

Bright on Beach
Memoirs

2003

RICHMOND DRAMA AWARDS

24/1/03

This was an excellent production in every possible respect

TEDDINGTON Theatre Club's production of Neil Simon's *Brighton Beach Memoirs* was excellent in every respect.

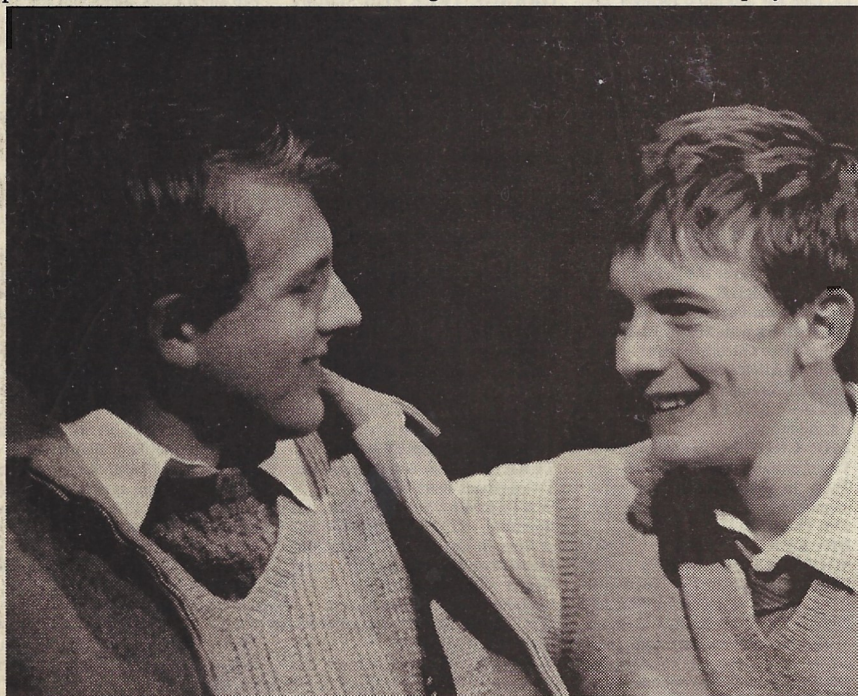
Mair Graham, whose tight direction of the play never allowed the performance to flag, was blessed with a superb cast of players. Every actor was ideally suited to his or her particular role.

sorrow, and humanity. He was acting at every moment he was on stage, silent, still and listening to the other characters. Rarely have I seen a young actor playing his own age performing with such maturity and strength.

The other two youngsters, notable Nora - Francesca Baker - who was playing the sixteen-year-old cousin brought the same

Jewish father. He brought much humour and dignity to this role.

Blanche, the hapless widow and mother of two daughters was beautifully played by Maria Waters, who developed her character throughout the play. She was excellent in her dramatic scenes, with her daughter Nora and sister Kate in which she displayed most



Ben Clarke as Stanley and Sam Marks as Eugene in Neil Simon's play Brighton Beach Memoirs - at Hampton Hill Playhouse.

The set, designed by Alan Corbett, was on several levels - main room, stairs and bedrooms, being most naturalistic complimented the action of the play. One was given a most authentic view of late 1937 Russian Jewish America to such an extent that one could actually smell the liver and cabbage being consumed on set.

In the lead role of Eugene, whose memoirs of Brighton Beach these are, was Sam Marks. From the moment he opened the play, Sam dominated the action. He spoke his lines with great fluency, maintaining his Jewish American accent throughout the play. To this very demanding role, he brought humour, pathos,

maturity and professionalism to her performance, capable of portraying a full range of emotion with great restraint and credibility.

Her younger sister Laurie was played by Sophie Stanley who does not have a lot to say, her head being permanently buried in a book, but who conveyed the fact that she, like Eugene, was aware of all that took place around her.

Stanley, Eugene's elder brother, was very well played by Ben Clare. He and Sam interacted extremely well.

In the role of Jack, the father was David R Blackburn, who gave a very convincing portrayal of the overworked, much put upon

poignantly her sorrow at being a cause of grief to others.

Clare Terry in the pivotal role of the typical 'Yiddisher mama' brought true authenticity to her performance, duster always in hand and over-protective of her brood.

Her moments of anguish and despair were most convincing - in particular when she berates her sister for being a burden to her throughout her life.

The play with its constant swings of mood and temp was played with such precision that it never palled and made for a most entertaining and moving evening.

George Hillier