

A LETTER
OF
RESIGNATION
2005

A real-life political drama

THE cast of Teddington Theatre Club's production of **A Letter of Resignation** by Hugh Whitmore at Hampton Hill Playhouse last week had more than the usual first-night nerves to concern them. One member was unable to perform and his place was taken at short notice by the director, Roger Smith.

First performed in London in 1997, the play is set in a Scottish castle in 1963 when the then Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, is informed of the resignation from the Cabinet and from Parliament of the War Minister, John Profumo, following his lying to the House of Commons.

There is very little action in the play. It consists mainly of long speeches by Macmillan in which we learn of his sheltered and privileged childhood and adolescence, and his general detachment from the events going on around him. We learn also of his deep religious faith, his concern regarding the social changes that followed the First World War and his great disappointment when his colleagues and family fail him.

Richmond Drama Awards Joy Manners

The demanding role of Harold Macmillan was taken by David Crawley. He was convincing in demeanour and appearance but was apt to stay in one spot centre stage, moving little. This resulted in a worthy but at times tedious performance.

The part of his wife, Lady Dorothy, was played with charm and vivacity by Moira Edwards.

In a touching scene, a flashback to 1931, she tells him of her adultery with Bob Boothby and that she is expecting Boothby's child. In this scene she was hampered by an unbecoming frock and a large hat, which obscured her face, reducing contact with the audience.

Director Roger Smith, carrying the book, did his best to fill the part of secretary Oliver Widdowes, the recipient

of many of Macmillan's confidences.

Lindsay Marnoch gave a competent portrayal of Ian Ritchie, the apologetic MI5 representative, his hapless task was to explain to the Prime Minister MI5's involvement in the Profumo scandal.

Wendy Bedford was pleasantly efficient as the housekeeper Mrs Brennan.

The back wall of the set was lined with bookcases containing books and a deer antler, to denote the library in an austere Scottish castle. It was furnished with club-type leather armchairs.

At few points in the play was the front of the stage utilised. This for me resulted in a lack of true involvement of audience with actors.

This play revolves around the historical facts of the Profumo scandal. It prompted reflections on the contrast between the Profumo resignation, from which there was no return to public life, and recent events.