

The Voysey Inheritance (Cottesloe) could be renamed 'Serious Edwardian Money'. The Voysey firm got rich slow: it took generations of corrupt dealings to make the firm its money. When Edward Voysey discovers that his father is a swindling solicitor, he resolves that as soon as he inherits the family firm he will do the right thing. Granville Barker's unwieldy play is, in part, a debate about what the right thing should be. Truth cannot be easily accounted for.

The part of Edward Voysey is played by Jeremy Northam, a young actor who looks, to judge from the photograph in the programme, satisfyingly like Granville Barker himself. When Edward is first forced to listen to his father's self-justification, presented as advice, Northam makes his head and shoulders look wonderfully like a hanger from which the rest of his body dangles. In the second half, once in command, he moves back into his suit and sits on the powerful side of the desk.

This production gives a convincing sense of Edwardian life: the *longueurs* during which after-dinner bores, inspired by port, talk on; it also shows how frankness upsets formality. At the funeral tea Edward announces to the company — the indignant, the deaf and the weeping — "There will be no money." The great dramatic moment of the play turns out, perhaps unintentionally, to be comic.

Barbara Leigh-Hunt is wonderful as Mrs Voysey, deaf as a post, larded in black jet. Alice (Stella Gonet) is a gilded, singular figure getting her kicks out of Edward's plight, ordering him to crack nuts, propose to her, go to jail for her sake. Suzanne Burden is powerful as Beatrice Voysey, the bookish wife with strong ideas and a weak husband, Hugh (Crispin Redman) — a velvet-suited artist who believes in a Bohemian version of the right thing. Michael Bryant's Peasy, a manservant bribed to keep his peace,



Discovering that his dad is a dddler. Jeremy Northam as Edward Voysey.

sounds mild but isn't. He brings out the line 'I want the money' in a husky animal hiss.

William Dudley has designed a plausible solicitor's office with views of Lincoln's Inn and an agreeable dining room, all decanters and damask, with a portrait of a Voysey ancestor in a prop-up-the-mantelpiece pose — a favourite family attitude. There is much leisure in which to ponder the effect that a desk or a dining table between two people has on their conversation. The desk increases power, the table seems to inhibit it, and in *The Voysey Inheritance* there is always

either a desk or a dining table in the way. The play itself resembles a huge mahogany dresser which can't be moved easily and hasn't been dusted for years. But Richard Eyre polishes it diligently and respectfully and makes its limited virtues shine.

At the Crucible *The Northern Mystery Plays* are in progress, adapted and directed by Mike Kay and John Tams. Every night God creates Sheffield with help from Bruno Santini, whose witty construction site offers plenty of steel to remind us where we are. Angels wear hard hats and Lucifer is the

gav'nor enjoying the brief thrill of sitting in God's hot seat on top of the scaffolding.

In this inventive production, surprises come thick and fast. Adam and Eve crash into the world naked, black and wrapped in cling-film. When Noah puts his ark up, he brings the house down. When a giraffe pokes its neck through a porthole, Noah sternly instructs it to 'sit'.

In the first half the world is created, flooded and saved. The second half of the *Northern Mysteries* cannot compete, focused as it is on visiting time at the manger.

Kellaway on Voysey

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