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# Not quite a train wreck but Lohan's inexperience shows

## Most of the drama is offstage in miscast Mamet revival

**SPEED-THE-PLOW**  
Playhouse Theatre  
★★☆☆☆

The onstage action in Lindsay Posner's much-hyped revival of *Speed-the-Plow* can't begin to compete with its offstage drama.

Ever since tabloid target Lindsay Lohan's casting was announced, people have been taking bets on her actually making it to the theatre, let alone giving a West End-worthy performance.

The bad news for vultures is that she's not a total train wreck, requiring just one audible prompt on press night, but offers an abject lesson in the difference between speaking lines and creating a fully realised character.

**Childlike**

In fairness, Mamet poses a challenge with enigmatic Karen, the naive temp secretary who convinces newly appointed Hollywood studio boss Bobby (Richard Schiff) to ditch producer Charlie's (Nigel Lindsay) commercial dead cert in favour of adapting a morally righteous tome.

Yet Lohan, though appealingly childlike, is convincing neither as an impassioned do-gooder nor a cunning manipulator, and her flat intonation grates.

Most egregious, she lets her scene partners down by switching off between lines, as if sensing the camera is no longer on her. It's an unmistakable indication of stage inexperience.

It's not the only miscasting in Posner's lethargic production, with Schiff struggling to convince as a hungrily ambitious shark.

This renders his dramatic 180 – often a tough sell – essentially meaningless, though he's on surer ground with Bobby's crisis of conscience.

The least-talked-about actor is the real star: Brit Lindsay is the sole cast member to nail Mamet's breakneck, machine-gun rhythms. Rather than aping Kevin Spacey's blistering psychotic devil in Matthew Warchus's superior 2008 Old Vic version, he presents Char-



■ Lindsay Lohan, with Richard Schiff, switches off between lines

lie as a sweaty, anxious hustler, aware that this is his last shot at financial security – a resonant reading for our times. Sadly, this *Speed-the-Plow* doesn't deliver satire of an industry sac-

rificing creative credibility for commercial gain through the play itself, but through the circumstances of its revival. Until November 29.

Marianka Swain



■ OperaUpClose's Marriage of Figaro. Picture: Christopher Tribble

## Farewell show is a delightful romp with sublime singing

**THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO**  
King's Head, Islington  
★★★★★

One tends to take for granted the sheer joy engendered by Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*.

With just a three piece orchestra comprising piano, clarinet and viola, Alex Beetschen's new orchestration of that so familiar overture soars through the Kings Head filling the room with glorious sound.

Instead of allowing the audience to sit quietly and listen to the opening music, director Sarah Tipple brings on the actor/singers in their modern dress to set up the stage, bring on the dress rails, arrange the furniture, hang the drapes and set the props ready for the performance.

As the music ends the play begins with Figaro, played by Alistair Sutherland, in full voice and having donned his costume, measuring up the stage, with Susanna – Rosie Bell – concentrating delightedly on her wedding hat forcing him to admit it is a millinery triumph.

Sutherland and Bell are ideal casting, facing the problems of the servant class with the ability to outwit

their less intelligent superiors at every turn.

Both talented comic performers and singers, they are a joy to watch and hear.

Nicholas Dwyer is both handsome and arrogant as the Count, with a fashionable beard like a pop star.

Fae Evelyn as his abandoned Countess is at first wistful, and later full of fun when she joins plans to bring down her pompous and egocentric husband.

Felicity Buckland is a perky Cherobino, the pretty boy who loves the ladies, and Henry Grant Kerswell looms threateningly as Bartolo the lawyer who is assisting Marcellina (Mary-Jane de Havas) in her quest for either marriage with Figaro or monetary compensation.

Another witty and hilarious libretto by Robin Norton Hale makes one sad that, apart from a Christmas gala season of repeat performances of their most popular productions, this is the last new work by OperaUpClose to open at the Kings Head.

Their farewell show is a delightful romp with sublime singing.

Not to be missed.

Aline Waites

## Tavern hosts musical spiritland for Pete and co to play best tracks

Shoreditch restaurant Merchants Tavern is moonlighting as an elegant setting for a stunningly wide range of music over the next three months as a host of respected clubhouse DJs, artists and critics prepare to air playlists of their favourite tracks. Each night, special guests including Hot Chip's Alexis Taylor, Flomotion DJ Nick Luscombe and BBC 6 Music presenter Pete Dinklage will play carefully-selected vinyl records of all genres from the past 50 years – encompassing everything from rock 'n' roll to soul, country, reggae, R'n'B, jazz and blues. Prominent DJ Bill Brewster launched the innovative new musical venture – dubbed Spiritland – on Monday before inaugu-

rating the venue's pioneering analogue sound system, hailed as the holy grail of auditory experiences.

Taking up residence in the bar of the former Victorian warehouse on Charlotte Street, Spiritland hosts a season of curated events until the New Year, when it intends to open its own restaurant, bar and members club with music at its heart.

Monday October 27 will see a night dedicated to Lou Reed on the first anniversary of his death, while later in the season, there will even be a rare outing of Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm's extensive jazz collection, loaned to Spiritland by his family. Visit [merchantstavern.co.uk](http://merchantstavern.co.uk).

Danny Wittenberg



■ Spiritland is coming to the Merchants Tavern