



at Frogs in a double bill with Electra at the Shaw: see Fringe

Fireworks and flashing steel

Critics' choice Theatre

Michael Billington in London

YUGOSLAV director Maden Materic is famous for creating wordless dramas. He works for the first time with British actors in *The Closing Number*, which arrives tomorrow at Hampstead Theatre (co-producers with *Shared Experience*) after a short tour. Phil Daniels plays a knife-thrower, Denise Wong his wife and Kate France a beautiful young pyrotechnic who presumably comes between them. Sounds intriguing.

Howard Barker, a dramatist never afraid of words, sees his *Victory* revived by The Wrestling School at Greenwich Theatre. Set in 1660, it deals with a Puritan

writer Tina Howe also coincidentally surface. *Painting Churches* gets its British premiere at the Nuffield, Southampton, with Clifford Williams directing a cast headed by Rosemary Harris, Susan Penhaligon and Frank Middlemass. And Chelsea's *Man In The Moon* include in a season devoted to women writers (opening tonight with Aphra Behn's *The False Count*) Ms Howe's *Approaching Zanzibar*, which deals with a drive across America.

Elsewhere, a modern French play, Pierre Bourgeade's *By Whatever Means*, opens at the Offstage Downstairs. A Brazilian hit at this year's London International Mime Festival, Friar Benfimo of Saint Anthony, comes to the Watermans. Charles Dennis's backstage comedy, *Going On*, opens at the Latchmere, Battersea. Pan Optic present a new version of *Miss Julie*, transposed to the West Indies in the 1980s, at the Battersea



Denise Wong as the knife-thrower's wife in *The Closing Number* at Hampstead: see Critics' choice

Billington Previews Closing Number

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ianlharris
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