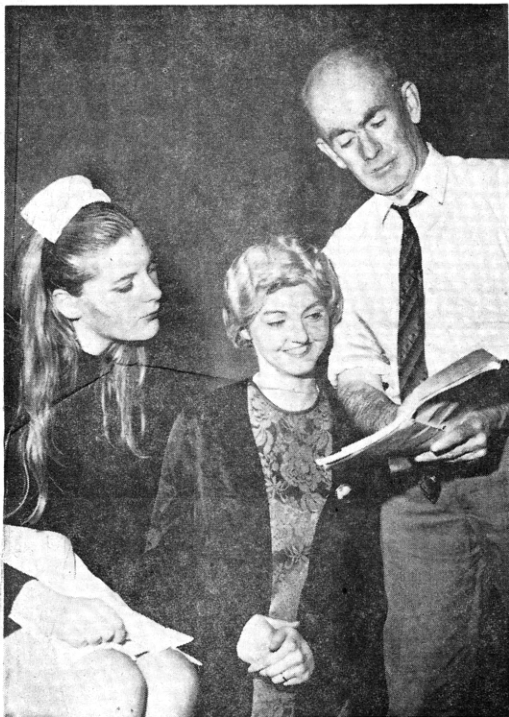


1969.



Val Haniver, producer of the Insurance Institute of Ireland Dramatic Society, briefing Bronach Crawford, left, and Fiona O'Regan for their presentation of "Separate Tables."

IS the 26-year-old Insurance Dramatic Society in Dublin the oldest amateur society in the country. The Society members are confident that they are the oldest . . . so I'll leave it to the readers to decide.

With two plays a year, the Insurance Institute of Ireland Members' Dramatic Society—to give the full title—has fifty-two continuous productions to its credit.

And the Secretary, Margaret Doyle, a daughter of Lieut.-Col. Doyle, former Director of the Army School of Music was proud to tell us that the Society has produced some famous names—like Eamonn Andrews, Jack McGowran, Brendan Caidwell and Kathleen Barrington.

What does the Society hope to achieve? Said the chairman, Dick Maher: "As well as providing a social outlet for young people, the stage makes one more observant, improves diction and gives a person poise and confidence."

Cupid roams freely

We learned from Phyllis Croke that cupid roams freely behind the wings, as it were. She told me: "Our founder members, Paddy and Peggy Cowman and Frank and Cecilia Prentin-Jones were introduced through the Dramatic Society. In fact, since the formation, there have been at least fifteen weddings, which is a proud record for any society."

Their fifty-second production is "Separate Tables" by Terence Rattigan and it opens on a three-nights run tonight in the Irish Life Theatre, Mespil Road.

Is this the oldest dramatic society?

The Honorary Treasurer, Christopher O'Connor mentioned that the theme of the play is loneliness, with a number of elderly people searching for companionship in a hotel in Bournemouth.

Members take their turn helping behind the wings. It was interesting to learn that one of these stage hands on this occasion is Kevin Cratton, who had the distinction last year of having his play, "Passes in the Night," accepted for the Dublin Theatre Festival.

● Producer is Val Haniver and the other members of the cast are Bronach Crawford, fresh from her success in the R. & R. production of "My Fair Lady," Nuala Bigger, Margaret Doyle, Margaret McKenna, Fiona O'Regan, Bill Fields, Anne Hanley, Joan Levins, Brian MacMahon, Jim McCormack, Maeve Flanagan, Dick Maher, and Phyllis Croke.