



MILTON SHULMAN at the theatre

Not just alive...electric!

NEW theatres are not always happy with their first - night openings either because the play they have chosen is a critical disaster or because of administrative teething problems.

Not so with **The Young Vic** which gave its first post-natal cry on Friday. This off-shoot of the National Theatre, aimed at attracting young people to the live theatre by an informal atmosphere dedicated to their tastes, auspiciously lived up to all its promises.

The theatre itself has that grey rough-hewn, bare look which contemporary design

identifies with honesty and informality.

The open stage, surrounded by a horseshoe of someday-to-be-cushioned seats, invites an intimate proximity with the audience. The bar, equipped with a juke box and serving coffee and soft drinks only, had none of that dire pomposity associated with most theatre bars.

A bubbling, farcical, updated version of Molière's **The Cheats of Scapino** enabled the cast to romp about the theatre with the uninhibited high spirits of a troupe of acrobatic clowns.

Set in Naples to a background of tinkling Neapolitan music, we watch the antics of the sharp, white-suited Scapino as he foils the efforts of two elderly fathers to arrange the marriages of their children.

Fitting about the theatre with

impish assurance and vitality, Jim Dale, as Scapino, charmed his young audience with a cocky, bravura demonstration of comic acting. His trussing up of one of the old men in a sack allowed him to deploy a battery of accents and some impeccable timing that almost stopped the show.

Gavin Reed, as one of Scapino's seedy chums, and John Moffat, as a cantankerous father, might be mentioned in a cast that seemed to be having as much fun out of the romp as the audience.

Frank Dunlop's production, as lively as an explosion of electric eels, sparked its contagious merriment through a delighted house and gave promise of more treasures to come from this fresh theatrical venture.

Scapino Shulman Standard



Clipped By:

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