

31 Jan - 7 Feb

## Lively revival of classic comedy

### Richmond Drama Awards Joy Manners

NOEL Coward's **Hay Fever** is a difficult play to put together. It demands tight ensemble playing with excellent diction and timing if the full wit of the text is to be conveyed to the audience.

This was not completely achieved by the cast in Teddington Theatre Club's stylish production at Hampton Hill Playhouse last week.

The plot concerns the four members of the Bliss family, who have each invited a guest to stay for the weekend without informing the others. They are not considerate hosts and the guests have problems coping with their hosts' eccentric behaviour.

Something metaphorically resembling a courtly dance ensues, with each family

member playfully carrying on a flirtation with another's guest. The unhappy visitors all depart secretly the following morning, leaving the family to their usual good-natured bickering.

Rosemary Oliver, in the pivotal role of ex-West End stage star Judith Bliss, gave an efficient performance but did not dominate the stage to the extent the role required. Hannah Walker, sporting a bright red wig, gave a strong performance as daughter Sorel. She seemed at ease in the role and had excellent diction.

Jonathan Lee was the amicable Simon Bliss and John Roth played his irascible father, David. Clare Terry was the scheming Myra Arundel. She conveyed well the impression of longstanding hostility between herself and her hostess.

Tessa Baddeley was the unsophisticated Jackie Coryton, painfully out of her depth in a very worldly household. David Wells was the rather gauche

Sandy Tyrell, fulfilling his dream of meeting his actress idol. Terence M Cardinal excelled as the suave diplomatist Richard Greatham. He has great stage presence and can convey meaning by merely cocking an eyebrow.

Laurie Coombs was the practical housekeeper, endeavouring to achieve some sort of order in a chaotic household. She had some very witty lines which were well communicated to the audience.

The set was attractive and the author's detailed instructions had been carried out meticulously. The Twenties period was well maintained in costume and furniture. I felt that pace and continuity were somewhat lost during the long interval between Acts 2 and 3. A brief scene change may have better sustained the dramatic impetus and flow of the play.

Many thanks to director Mair Graham and her team for a lively revival of a fascinating play.

## Comic masterpiece

NOEL Coward's great 1925 comedy **Hay Fever** is to be the next production by Teddington Theatre Club.

The play will run at the Hampton Hill Playhouse from Saturday January 31 to Saturday February 7.

The Bliss family (played by Rosemary Oliver, John Roth, Hannah Walker and Jonathan Lee) each invite a guest for the weekend to their cottage in Cookham - who they then abuse and confuse!

Following a histrionic display

by each and every member of the family, the guests flee the next morning on the first available train.

The guests in this case are to be played by Terence M Cardinal, David Wells, Clare Terry and Tessa Davies. The maid Clare is played by Laurie Coombs.

The play is definitely one of the Master's comic masterpieces.

Mair Graham who directed 'Brighton Beach Memoirs' last season directs and the production is being designed by Alan Corbett.