

J. B. PRIESTLEY can be a disturbing playwright, and his "time" works are among the most thought-provoking of all.

Teddington Theatre Club is at present performing *Dangerous Corner* (the last show is tomorrow) at Hampton Court Theatre in a production that is gripping and occasionally spine-chilling.

This exercise in the negotiation — or failure to negotiate — the dangerous corners in life's journey was brilliantly directed by Roger Smith. He paced the production perfectly, beginning in a seemingly desultory fashion, and then screwing up the tension even more quickly and with such effect that even the two intervals could not break the thread of concentration. The handling of the epilogue was masterly.

There were two very fine performances indeed, from stalwarts of TTC, certainly, but nonetheless welcome for that. David Evans, as the clear-eyed realist, Stanton, stood out head and shoulders above the rest of the by-no-means insignificant cast. His was a towering portrayal of the only character who really understands what is happening.

Then John Roth as Robert Caplan, head of a publishing firm, warmed to his task as the play progressed. Had his early scenes had the authority of the middle ones, the final breakdown would have been devastating — as it was, it only sketched in the disintegration of an apparently strong personality.

Laurie Coombs, as Rob-

ert's wife, Freda, touched the heights of ecstasy and the depths of despair in her playing, and if she had retained sufficient control to avoid an unnecessary shrillness, she would have been perfect.

Susan Bell began very stiffly as Olwen Peel (in love with Robert, but loved by Stanton), with a flat delivery that became irritating, but once the revelations began, her playing took fire.

There was an exciting newcomer in Marian Hudson, who played Betty Whitehouse, wife of Freda's brother, Gordon. Her naive brittleness at the beginning turned absolutely convincingly into the bitter, frustrated woman of the third act.

I was disappointed by Michael Norman's Gordon — he seemed unable to come to terms with the character and struck me as wont to adopt an attitude rather than allow the character to grow from within.

The tiny part of Miss Mockridge was neatly handled by Rita Smidman, and the whole play gained immeasurably from the beautifully designed and splendidly executed set by Jeff Beauchamp.

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MIDDX. CHRON.

DANGEROUS  
CORNER  
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RICHMOND and TWICKENHAM TIMES

IT wasn't until someone said "You're nothing but a liar, a cheat and a dirty seducer" that I began to doubt the authenticity of J. B. Priestley's *Dangerous Corner* at Hampton Court Theatre on Tuesday.

The clichés had been coining thick and fast up to that point, but I put it down to its great age and specific period setting (early thirties), not having seen the play before.

Little did I realise that Mr. Priestley had his tongue firmly placed in his cheek when he wrote this domestic melodrama way back in 1932. At Least I hope he did.

Using one of his familiar time warps, he imagines a bogus evening of revelations between a group of friends and business acquaintances, sparked off by the recollection of a supposed suicide and culminating in the discovery that it wasn't suicide at all but, pause for gasp, murder.

Priestley's message seems to be that it is sometimes better to let sleeping dogs lie, especially when there is a threat of rabies.

The secret is to play it ab-

solutely straight, so that the audience unwittingly takes it for real, which is precisely what happened in Roger Smith's production. The period detail is excellent, not only in fashion and decor, but also in attitude, stance and mannerism.

David Evans, in particular, looked magnificently smug and caddish as the dastardly Stanton — everyone refers to him by surname only — and John Roth played the seeker after truth, Caplan, with unerring tenacity.

Good to see Laurie Coombs, usually crawling around on all fours (on stage, that is) as a human being for once, and Rita Smidman was agreeably cast against type as a snooty novelist.

Michael Norman and Marion Hudson gave adequate rather than inspired performances as ill-matched young marrieds, and Sue Bell is perhaps the most convincing of all in the play within a play.

Teddington Theatre Club's next major production at Hampton Court Theatre will be the farce *Sailor Beware!* by Philip King and Falkland Cary, from September 16th to 23rd. —N.S.