

Satisfying theatrical pleasure

TEDDINGTON Theatre Club's commendable policy of presenting new work by untried, in-house writers continues to be yet another good reason why a visit to the intimate studio space at Hampton Hill Playhouse can be such a rewarding and enjoyable evening out for discerning theatregoers.

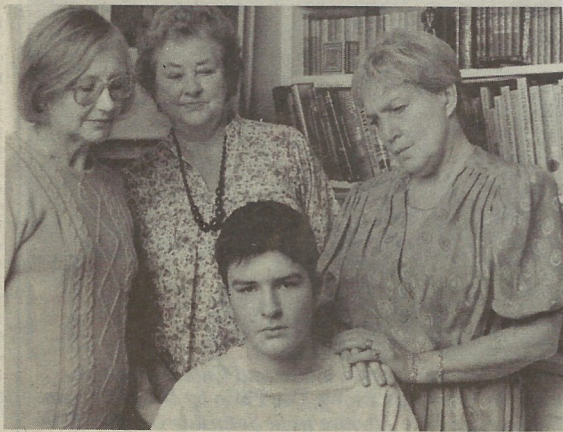
Last week we were given the premiere of Heather Godley's intriguing first play *Asylum* which proved to be an altogether satisfying theatrical pleasure from beginning to end.

Godley's vast experience as both actress and director undoubtedly helped her to produce such a well-made, well-constructed and ultimately beguiling piece of work and the fact that she can now add 'playwright' to her list of credits goes without question.

Based on a fascinating true story (fact really can be stranger than fiction!), *Asylum* concerns Audrey and Pat, two retired professional women, life-long friends, who share an attractive and valuable house in leafy Hampstead and whose lives are not only devoted to each other but also to good food, fine wines, cultural pursuits and collecting money for their favourite charities from unsuspecting customers outside Sainsbury's.

This comfortable, almost idyllic existence is shattered by the arrival of a young, good looking refugee from Eastern Europe who has aspirations to become a ballet dancer. Of course, at first, Audrey and Pat are completely taken in.

It isn't long, however, before sixteen year old Rudi (superbly played by Alex Brown - winner of a Swan



In rehearsal for *Asylum*

Award for Most Promising Newcomer of 2000/1) deliberately sets out to disrupt their lives by wheedling his way into the affections of Pat, the slightly dotty ex-teacher (Sue Viney surely giving the best performance of her career) and eventually moves into the house.

To reveal too much of the plot would spoil the enjoyment of the future audiences which this most absorbing play most certainly deserves. Godley herself plays Audrey, the retired doctor now infirm due to a recent hip operation - a performance so outstanding - funny and enchanting one moment - moving, almost heartbreaking the next - that one cannot imagine anyone else in the role.

Excellent support is given by Moira Edwards as Audrey's well-meaning sister, Barry Hill as the lawyer called in to give advice when poor Pat changes her will in favour of the boy, and Linda Sirkir as a social worker, useless as always in times of crisis.

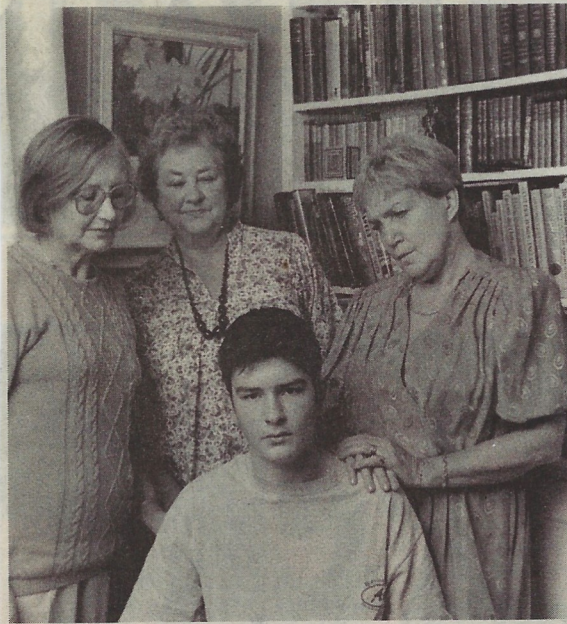
Plays, whether old or new, have to be directed and

here Heather Morgan once again proves that she is a director of outstanding quality.

With a little judicious cutting here and there which would highlight the tension, this play could receive a profession performance before long. Well done TTC - keep up the good work!
JC

Asylum
2001

Topical theme



Members of the cast in rehearsal for *Asylum* which opens next Wednesday October 10th.

NEXT week from Wednesday October 10th to Saturday October 13th Teddington Theatre Club is presenting a Studio production of *Asylum*, a compelling new play by Heather Godley.

The play explores issues raised by the subject of refugees and asylum seekers and it is based on actual events which happened only last year affecting personal friends of the writer.

It involves two retired professional women who instinctively and readily espouse a variety of liberal causes. They share a

valuable house in Hampstead and into their comfortable harmonious existence arrives a charming 16-year-old Eastern European refugee. Their cosy lifestyle is irrevocably altered causing them to question some of their long-held assumptions. A surprise twist ends the intriguing tale.

The play is directed by Heather Morgan. It is being performed each evening at 7.45 in the Coward Room at Hampton Hill Playhouse, 90 High Street, Hampton Hill. Tickets cost £5 and the box office number is 8979 9499 (9am to 9pm only).

RICHMOND DRAMA AWARDS

Ruthless menace

THE Teddington Theatre Club's presentation of Heather Godley's witty and thought-provoking play, *Asylum*, did not disappoint the capacity audience at the first night in the Coward Room at the Hampton Hill Playhouse.

The play tells the story of two worthy, retired professional women who share a house in Hampstead and have a very pleasant life style. Into their lives comes a seemingly authentic refugee who preys upon the weaker of the two women and causes much distress.

The part of the formidable Dr Hamilton was taken by Heather Godley herself, and she dominated the play. Her romantic

friend was ably played by Sue Viney and the entire cast performed well.

Alex Brown gave a lively portrayal of the asylum seeker with a taste for vodka and the change from engaging simplicity to ruthless menace was well handled. There was also a striking cameo by Linda Sirkir as the exasperatingly unhelpful social worker.

The set and costumes were pleasing and Heather Morgan's direction was sound. The between scene breaks were unduly lengthened by the cumbersome clearing away of bottles, cups and glasses.

JM