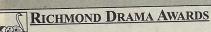
THE CHERRY ORCHARD 2001

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Intimations of revolution

IN THE right hands Chekhov's fictional people become real to me, and David Lewsey's production of *The Cherry Orchard* for Teddington Theatre Club at Hampton Hill Playhouse last week

Orchard for Teddington
Theatre Club at Hampton
Hill Playhouse last week
had a cast of entirely
believable characters.
No-one takes centre
stage for long in this play.
Ideally the mood and
atmosphere is created by
ensemble playing and this
was achieved seemingly
effortlessly by unselfish
acting by the whole cast.
Susan Reoch's
Ranevskaya had great
serenity and radiance as she
returned to her ancestral
roots - the decaying
grandeur of her country
estate, and later when her
beloved cherry orchard is
doomed, her paroxysms of
grief were immensely
moving.
Chekhov's story, a mix

of realism and symbolism, of the ruination of a prerevolutionary Russian family by their own heedlessness, is described by him as part tragedy, part comedy and sometimes even farce, had the last two of these embodied, in this instance, by the wonderfully funny Stephen Bentley as Gaev, nearly always disengaged from immediate concerns, and aiming an imaginary cue at billiard balls.

Adding comic touches too was John Roth as the clerk, Yepihodov, absorbed and lamenting his squeaky shoes; Claude Wheeler's eccentric Carlotta and an amusing account of self-regarding Dunyasha from Lynn Lewsey, declaring her sensitivity as she gazed into her pocket mirror.

There was an assured performance from David R Blackburn as arrogant manservant, Yasha and Giles

Henderson brought a lightness to mature student Pytor's pedantry.

Although there were some anguished glances from Sophie Compton's constantly angry Varya to Nick Young's Lopahkin, who came across as engagingly extrovert, there wasn't much sense of unspoken love.

Karyn Victoria Scott's Anya, Ranevskaya's daughter, was quick to sympathise but still bubbled with irrepressible youthful optimism in her love for Pytor.

Chekhov's interweaving of tragedy and comedy is seamless and as the curtain came down on David Crawlwy's shambling old manservant, Firs, accidentally locked in the abandoned house, it's a potent image of the break-up of the old order.

Jenny Scott

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