

Women who are losing in love let their Hare down

AMY'S VIEW is David Hare's first old-fashioned play: having so eloquently conveyed and criticised the essence of Mrs Thatcher's England he now turns tail. In form, Hare's plays have been fresh and bracing — famous for their insight and the force of their moral indignation.

Amy's View still captivates and concerns, fortified by the emotional dynamism of Richard Eyre's production. But as smartly set by Bob Crowley in rural, upperish middle-class England's heartland, complete with veranda, summer house and old granny, Hare harks back in style and sympathies to the 1950s plays of NC Hunter and Robert Bolt.

That old playwriting form, where well-heeled genteel folk in country houses lament the fading of dreams and a brash, end-of-empire world, has long passed. But here Hare sounds a requiem for the passing of their children's securities. He also shapes a battle of wills between two women suffering those pangs of betrayal and loss caused by men.

It's true Amy's View spans the Thatcher-Major years rather than the '50s. And Hare describes an England in recent decline and free fall. But apart from incidental references to a pub converted into a wine bar serving "wind-dried yak meat" and the rise of independent television production companies, there's scant period sense.

Besides, it's hard to illustrate the moral iniquities of Thatcherite England by creating as your example a famous actress whose status as a poorly advised Lloyd's under-

Amy's View ★
Lyttelton Theatre
NICHOLAS DE JONGH

writer enables her to gamble her way to huge profits before being ruined by limitless debts. This, though, is just one facet of a complex play whose focus grows fuzzy.

Esme Allen, the widowed actress, tremendously played by Dame Judi Dench, with an air of fraught, flinty hauteur which gives way to child-like vulnerability, launches a battle of wills with daughter Amy set upon marrying Eoin McCarthy's bland Dominic — an aspirant film director of no known social status.

While Amy subsequently acquires children, losing Dominic to adultery and his brilliant career, her view of the world, which involves unconditional love, comes to seem as flawed as her mother's unworlly romanticism. Samantha Bond, although swallowing the ends of sentences so they often become inaudible, powerfully



Battle of wills: Dame Judi Dench and Samantha Bond

charts Amy's change and decay as she sinks to haggard querulousness. Their last encounter memorably reeks of a pain and anger years in the making.

Both women are victims of their circumstances and their men — Ronald Pickup, endearing as a smitten, inebriated widower, is the cause of Esme's financial downfall.

Hare, however, keeps widening the range of his view of this world until the focus grows confused: Esme's view of the theatre as infinitely superior to the charms of film and TV involves an insubstantial, dragging debate in which she puts Dominic down like a dead weight.

The actress's professional and personal decline ironically mirror

each other until, in the closing scene, Hare shows Esme rediscovered and committed on a stage which has become her entire, lonely life. It is an enticing romantic finale, and Dame Judi, who so magically blurs the line between being and acting, does convey the woman's bitter-sweet triumph with absolutely piercing effect.

A road to ruin paved with great performances

STRAVINSKY'S longest work held a sell-out audience enthralled for its three-hour duration last night in the second concert of this year's City of London Festival.

It was a night to mention in awards panels later in the year. Top people were involved. John

LSO ★★★
Barbican
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teverdi Choir, who occupied a scaffold like a crowd at the races, and sang lines marked

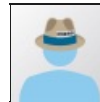
tale suited composer and librettist. If only the rake had shared their attitude to work, he would never have taken the road to ruin.

Ian Bostridge depicted Tom Rakewell as an arrogant fool. Deborah York's soprano has the right arrow-straight timbre for the innocent fiancée. Soprano

paper bag. None outsang Bryn Terfel, whose thunderous baritone and dominant presence as the tempter Nick Shadow, stole the show. How the Cardiff Singer of the World judges must regret not putting him first in 1990. Can Hovorostovsky act?

● Tonight, pianist Maria Joao

Amy's de Jongh Standard



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