

Clive Wolfe on COLLEGE THEATRE

IT'S NEW; it's exciting; and it's full of fresh talent and promise. The first-ever National Student Theatre Company presents (at the Cathedral Hall, 47 Albany Street, Edinburgh, 22 Aug to 10 Sept) a rich diversity of abilities from seats of learning ranging from RADA to St Saviour's and St Olave's Grammar School — via several English, Irish, Scots and Welsh universities and colleges. The acting variety is the purely accidental result of fiercely contested auditions.

Institutions represented in the full company are: Middlesex Polytechnic at Hendon (four members); Drama Centre and Hull University (three each); RADA, LSE, Salford Univ and UCW Cardiff (two); and one each from Bingley, Goldsmiths, Homerton, Newnham (Cambridge), and Royal Holloway Colleges; Kingston and Middlesex (Ivy House) Polys; St Saviour's & St Olave's Grammar

School; the Universities of Belfast, Birmingham, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Manchester, St Andrews and Warwick; and UCW Aberystwyth.

It was the need for a further outlet for new student and recent student playwrights which sparked off this venture, and two such are included in this first season, made possible by the ever-encouraging sponsorship of *The Sunday Times* — the first newspaper, I believe, ever to sponsor a theatre company.

Louise Page has just been commissioned to write for the Royal Court. Her "Lucy" recently won the first International Student Playwriting Competition and is now being considered for professional production. The NSTC will present her new play (actually her project for UCW Cardiff's one year postgrad course) "Glasshouse" — an intense drama of

adult brother/sister jealousy over their helpless invalid mother.

Edinburgh graduate Ken Ross's "The Death of Private Kowalski" began life as a 1976 NSDF entry. The production failed to be selected, but the play was given a rehearsed reading cast from among all at the Festival, then rewritten. Now it is ready for its full scale public launching. Very funny, moving and full of vitality, it is a compelling and thoughtful view of a rarely recognised problem for today's youth — too much choice — and it tops the list of compulsory viewing on this year's Edinburgh Fringe.

RSC/Buzz Goodbody Directors Award winner Jayne Chard directs the last production by the first NSTC — Joe Orton's lesser-known comedy "The Erpingham Camp". Antony Waterman again designs, repeating the collaboration which won two top prizes for Middlesex Poly at Hendon's "Happy Days" in St Andrews.

Elsewhere on the Fringe, 1975 (London) NSDF veterans form the basis of some Bristol Revunions shows which include a revival of Joe Richards's absorbing and chilling study of marital isolation "Backlog" (much acclaimed at the Royal Court); Sheridan Ball, Steve Rawsthorne and director Andy Jordan from "People Are Living There" (also successful at the Court); and Jonathan Gershfield (ST Playwriting Award winner) now directing new musical "Blood and Kisses." A fresh translation of Gorki's "A Respectable Family" is included in their adventurous programme.

From the 1977 NSDF, Bradford's refreshing (award-winning) "The Private Life Of Superman" should bring another crop of successes, particularly for Elaine Lindsay (Lois Lane), Franny O'Loughlin (Superman/Clark Kent) and composer/pianist Phil Wharton, and they add two new plays, including "Bugger The Blue Eyes", Diane Richardson's award-winning first play. Bingley have expanded Dave Simpson's "Wild About Harry" into "Harry, Maude, Harry and Maude." Carlisle College of Art and Design present the splendid (award-winning) "Like Dolls or Angels". And the Festival's Best Actress Chris Kavanagh appears again in Bretton Hall's "Saturday," plus other plays. This year's Fringe will certainly not lack quality.