

KING
LEAR
1994

Teddington tragedy

TEDDINGTON Theatre Club at Hampton Court Theatre next presents *King Lear*, arguably Shakespeare's greatest tragedy.

Beginning almost like a fairy-tale, with the King, played by John Roth, dividing his kingdom between his three daughters, Goneril, (Susan Reoch) Regan (Sarah Renton) and Cordelia (Lynn Howes), it progresses to depict the political ravages of a state weakened by division and the pursuit of self-interest. The events portrayed could have been torn from today's headlines...

This production, with a predominantly urban setting seeks to echo humanity's destructive potential and the elemental forces of nature.

Performances will be every night from Saturday, March 26th until Saturday, April 2nd, at 7.45pm. Tickets can only be sold to members and their guests, but to become an audience member of the society for the year, just telephone 081-398 0085 and this can be arranged for £5, (£2.50 for senior citizens.)

TTC also invite you to an open morning at Hampton Court Theatre, on Sunday, March 27th, from 11.30am to 1.30pm.

Everyone is welcome.

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Richmond Drama Awards

Shakespeare's television documentary

THERE's no reason why Shakespeare shouldn't be done in modern dress. As an RSC director once forcibly argued, the Bard was doing just that himself in his time.

So from that point of view, John Buckingham's version of *King Lear* for Teddington Theatre Club at Hampton Court Theatre this week was perfectly valid, although I would quibble that this otherwise excellent production, irritated in the opening scenes by offering the play as a TV recording, stopping the action with countdowns for the main protagonists.

With no further interruptions, the play gained pace and momentum as the tragedy unfolded.

In the title role, John Roth made an impressive *Lear*, speaking the verse with faultless timing and intelligent understanding - a man almost made mad by his

own fears of the condition, watching his own disintegration.

Aidan Paddick was a Fool rather distanced from his master, offering no comfort to the stricken *Lear*, pitilessly taunting, constantly reminding him that in relinquishing his kingdom, his was the greatest folly.

There were strong performances too from the women in the cast. In the beginning one had sympathy for Gonerill, as her father's beer-swilling, raucous retinue, armed with ghetto-blasters made free in her household. Not so stony hearted initially, Sue Reoch effectively achieved her con-

version, as did Sarah Renton as Regan, with Lynn Howes giving a touching account of the wronged Cordelia.

In a powerful performance, David Blackburn fairly emanated evil as Gloucester's bastard son Edmond with Andrew Rogers' weak Edgar, his legitimate son, becoming a compassionate companion to his blinded father and finally athletically avenging him in a well-managed stage fight (with swords?)

David Crawley made a fine Gloucester, rendered sightless - I'm still haunted by his agonised screams - by the believably brutish Mike Butler as Cornwall.

An imposing Kent, John Riley so effectively disguised himself after his banishment by *Lear*, that it was some time before I recognised him.

Jim Bellingham made a convincing change from wimp to man of decision as Albany and the rest of the cast gave able support as gentlemen, soldiers, servants, messengers et al.

This bold choice of play with good sound and visual effects - a real downpour in the storm - deserves a wider audience than was evident last Saturday's first night.

Jenny Scott