

# Not boldness but sheer arrogance

**E**VEN theatrical geniuses can have off-days, and this soulless solo version of Hamlet must have been conceived by Robert Lepage on a particularly bad one. The French-Canadian director may be the most exciting and innovative talent working in the theatre today, but *Elsinore* shows him indulging in sheer tricksiness and shameless egotism.

Here, Lepage uses technology not to enhance the live experience or serve his diced and filleted version of Shakespeare's play, but to facilitate his own vain and none-too-impressive performance of all the major characters. It's amazing that one of his many collaborators didn't take him aside and quietly suggest that, this time, he'd

*Elsinore*  
*Lyttelton Theatre*

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film and projection amounts to mere gimmickry, enabling Lepage to hop from one character to another. He uses simpler tricks to the same effect, ducking behind a screen as Hamlet and re-emerging as Polonius, or spinning a table to act out a heated argument between Hamlet and his uncle. The most risible moment comes when the central screen drops a square of fabric over Lepage's head, revealing him as a bearded, lisping Ophelia



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**Robert Lepage in *Elsinore*: sheer tricksiness and shameless egotism**

wearing what looks like a bell-tent.

Even the tragic final scene generates unintentional hilarity. Lepage places a camera in the hilt of a rapier, enabling us to see the fatal woundings close up. But even this deft trick takes on a comic tone as the camera freezes the images of the dead, and we watch Lepage

struggle out of costume to be killed again.

*Elsinore* is playful and technically accomplished, but it is also hollow, offering nothing more edifying than the chance to watch an admired director show off. The most atmospheric thing about it is Robert Caux's live score, but even

that sounds at times like a tacky cinema soundtrack. The cancellation of the British premiere at last year's Edinburgh Festival — because of technical problems, funnily enough — was perhaps a blessing in disguise.

● *Until 11 January. Box office: 0171 928 2252*

Elsinore Nick Curtis Standard



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