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SO FAR IN 1989 PRESENT AND PAST PUPILS HAVE:-

IN 1988 FORMER CONTI PUPILS PAST & PRESENT PLAYED.

Play Reviews CHISWICK HOUSE GARDEN

Cymbeline
THE GODS smiled upon Hounslow
Leisure Services' presentation of
Theatre Set-Up's Cymbeline, described
"as a comedy in the magical Celtic
tradition". An accurate description having paid regard to the ambitious and
exhaustively researched programme
notes which analyse the meanings of the
story. In fact, not forgetting the planetcary correspondence of the characters,
not so much a programme more a way of
life, to be studied, time permitting, in
th idyllis curroundings of the open-air
Temple Amphitheatre in Chiswick Cymbeline

House Grounds.

I suspect we had the advantage of the National Theatre production, which was touched with sadness by the death of Lord Olivier on the same night. However, it was also one of the loveliest nights of the year, marred only by the roar of the occasional planes overhead, although even they acquired a magic of their own once reflected in the pool by the amphitheatre. Apart from that the acoustics were admirable.

The explanation of what lies behind every nuance and permutation of the plot are fascinating, though I suspect some of them might have surprised even the Bard himself. However I am content

to coast along with this intriguing and unlikely confection of gobbledegook, with its echoes of Snow White, complete with Wicked Queen, the faithful servant who can't bring himself to cut out the theorems heart and her remote control to the contr

touch too protracted (though apparently an hour shorter than the National). Artistic direction by Wendy McPhee and co-director Don Caulfield — a sturdy Belarius et al — impeccable; incisive characterisations, audible even across a crowded lake, by Stephi Hemelryk (Imogen), Christopher Robbie (Cymbeline and others), subtle doublings by Tomy Portacio (Leonatus Posthumus and Cloten) Chris Jordan (Pisanio and Arviragus) and Ben Foster (Jachimo and Guiderius). As the Queen, Teresa Forsythe reminds us what a great stage comeback could be in store for Joan Collins.

Eric Braun

#### MAUREEN PATON gets hot under the collar

# Hell on earth

Auris Clos

SARTRE borrowed his idea of Hell from the ancient Greeks whose attitude to the afterlife was altogether more urbane than the medieval Christian fear of eternal physical torture.

It was the mental anguish that mattered more to Greek souls in torment. In Homer's Odyssey, the denizens of the underworld complained of its everlasting tedium as if Hades were some ghastly hospital waiting-room guarded by a harpy behind the reception desk.

Paul Farnsworth's appropriately sterile design for this Cotswold Theatree Group production presents us with an ornate antechamber in Second Empire style that looks like the setting for a stifling Givil Service cocktail party. The oven-temperature heat in the Studio does the rest. Hell is too many other people in the audience on a hot night.

Director Alison Sutcliffe gives us

ecognisable human beings in this loomed menage a trois. Susan Dury, as the embittered lesbian postal clerk Ines, looks like an escaped wardress from Prisoner Cell Block H, full of blue resentment towards Kate

looks like an escaped wardress from Prisoner Cell Block H, full of blue-collar resentment towards Kate Nicholls' hearless socialite Estelle. Bearded, burly Bruce Purchase has a gruff male chauvinism as the surly Garcin, who prefers the company of men in his newspaper office. It is less easy to believe in them as spectres, but that is a problem inherent in the play itself. Reuben Purchase completes the cast as a smug little flunkey, the porter at the gates of hell. Frank Hauser's crisp translation serves Sartre's economical style well and supplies an ironic modern perspec-tive with Ines' sour joke about the absence of a traditional borruer in hell. "They cut down on the state." Suppreparing to whip up hatter and despair as the self-appointed dominatrix in this victous circle.



## The Recruiting Officer

The Recruiting Officer
The ROYAL Court has done Australian theatre a service if its directors have noted how little embellishment is strictly necessary in the presentation of a good old play.

Not that Max Stafford-Clark managed to get it all right. The balance between the two affairs in The Recruiting Officer is tilted heavily towards the Plume and Silvia liaison, mainly thanks to Amanda Redman and Julian Wadham. Redman, in particular, carries her unexplained transformation into the Wilful male with a delightful ambiguity that never confuses the audience, though it is enough to fool her fellows in stage.

Nigel Cooke's Worthy, on the other hand, takes his name too literally; and Kathryn Hunter, who had been so moving in Our Country's Good, translates Melinda's uncertainty of mind into movement without encouraging us to care for her eventual decision.

The company's strength in the officentre characterisations is also a major contributor to the overall picture—adding touches of Restoration to a play

more concerned with the real politics of marriage than its predecessors. We actually care about stilly Lucy's attempts to wed the only semi-outrageous Brazen; about country Rose's complaints of loss of reputation without compensatory pleasure; and even about worldly-wise Saint Kite's military requiting as his Captain deserts to raise recruits in a marrimonial way.

Stafford-Clark and despirer Peter Hartwell have so well established the social intimacy of 18th entury Shrewsbury that there is a reasonable fear that French dragoons would do far worse than these conniving grenadiers.

And also the economics which have brought Kite into the army and taken Plume out of it to pay taxes on his wife's bountiful income can also be assumed.

The only historical aspect which Australian audiences may miss is any sense of its premiere production on our soil 200 years ago, which we've been encouraged so optimistically to expect by the prior production of Our Country's Good. London, Blackpool and Toronto (to which the double bill now tours) may have lesser expectations.

Jeremy Eccles

Jeremy Eccles

#### WIMBLEDON Sammy's Magic Garden

Garden

THE ENCHANTING Polka Children's Theatre has everything to delight younger patrons such as tearooms in magic train carriages and the most beautiful marbles you could hope to buy but still lacks effective air conditioning.

Once predominant the home of younger diversifying with a season of the period of

as bright as a button and immediately at loggerheads with the horrid Miss Nettetle, who loathes youngsters and is doing sinister things with poisoned cakes to turn them into flowers imprisoned in thraldom to her in the magic garden. Makeup and costumes by Paula Adrainowski and Leni Hill are brilliantly macabre in their effect. Lizzie Queen's Miss Nettle has much of the Gearsome impact of Margaret Hamilton's Wicked Witch of the West in The Wizard of Oz, and, for that matter, Joschine Medville has something of the sparkle of a dusky young Judy Garland. As her friend Eddie, who supports and accompanies her on all her adventures, Ian Doody is engagingly nimble and bright—son of Jean Challis, be was that looks to be at the start of a promising career. Tony Pritchard makes Compost the Gardener another entertaining character. He, like the rest of the cast, gives full value to the author's effective music and lyrics, for which credit is also due to MD Nick Skibeck. Full marks, too, to Alex Bunn's imaginative set designs and director Chris Fisher for keeping the MD Nick Skilbeck. Pull Harroy, ed. Alex Bunn's imaginative set designs and director Chris Fisher for keeping the show going at such a cracking pace. Eric Braun

#### The heat is on – BRUCE PURCHASE and KATE NICHOLLS in Huis Clos at the Lyric, Hammersmith. Picture: Tristram Kenton

## THE POOR

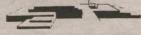
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