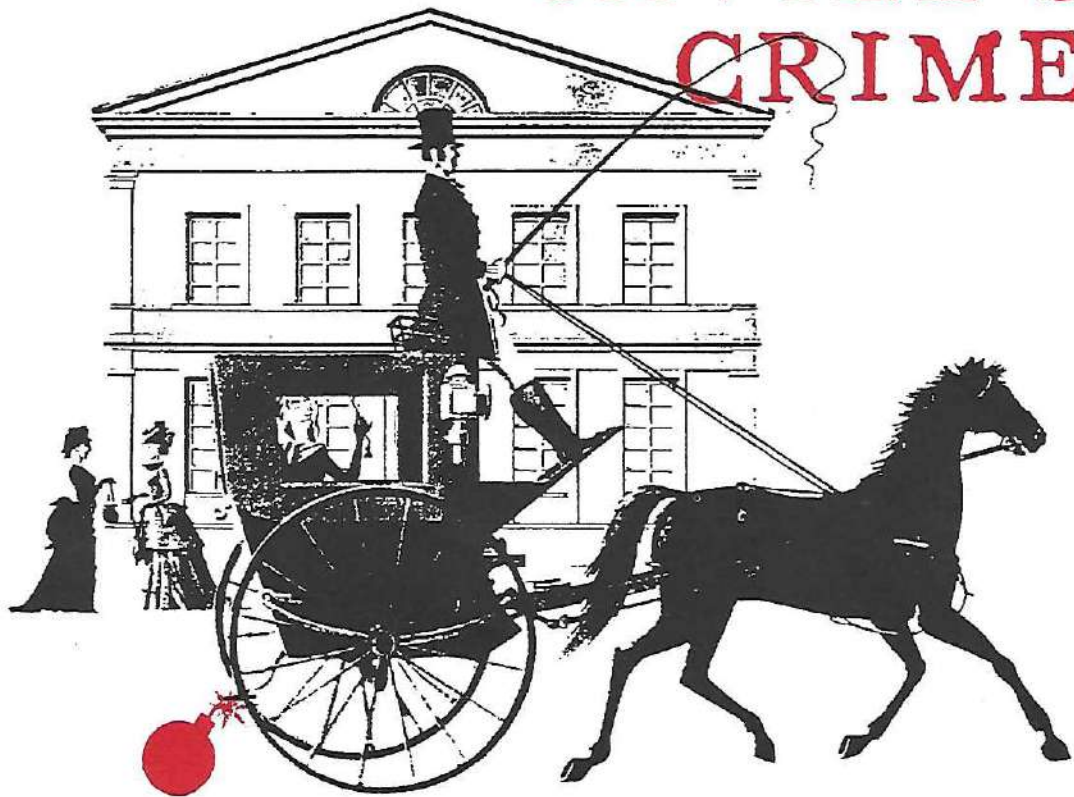




LORD ARTHUR SAVILE'S CRIME



A Comedy by Constance Cox

based on the short story by Oscar Wilde

Directed by Sonia Dell

At the BÄUMLIHOF GYMNASIUM, Riehen

19th, 20th, 21st and 22nd October
Starting at 7.30 p.m.



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Lord Arthur Savile's Crime

A comedy by Constance Cox

based on the short story by Oscar Wilde

directed by Sonia Dell

Cast in order of appearance:

Lord Arthur Savile.....Kevin Ashbridge
 Baines, the butler.....Eric Collino
 Sybil Merton, his fiancée.....Isabelle Gould
 The Dean of Paddington, his uncle.....Theo Bucher
 Lady Windermere, his aunt.....Diana Zuger
 Lady Clementina Beauchamp, his great-aunt.....Cynthia Baer
 Lady Julia Merton, Sybil's mother.....Joy Scherer
 Mr. Podgers, a cheiromantist.....Edward Atkinson
 Nellie, the maid.....Thérèse Offrell
 Herr Winkelkopf, an anarchist.....Dennis Dell

The action of the play takes place in the drawing room of Lord Arthur's house in Grosvenor Square, London, over several days in the late 1890's.

There will be an interval for refreshments halfway through the second act.



Crime?
Pleasure?
So what...
the Roche ians.



Director's Notes

Devotees of the Semi-Circle may well remember that "*Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*" was our first public performance, a play-reading way back in 1975: therefore it seemed somehow appropriate to choose it as my first major production. I particularly wanted to do a comedy and the fact that this is a very funny play only helped to confirm my choice.

True connoisseurs of Oscar Wilde will of course realise that this "*Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*" is not by Oscar Wilde at all. He wrote the short story of the same title in 1891, and this was later adapted by Constance Cox into the three-act play you are seeing tonight. Oscar followed with even more well-known works in the same vein: "*Lady Windermere's Fan*" and "*The Importance of Being Earnest*". Frivolous and light-hearted, it was the underlying wit and humour in all his works which perhaps explains why they are appreciated and enjoyed to the present day.

Semi-Circle producers notoriously have problems finding a cast - not enough men available, actors who are too old or too young for the parts, not to mention the special demands of musicals. But I had very little trouble getting my cast together - beginner's luck, maybe.

With reference to musicals, only Richard Levitt would have dared to try - and succeed - to turn our motley crew of singular talents into the fluid, wonderful spectacle that miraculously appeared on the stage as "*The Boy Friend*". If my "*Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*" manages to hold your attention, amuse and entertain you to even half the extent of "*The Boy Friend*" and our other productions, I for one will be well pleased.

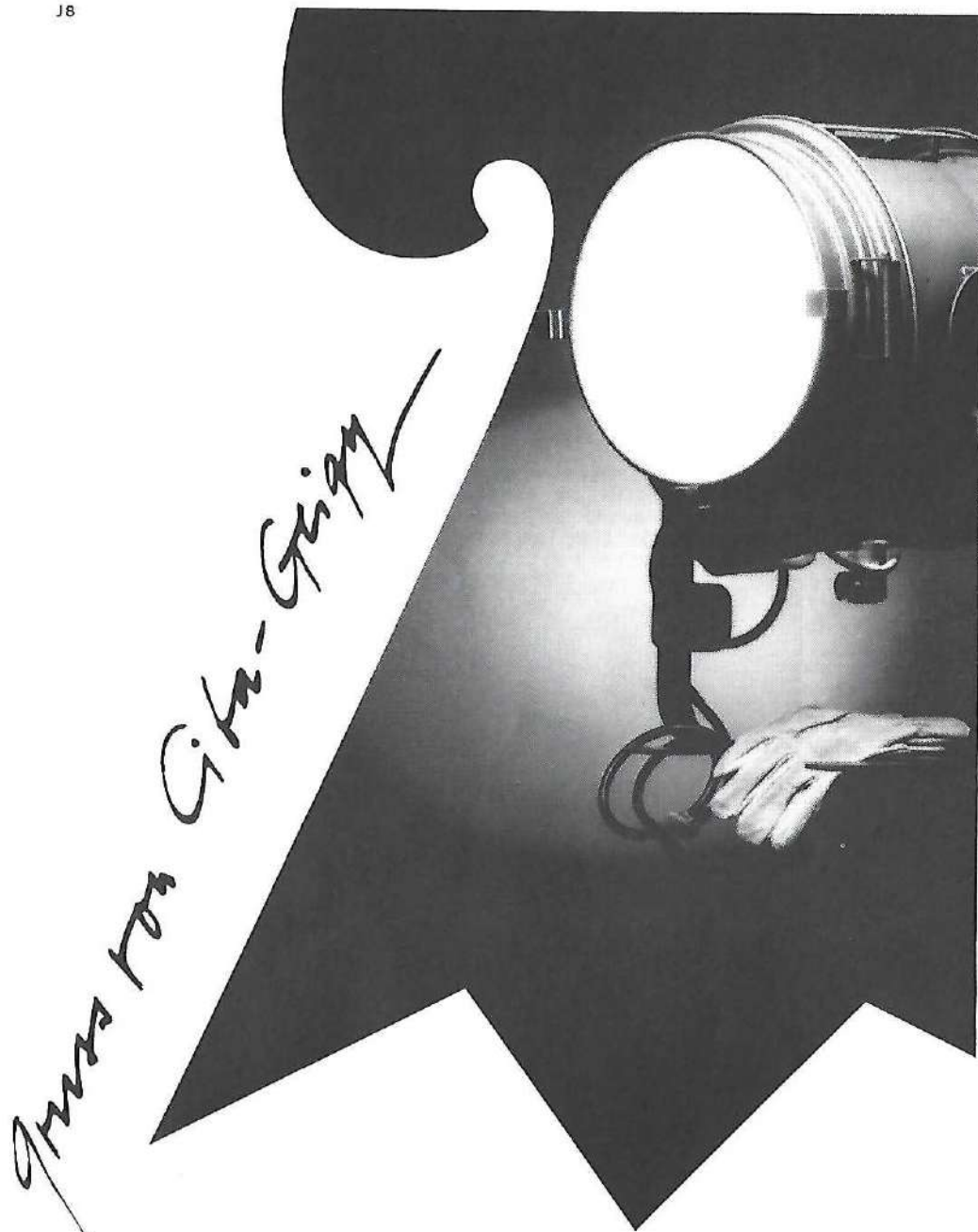
Your Director,

Sonia Dell

CONSTANCE COX

Constance Cox is British, with a year of birth given as 1915 and an address in Hove, Sussex. Her publications have ranged from the literary ("*Parson Brontë's Daughters*") to the intriguing ("*What Brutes Men Are*"). But her real strength was in adaptation of literary classics to the stage and screen, with titles such as "*The Picture of Dorian Gray*" (1953), "*Vanity Fair*" (1946) and, since 1959: "*Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*", "*Wuthering Heights*", "*Pride And Prejudice*", "*Northanger Abbey*", "*The Woman In White*", "*A Christmas Carol*", "*Everyman*", etc.

Those of you who have read the short story, "*Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*" will notice that the play is not just a simple adaptation. Some loose ends in the original story have been neatly tied up, and some aspects of character, particularly of the leading lady and her mother, have been made more credible - all this while still remaining within the style and framework set by Oscar Wilde.



Introducing the Cast

Edward Atkinson

Edward has lived in Switzerland for four years. He joined the Semi-Circle in 1991, and has appeared in various workshop productions, as well as in the main production "An Inspector Calls" last year. This may be his last Semi-Circle performance due to an inability to learn lines and violent hiccupping caused by stage fright immediately before a performance.

Eric Collino

Eric is a Londoner, born just outside the sound of Bow Bells, so not quite a Cockney. He has been living in Switzerland for 13 years and joined the Semi-Circle three years ago. Only previous acting experience at that time: 3 minutes on stage in the firm's pantomime in '63. He has since appeared in the workshop production "Thermal Underwear" and the main production "An Inspector Calls". He spends his spare time wondering which part of his Hi-Fi system is next due for a change.

Joy Scherer

Born in Leicester, England, Joy first came to Basel 26 years ago. She is married to a Swiss and is mother of two teenage daughters. She joined the Semi-Circle in 1984, and made her acting debut with the group in the workshop production "Fumed Oak". Since then, she has appeared in several one-act plays as well as having a go at directing. This is her third appearance in a major production, after "Nightmare" and "An Inspector Calls".

Isabelle Gould

Isabelle has been on the stage from the early age of seven! She is a Surrey girl and has been in Switzerland for more than three years and works for the Bank for International Settlements. Most of her experience has been in pantomimes and she has played almost every part in this genre, including Dorothy in the "Wizard of Oz". Her first acting job for the Semi-Circle was as the prim and proper sister with a betting habit in the workshop production, "George".

Thérèse Offrell

Thérèse comes from Sweden and has been living in Basle for more than four years. She works for Crossair, which she enjoys very much. She joined the Semi-Circle earlier this year as a prompter in "Sweet Caroline Sweet". Thérèse has been acting, singing and dancing since she was a child and is looking forward to continuing together with the Semi-Circle.

Theo Bucher

Is of Swiss and English descent. He grew up in Middlesex, studied in London and came to Basle to stay in 1974. After joining the Semi-Circle in 1986 to nurse his ailing English, he got roped into building scenery and handling lighting for the pageants in 1987. Since then there have been few jobs he has not done in one production or another. He has had acting roles in "Love for Love", "The Crucible" and "Nightmare".

Kevin Ashbridge

Kevin first appeared on the stage for the Semi-Circle in "Thermal Underwear", where he played out his mid-life crisis to the tune of popping champagne corks. Before that he successfully played a tree in a Christmas play directed by Norman Koeth. He has been in Basle since 1991, with a string of acting roles from local theatre groups in his native New Zealand. Many of you may have been impressed with his kaleidoscopic Irish accent in our recent workshop production "A Sense of the Ridiculous".

Cynthia Baer

Cynthia comes from New Jersey and works for a publisher. She played a leading role in the Semi-Circle production, "I Remember Mama" and was last seen for the Semi-Circle in one of the Bennett monologues earlier this year. She has also produced programmes for the Semi-Circle as well as handling publicity and advertising for some of our productions.

Diana Zuger

Diana originally comes from Bournemouth, England, but has lived in Switzerland since 1967. As a founder member of the Semi-Circle, she also took part in its inaugural performance back in 1975, which was the reading of Lord Arthur Savile's Crime, when she had the role of Sybil. How the years go by!! She has had a string of roles in many of the Semi-Circle productions over the years and was last seen performing the Alan Bennett monologue "Bed Among The Lentils".

Dennis Dell

Dennis is a real London cockney, born within the sound of Bow Bells. He works for Roche and is a keen nature enthusiast and an expert on butterflies. He first went on the stage for the Semi-Circle as a nasty little lawyer in "Love for Love", and continued with roles in "The Crucible", "What's for Pudding" and as the dirty old man with a vivid imagination in "George". He has also been very active within the Semi-Circle as production manager, programme editor and spotlight operator.

If All The World's A Stage, Who's Looking After the Props?

"Props" is short for Properties. The Oxford Dictionary defines these as "stage appurtenances" - grab that dictionary again!!!

The difference between Props and Stage Set has become rather fluid, so that props cover anything that is not stage furniture or costumes. One man's prop is another's stage set.

Props can help the playwright define or assist in setting the scene or action in terms of time and place, or create a mood at various points in the play. They have become so important that a special person has to be delegated to collect them in the run-up to the production and dress the stage set with them so that they are in their right place at the right time when they are needed. Props can also be a stage manager's nightmare. Let's look at some of the adventures we have had with props in the Semi-Circle.

Many of you will have enjoyed our last workshop production. It included "Sweet Caroline Sweet" and this play was one of the most technically complex things we have ever done. The story line needed two apartments to look completely different. To allow this to occur in the very short time available for scene changes, the furniture had to remain the same, but small objects, which gave the rooms their distinct character, had to be changed or rearranged. These scene changes were carried out in semi-darkness in full view of the narrow confines of the Cellar Theatre, Schönes Haus, which was full to the brim for almost every performance. The stage hands had to rehearse almost as thoroughly as the actors to get everything just right. You may have noticed them sitting up front, close to the stage on the right, peering bleakly at their lists of cues and prompts, before rushing madly onto the stage to shift cards, newspapers, cups and glasses, drink trays, pictures, furniture and furniture covers without tripping over the carpets and breaking their necks before the lights man shouted at them to get off the stage - the next scene was about to start.

Also included in this workshop was "George".

The action in "George" required two beds, one for Mr. Smith and the other for his imaginary companion. These were two domestic beds, which had to be raised to look like hospital beds. There was a very loud and sharp crack during one of the performances, as Mr. Smith jumped about the bed a little bit too exuberantly. We have heard about bringing the house down, but the beds belonged to the director and she wanted them back!

Of course, an avant garde Director of "George" might have just dressed Mr. Smith in pyjamas, placed him in the middle of a bare stage and expected the audience to imagine the beds. But would this have given the right "message" on what the play was all about? Nevertheless, I believe Muriel is seriously considering this possibility out of concern for her furniture.

The plot of "George" also required a home-made stuffed rabbit, and

Synopsis Of 'The Play

Lord Arthur Savile's engagement to the lovely Sybil Merton looks like never ending at the altar - all because Lady Merton's pet chiromantist Podgers has read Lord Arthur's palm and foretold he would commit a murder. Lord Arthur naturally desires a blissful married life and, therefore, feels duty bound to get the crime over with first. But despite valiant assistance from his butler and the cheerful anarchist Winkelkopf, attempt after attempt fails. Then news comes that Podgers is a charlatan: Lord Arthur is free, and the carriage waits to take him to the wedding rehearsal. Alas, it contains Winkelkopf's newest bomb. Getting rid of this provides the final complication Period of the action: 1890.

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CLIPPERS

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a rather conventional, purchased rabbit with label prominently visible was used for the rehearsals. A rather cute and funny looking hand-made rabbit was found and the exchange made. Unfortunately, nobody had mentioned this to the actor playing Mr. Smith, who first came face to face with this beautifully ridiculous little rabbit in the middle of a performance in front of a full house. You could see that it was taking all his self-control not to burst out laughing on the spot!

A bed also played a role in "*I Remember Mama*", and was set on wheels to get it on and off the stage quickly, with the large-framed Richard Levitt in it!

In the last major production, "*An Inspector Calls*", Basle shops were searched high and low for a round red table cloth, an every day item that we thought should cause no difficulty. None was found and Barbara Hümmel found herself making one, just before the play opened! When the opportunity to obtain the whole set of this play from a Brockenstübe arose, it was jumped at. With bargains such as this, the simple details can cause problems. The backs of the chairs were too high and sometimes screened the actors from the audience! The table had fruit and sweets. The sweets were eaten and regularly replenished, but the fruit was left alone, till days later it was suddenly noticed with panic that the fruit had not only visibly wilted, but actually gone off! The household portrayed was a wealthy one. So the silver of all the committee members was borrowed for the duration of the performance. If the committee's families then had to eat with their fingers they can say it was all in the cause of art!

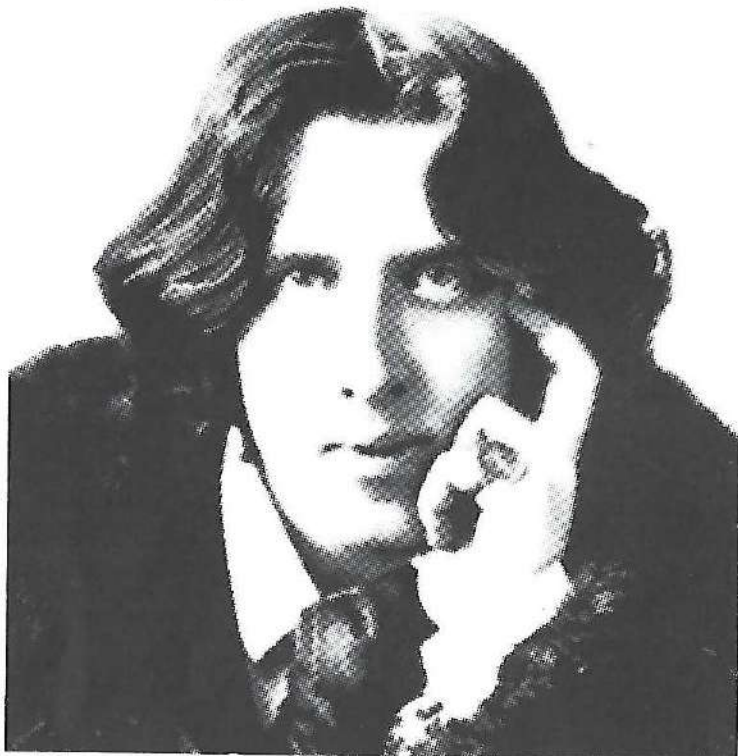
"*An Inspector Calls*" also required an engagement ring and it is easy to understand that nobody wishes to lend out their fondly cherished token of betrothal even for art - and a cheap rhinestone imitation can cost 50 Francs. Sheila McKenzie eventually found a suitable child's ring and a single costume jewelry rhinestone to glue on to it for a total cost of around 4 Francs. It looked good but was devilishly uncomfortable to wear and needed constant readjustment.

Luck can also play a part. As "*Bar Stools*" was being planned, four beautiful bar stools were been thrown out by the Stadttheater - they were quickly retrieved!

Props can play a vital role in the plot, and then cause difficulties. In a previous workshop play, "*Thermal Underwear*", a bottle of champagne was required, and chosen for it's pop, rather than it's taste. The pop provided the cue for one piece of dialogue, and when the cork came out without popping in one performance, the cue went begging. The actors rose to the occasion by a virtually unnoticed line recovery exercise and deliciously comic dialogue that would otherwise have been missed out was slotted back in.

"*Sweet Caroline Sweet*" required a card to lie on the sideboard, so that the landlady could pick it up and read it. During the dress rehearsal, the card got misplaced among the British newspaper props. The landlady improvised marvellously by picking up a pocket book and reciting the text that should have gone with the card!

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* Remark found in Michael Invernor's Biography of Oscar Wilde, entitled "His End was a Heap of Sh...", page 2379.

Beautiful costumes were previously obtained via Frau Studiger of the Stadttheater for such productions as "Pygmalion", "The Crucible", "Love for Love" and "I Remember Mama". Unfortunately, the Stadttheater changed it's policy for a time, and this opportunity was closed to us until just recently. We are therefore very grateful to be able to thank Frau Studiger of the Stadttheater for the costumes of "Lord Arthur Savile's Crime."

During one of the later rehearsals of "Night Must Fall", the small key to the handcuffs went missing. We were all thankful this didn't happen during a public performance after Inspector Belsize had handcuffed the culprit! This play also required an old bible that had to look old and unused for many years. Ingenuity and hard work achieved this by a healthy dusting with flour.

The lady in charge of props for "I Remember Mama" fell down some dark stairs when carrying in a large vase for the stage. The vase survived but our props heroine had to be taken to Riehen hospital where a torn ligament was diagnosed. The usual Jack-Of-All-Trades, the cast, were roped in to fill the gap at short notice. The steps of the theatre have now been covered with white strips to prevent a recurrence.

Beautiful and valuable items such as the antique furniture obtained on loan for the set of the restoration comedy, "Love For Love" raise the question of expensive insurance against possible damage.

One of the most difficult things to manage is a live prop! The main production, "I Remember Mama", required a cat to be carried around by a child. A dirt box was organised in case the cat got nervous. Then, during one of the performances, the cat just made off into the audience to the great disconcertion of the back-stage crew. The owner was dispatched on a desperate cat hunt. Apparently, the whole event passed virtually unnoticed by the audience!

Food and drink have presented continual problems. The imitation whiskies and ports, made with diluted Coke, tea and fruit juices, may look authentic, but tasted foul! "Blithe Spirit" required the regular entry of relays of trays of food since the action always seemed to be taking place at meal times. The scrambled egg looked awful but apparently tasted better than it looked! "Separate Tables" was set in the dining room of a residential hotel. The tables had to be set differently and the various guests wanted different menus. The food was meant to be served piping hot with the steam visibly coming off the soup. This was not only a question of logistics back stage, but of timing on stage - no actor wants to be caught with his mouth full when he is cued to say something! This was not Bryan Taylor's problem. He had been missed out in the serving, and had to eat off an empty plate!

Obviously, practice is required in this area, and the Semi-Circle believes that in the best entrepreneurial fashion of the post-Thatcherite years there is a "niche opportunity" for a restaurant open to those who want to eat well and act at the same time. Besides offering excellent and much needed training possibilities, we could aim for both an Oscar and a mention in the Michelin Guide!

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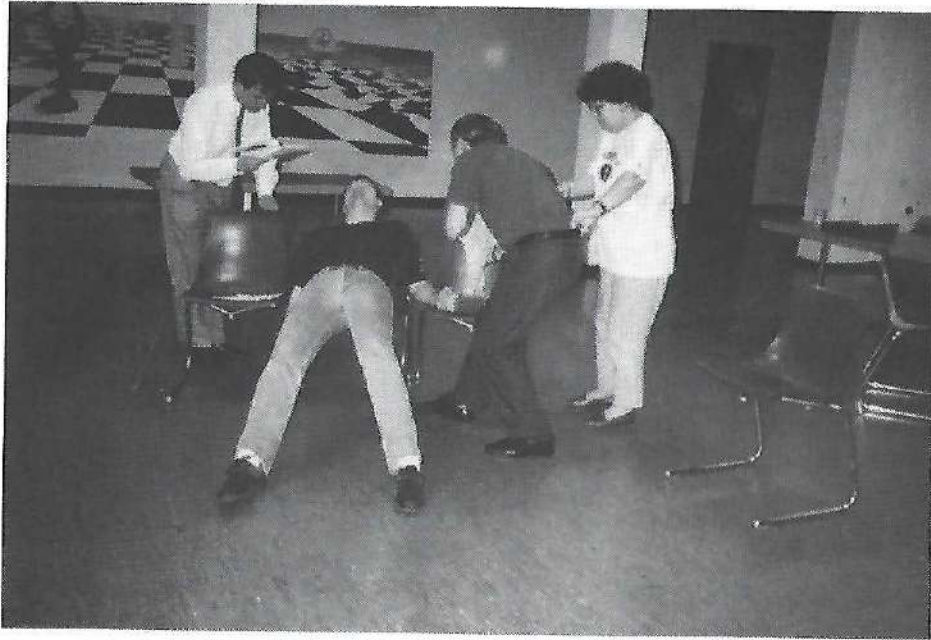
Telefon 261 95 70

Inhaber: R. Wyler

LORD ARTHUR SAVILE'S CRIME

Production Team

Production Manager Grayson Richards
Stage Manager Roger Kleiber
Director Sonia Dell
Prompter Caroline Weisskopf
Stage Design Theo Bucher
Stage Building John Chidlow
and Friends
Set Artwork Bob Williamson
and Cynthia Baer
Lighting - Sound Barbara Hummel
Costumes Michelle Florin
supplied by Frau Studiger, Stadttheater
Properties Joan Kuster
Stage Furniture....on loan from Schaufelberger
Make-up Jenny Aellig
and Friends
Publicity Sue Stafford
Dennis Dell
Programme John Stafford
Front-of-House Jean-Pierre Zuger
and Friends
Foyer Exhibition Sheila McKenzie
Photographer Jonathan Taylor
Box Office Ray Kleiber
and Friends
Ticket Sales Herr Wyler
School Caretaker Herr Ruegger
Stv. Herr Burger
School Secretary Frau Schnyder



Sonia directs the administrations of Dennis and Edward to Kevin

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Before The Semi-Circle

As you can see from the list of Semi-Circle productions, the first public performance of the Semi-Circle was in May 1975. But even a drama group like the Semi-Circle doesn't just appear, and it may be of interest to you in a nostalgic kind of way to learn of the very first efforts of our drama group before it became the Semi-Circle. We reproduce a programme below of the very first performance, almost exactly 25 years ago, of what was then called the Drama Group of the British Circle. You will see that several of the play readings performed later became productions of the Semi-Circle:

The Drama Group Presents

an Entertainment in play reading

Pygmalion by G.B. Shaw "Eliza Comes to Stay"

Mrs. Pearce (the housekeeper) Joan Lamprecht
Eliza Doolittle (a flower girl) Hazel Day
Professor Higgins (a speech specialist) Bryan Taylor
Colonel Pickering (an English Gentleman) David Pughe

Interval

Blithe Spirit by Noel Coward "Darling! Go Home!"

Elvira (spirit of the first wife) Molly Cooper
Charles (the husband) Louis Chesner
Madame Arcati (a medium) Barbara Haener
Ruth (spirit of the second wife) Audrey Spinnler
Edith (the maid) Jeanne Pümpin

Interval

The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde .. "The Interview"

Ernest (or Jack)..... Raymond Jones
Gwendoline Doreen Gürtler
Lady Bracknell Muriel Taylor

A Letter from a Modern Student to her Parents (poor things!)

Read by Esmé Chesner
Mother mimed by Sadie Eigensatz
Father mimed by Peggy Hürzeler

Finale and much applause

Curtains managed byDaisy de la Coze
Introductions by Esmé Chesner

The play reading was on Tuesday 19th November 1968 at the Restaurant RIALTO, (Bühnensaal) at 8.00 p.m. for 8.15 p.m. with admission free to members of the British Circle, Basel