

Theatre: Reviews

This mucky fifties romp is great fun

An old fashioned family comedy drama about the decade's music and morals contains sex scenes the Lord Chamberlain would have vetoed

HATCHED AND DESPATCHED
PARK THEATRE
★★★★☆

This mucky romp through the fifties features hatches and despatches - a christening and a funeral - on the same day with hilariously uncomfortable results. It is 1959 when women wore nipped in waists, tight skirts and stiletto heels.

What is so delightful about this extraordinarily witty play is that it not only takes us back to the music, morals and fashions of the 50s, it also reminds us of the kind of plays we used to love and enjoy. The messages have clarity and we are familiar with the kind of people portrayed. But although it is a kind of old fashioned family comedy drama it has been brought bang up to date. The writers call it a 'romp through the fifties' - but with sexually explicit scenes and stories that would have been impossible in the fifties. Words the Lord Chamberlain would never have allowed on stage.

The acting is sublime. Wendi Peters as Dorothy - the matriarch who says predictable

things like 'My trouble is I never think of myself, only care for other people' is a cross between Margaret Thatcher and Edna Everage with a touch of Hyacinth Bucket thrown in. I'm not sure whether this brand of woman still exists but the actress is perfection in the role.

The cast is full of excellence - Director Michael Kirk hasn't put a foot wrong in choosing his actors. Wendy Morgan beautiful and wistful as the new widow, Dorothy's downtrodden younger sister, her sexy daughter Diana Vickers and the warring parents of the Christened baby are all so excellently

delineated that we in the audience feel like interlopers in the family crises.

It has a bit of everything including huge commercial possibilities. Tremendous fun. **Aline Waites**

■ Wendi Peters as matriarch Dorothy
Picture: Philip Lyons



Shattering soliloquy of grief and isolation

SONG FROM FAR AWAY
NEW VIC
★★★★☆

The anticipated union of invogue director Ivo van Hove and playwright Simon Stephens at theatrical hotspot the Young Vic is surprisingly low-key, but this 75-minute monologue lingers long after the event.

Successful New York-based banker Willem returns home to Amsterdam following the sudden death of his younger brother. His attempts to make sense of it, and address his own alienation, take the form of elegiac letters to the departed Pauli.

It's an exhaustive study of the mundane and the monumental, bereavement fractured through everyday irritations in Eelco Smits' masterfully conversational delivery. Deliberately oblique on some details, like the origins of Willem's familial conflict, it's devastatingly effective as pointillist theatre: thousands of

poetic observations gradually form a life.

Numbed Willem discovers an outlet in a half-remembered song heard in his local gay bar. His attempts to recapture it speak to his quest for meaning and connection, and the desolation wrought by their absence.

"Go where the love is," counsels Mark Eitzel's haunting piece, but Willem is the emblem of contemporary dislocation and isolation. Nowhere feels like home - he's most comfortable in liminal, anonymous hotels and airport lounges - and this loss makes him all too aware of his gaping internal void.

Without showboating, Smits turns in an extraordinary performance. Stripping off both clothes and emotional armour, he lays Willem bare: selfish, cynical, droll, confused, furious, heartbreakingly fragile. He also conjures a range of characters, from a father bulldozed by grief and uptight sister to the potent absence of Pauli.



■ picture: Jan Versweyveld

Van Hove's delicate Toneelgroep Amsterdam production features barren, modernist design and meticulous lighting from Jan Versweyveld. In his childhood bedroom, time speeds past Willem in a flutter of sped-up shadows; sometimes, he's plunged into silhouette, every gesture magnified. Shattering accumulative power.

Marianka Swain

Invitation To A Camden Psychotherapy Unit Special Fundraising Event

LOVE AND LOSS – WHY GRIEF MATTERS

Marking the 100th anniversary of Freud's Mourning and Melancholia

Saturday 3rd of October 2015
From 9am - 6pm

Institute of Child Health, 30 Guilford Street, London WC1N 1EH



In celebration of Freud's ground-breaking paper this event will focus on ways of exploring loss and the emotional price paid when loss goes unacknowledged or unresolved. We will address these ideas from the perspectives of psychoanalysis, the arts, philosophy and politics.

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Ronald Britton psychoanalyst, former president of the British Psychoanalytic Society. Chaired by **David Bell** psychoanalyst, former president of the British Psychoanalytic Society. **Giles Fraser** priest, philosopher and journalist, columnist in the Guardian and frequent contributor to BBC Radio 4.

Special screening of 'Truly, Madly, Deeply'

Juliet Stevenson, Olivier Award winning and BAFTA nominated stage and screen actor.

In conversation with

Hugh Brody, film director, anthropologist, writer and lecturer.

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