

THE SCHOOL
FOR SCANDAL

1973

SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL, T-14 JUL 1973

Syrup of wigs

Hampton Court Theatre has been overflowing with powdered wigs and extravagant gestures this week because of David Smidman's production of **The School for Scandal**, which still has two more performances to go.

It is Mr. Smidman's first full-length production for Teddington Theatre Club, in itself an achievement. Restoration comedy can't be the easiest thing to direct, by any means, and Mr. Smidman did well to make it as amusing and stylish as it undoubtedly is.

The production is chiefly notable for individual performances. Terry Hepple's outrageously camp Sir Benjamin Backbite, for ever poised as if holding an imaginary crate above his head; Bernice Warren's excitable Mrs. Candour, threatening to pop out of her finery at any minute; John Roth's Sir Oliver Surface, a striking contrast to his recent Macbeth; Philip Hickson's Yiddisha Moses; Sylvia Darvell's gracious Lady Teazle; Frank McNamara's elegant bouncer, Charles Surface.

Chris McDermott looked splendid in period costume, as Sir Peter Teazle, but he was inclined to gabble. Geoffrey Rae seemed uneasy in the role of Joseph Surface and Ros Freeborn was decorative rather than convincing.

Pace is all-important in such a play and there was an inclination at times to rush through the complicated plot like a dose of salts.

It is being performed on a "thrust" stage, with the audience on three sides, an arrangement that works extremely well. The revolving props are most ingenious, although they look a bit incongruous next to all the period finery.