

LETTICE &  
LOVAGE  
2000

TEDDINGTON THEATRE CLUB

## Focus on relationships



Heather Hodgson and Marian Jardella in *Lettice and Lovage* being presented by Teddington Theatre Club from this Saturday, February 12th.

PETER Shaffer's play *Lettice and Lovage* won the Evening Standard Best Comedy award when it opened at the Globe Theatre in 1987 - and Teddington Theatre Club will certainly play it for laughs when their new production opens tomorrow, Saturday February 12th.

It concerns two women, both eccentrics - one a private person, one in the public eye. Typical of Shaffer's focus on relationships between people of seemingly opposite natures, they start

poles apart and gradually find common ground.

Marian Jardella plays Lettice, the part famously played by Maggie Smith in the original. She takes issue with Lotte, played by Heather Hodgson, for being economical with the truth while showing visitors over an ancient pile, Fustian Hall. After many skirmishes, the two see eye to eye, only to get into very deep water indeed.

This is Marian's first part at Teddington and comes shortly after her Swan nomination in *The Last Days of Don Juan*.

Heather Hodgson has been a TTC member for 20 years. Lesley Whithair, last seen in another comedy *How The Other Half Loves*, plays Miss Frammer; Derek Stringer, another new face, plays Bardolph and Roger Watts, surly Man.

Peter Shaffer's plays are, of course, well known, with *Equus* and *Amadeus* for example, filling West End theatre ever since they were written. *Lettice and Lovage* is being directed for TTC by Mair Graham - who directed her first Shaffer play in 1979.

Derek West

RICHMOND DRAMA AWARDS

## Colouring the past



Heather Hodgson and Marian Jardella in *Lettice and Lovage* at Hampton Hill Playhouse.

QUITE a departure from some of his more epic plays is Peter Shaffer's *Lettice and Lovage*. Although it bears his hallmark in a highly original intelligent script, it's a comedy which takes a wickedly witty, sometimes even savage swipe at the heritage scene, albeit a tad lengthy with a rather weak ending.

Directed with a sure touch by Mair Graham in a production for Teddington Theatre Club, it was staged last week at the Hampton Hill Playhouse with excellent set designs by Phil Greenleaves.

Lettice of the title, to relieve the tedium, weaves a tapestry of historical invention around the otherwise boring reality of the Fustian family's ancestors as she guides the tourists through their stately home on behalf of the Preservation Trust.

Her embellishments have not gone unnoticed by the powers that be and she is called to account by Lottie Schoen, their representative, who feels morally obliged to sack Lettice for her wanton departure from the verities.

Marian Jardella brought admirable restraint to the role of this fantasy-inspired tour guide, resisting what must have been a strong temptation to go OTT. Nevertheless she made Lettice a charismatic and colourful lady, wonderfully eccentric and funny.

In the role of Lottie, Heather Hodgson was every inch the custodian of correctness, indeed a lady of 'grey integrity' who preferred buildings to people. Initially shocked by Lettice's non-conformity, she gradually reveals aspects of her more radical youth and is won over by Lettice's warmth and enthusiasm, not to mention generous helpings of her homemade brew (with lovage).

These two actors, playing such vividly contrasting characters, both in different ways escapists from reality, established an unexpected and believable rapport.

Derek Stringer, almost rustled playing the dry-as-dust solicitor, Bardolph and Lesley Whithair was the overweening Miss Frammer.

Jenny Scott