

JUMP MALINOFF, JUMP

2004

27-30 Oct

Family conflict

Richmond Drama
Awards
Joy Manners

AT the Coward Room at Hampton Hill Playhouse last week the oddly titled **Jump Mr Malinoff, Jump** was presented by Teddington Theatre Club.

Written by Toby Whithouse, it tells of the conflict within a Russian immigrant family, the Malinoffs, who run a cheap cafe in Southend in 1990.

The very practical set was of the cafe decorated for a birthday party with balloons and streamers, and a sign saying 'Happy Birthday' in Russian. A recording of a sad Russian song added to the scene and strong beat music created a menacing atmosphere.

The younger of two brothers, George, played by James Price, is a 16-year-old schoolboy. He is clever and working for school exams. He worships his older brother, Nick, who works for a firm which sells used cars.

When an old friend appears and offers Nick the chance of easy money by being involved in arson but when he considers the effect his actions would have on the family he tries to say no. He is terrified when his old friend threatens him with a razor.

His uncle, Pasha, learns of the plans and tells George, hoping that he will notify the police. George refuses, so Pasha, who all his life has avoided decisive action, tells the police of the imminent crime knowing that it is probable he will not be forgiven

by the family members.

David Lewsey's firm direction drew fine performances from the cast of five and sixteen year old James Price was a convincing if a rather soft-voiced George. Fraser Brown was the weak Nick, whose ambition and love of fast cars led him into crime.

Cassie J Wadsworth was the beautiful teenage temptress Emily who uses her friendship with the impressionable George to seduce his brother. She had some very good lines, which she delivered with sharp humour.

Steven Peters was the callous old school friend Dougie Price whose inopportune return to Southend brought trouble to the Malinoffs. His was a chilling portrayal of a ruthless criminal.

Nick Young dominated the stage as the guilt-ridden, intensely proud uncle, Pasha, whose care for the family's reputation was paramount. Their father having left home he has to decide whether or not to sacrifice one of his nephews to save the other and the family's livelihood.

This production was the amateur premiere of the play which won the Verity Bargate Award in 1998. Lighting and sound were [spot on] and costumes were faithful to the period and script. The plaintive cries of the drunken mother, Sophia, off stage, added tension to the atmosphere.

David Lewsey and his team deserve our thanks and congratulations for their enterprise and dedication in bringing a complex many-layered play to pulsating passionate life.