

Even more astonishing in an RSC Stratford season that is already assuming vintage status is Sam Mendes's debut production of *Troilus and Cressida* in the Swan. Performed with shattering intensity and stylishly designed by another RSC debutant, Anthony Ward (a great leaning mask of Apollo, ladders, a pool for Cressida's feet and warriors' blades), it will stand comparison with any version I can recall. It is visceral, crystal clear and as absorbing as a great sporting event.

Ralph Fiennes and Amanda Root are the lovers, and an almost unbelievably strong cast includes Norman Rodway's definitive Pandarus, Ciaran Hinds's sensuously leonine Achilles, Sally Dexter's lushly melancholic Helen, David Troughton's vigorously ebullient Hector, Paul Jesson's gravely subtle Ulysses and Simon Russell Beale's blisteringly repulsive Thersites. You should go.

## Coveney on Troilus

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