

ENTERTAINING
MR SLOANE

1995

RICHMOND DRAMA AWARDS



Mask of hypocrisy

THIRTY-one years on from its premiere, *Entertaining Mr Sloane* is still bringing in audiences for professional and amateur companies alike, targeting as it does the rampant hypocrisy of society.

It was Joe Orton's first full-length play, staged at the New Arts Theatre Club in 1964 and with, almost unbelievably, the financial backing of popular playwright Terence Rattigan, was later transferred to the Wyndham's.

Last week it was directed by Chris Ivey for Teddington Theatre Club at Hampton Court Theatre on a set designed by Christine Osborne of which Orton would have approved, dominated as it was by three enormous flying ducks.

Its theme, the struggle between an ageing nymphomaniac and her homosexual brother for the body and soul of a murderous young thug, is sordid, redeemed by its author's brilliant farcical style and elaborately polite

language of understatement.

In a well developed performance, Sue Viney gets the formal tone of almost archaic social exchanges just right as Kath, whose randiness is contradicted by her ladylike gentility as when, violently goosed by her new lodger, Mr Sloane, she merely leaps to the window and admires the "brave show of tulips".

Although Martin L Pearce's Sloane has the right mix of innocence and amorality, a thug with the face of an angel, the sexual tension is dissipated by John von Kesmark's Ed, who lacks the very real menace underlying this character's apparently easygoing affability.

A mixture of Alf Garnett and Steptoe, Barry Rocard gives a truculent edge to Dada, Sloane's luckless victim, the one outside the convention of toujours la politesse, embarrassing Kath and brother Ed with his unwelcome disclosures on the true nature of her beloved new lodger.

Jenny Scott