

YOU can see why Fox and Gould are so excited about making a buddy movie in David Mamet's *Speed-the-Plow* (NT, Lyttelton), for 'Speed-the-Plow' itself is a fizzing and very funny variation on *The Buddy Play*.

Bobby Gould (Colin Stinton) has been made Head of Production at a big studio, and Charlie Fox (Alfred Molina), with whom he has buddied about Hollywood for 11 years, comes straight to him with a 24-hour option involving a big star. It will make them rich. 'Rich?' says Gould. 'Are you kidding me? We're going to have to hire someone just to figure out the things we want to buy . . .'

Enter, disturbing this idyll of boyish excitement, *The Girl*. Karen (Rebecca Pidgeon) is a temp in Gould's office: slim, scrupulous, bold, pretty, amused. She speaks like a trainee air hostess and asks out-of-court questions like 'Is it a good movie?' Charlie bets Bobby he can't make her within 24 hours; Bobby gives Karen a novel by an East Coast cissy to courtesy-read and report on that night. Karen persuades Bobby to drop the buddy movie as degrading and to greenlight for shooting this wholly unsaleable hypothesis about radiation, redemption and the end of the world. It will be 'a film to make a difference' and bring people hope.

Karen is where 'Speed-the-Plow' begins to go wrong, although Pidgeon's performance is so mesmerisingly pitched between innocence and knowledge that you can't wait to hear

## THEATRE

'Speed-the-Plow',

'Mirror' and 'Vortex'

### MICHAEL RATCLIFFE

what she will say next. It is simply not possible to believe that so solemn a young Head of Production would give in to a Green case so fast. Directed by Gregory Mosher of Lincoln Center Theatre, Stinton and Molina are finely matched as an evangelist *manque* and a tick-tack artist who moves at twice the normal speed of man but always ends up at the back. When they have mastered the bleak width and blotting-paper acoustic of the Lyttelton — not kind to comedy — they will be even better.

Arthur Miller's *Two-Way Mirror*, directed by David Thacker at the Young Vic, is a double bill written 20 years later than 'After the Fall', reviewed last week. Where the earlier play is painstaking, cross-referential and oblique, 'Some Kind of Love Story' and 'Elegy for a Lady' display a masterly craftsmanship and direct human understanding throughout. True, the second, in which a grieving middle-aged lover (Bob Peck) enters a jeweller's shop to buy something for his dying mistress, is a somewhat contrived and ceremonial piece, but 'Some Kind of Love Story' is a tangle of tender feelings in which sex, power, truth, love and corruption are unforgettably combined.

## Ratcliffe on Plow

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Tue, Feb 25, 2020