

Well- heeled romp

PERHAPS it was wishful thinking, but I kept expecting someone to burst into song during **The Shoemaker's Holiday** at Hampton Court Theatre last week.

An "Elizabethan romp," updated by director John Roth, it had the innocence and charm of an olde worlde pantomime, so a few songs might not have gone amiss.

What did go amiss more than once was my concentration thanks to a stunningly inconsequential plot about shoemakers becoming Lord Mayor of London or going off to fight for Queen and country and returning to find the wife on the brink of marrying someone else.

The buoyancy of Mr. Roth's production seemed almost entirely dependent on the projection and personality of the main protagonists, notably Michael Godley's Simon Eyre, Doug Andrew's Firk (did I detect a touch of the Ronnie Barkers?), Patti Bottomley's Jane, Heather Godley's Margery and Chris McDermott's Sir Roger Otley.

In the relatively small role of Sybil, the heroine's maid, Susan Oliver gave a fine lesson in making the most out of scant, unpromising material. Abigail Ortiz and Stephen Bentley, as the young lovers, made promising debuts, both having well modulated voices. Each needs to work on facial and bodily expression, however.

Leonard Cotton's sturdy set had a fine period look about it, but the strange mixture of Elizabethan and modern dress was extremely hard to accept, whatever the director's justification.

Unfortunately I do not share Mr. Roth's enthusiasm for Elizabethan comedy—even updated to suit modern audiences — otherwise I would have derived more enjoyment from this worthy revival.

THE
SHOEMAKER'S
HOLIDAY
1977



OPENING AT HAMPTON COURT THEATRE tomorrow, "The Shoemaker's Holiday" is Teddington Theatre Club's second production of its golden jubilee year. Written by Thomas Dekker in 1598, this play soon became one of the popular comedies of the English stage. In recent years, however, it has been neglected and few people at Teddington Theatre Club had even heard of it when director John Roth said he wanted to direct it. One of TTC's most versatile talents, John has updated the play himself, making it "more palatable to modern audiences." Michael and Heather Godley (pictured above), who have appeared in the play before, are cast as the shoemaker and his wife, and newcomer Stephen Bentley plays a young man who falls in love with the Lord Mayor's daughter, played by Patricia Bottomley. "The play is a romp," says John, "and this is exactly how we want to present it to our audiences." There are performances all next week, including a special one for the Little Theatre Guild next weekend.