

KVETCH
1994

Tortured verbal pyrotechnics

PLAYWRIGHT and actor Steven Berkoff is credited with a monstrous ego, so it's interesting to speculate what his reaction would be to his work as done by amateurs.

Teddington Theatre Club fearlessly (it seems) tackles one of his verbal pyrotechnics this week at Hampton Court Theatre and emerge triumphant.

Its title *Kvetch* is extensively and kindly defined for us in the programme notes, but in short, it's a perpetual state of anxiety about anything and

everything in the business of living.

Berkoff has chosen to demonstrate this universal condition with five characters of American Jewish persuasion: Frank - in the 'never mind the quality, feel the width' trade, his wife Donna, his mother in law - 'married the mouth' George intones bitterly 'and inherit the belch' - his colleague Hal and business associate George.

Karim Peermohamed directs his team of angst-ridden beings with

consummate skill as they exchange social niceties, swiftly contradicted by their inner thoughts. Listening characters freeze in polite smiles of inattention or forced guffaws at the attempted joke as we hear the tortured internal dialogue.

In an unexpected guest for dinner situation; sex (or lack of it) in marriage; the workplace; the infidelity, Clare Terry, Barry Rocard as Donna and Frank, Sue Viney as mother in law, Charles Lacey as Hal and John von Kesmark trod this potential

minefield of American Jewishness without putting a foot wrong. It all touches a raw nerve but it's brilliantly funny.

And if the cast suffered kvetch it certainly didn't show in last Saturday's first night performance, met with thunderous applause. Congratulations are also due to the lighting, design and stage management teams.

There are performances tonight and Saturday. If you haven't got a seat already - get one

Jenny Scott