

► THEATRE

Sister's under your skin



Sister acting up: Renata (Stephanie Beacham)

**'Equally Divided'
Richmond Theatre**

THE FUNERAL is over and the body has been cremated. All that is left to deal with is Ma's will. But for sisters Edith and Renata Taylor, this is where the trouble begins as their mother has divided her property between them. Renata (Stephanie Beacham) is beautiful and wealthy, flitting from one man to another between trips to France and visits to her analyst. Older sister Edith (Stephanie Cole) is a practical spinster who has spent the past 15 years

looking after their "cruel cow" of a mother. The play opens with Edith involved in a telephone conversation with a friend, explaining that she had overheard her mother making a new will which leaves Renata out in the cold. Sadly, Edith can find no trace of this will and blames her solicitor's secretary, who "couldn't find a key on a typewriter". The arrival of bumbling solicitor Charles Mowbray (Benjamin Whitrow) brings fresh animosity between the sisters as he makes his interest in Renata obvious, despite

Edith's attempts to gain his attention.

When they are told there is little money, Edith and Renata agree to have their mother's collection of antiques valued and sold. It is only after another fight with her sister and the discovery there is no new will that Edith enlists antiques dealer Fabian Hill, played by Gerald Harper, to help her get her "just desserts".

Equally Divided moves at a cracking pace in the hands of a strong cast, with the laughs coming rapidly. The interplay between Cole and Beacham is wonderful.

Even before a word was spoken, they were able to demonstrate the depth of the gulf between them.

The pace did wilt a little towards the end, but just when it appeared we were in for a Disney-style happy ending and a touching reunion between warring sisters, the story took an unexpected twist.

The play finishes tomorrow (Saturday) so hurry and book your ticket now.

Equally Divided runs at Richmond Theatre, The Green, Richmond, until tomorrow (Saturday). Performances 7.45pm, Sat mat 2.30pm. Bookings: 0181 940 0088. Tickets £8-£21.

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