

TEDDINGTON THEATRE CLUB

Noel Coward celebrations

THE highlight of Noel Coward centenary celebrations in Teddington on Thursday December 16th will be a gala evening at the Teddington Theatre Club.

It is hoped that celebrity film star Sir John Mills will unveil a specially commissioned portrait of The Master before an invited audience, and inaugurate the Noel Coward Room at the club's new home, The Hampton Hill Playhouse. The portrait, by local artist George Melling, will now hang in the club.

The Playhouse itself benefitted significantly from the estate of Noel Coward and this will be a good chance to acknowledge the generous funding in a suitable way.

The club has chosen for its current production, which is running all week in the main auditorium, Coward's *Relative Values*, a light-hearted, witty comedy of manners, first directed by Coward himself in 1951. On December 16th, to mark the occasion, the event will be black tie and members will

dress the part and meet invited local celebrities and big names from the world of

the theatre. It is hoped Sir John will meet the cast after the performance.

RELATIVE
VALUES

1999

HAMPTON HILL PLAYHOUSE

Noel Coward centenary celebration

MEMBERS dressed up in black tie and feathered boas - to toast Noel Coward's birthday on December 16th. The celebration, at the Teddington Theatre Club, was only a stone's throw away from where Noel Coward was born, in

Waldegrave Road.

To mark the occasion, the club had commissioned a special portrait of The Master, which was unveiled by Hayley Mills, a great friend of the Club. She, of course, has a direct link to Noel Coward through her father, Sir John Mills. Her recollections were videoed into the auditorium to an audience of over 200 waiting to see that evening's performance of *Relative Values* which ran to capacity houses all week.

The artist, ex-Kingston University undergraduate George Melling, was present, and his powerful portrait now gazes down the clubroom and into the studio theatre named after Noel Coward himself.

A wonderful evening was enjoyed by a number of invited guests including the Mayor and Mayoress of Richmond, Lady Daubeny, Councillor David Cornwell, Joan Hirst from the Estate of Noel Coward, Gareth Pike, Chairman of the Noel Coward Society, Michael Imison, National Co-ordinator of the Noel Coward Centenary and Nicolle Penn-Symon, Head of Capital Services Monitoring, Arts Council of England.

Downstairs, as the auditorium filled up, members drank champagne and inspected framed caricatures of Noel Coward and some more current stars, captured by artist Rob Page.

Derek West

RICHMOND DRAMA AWARDS

More equal than others

THERE is an added incentive for audiences at Hampton Hill Playhouse this week. Not only will they see an excellent production of Noel Coward's *Relative Values*, directed for Teddington Theatre Club by Stephen Oliver, but also an exhibition in the foyer of local artist Rob Page's vivid caricatures of famous faces.

All this is in celebration of the Master's birth, especially appropriate since the momentous event took place in Teddington on December 16th 1899.

This play was written at a time when murmurings of discontent were growing louder against the established theatre and Coward was derided by the new wave writers.

All that changed in the 1970s when Coward's reputation enjoyed a resurrection, and *Relative Values*, first produced in the '50s, has a distinctly revolutionary flavour.

In it, at least one servant is definitely superior to his upper crust bosses. Crestwell the butler is the central character, has most of the best lines, and



Jim Tickle, Jill Schaverein and Jean Keay.

Stephen Bentley in the role relished every word of Coward's witty dialogue and delivered it with crystal clarity and impeccable vowel sounds, dropped immediately in exchanges with servants.

Class distinctions are seriously mocked as Felicity, Countess of Marshwood, tries and fails to come to terms with her son and heir's intentions to marry a film star from Hollywood. Jean Keay gave a bright, quirky account of the lady in question, determined to avert the disaster.

Revelations from her lifetime lady's maid, Moxie,

given a versatile performance by Jill Schaverein, present more social dilemmas, but Crestwell has solutions to every problem.

As Miranda Frayle, goddess of the silver screen, Rosemary Oliver exuded tinsel town glamour, while David Hannigan's Earl was all baby-faced credulity.

Charles A Halford made a credible screen idol, and the other members of the cast provided sterling support. See it if you possibly can! Yet another bonus is an extremely elegant set designed by David Rumens.

Jenny Scott



A portrait of celebrated playwright Noel Coward was unveiled at a special ceremony in Hampton Hill Playhouse on December 16th to mark the 100th anniversary of his birth in Teddington. The painting was unveiled by famous auteur Sir John Mills and his daughter Hayley. A performance of Coward's 'Relative Values' was held in the evening and the audience were shown the unveiling in the auditorium. Pictured here are Hayley Mills with the portrait's painter George Melling (left) and Michael Godley.