

Coward for Christmas

TEDDINGTON Theatre club has made a popular choice for its final production of 1991 with a presentation of Noel Coward's witty play, *Waiting in the Wings* at Hampton Court Theatre from Saturday December 7th to 14th each evening at 7.45pm.

This production is a

wonderful opportunity for the club's more mature ladies to use their wealth of experience and to show the strength of talent in this sector of the club. Under the direction of Roger Smith, one of the club's top directors, this varied and formidable array will come together to display their outstanding versatility.

The 'Wings' of the title is a charity home for retired actresses in straitened circumstances, all of whom have been stars in their day. Imagine the squabbles, jealousies and grandiose memories that such a volatile company provoke. Fresh feuds are sparked off by the latest arrival which eventually involve the whole establishment, resulting in tragedy.

This is a Christmas entertainment not to be missed. Tickets, priced at £4.50 each, will probably be in great demand so members are advised to get on to the box office on 081-977 9710 (from 7 to 9pm) as soon as possible. Membership details on 943 3322.

WAITING
IN THE
WINGS,
1991

he has also cast to character.

Heather Godley as the ramrod May Davenport in black lace (originally played by Marie Lohr with a broken wrist) and Eileen Nichols in the Thorndike role of Lotta Bainbridge, are totally convincing as great star actresses of the old school, their second act reconciliation, one of the most touching scenes penned by Coward, played with wit and heartwarming compassion.

Joan Scarrott brings bright-eyed 'Maisy Mae' verve to the retired soubrette; Rita Smidman is at once funny and moving as the dotty fire-raising Sarita, making a perfect exit; Anne Low in a white wig is the fiery Deirdre expiring during an Irish jig; Cynthia Carss is the still glamorous Bonita, with a charming song to follow Christmas dinner; Christine Eyre glitters as the outspoken Maud; and Jean Keay, Yvonne Lawrance and Bernice Warren are strongly matched to supporting roles.

Special thanks go to Allen Dickens in the Graham Payn role as the home's able organiser for a fine contextual rendering of Coward's *Come to the Wild, Wild Weather*; Helen Smith is splendid as the brusque matron, sporting tight Ensa togs for the party; while Angela Ellaway as the sly feature journalist, and Paul Lawrance, Jennifer Tudor and Chris Hurles give brief but effective support.

Fiona Andrews' set for the sitting room and terrace of *The Wings* makes excellent use of the spacious but unyielding Hampton Court Theatre stage, with lighting by Chris Bird. And with the help of Chris Dapre on sound, Simon Lane is the ghostly but resourceful pianist.

John Thaxter

RECOMMENDING the text of his play *Waiting in the Wings* "to the reader's most earnest attention", Noel Coward claimed that abusive London critics had robbed him of the long run he expected after a triumphant opening night in 1960. More likely his nervous producers couldn't go on paying a cast of eighteen actors when business fell below capacity.

Indeed, the requirement for a large acting corps has kept his comedy drama about a retirement home for former star actresses locked away on the printed page, except when rescued by resourceful amateur groups when it becomes subject to the usual casting compromises.

But Roger Smith's production for Teddington Theatre Club this week reveals no such compromises. His cast of strong, mostly senior actresses were clearly waiting in the wings for an opportunity to appear in this expansive and affectionate revival. And as well as casting from strength