

Yardley creates orgy of delight

GEORGE FARQUHAR'S rum-'bust'-ious play *The Recruiting Officer* gave Teddington Theatre Club an opportunity to do what it does best at Hampton Court Theatre last week.

Director Eric Yardley was inspired to create a production that sizzled with pace and swept audience and players into an orgy of delight and laughter.

Amanda Smith was a most winning Sylvia and David Lewsey an attractive Plume, but both need more control over fidgeting limbs — however, both are welcome "graduates" from Youth Action Theatre.

There were two superb

performances that would have graced any stage: Jack Smerdon's Brazen had me aching with laughter at his minutely judged reading of a very difficult role, and John Roth gave the best performance I have yet seen from him as the dull, but by no means witless, Bullock.

Michael Godley disappointed with his Sergeant Kite — the bellowing and bluster allowed too much of Farquhar's wit to slip by unnoticed, although not unheard.

Anthony Eva gave his customarily elegant performance as Justice Balance, while Alison Simon's (superbly uplifted) Melinda needed only a touch more acid in the opening scene.

Brendan Buckley was good as the unhappy Worthy, but had not the measure of this acoustic, while Dianne Williams was enchanting as the lively Rose.

Mart Stonelake and Peter Smith gave a couple of neat cameos as yokels conned into enlisting, and most of the smaller parts were done well.

The set design of Melanie Wood was brilliant, and Chris Olney's lighting of it an object lesson. This was one of TTC's best, and fully worthy of Jubilee Season status.

GEORGE ALLAN

THE
RECRUITING
OFFICER
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Blame the play— not the company

WILL AUDIENCES two hundred years from now find anything to laugh at in the plays of Tom Stoppard and Alan Ayckbourn?

Judging by the survival and continuing success of Restoration comedy well into the 20th century, I should think the answer has to be yes.

Like Stoppard and Ayckbourn, the Restoration playwrights frequently had more than empty laughter to offer an audience. The plots may sometimes have been unfathomable, but the characterisation and social comment was often superb.

Farquhar's *Recruiting Officer*, for instance, incorporates satirical swipes at the law and the military, as well as serving its main purpose as a Restoration romp.

Eric Yardley's production for Teddington Theatre Club this week realises both aspects of the work, and if the whole doesn't work quite as well as it should, I think the fault lies more with the play than the company.

I had reservations, however, about the casting of

David Lewsey—a stalwart of Mr. Yardley's excellent Youth Action group—in the title role. David has a strong voice and a well developed dramatic sense, but the lusty Captain Plume requires an altogether more authoritative stage presence.

Another recruit from YAT was Amanda Smith in the role of Silvia, who disguises herself as a gentleman in order to "secure her man." Considering her inexperience, Amanda gave an impressively confident and stylish performance, as did Dianne Williams, making her TTC debut as Rose, a country wench.

Indeed, all the main protagonists rose to the occasion and some, by virtue of the parts they were playing, stood out more than others. Jack Smerdon, for instance, gave us a delightful lesson in scene-stealing as Capt. Brazen, a fop in uniform, and John Roth created a wonderfully rounded character out of the fuzzy-brained bumpkin, Bullock. Both performances are distinguished by acute comic observation.

Michael Godley, as Sergeant Kite, and Tony Eva as Justice Balance, give variations on their best known stage personas—the latter

blustering and indignant, the former booming and bombastic, which is not to decry either performance.

I was also extremely grateful for the presence in the cast of Alyson Simons, whose striking looks (albeit marred by an awful wig and deliberately tasteless costumes) kept me going during the dull bits. She played Melinda and won.