

Hoboken Pier. Her father, a Russian cardiologist (Carl Forgiione), modulates her anxieties with the interests of her suitor, a Sicilian cop played in a near-perfect de Niro imitation by Nigel Whitmey, and those of a rival nightclub singing detective (Robert Jerez).

Bodies in the Hudson are confused with bodies on heat. And Bebe has a brother who hasn't come home. The show is far too long, but we must not be unreasonable. Peter Granger-Taylor, and his regular musical collaborator, Adrian Johnston, are coming chaps.

They have welded prohibition paranoia, forensic science, and the alternative 1920s culture of low jazz dives and seances, into one of the most compulsively hypnotic entertainments I have seen for many months. It plays for one more week in the pleasantly castellated seat of old John of Gaunt, 'time-honoured Lancaster'.

Alan Ayckbourn's attempt to pass off *Invisible Friends* at the RNT's Cottesloe as a serious new play, but for kids, is a bitter

disappointment. It is frankly inert and badly performed (acting for children apparently means underlining everything you say and waving your arms around), an automatic, echoing exploitation of the brilliant *Woman In Mind* five years ago.

Even sub-standard Ayckbourn is divine manna compared to the offensively incompetent *Map of the Heart* by William (Shadowlands) Nicholson at the Globe. The cast includes the indestructibly wonderful Sinéad Cusack, the gritty Patrick Malahide, the strangely blundering Susan Wooldridge. They comprise a love triangle in the shadow of Third World charitable action and kidnapping, personal deceit and dismay.

The play feels like a mistaken expansion of a feebly opportunist television script and Peter Wood's uncharacteristically bitty direction does little to disabuse us of the notion. Its crass, implicitly critical reference to a far superior play by David Hare (*Map of the World*) does not help.

Coveney on Invisible

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