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Red Star by Les Ellison

**A staged reading with the
St George's Players directed by
Nickie Cox**

Red Star was a first prizewinner in Radius's recent playwriting competition and this excellent presentation demonstrated the play's strengths. A tightly knit ensemble performed at audience level with a minimal setting to create a powerfully imagined world of uneasy celebrity and disintegrating relationships.

Yuri Gagarin goes into space and returns a national hero. He has fame and money, but what he wants is a job he can take satisfaction in and the security of a loving family. The play telescopes Gagarin's life after the space voyage so that we see his increasing desperation. In this production the relationships came over strongly as Gagarin interacted with his loyal wife, with the arrogant Kruschev, with Kruschev's sophisticated wife who has mastered the system, with the narrowly focused rocket scientist Korolev and with the hero-worshipping technician Anna.

Different stage areas were used to indicate changes of scene and passage of time. These changes are not always easy to follow on the page but several people commented that in performance they were very effective. A strong cast of six showed

their versatility by doubling convincingly, and this in itself brought out the universality of the play. Well paced, confidently acted and creatively directed, *Red Star** was enjoyed by everyone and we appreciated the opportunity for discussion afterwards.

Margaret Hunt

* Available from Radius office
@ £5 + £1 p&p.

