

MISS JULIE

1989

22-29 July

TEDDINGTON THEATRE CLUB

The kitchen detail

IT'S RARE for two productions of the same play to run in parallel. For the professional playgoer the chief advantage of first seeing Strindberg's *Miss Julie* in the discreet English version by Michael Meyer, at the Hampton Court Theatre until tomorrow, is to prepare for the onslaughts of the explicit French language production at the Lyric Hammersmith until Sunday.

Jean Brown's staging for Teddington Theatre Club is a miracle of realistic Swedish kitchen detail. Pots steam on the hob, wood ash falls from the grate - and real, if accidental smoke from the fire added to the stifling heat of Saturday's first night. And where did they

find that splendid quarry flooring?

Christine's plate of stewed kidney looks appetising, and Jean surely quaffs genuine claret. The cleaver he uses to behead Miss Julie's cage-bird gleams menacingly, just as his open razor seems more than capable of drawing her upper-class blood, but I remained unconvinced that Karen Rose's Miss Julie would actually use it to slash her own elegant throat. A real beauty with a Gibson girl figure, she looked wonderful in dazzling Nineties costumes.

But her vowel sounds lack aristocratic openness, and the impression one carries away is of Faye Dunaway cast as Blanche duBois. On the hottest evening of the summer there wasn't quite enough steam heat generated by her performance to fuel the sexual tragedy.

I've seen the play at least half a dozen times but never

before taken note of the actor playing Jean, nor realised that he is the real seducer. Young TTC actor Richard Eliot's star is in the ascendant (he is nominated for one of this year's drama awards) and his crackling performance as the ambitious but finally groveling valet suggests that Strindberg's naturalistic tragedy could be re-named *Monsieur Jean*.

The thankless task of tending the pots and cleaning up the mess of litter and lives goes to Barbara Phelps' beautifully observed Christine, the only really likeable female in the Strindberg canon, whose mundane but watchable kitchen activities set the scene.

On the first night, the midsummer riot by servants and villagers (played by a splendid all-star TTC cast) looked picturesque enough to illustrate a Swedish travel brochure.

John Thaxter

Grand passions

PLAYING the title role in Teddington Theatre Club's next production from July 22nd to 29th at Hampton Court Theatre of Strindberg's famous play, *Miss Julie*, is Karen Rose.

Karen has not been seen in a TTC production for nearly two years as, with her husband and baby son, she embarked on a prolonged tour of the world starting in North America and taking in all parts of the USA and Canada, then on to Australia, New Zealand and the Far East - a tremendous experience for a mother with a young child. And within a week of her return, she auditioned for the exacting role of Miss Julie and was cast by the play's director, Jean Brown.

Opposite her as the

unpredictable valet, Jean, is Richard Eliot, who will be remembered for his performance as one of the quartet in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* earlier this year. Completing the cast, playing the forthright maid, is Barbara Phelps.

Midsummer Eve, and instead of visiting relatives with her father, Miss Julie decides to stay at home with the servants when the conflict between sexual passions and social position becomes overwhelming. Why did she do this? Whether she planned some adventure or not, unusual things happen. but is she in control, or is it the valet, or who?

Members' tickets at £3 available on 898 5295. Membership details on 399 2318.