

# A Lily In Little India

By: Donald Howarth

Play no. 227

Opening show: 01/04/1967

Hebrew Version by : S. Jonathan

Directed by : Abraham Ninio

Designed by: Joseph Carl

The Cast

**George Bland:** Nachum Buchman

**Jacob Bowers:** Yael Yaacov

**Anna Bowers:** Zalman Hershfeld

**Mrs. Hanker:** Shoshana Duer

**Alvin:** Israel Biderman

**Doctor:** Iechiel Amir

**Maurice:** Iechiel Amir

The Play

"A Lily in Little India" concerns itself with love.

The play shows a couple, breaking out of their shell, and facing the world with some hope. The young protagonist, Alvin Hanker, is a rather unaccomplished adolescent, constantly nagged by his widowed mother. Seeking some outlet for his stifled emotions, he takes to horticulture and starts to cultivate a Dragon Fang Lily in the privacy of his bedroom. This innocent pastime divides him from his mother but brings him into touch with a neighbouring parson's daughter, who shares his enthusiasm for plant-life. There is no physical contact between them. No tokens of affection are exchanged. But you still feel, at the end of the play, that the two of them have been rescued from their solitude.

Apart from showing how two shy and withdrawn people are brought together, the play also paints a vivid and unromantic picture of their domestic backgrounds. So repressive and choking is the Hanker household that Alvin is driven to acts of desperation and even cruelty. This is not surprising when you look at Alvin's mother, a North-country tyrant who can even wash up aggressively. She may, as the author says, be "deeply attached to Alvin" but her attachments is well-hidden under a layer of harshness. What tenderness she has is reserved for her postman-lodger whom she is anxious to bring to bed at the earliest opportunity. In one memorable scene, Alvin's sudden awareness of this play have with his already over-wrought feelings. In contrast with this bubbling domestic hell is the atmosphere of depressing suburban gentility that prevails at the home of Alvin's solitary friend, Anna. She gets on with her dress-making, while her father proceeds quietly towards his grave. But, under the calm surface, there is a vein of rancour which can suddenly become nakedly apparent.

Donald Howarth's feeling for the texture of family life is most impressive. The resentment that can be created by the destruction of the weekly newspaper,

the worry as to what the neighbours may think when a blazing row is in full progress – such details are common enough in life but are rarely so intelligently used by a dramatist. Mr. Howarth also combines a wide-ranging compassion with a sharp insight. He understands the shock to an only child, the son of a widow, when he realizes for the first time that his mother is in love with some-one else. Yet she also appreciates the resentment of a mother who feels that her son is drifting away from her. This ability to project himself into the skin of two mutually antagonistic characters and to render the feelings of both of them with equal truth marks Mr. Howarth out as a true dramatist.