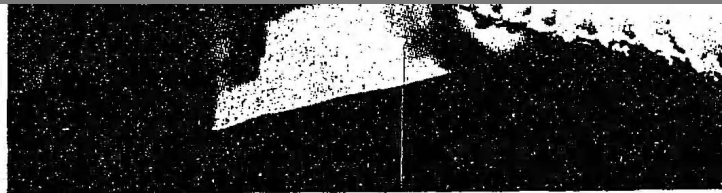


In contrast, there are signs merely of wastage and decadence at the Hampstead Theatre, where **The Closing Number** (co-produced with Shared Experience) is a dreadful, misbegotten hybrid involving two actors, a juggler, an accordionist and the Yugoslav director Mladen Materic, whose sensational **Tattoo Theatre**, a piece of 'theatre beyond words' (no, not mime), visited the Edinburgh Festival, and the Almeida, in 1987.

The same wordless dance-of-sex formula is applied to Phil Daniels and Denise Wong on a houseboat, and it falls flat



Silk and steel in a shower of scatology: Quick-change Nicholas Le

because the performers do not inhabit their prescribed world with any sensual conviction. Their relationship is punctuated by the knife-throwing exploits of Daniels. A red jelly that has been going in and out of the fridge is finally smeared over

the two of them. This is supposed to mean something. Like: why go easy on the cream?

Here Come the Clowns at the King's Head, which Philip Barry wrote in 1938 before he pulled himself together and wrote *The Philadelphia Story*, is

Michael Coveney on Closing Number

Clipped By:



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