This'll put bums on seats

Theatre de Complicite has pulled off its greatest theatrical coup yet - defrosting a Neolithic man



Susannah Clapp

Mnemonic Riverside Studios Peggy for You Hampstead Our Father Almeida

Newspapers

by ancestry

Our Father Almeida

NOTHING STAYS STILL in

a Theatre de Complicite
show. Everything is always
on the point of changing into
something else: one episode
into another, one character
into the next, one object into
a nanimal. It's the tumble of
images that makes this company so exciting to watchit's like watching a a waterfail crash on to the stage.

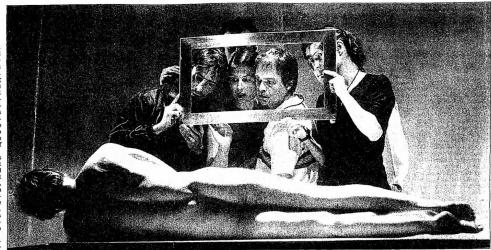
In Complicite's new production at the Riverside Studiction at the Riverside Studos, Simon McBurney has
come up with, and directed,

duction at the riversiae Studios, Simon McBurney has come up with, and directed, an idea which goes to the root of the company's interests, Mnemonie is an investigation of memory. It asks how this faculty works. It answers by saying that recollection is not simply mechanical retrieval, but an imaginative act. It illustrates this by creating two intellinked stories the recovery of the frozen body of a Neolithic man, and the recovery, via a mid-European journey, of a woman's immediate family history. McBurney supplies a pumgent definition of the process of remembering and of the

antoning supposes plans gent definition of the process of remembering the control of the control

with the edgy Katrin Cartilidge and goofy Richard Ratz, which show Omposition of the control of

to give it some upbeat publicity and 'let the gloom come as a lovely surprise'. One client commits suicide



'Lipman is a meticulous, manic card -

butnot

convincing

Photograph by Neil Libbert

(offstage), an act more despised than mourned by Ramsay, A very cross northern dramatist explains that the writing of a play is 'a fart in the face of destiny'.

The day's events are shaped by a Shakespearean reference. Ramsay sees herself betrayed by one of her male protegés, much as Falstaff was betrayed by Prince Hal. The dialogue is larded with heatrical teases: Alans Ayckbourn and Plater are muddled with one another by their agent, who maintains, with a certain amount of scatter-brained posturing, that they must always be running into each other in well observed

Yorkshire. The epigrams—
'Its wonderfully written; I
think that's probably the
problem'—are all to do with
the theatre. This is a sparky,
well-worded coterie piece.
Actually, it's really a onewoman show, in which
every one who isn't Ramsay
is grist to the mill of her character. As in life, it seems,
where she was a man-eating
orchid, bullying, vamping
and interfering with her
clients' private lives, behaving, in fact, like someone
who might expect to have a
play written about them.
Lipman is a meticulous,
manic card—well observed,
but not convincing. She

moves like a marionette marinulated by quarrelling puppeteers: every other word ends in an upper-class explosion. What she lack the marinulated has been a considered to the control of th ometimes engulfed by them.
Here is the sophisticated

daughter returning to a rain-drenched rural home after urban success and dissipa-tion. Here is the put-upon mother, always poised to drop to her prayerful knees. Here are quarrelsome sib-lings, ready to rise to a song. Here, too, are several Hibern-ian curtseys to Chekhov: the trees of the homestead are about to be chopped down. O'Brien's linguistic gifts fouch these ingredients with lyricism. This shades into blarney and into twinkling insight, there's a boy's bot-tom hore which is appra-ently like we will be appra-ently like will be appra-ticed up in a handkerchief.

tant ingredient, a pulse of real feeling which runs through the play, a pulse which is often lacking in more sleekly turned dramas.

more sleekly turned dramas. It is apparent in a presumably autobiographical vein, when the glossy visiting daughter is told that the books she writes and sends to her mother are regularly buried in the garden. It is apparent in the subtle relationship between three sisters. And if flares into dramatic life in David Troughton's formidable performance as the tyrannical, perhaps incestuous

Mnemonic & Peggy Susannah Clapp

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