

THE  
SCHOOL  
FOR  
WIVES

2002

RICHMOND DRAMA AWARDS

## A very clever use of the space

**T**EDDINGTON Theatre Club presented Moliere's *School For Wives* in the Coward Room of the Hampton Playhouse for three nights last week.

I was very impressed to see how the playing space had been utilised, in a way completely different from the last time I visited this studio theatre. A mini theatre had been created, the actors performing in front of curtains, in much the same way as the French actors of the 17th century.

The play is concerned with the inherent dangers for an older man who thinks that by marrying a young innocent girl, whom he can mould, he will have the perfect wife.

The play was translated, adapted and directed by Lestocq Bonerman. He told me that it is fairly difficult to find a modern translation which is not permeated with profanity. His translation was ideally suited to this studio presentation which moved at a good pace. The actors were all very hot on their cues and brought out the wit of the piece, much to the evident delight of the audience.

Steve Boxall made a very good Arnolphe, the man with the ideal system for training a wife, who is in fact duped by that intended wife and her young suitor Horace.

David Crawley as Chrysalde made a very good Raisonneur, the voice of the middle way - the essence of Moliere's philosophy of life.

The servants were amusingly portrayed by Sarah Brooks and David Riley.

Agnes, Arnolphe's ward, whom he intends to marry, was charmingly played by Angela Francis, who made a very good ingenue, who proved not to be so naive.

Mitch Peacock, recently seen as Ferdinand in *The Tempest*, was well cast as the suitor. He has a good presence and well modulated light voice, which is ideally suited for this role. Although this was a French play I found his constant use of gestures unsuited to the small acting area of the Coward Room.

The *Deux ex machina* frequently to be found in the 'denouement' of a Moliere play was supplied by Royston Capel and Barry Hill as Enrique and Oronte.

The seventeenth century setting of the play was achieved by using brocade waistcoats, ruffs and jabots worn with plain trousers rather than complete costumes which might have been inhibiting for the actors and overpowering for the audience in such a small area.

George Hillier