

ON THE
RAZZLE

2000



*Very clever and very witty, Tom Stoppard's **On the Razzle** at Hampton Hill Playhouse, is proving to be great fun, even in rehearsal.*

*Teddington Theatre Club director Heather Morgan tells us her 17 strong cast are having a great time, determined to do justice to Stoppard's version of the play which was made into the 1964 musical 'Hello Dolly'. The plot is simple enough. Weinberi and Christopher are assistants to a country grocer, Zangler, and when their master's away, the lads will play. He is off to Vienna to take part in a grand parade and to pursue a merry widow of his acquaintance. They secretly follow him to the festive city where they are determined to have the time of their lives aided and abetted by the females they encounter. **On the Razzle** is playing from March 18th to 25th at 7.45pm. Tickets are £8. 0181 979 9499.*

RICHMOND DRAMA AWARDS

Dazzling bit of razzle



*Marc Batten, Tony Nieper, Niall Trimball and Paul Grimwood in **On The Razzle**.*

UNTOUCHED by any suspicion of usefulness - this is one of Tom Stoppard's descriptions of his own work, and with that he completely disarms his critics. His interpretation of Nestroy's *On the Razzle* clearly comes into this category, I'm glad to say.

It was given a wonderfully light and lively presentation by Heather Morgan for Teddington Theatre Club at Hampton Hill Playhouse last week with a dazzling display of virtuosity by the cast.

Another form this piece took, *The Matchmaker*, spawned the musical *Hello Dolly!* but Stoppard's version is in a class of its own and takes comedy into a whole new dimension. He excels, as he says, in "hanging his plays on other people's plots".

This one is impossible to summarise, except to say that it concerns Zangler, in his own words, a purveyor of high class provisions, and Tony Nieper imbued the character with swelling pomposity. He is a man constantly battling with his own tortuous verbosity and losing the unequal struggle.

In his exacting employ, his chief assistant and sidekick plan to escape from their dull lives in the shop for a while with a trip to Vienna - on the razzle!

These two, Weinberl and Christopher, as played by

John Kipps and Marc Batten made an inspired comedy duo as they try, in various guises, to avoid their boss on their illicit time off.

Complications and countless puns abound as Zangler tries to prevent his niece Marie, the fetching Deborah Daines, entangling with the penniless Sonders, with Paul Grimwood giving a cape-swirling, passable imitation of an old Sandeman's Port ad, only he's probably too young to remember it.

There were numberless other performances of style and wit: Niall Trimble's verbally dexterous Melchior, Julia Allen's complaisant Mrs Fischer, Sue Viney, Sue Bell as the dignified Miss Blumenblatt and Madame Knorr, and Charles A Halford was hilarious as an incredibly randy Coachman.

Among the many excellent portrayals, Tracy Frankson proved she had a gift for comedy as Lisette, the French maid, willingly exiting with the Coachman and returning looking increasingly dishevelled and *deshabille*.

Imaginative costumes by Eileen Baker and Margaret Boulton looked remarkably authentic for 19th-century Vienna during Scottish Week, and an elegantly simple set by Malcolm Watton worked well for the action. Altogether a razzle-dazzle show.

Jenny Scott