

Fact-laden debate a heavy history play

Conti and Fox shine as French icons but drama lacks wit and nuance

THE PATRIOTIC TRAITOR
PARK THEATRE
★★★★☆

How does history judge a leader whose successful career ends in cowardice and disgrace? That's the question at the heart of writer/director Jonathan Lynn's *The Patriotic Traitor*. It presents Marshal Pétain's 1945 trial and subsequent exile for facilitating the Nazi occupation of France. Lynn's play is fastidiously researched but struggles to find much contemporary relevance.

Set in Pétain's cell as he awaits the trial verdict, the play uses flashbacks to reflect on his career and relationship with De Gaulle. The two met before the First World War and served together in the trenches when De Gaulle was in his twenties and Pétain in his fifties. They developed a father-son affection despite their polarised strategic views: pragmatist Pétain consistently advocating caution while De Gaulle urged the need



■ Tom Conti in *The Patriotic Traitor*

Picture: Helen Murray

to develop modern weaponry like the Germans.

In Lynn's production, a large map of France dominates the set delineating the Maginot line. Obvious lighting changes cue in the plays' time shifts. Debate-heavy writing often lacks subtext with Pétain frequently addressing the audience as he overstates his conflicted feelings towards De Gaulle. Ruth Gibson plays De Gaulle's spirited wife with impressive elegance and the three supporting cast members do their best to add layers to the roll call of Generals, Cadets, and Officers. Tom Conti plays

Pétain with an unnecessary Yorkshire accent but brings a tender humanity to the role. Laurence Fox is superb as the young De Gaulle who devours Nietzsche and has zero social skills but grows into the fervent self-proclaimed saviour of France. Lynn wrote 'Yes, Minister' and his humorous portrait of the vanity of these titans is witty and entertaining though the comic tone wavers unsteadily - the drunken bonding scene is overplayed. There are facts a-plenty but not enough drama to bring the history fully to life.

Caroline David

Stylish witty and lurid tale

THE MAIDS
TRAFALGAR STUDIOS
★★★★☆

In 1933, French society was rocked by Christine and Léa Papin's brutal murder of their employer. The incident loosely inspired Jean Genet's 1947 play, which uses that power struggle to starkly challenge identity constructs. Jamie Lloyd's suitably unflinching revival benefits from a salty Benedict Andrews and Andrew Upton translation, and features an added layer of topical resonance by casting actresses of colour as the downtrodden servants.

But most striking is Genet's radical form - part foul-mouthed performance poetry, part expressionist fever dream. There's no anchor to reality as the women weave their experiences into sensational stories (they're keen readers of *Deadly Pleasures* magazine) and crawl into one another's skins through role-play. The maids' revenge ritual, in which one acts as mistress and the other murderer,



■ Uzo Aduba in *The Maids*

Picture: Marc Brenner

could be a memory, a plot, a fantasy or a warped love letter, while the vividly subjective characterisation renders the lady of the house monstrous and the sisters horrifyingly debased.

Genet lays bare the psychological devastation of defining one person through another. The maids are at the mercy of their mistress's whims and denied independent lives, imprisoned long before they contemplate committing a crime. They mirror one another's self-loathing and cringe under the audience's gaze - metatheatricality amplified by Soutra Gilmour's pictured-framed set.

Along with unnatural class divisions, this all-female work interrogates the performative quality of gender, from exaggerated feminine gestures to outré drag queen costuming. The manic imitation by Zawe Ashton's maid punctures the artifice of Laura Carmichael's pouting mistress, and Ashton forms a superb double act with Uzo Aduba as the incestuous sisters whose identities queasily blur. Aduba is also adept at finding necessary tonal gradations in Lloyd's high-octane production. A stylish, witty and lurid assault that finds existential truth through radical pretence.

Marianka Swain

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN NOTICE OF COUNCIL TAX 2016/2017

On 29 February 2016 the Council of the London Borough of Camden, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, set the following amounts of Council Tax for the financial year ending on 31st March 2017.

(a) The amount charged, for the whole of the Borough, EXCEPT for the Garden Squares specified in (b) below, is given for each of the categories of dwelling in the valuation bands shown below:

Band	Amount of Council Tax per year £
A	906.25
B	1,057.30
C	1,208.33
D	1,359.38
E	1,661.46
F	1,963.55
G	2,265.63
H	2,718.76

(b) The amount charged for the garden squares for each of the categories of dwelling in the valuation bands shown below:

Band	Fitzroy Square Square £	Gordon Square Square £	Mecklenburgh Square Square £
A	1,012.85	1,003.16	999.09
B	1,181.66	1,170.36	1,165.60
C	1,350.46	1,337.54	1,332.11
D	1,519.27	1,504.74	1,498.63
E	1,856.88	1,839.12	1,831.66
F	2,194.50	2,173.52	2,164.69
G	2,532.12	2,507.90	2,497.72
H	3,038.54	3,009.48	2,997.26

- On 16 December 2015 the Council of the London Borough of Camden, in accordance with Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, made the following resolution regarding a Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) from the financial year beginning 1st April 2016.
- The Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme will be the same as the scheme in operation in 2015-2016, where the maximum support available to working age people is 91.5% of their Council Tax liability.

Further details about the scheme can be found at www.camden.gov.uk

The Council Tax is to be payable in the year commencing 1st April 2016 in accordance with the Regulations made under the Act.

Director of Finance, Mike O'Donnell, Camden Town Hall, Judd Street, London, WC1H 9JE
10 March 2016

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