

REBECCA

2000

ENTERTAINMENT

HAMPTON HILL PLAYHOUSE

A haunting mystery



Cathy Early as Mrs de Winter and Jan Ryan as Mrs Danvers in *Rebecca* by Daphne Du Maurier being presented by Teddington Theatre Club at Hampton Hill Playhouse.

JUST the name - Manderley - is enough to conjure up the haunting mystery we associate with Daphne du Maurier's most famous novel *Rebecca*.

Here we have the stage version which she wrote herself to capture all the romance and malevolence of the original, performed at the Hampton Hill Playhouse, 90 High Street, Hampton Hill, from Saturday July 8th to Saturday July 15th at 7.45pm.

Maxim de Winter is the rich, attractive hero, brooding over secrets from

the past. Into his world steps his new bride, a plain, gauche heroine, groping for poise and maturity in a world riddled through and through and dominated by the memory of the first wife, the apparently enchanting and beautiful Rebecca.

The story gathers in tension as the second Mrs de Winter slowly pieces together her husband's tragic past. And in the background, of course, is the awesome, brooding figure of the housekeeper, Mrs Danvers, monument to malice and jealousy.

Tickets on 8979 9499.

RICHMOND DRAMA AWARDS

Still compelling sixty years on

SOMEHOW Gordon Edwards's 'set realisation' for Sally Graves's *Rebecca* for Teddington Theatre Club at Hampton Hill Playhouse last week, wonderful as it was, seemed more suited to a bright and witty comedy by Noel Coward than the hall of a stately home.

True it was the '30s, but even the still-pervading influence of *Rebecca*, the first Mrs de Winter, would not have extended to the architecture.

That said, this production of Clifford Williams's adaptation of Daphne du Maurier's classic novel still made for compelling drama, sixty years after its first staging and a fantastically successful film.

Confounding expectations, Susan Reoch as Maxim de Winter's sister Beatrice was a glamorous sophisticated woman, forthright, but sympathetic, while Stephen Bentley as her husband Giles made a remote 'though kindly figure.

Even so, they made a daunting reception committee for Maxim's second wife, married abroad and introduced to Manderley for the first time.

Catherine Early exuded vulnerability as the dowdy young bride, a former paid companion, brought back to



Cathy Early and Jan Ryan as Mrs de Winter and Mrs Danvers in *Rebecca*.

an alien world of wealth and privilege, and competing with the ghost of beautiful Rebecca, his first wife. But what she has to come to terms with eventually is much more than adjustment to gracious living.

This actress effectively made the transition from naivety to suddenly enforced maturity as she learns the truth about Rebecca and how she died.

Jan Ryan gave a chilling performance as the vindictive housekeeper, Mrs Danvers, obsessed with illusions of her former mistress as a paragon of all the virtues, and John Kipps as Maxim de Winter was the very model of uptight English manhood before his control snaps and a man of

powerful emotions is revealed.

There were excellent cameo performances from a strong supporting cast: David Wheatley brought a whiff of danger and notched up the tension considerably with his portrayal of Rebecca's former lover, the opportunistic Jack Favell, and Charles A Halford brought a trustworthy, comforting presence to his role of Manderley's loyal estate manager, Frank.

Lighting and sound effects were frighteningly realistic in the closing moments of the play as Mrs Danvers has her final revenge and Manderley is consumed by fire.

Jenny Scott