

The Maids (Le Bonnes)

By Jean Genet

Play no. 223

Opening show: 26/11/1966

Hebrew version by: Maxim Gillan

Directed by : Michael Almaz

Lighting : Moshe Frank

Cast

Shoshana Duer

Ziporah Peled

Geulah Nuni

Jean Genet, who is regarded by many critics as the greatest French writer of his generation, was born in Paris in 1910. An illegitimate child who never knew his parents, he was sent, at the age of ten, to a reformatory, for stealing. After years spent in various such institutions he ran away and joined the Foreign Legion, which he soon deserted. During subsequent years he wandered through Europe, spending time in prisons in almost every country he visited. In 1943, during a long prison term, he wrote his first book "Our Lady Of The Flowers". His was followed by the plays "The Maids", "Death Watch", "The Blacks", "The Balcony" and "The Screens". He also wrote "A Thief's Journal" and a volume of poems.

Genet's unique career came to a climax in 1948 when he was convicted of theft for the tenth time and only escaped life imprisonment through the intervention of a group of prominent writers – among them Claudel, Gide, Sartre and Cocteau – who submitted a petition to the President of the Republic. He was granted a pardon.

"The Maids", Genet's best known play, is based on a notorious murder case. Written like a thriller, it uses a mixture of realism and stylization to throw sombre light on nooks and corners of our souls which we usually prefer to leave unexplored. However, with all its gloom and violence the play emerges strangely optimistic and full of power and life.