

# CatsPlay

By **Istvan Orkeny**

Play no. 294

Opening show : 20/04/1974

Creative team

**Hebrew By:** Tirza Atar

**Directed by:** Helena Kaut-Howson

**Sets by:** Joseph Karl

**Costumes by:** Adina Reich

**Lighting:** Natan Panturin

Cast

**Mrs. Orban:** Batya Lancet

**Giza:** Ada Tal

**Paula:** Dina Rotkop

**Joschi:** Yitzchak Kluger

**Ilona:** Miriam Evron

**Victor:** Gideon Singer

**Waiter:** Yitzchak Kluger

Istvan Orkeny's "Catsplay" has gained international acclaim and placed him among the very few East European playwrights whose work has been performed in the West. What makes it rather unique in the context is the fact that Mr. Orkeny's tragic-comedy neither makes an overt political statement nor does it concern itself with great ideological issues. Historical upheavals exist there only in a remote background and though they do influence the pattern of the main characters lives, they do so in an unaccountable, fate-like way.

The action of the play evolves through an exchange of letters between two old ladies, long separated "sisters". Both are widows, both have rather indifferent children and both have dropped out of the world. Here however the resemblance ends. Though strongly attached to each other by sisterly affection, loneliness and nostalgic memories of their illustrious past, the two old ladies lead lives as diverse as their personalities.

Mrs. Orban occupies a rundown apartment in present day Budapest, while the matronly Giza resides with the family of her wealthy son in a mansion in Germany.

Giza is paralyzed and accepts her retirement, but her sister does not and the action of the play follows her attempts to relaunch herself and defy the old age. Her only social routine is the weekly dinner she gives to an old admirer Viktor, a dilapidated opera singer.

Now she makes a new friend, a dashing younger widow, who flatters her and glamorizes her relationship with the wadding Viktor. This reached its climax with Viktor's come-back concert at which Mrs. Orban's new girl-friend nets the singer (her real intention all along) leaving the old lady to attempt suicide.

Beyond all those rather minor affairs, overblown domestic incidents and escapist fantasies of the characters, there lies a poignant and gently ironic picture of a hopeless predicament: old age.

The passions remain unextinguished, the conflicts over the way to live, love and retire remain as unresolved as the reoccurring argument over the interpretation of an old faded photograph carrying an image of the sisters youth.