

WITH APOLOGIES TO THE BARD

'THE SEVEN AGES OF MAN' (Anerley Methodist Youth Club)

Not every amateur company can get away with a full length Shakespearean production – even an odd excerpt or two can prove quite a headache when it comes to shuffling inexperienced players round the stage.

It was for this reason that the members of Anerley Methodist Youth Club decided to concentrate on one speech, On Friday and Saturday in Anerley Town Hall they presented their own very amusing version of "The Seven Ages of Man," Even if their interpretation was perhaps not quite what the Bard had in mind, they used the theme to excellent effect and presented a series of short sketches typifying each age.

The "infant" stage is not easy to portray, but the players overcame the problem by setting the scene in a maternity hospital. They blended the boredom of the mothers to be with the frenzied anxiety of the waiting husbands with just enough exaggeration to make it really amusing.

It was not until the "schoolboy" however that the long legged, rosy faced enthusiasm for these youthful players came into its own – dozens of cubs swarmed on to the stage shrieking and shoving as only small boys can. Their exuberance did not subside until their unhappy teacher was led away by two white-coated attendants.

Half empty soft drink bottles and the incessant clangour of a clubroom were the somewhat unromantic setting for the "lover," but the lighting effects were particularly good and captured the mood of the remarkably rapid courtship.

The "soldier" sketch was undoubtedly the most amusing and entertaining of all. Proving that a variety show in its own right. Roy Webb was the first to perform with a skilful display of gymnastics.

Then it was the turn of four over-enthusiastic "soldiers"

who ripped, tottered and tumbled their way through an outstandingly good slapstick routine. The combined singing of Janet Tredinnick, Flory Webb and Dave Dent was perhaps one of the most pleasing features of the show

A ridiculously chaotic court scene typified the infinite patience for the "justice" who did his best to maintain order, despite the verbosity of the police constable and the prisoner in the dock. The age of the "old man" included a goon-style psychiatrist's surgery in which odd characters adorned with sausages, saucepans, and plastic flowers wandered unconcernedly across the stage.

Fred Garrard provided the piano accompaniment throughout the production, and the continuity was supplied by Robb Rogers, whose easy, likeable manner added the final touch of professionalism to an enjoyable show.

M.E.R