

SUDDENLY LAST SUMMER
& SOMETHING UNSPOKEN
2003

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ENTERTAINMENT

RICHMOND DRAMA AWARDS

Dominating and tormenting others



Heather Hodgson as Mrs Venable in *Suddenly Last Summer* by Tennessee Williams

THE staging of a play by Tennessee Williams is always a special event.

Teddington Theatre's double bill *Suddenly Last Summer* and *Something Unspoken* running this week at the Hampton Hill Playhouse is no exception.

Director John Buckingham has assembled a powerful cast and technical team to present an elegant and scaring portrayal of life in 1930s New Orleans.

The theme running through both plays is of elderly women using their power, wealth and position to dominate and torment those less fortunate than themselves.

In *Something Unspoken* a jewel bedecked spinster, Miss Cornela Scott endeavours to manoeuvre election as Regent of the local Chapter of the Confederate Daughters. It is

probably her last chance to achieve election but she is too proud to attend the meeting in person and risk a humiliating defeat.

The part of the lonely old lady was taken by Patricia Luson. She conveyed the bitterness of a frustrated old woman whose main pleasure is tormenting her unfortunate secretary, while appearing to care for her. Clare Terry, as the secretary, is forced to endure humiliation at the hands of her employer. At the same time she must be conciliatory and avoid outright confrontation.

The second play *Suddenly Last Summer* opened with thunder and lightning effects and strange bird cries to achieve an oppressive atmosphere.

An elderly widow, Mrs Venable, has arranged a meeting between and doctor and her niece, who is being

treated as a lunatic, in the hope that he will accept the girl as a patient on whom to undertake experimental brain surgery. She believes the girl has caused the death of her beloved son, Sebastian, and is determined to have revenge on her and her family.

The doctor is aware that his financial future can be assured if he agrees to operate on the girl but seeks at the meeting to find out the truth. He gives her an injection and encourages her to tell her horrifying story of how she in fact tried to save Sebastian but his stubbornness caused his own death.

Lynn Lewsey-Howes gave a monumental portrayal of the tormented and abused girl. Heather Hodgson was chilling as the charming, ruthless Mrs Venable.

Adam Green took the part of Catherine's brother George and Clare Terry that of her weak and selfish mother. They are more concerned with getting hold of the money Sebastian has left them than on the suffering being inflicted on Catherine.

Rick de Kerckhove was Dr Cukrowitz. He achieved the difficult task of drawing out Catherine's story and also reprimanding the formidable old woman who could not help but interrupt. Cynthia Carss, as Sister Felicity, fluttered about the stage like a large, white bird.

The action took place on the patio of a green shuttered house with a luxuriant tropical garden. Bird calls and hissing sounds were used to enhance the sultry atmosphere. The cast were beautifully dressed, all except Mrs Venable being in white. Great care had been taken with make-up and hairdressing.

Many congratulations to director John Buckingham and all concerned in mounting a memorable production of an extraordinary play.

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