

HAMLET, 1989

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ENTERTAINMENT

RICHMOND DRAMA AWARDS

Chopping at the rhubarb

THIS very month you can see three major productions of *Hamlet* in London. Twin heavyweights at the National and the RSC take up almost four hours apiece, whilst in Yuri Lyubimov's cut-and-paste curiosity at the Old Vic a mobile curtain intrudes as an aggressive new character.

Maybe this explains why ticket sales were a bit slow for last week's Teddington Theatre Club production. More's the pity, because TTC members who stayed away missed a briskly entertaining production by Rodney Figaro, focussing on the big speeches and the central

narrative, while chopping furiously at the rhubarb and the Fortinbras sub plot.

The tragedy was despatched in less than the advertised two and a half hours, but took full advantage of Hampton Court theatre's modern lighting resources (Jean Goodwin) and quadrophonic sound (Charles Halford).

At first a touch melodramatic, Stephen Bentley's Prince fashionably shared his 'To be, or not to be' soliloquy as a conversational ring-a-roses with Margaret Boughton's terrified Ophelia, and with half the Danish court.

As a prologue, Graham Holliday's tail-wagging Horatio annexed 'I could a

tale unfold...' from the Ghost. But Ashley Hodgson's upstaging spectre, an echoing hologram in the Angel niche, had no cause to complain.

Not so Julie Bevan's Gertrude (a glamorous Diana Rigg look-alike) who surprisingly surrendered her 'willow grows aslant a brook...' to Lesley Ann Thompson's arriviste First Gentlewoman, dashing on in a drenched nylon nightie.

Jack Smerdon's Polonius was an efficient court administrator rather than an interfering old fool; David Duff gave another of his sly, laid back performances as Claudius; while Peter Sainty did a memorable party piece as a grave-digging Celt.

John Thaxter