wood Green, north London, in 1927, Peter Hepple was brought up from the age of nine by his maternal grandmother, while his father, working shifts at Cable and Wireless, introduced him to music hall with regular visits to the Wood Green Empire. He went to the City of London School, and was evacuated with it during the Second World War to Marlborough. Post-war National Service with the Royal Engineers took him to Orkney, Egypt, and Turkey; it was in Ankara, he said, that he developed a taste for night clubs.

He trained as a surveyor, but left to take a job in publishing with *Burke's Peerage*, where he met his wife-to-be, Josie. Later, he became editor of publications for the Institute of Petroleum, where he also helped organize the Institute's conferences. Already he was finding his true vocation in

entertainment journalism, beginning freelance work for *The Stage* in 1950.

His first review was of the female impersonator Ella Shields at the Queen's, Poplar; he went on to cover the small club theatres that were the predecessors of the fringe, extending his geographical range to out-of-London theatres and later developing his knowledge of the club and cabaret scene as editor of *The Stage's* 'Night Beat' section for ten years. In 1972 he took on the editorship of the paper itself, a post he held with distinction for twenty years, during which time a large number of talented young journalists and reviewers cut their teeth under his guidance. Unable to contemplate retirement, he was soon back as consulting editor, a post he held until his death, continuing to review everything from West End first nights to the cabaret showcases that had become an important feature of the paper under his editorship.

No other member of the Critics' Circle (of which he was successively Treasurer, Secretary, and Trustee, being instrumental in setting up their lifetime achievement award and the drama section's annual award ceremony) could be found reviewing jazz, pier-end shows, new theatre buildings, and operas, bringing the same enthusiasm and expertise to each.

A founder member of the Circle's 'smokers corner', which in recent years has been forced to take its guilty pleasures on theatre steps, Hepple would regularly regale the likes of Michael Billington and Charles Spencer with stories of his

sorties to the farthest reaches of the entertainment world. His trademark mac and fag made him appear more at home in the tiny pub venues where he and I would sometimes be almost the only members of the audience, but he was welcomed everywhere. (Another trademark, his spectacles, disappeared recently when he benefited from laser eye surgery.)

His last theatre review was of the National Theatre's *Pillars of the Community* in November 2005, when a health scare finally persuaded him to slow down, but as recently as a month before his death he was reviewing a variety showcase in the Cadogan Hall. His last feature article, on psychics in the entertainment industry, appeared in *The Stage* in the following week.

Although he preferred the traditional typewriter, Hepple did eventually become familiar with the computer keyboard, and was responsible for compiling much of the copious reference material that appears on the *Stage* website. He had an insatiable appetite for show-business facts, most of which he kept in his head. Away from *The Stage*, he contributed to many other journals, including *Boxing News*, *Show Pictorial*, and *Where to Go in London*, whose theatre column he wrote until it was absorbed by the rival *What's On*. He remained a conscientious council member of the International Theatre Institute's British Centre, contributing regular UK round-ups to their biennial 'World of Theatre' survey.

Peter Hepple married Josephine Barnett in 1954, and they have two daughters.