



1958

12TH-15TH NOV.

PHILOCTETES

by Sophocles (495-406 B.C.)

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in a new version by Mr. B. E. Stone

The play will be preceded by a one-act comic prologue, which has been written for the occasion by the producers. In it some information about the Greek drama, and about tonight's play, is given. The prologue leads into the play without a break. The scene is the island of Lemnos, with the cave of Philoctetes.

Background to the play

Philoctetes, whose fortunes were watched over by the deified Herakles, had accompanied the Greek expedition to besiege Troy. While there, he trespassed on the holy ground of the temple of the goddess Chryse, and was bitten by the poisonous snake appointed to guard her shrine. The resulting wound was incurable, and the smell of its festering and his cries of pain became so unbearable to the Greeks that their leaders, on the advice of Odysseus, marooned him on the uninhabited island of Lemnos. There Philoctetes remained in pain and misery for ten years, while the weary fighting went on at Troy. But it was then revealed to the Greek leaders that Troy could be taken only by means of the bow and arrows of Herakles, which were in the possession of Philoctetes.

Odysseus is sent to bring Philoctetes back to Troy, and takes with him Neoptolemus, the son of the famous Achilles. Our play begins with their arrival on Lemnos. We see Odysseus' crafty attempts to trick Philoctetes into leaving the island, and Neoptolemus' struggle with his conscience when he perceives the noble character of the man Odysseus urges him to deceive. But, above all, we see an unforgettable study of suffering in the person of Philoctetes, as his spirit contends with inscrutable gods and treacherous men.

There will be one interval of fifteen minutes

Extra buses have been arranged on the Braybon Avenue—Old Steine route for the end of all performances



**VARNDEAN BOYS IN
GREEK PLAY**

The false merchant (P. E. Serrés) spins his yarn to Neoptolemus (P. J. C. Ridgewell), while Philoctetes (P. B. W. Rayment), holding the bow of Herakles, listens.

Continue down for review

VARNDEAN BOYS IN GREEK PLAY

A REPUTATION for first-rate productions has been built up by the dramatic society of the Varndean Grammar School for Boys, and this week's presentation of "Philoctetes" by Sophocles (495-406 B.C.), has further enhanced it.

Until this year they have concentrated on Shakespeare's plays, but as alterations to the stage are still in process, it was necessary to choose a production that did not require conventional treatment. So the school hall has become a Greek amphitheatre, and the play is preceded by a one-act comic prologue, specially written for the occasion by the producers.

An electrician in tears told the audience why he was out of a job; a pedant gave information about the Greek drama, explaining that the word "tragedy" in this context indicated a play with a serious theme—"it was the Elizabethans who littered the stage with corpses"—and the chorus demonstrated their dual rôle of commenting on the action and serving in crowd scenes.

The play is an unforgettable study of suffering in the person of Philoctetes, as his spirit contends with inscrutable gods and treacherous men.

Serpent Sentry

The scene is the island of Lemnos, with the cave of Philoctetes, whose fortunes were watched over by the deified Herakles. Philoctetes had accompanied the Greek expedition to besiege Troy. While there, he trespassed on the holy ground of the temple of the goddess Chryse and was bitten by the poisonous snake appointed to guard her shrine.

The resulting wound was incurable, and the smell of its festering and his cries of pain became so unbearable to the Greeks that their leaders, on the advice of Odysseus, marooned him on the uninhabited island, where he remained in misery for ten years while the weary fighting continued at Troy.

It was then revealed to the Greek leaders that Troy could be taken only by means of the bow and arrows of Herakles, which were in the possession of Philoctetes, and Odysseus is sent to bring him back to Troy taking with him the son of the famous Achilles, Neoptolemus.

Crafty Odysseus

The boys acted extremely well to bring out Odysseus' crafty attempts to trick Philoctetes into leaving the island, and Neoptolemus' struggle with his conscience when he perceives the noble

character of the man his leaders urge him to deceive.

Philoctetes' struggle with his own bitterness, which is only resolved with the appearance of the god whose bow he uses and his instructions to return to Troy, is the moving climax which brought to an end the heightening tension which was most brilliantly sustained throughout the play by Paul Rayment as Philoctetes.

Varndean is already proud of one Paul—Paul Scofield, the actor—and now they have a second contender for success, although Paul Rayment hopes to study law at Oxford. The Old Bailey may one day echo to his pleading, in which event a jury may well be swayed!

P. J. C. Ridgewell played Neoptolemus; S. Peachey was Odysseus, and others in the cast included P. E. Serrés, M. J. Phillips, A. G. Dale, A. M. Holt, R. E. Hart, A. M. Fiddaman, S. G. Lambert, S. A. Yeates, P. J. Hancock, R. Capildeo, G. E. P. Ness and J. F. Howe.

Masters Deserve Praise

The cast of the prologue were: M. L. Perkins (Pedant), J. T. Wellard (Varndean father), A. N. Felix (Varndean mother), G. E. P. Ness (electrician), D. Cox and R. E. Homan (attendants).

Mr B. E. Stone, the English master, had the play translated by a Greek scholar and then himself rearranged the chorus to make for clarity. Assisted by Mr M. McGowan, his production deserves the highest praise. The set was designed and built by Mr M. Bruce, and the costumes, also designed by Mr Bruce, were supplied by local theatrical costumiers. Songs were composed by Mr Russell W. K. Taylor.

Make-up was by Mr M. Wylie, and wardrobe mistresses included Mrs M. Bruce, Mrs C. G. Bintliffe, Mrs R. W. K. Taylor and Mrs E. J. Hutchins. Stage manager was Mr L. V. G. Symes.