

THIS unfairly ridiculous play by Richard Nelson may be set in the "late spring of 1945", but its characters are blissfully unconcerned about little local difficulties like the final defeat of the Nazis and the Japanese or the imminent bliss of peace. Such passing matters are never mentioned — perhaps because when it comes to detailed knowledge of 1940s English life the American Mr Nelson rather resembles that misleading guide who advised tourists that it was considered bad manners not to haggle over the price of your ticket on a London transport bus.

Since the play operates in an almost complete political, social and cultural vacuum, any audience is left to fall back upon sex for light relief. And when it comes to sex Mr Nelson has plenty to offer. His account of 17-year-old Peter, evacuated to Canada in 1940 and returning to a Clapham flat to live with his three post-teenage sisters, implies that the hazards of war induced a state of such priapic frenzy in the prim English that it just would not die down after the bombs were over.

Hardly has Peter arrived than Ann, his pregnant, married sister is discreetly masturbating him — while he bathes in a tin tub — Nelson appar-

Sex saves the day on the home front

Goodnight Children Everywhere X
The Other Place, Stratford

NICHOLAS DE JONGH

ently imagining the English middle classes had not heard about fitting baths by 1945. There is more to come. Ann's husband, a middle-aged GP, can't keep his hands off his practice nurse; her actress sister, not content with pleasuring a director so as to get her hands on a good part, seethes and screams with jealousy when she realises just what Peter and Ann are down to.

Apart from all this preposterously rendered jiggery-pokery, generally

indulged in laughably stiff upper lip style, Nelson keeps his sexually charged and alienated family in aimless, snapshot reminiscence of their shared past and separated experience as evacuees. Ian Brown's production, performed on Tim Hatley's old-fashioned, living-room set, views the play with dewy-ved reverence. Nelson's references to English greengrocers reduced to selling dead crows, long queues and "coupons" rather than ration books for food betray a basic ignorance. Sara Markland, Robin Weaver and Cathryn Bradshaw as the un-Chekovan three sisters flutter around Simon Scardfield whose Peter understandably exudes sulky boredom.



Big sisters: Sara Markland, Cathryn Bradshaw and Robin Weaver in Goodnight Children Everywhere

Alastair Muir

de Jongh Standard Goodnight



Clipped By:

ianlharris

Tue, Jul 25, 2023