

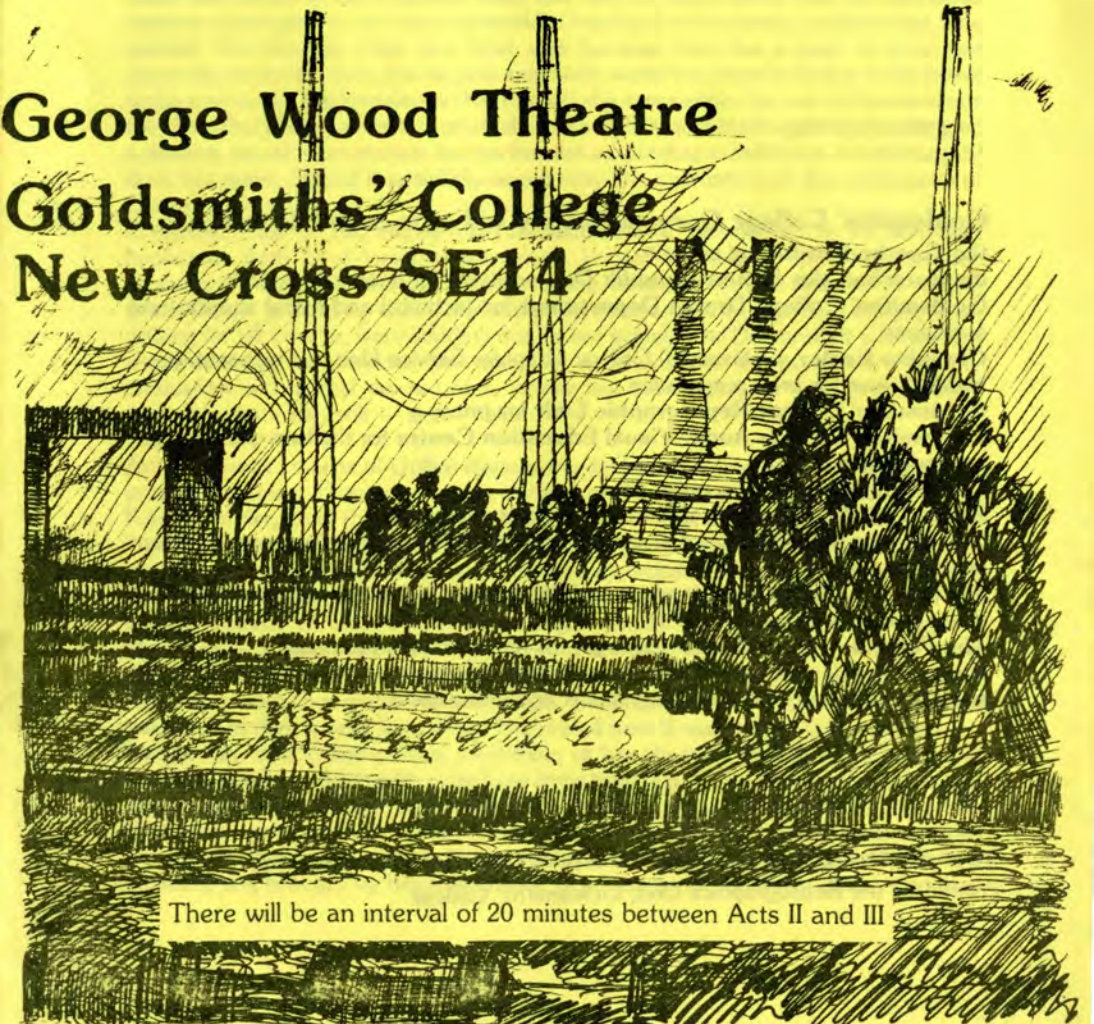
University of London
GOLDSMITHS' COLLEGE

German Society

Der Besuch der alten Dame

eine tragische Komödie von
Friedrich Dürrenmatt

**George Wood Theatre
Goldsmiths' College
New Cross SE14**



There will be an interval of 20 minutes between Acts II and III

Monday 19th March 1984 at 7.15pm (green ticket)
Tuesday 20th March 1984 at 7.15pm (pink ticket)
Wednesday 21st March 1984 at 2.15pm (blue ticket)
Wednesday 21st March 1984 at 7.15pm (white ticket)

Goldsmiths' College German Society wishes to record its thanks to
the Goethe-Institut for publicity
die Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland for financial support
Goldsmiths' College Drama Department for technical and moral support and assistance
Christine Keeler, Goldsmiths' College Graphics Service Unit, for typesetting
Stella Stone for print preparation
Goldsmiths' College Reprographic Unit for printing
Goldsmiths' College Audio-Visual Education Centre for the loan of equipment and video-filming
Carol King for advice on make-up
Stuart Cabeldu Catering Ltd for the loan of equipment
Ted Cox for publicity, technical and administrative advice, moral support and great good humour
Jim Owen, College Superintendent, and **Pat Adams**, for the loan of uniforms and for making rehearsal space available
The Porters of Goldsmiths' College, for not becoming too upset
Carla O'Reilly and **Carole Simpson**, German Department Secretarial Staff, for publicity, ticketing, and personal support and enthusiasm

Set in 9pt Souvenir by the Graphics Service Unit, Goldsmiths' College
Printed by the Reprographics Unit, Goldsmiths' College

Der Besuch der alten Dame

After the English premiere of Dürrenmatt's grotesque 'tragic comedy' Kenneth Tynan wrote: 'I seriously doubt whether any theatrical text more wickedly subversive of the Western way of life has ever been staged in London. *The Visit* is a blanket condemnation of the acquisitive society. It asserts, blandly and eerily, that justice in such a society means only the justice of the rich; and it challenges the sanctity of majority rule by confronting us with a situation in which the straightforward application of democratic principles leads to an act of criminal atrocity.'

Dürrenmatt shows us a world in which both traditional religious values and modern secular humanism are equally powerless in the face of economic self-interest cloaked as concern for justice and liberty. In this world, devoid of love or loyalty, no individual accepts responsibility for the decisions and actions of the community. Dürrenmatt (who was raised in the Calvinist faith) has told us many times that no individual, however courageous, can 'save the world'. Only God, in his mercy, could do that, if he wished. Yet because there is a God, and because man has a soul, he must not passively surrender to a chaotic and enigmatic world but must hold fast to his moral sense even in the full knowledge that this will alleviate neither the evil of the world nor the absurdity of his own fate. Ill gradually and painfully accepts his guilt and undergoes a genuine moral regeneration, but his belated awakening to individual moral integrity does not avert, indeed it positively accelerates the corruption of the community of Güllen.

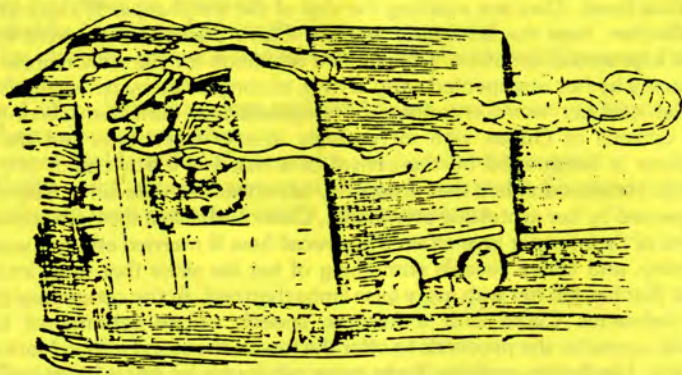
Economic man in his infinite corruptibility, liberal democracy in its perfected hypocrisy: both have lost that wholeness known to classical antiquity, sardonic allusions to which run through this bizarre play, culminating in the final chorus with its mock-Greek farewell to Claire and encomium to prosperity, 'as if a damaged ship, drifting far off course, were sending out its last signals', as Dürrenmatt writes in his stage direction: a reminder that once, in a distant era, there existed a healthy civilisation with a real moral order, whose last faint echo our own irredeemably corrupt culture can still — just — hear.

Act I: Various citizens of Güllen discuss the desperate economic state of their once prosperous town. They are awaiting the visit of the shopkeeper Ill's former girlfriend Kläri Wäscher, now the fabulously wealthy Claire Zachanassian, from whom they hope for a generous donation. The planned reception for the millionaire is thrown into disarray by her unexpected early arrival, accompanied by her seventh husband, her butler and her weird entourage of gangsters and eunuchs. Claire greets the leading citizens of Güllen with increasingly sinister questions, and the macabre atmosphere is heightened by the arrival of a massive black coffin, but the town dignitaries remain confident that prosperity lies ahead with the aid of Claire's money. Accompanied by her grotesque attendants, Claire and Ill visit the Konradsweilerwald, the scene of their former love-affair. They recall how Ill married another woman, who had money, and Claire reveals something of her life since that time, including the accident that has left her with more false limbs than real. At the ceremonial dinner, the mayor welcomes Claire with a fulsome speech whose sentimental falsity she brusquely corrects; she proceeds to offer the town a thousand million Marks in return for 'justice'. Her butler explains: forty years previously he was a judge in Güllen at a paternity suit brought by Klara against Ill. Ill bribed two witnesses to swear that they

had slept with Klara, who was thereupon hounded out of the town, destitute and pregnant, and forced into prostitution. Since then she has, however, become wealthy through a series of marriages, has bought the judge's services and has had the two false witnesses tracked down, blinded and castrated. She now proposes to complete her revenge at last by buying Ill's life: the condition attached to her proposed donation is that one of the Gülleners must kill Ill. Outraged, the mayor rejects the offer, but Claire replies: *Ich warte*.

Act II: As Claire waits on her balcony, with yet another husband-to-be, the townspeople begin to buy more expensive goods on credit — and to acquire guns, ostensibly to defend themselves against Claire's escaped black panther. Ill realises that they are gradually putting themselves in a position where they will have to accept Claire's offer. He demands Claire's arrest for incitement to murder, but the policeman, who has a new gold tooth, refuses to take the threat to Ill seriously. The mayor likewise turns a deaf ear to Ill's increasingly terrified entreaties; he has the plans for a new town hall, but he too refuses to take Ill's fears seriously. The priest urges Ill to look to his own conscience, acknowledge his guilt and conquer fear through repentance: sound advice, and indeed Ill subsequently does just this, but the man who offers it has also already fallen prey to economic temptation: the church has a new bell, and the priest implores Ill to flee and not lead them into further temptation. Claire's panther has been shot and Ill, knowing that he too is being hunted, arrives at the railway station intending to leave for Australia. All gather round him, ostensibly to wish him a friendly farewell, but Ill dare not try to board the train for fear that one of them will prevent him. As the train leaves without him Ill realises that he is lost.

There will be an interval of 20 minutes between Acts II and III



Act III: The doctor and the teacher call on Claire to plead for sympathy for the plight into which they have got themselves: hopelessly in debt and desperately dependent on Claire's money, they still hope to obtain the money without paying her price. They urge her to invest in the economic growth potential of the town, but Claire discloses that she already owns Güllen and has deliberately engineered its economic decline as part of her plan. The teacher finally appeals to Claire's humanity, but is contemptuously dismissed: the world made Claire a whore, now she intends to make the world a brothel.

The Gülleners, still buying on credit, come to sound out Ill's wife: the Press is in town for Claire's latest wedding, and they are afraid that Ill may talk. Two reporters arrive, having got wind of Claire's youthful romance, and the drunken teacher tries to alert them to what is going on. But he is silenced by Ill himself who, after days spent in solitary meditation, has found the courage to accept his fate. He has acknowledged his guilt and responsibility: it is he who made Claire what she is. The teacher tells Ill that he will indeed be killed: the temptation is too great, their poverty too bitter.

Ill asks to go for a drive with his family in his son Karl's new car. The mayor arrives, with a rifle: the townsfolk are to assemble that evening to vote on Claire's offer. The mayor makes it clear that they intend to accept. Ill indicates that he will bow to the community's decision, and the mayor tries to persuade him to commit suicide. Ill however refuses to take the burden from them: he will accept his death as just, but they must be his judges and executioners.

The family go for their first and last car ride together. It is Ill's leave-taking from his family and from the surroundings in which he has spent his whole life but whose beauty he now sees for the first time. In the Konradswellerwald he meets Claire for the last time: they speak of their past love, of the child they had, and Claire tells him of her plan to take him, after his death, to Capri, where she has had a mausoleum built. Reporters and film cameramen, ignorant of the real nature of Claire's offer, are in attendance as the Gülleners assemble. The teacher exhorts them to act in the interests of justice, idealism, liberty and charity. They take a vote, and the ceremonious atmosphere is broken only by Ill's cry of outrage. But when the procedure is re-run for the benefit of the film-cameras, his solitary protest is not repeated. The vote is unanimously in favour of acceptance. Press and cameramen leave and the men of Güllen carry out Ill's execution. The Press are informed that Ill has died of joy; Claire hands over the cheque. In the final 'World Happy End' the citizens of Güllen speak in the manner of a Greek chorus of the town's new wealth, as Claire departs with the dead Ill.

David Jenkinson

Cast

Die Besucher:

Claire Zachanassian, geb. Wäscher **Elisabeth Veacock**

Ihre Gatten VII-IX **Friedel Weinert**

Rudolf Hofer, der Butler **Bob Aylett**

Toby **Tim Storer**

Roby **Ian Millstone**

Koby **Andy Wardale**

Loby **Andy Hatton**

Die Besuchten:

Alfred III **Chris Farrow**

Frau Mathilde III **Paula Bamfield**

Ottilie, ihre Tochter **Lucy Mason**

Karl, ihr Sohn **Steven Covell**

Friedrich Breitenbach, der Bürgermeister **David Jenkinson**

Annette Breitenbach, seine Frau **Alice Louise Holmes**

Hermann Lüthi, der Pfarrer **Peter Willoughby**

Frau Adelheid Lüthi **Annette Jander**

Karl-Otto Neumann, der Lehrer **Ted Batley**

Herr Doktor Wilfried Nüsslin **Ted Cox**

Frau Doktor Waltraud Nüsslin **Astrid Martini-Facio**

Gerhard Hahncke, der Polizist **Patrick Wynn-Simmonds**

Frau Monika Hahncke **Siân Phillips**

Hans Hofbauer (der erste Bürger) **Peter Gale**

Frau Hannelore Hofbauer (die erste Frau) **Susan Chapman**

George Helmesberger (der zweite Bürger) **Thomas Gruber**

Frau Aloisia Helmesberger **Caroline Hyde**

Joseph Hauser (der dritte Bürger) **Jürgen Lampa**

Frau Marga Hauser (die zweite Frau) **Petra Wilmott**

Kurt Stocker (der vierte Bürger) **Russell Brown**

Frau Kathrin Stocker **Johanna Biddle**

Manfred Allmendinger (der Maler Frédéric de Mendinger) **Patrick Duffy**

Berthold Kühn, Turner (Bewohner der Stadt) **Sam Featherston**

Fräulein Luise Läßlich **Carrie Mason**

Fräulein Dagmar Heißler **Carol Rayment**

Sigrist **Jonathan Dean**

Kinder der Stadt

Alfons **Dirk Froese**

Sigismund **Dettmar Forsyth**

Hermine **Silke Froese**

Die Sonstigen:

Bertha Glutz, Pfändungsbeamtin **Ulla Renton-Kite**

Franz Dallinger, Zugführer **Ted Cox**

Wilhelm Teller, Bahnhofsvorstand **Boyd Ringrose**

Die Lästigen:

Heike Kallwitz, Pressedame 1 **Kerstin Otto**
Ulrike Benkhoff, Pressedame 2 **Adelheid Leube**
Josie McKay, Floor Manager/Photografin **Ulla Renton-Kite**
Horst Baumann, Fotograf **Chris Mayhew**
Jürgen Leier, Radiosprecher **Klaus Nissen**
Shmuel Goldberg, Kameramann **Chris Mayhew**

Directed by **Maggie Forsyth**

Designed by **Ian Millstone**

assisted by **Janet Brown**

Stage Construction by **Sam Featherston**

Lighting Design by **Steven Greatorex**

Music arranged by **Greg Brightwell**

Costume Design by **Maggie Forsyth**

Poster by **Ian Millstone**

Sound by **Greg Brightwell** and **Boyd Ringrose**

Publicity by **Kerstin Otto** and **Adelheid Leube**

Exhibition material by **Ted Cox**

Production Manager: **Sam Featherston**

Stage Management: **Katharina Friedmann, Susan Watkin, Sally Peart, Daniela**

Tschumi, Michael Field, Thomas Gruber

Wardrobe: **Ruth Froese, Wendy Kirkham, Linda Gardener, Vanessa Johnson,**

Anne Clarke, Sara Mojer, Catherine Moore

Make-Up: **Sophie Colin, Catherine Fletcher, Liz Suleyman, Carol King, Shelaqh**

Spurway, Eva Boura, Maria Green

Front of House: **Eva Boura, Jane Hegedus, Helen Zumbrunn**

Prompter: **Julie Alderson**