



LOFT THEATRE FIFTY-FIFTH SEASON 1976-1977

APRIL 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30

THE PHILANTHROPIST

By Christopher Hampton

Cast:
 Philip.....JOHN FENNER
 Donald.....KEN THOMAS
 John.....PETER STATON
 Celia.....LIZ DALTON
 Brahm.....DAVID BIDDLE
 Araminta.....CHRISTINE CARPENTER
 Elizabeth.....MARGARET REES

Director: KEN THOMAS

Scene: The room of a Bachelor Don

There will be an interval of 15 minutes between Acts I and II.
Curtain down approximately 9.45 p.m.

Set Design: Jean Clarke
Stage Manager: Stephen Ekins
Assistant Stage Managers: Rona Bain, Joyce Welch, Pat Griffiths, Martin Boyd, Barry Lidstone, Julie Peters
Sound: John Gough
Lighting Design: Tony Howard
Lighting Operators: Martin Sabin, Bruce Draper, Richard Pernberton
Wardrobe: Madeline Gorriell
Construction Manager: Albert Whitehart
Photographs: Roger Harris

NO SMOKING IN THE AUDITORIUM

Unlikely mixture made to blend

THEATRE

By ANNE LEUCHARS

THE PHILANTHROPIST — Loft Theatre, Leamington, until Saturday, April 30 (running time: 2 hours).

EVEN a horrific suicide cannot penetrate the intellectual philosophising and analysis that Christopher Hampton's characters indulge in.

Words like "oleaginous" flow unqueried through the conversations and the number of in-depth personality probes suggest that the set should merely be a giant psychiatrist's couch.

But an audience lacks the psychiatrist's professional patience and detailed interest and parts of this play can become tedious. The Loft cast manage to minimise these as the characters follow each other along the primrose path to everlasting self-knowledge.

Leading the procession is Philip, the college don who has the courage of his lack of convictions.

He is engaged to Celia,

who is as spirited and vivacious as he is meek and unassuming.

An unlikely couple with some unlikely friends who gather in Philip's flat for a dinner party.

The least complicated of these is Don, a fellow lecturer who has perfected the art of earning a living with minimum effort.

Ken Thomas's performance makes it obvious why Philip should depend on him for advice and company.

Completely relaxed, with a sincere and friendly manner, he has a calming influence on the analytical hysteria bubbling through the play.

But he doesn't escape without having to pronounce on his particular philosophy of life.

Philip is anxious to please everybody but that doesn't mean he lacks feelings of his own. John Fenner handles these with great sensitivity and compacency, unstrained by being on stage the whole time.

Liz Dalton occasionally lapses into recitation rather than acting, but she handles Celia's confusion over her feelings for Philip very well.

This confusion is prompted by the arrival of Brahm, a successful novelist. He is the complete opposite of Philip — self-satisfied, deliberately shocking, selfish and vain.

David Biddle goes to town on creating Brahm and maintains a performance which carefully doesn't overdo things.

Christine Carpenter is not stinky enough as the seductress Araminta. She should be more of a practised bitch to make her philosophy seem credible.

The combined problems of the characters would give a psychoanalyst nightmares. Yet there is plenty of comedy in the play, delivered neatly and shrewdly, and the unlikely mix of humour, philosophy, psychology and tragedy is made to work successfully.

Shy don gives play vitality

PROVOCATIVE, witty and, at times, genuinely moving, "The Philanthropist," at the Loft Theatre, Leamington Spa, is an exciting play.

Christopher Hampton's comedy of manners is set throughout in the tastefully decorated quarters of "a bachelor don" — Oxford or

Cambridge it's difficult to tell (the study of words).

Because of his subject, Philip can always find something good about what is said to him, and self-admittedly lacks "critical faculties." He just enjoys the sound of words, no matter what is said, and thus finds it impossible to react conventionally to those who say unkind or even cruel things. Shy, self-effacing and painfully good-humoured, Philip is an excellent character as he finds himself dull as a person.

John Fenner is magnificent in the role. It is a difficult and subtle one since Philip must run what is, for him, the gamut of emotions — and still present the same cheery face to the outside world. Philip is forced to face a suicide, the break-up of his long engagement and, ultimately himself.

Strong

The rest of the cast in this fine production is also strong — Ken Thomas as the earthy and loyal Donald, Liz Dalton as the secretly soft-hearted Celia, Philip's intended, and Christine Carpenter as the sultry nymphomaniac Araminta.

David Biddle is splendidly condescending as the rich and affected writer, Brahm — offended that he is not included on a "death list" of 25 major British authors and especially cruel to Philip because he desires Celia for himself.

This play might not suit everyone's taste and, as the Loft Theatre's newsletter warns, "It is not suitable for children." It suited my tastes down to the ground, however, and I found it a mentally stimulating, visually appealing and emotionally charged evening's theatre.

V. MEK.

Play that has a degree of polish

The Philanthropist, Loft Theatre, Leamington.

THIS version of the uni-versity-town play about the loves and fears of a bachelor don has a very polished look.

It is elegantly set and incisively directed by Ken Thomas. His cast keep their characters and their dialogue going with pace and interest and achieve a high degree of naturalness in approach that makes for a convincing and consistently interesting evening.

John Fenner plays in a most credible manner the

lonely don who is about to be married and Liz Dalton puts a great deal into the girl who wonders whether or not she is doing the right thing in accepting him.

David Biddle poses to just the right degree as the author Brahm and Christine Carpenter contrasts well as the girl most likely to get any man to bed.

It is an adult play and not an easy one. It has a serious conclusion but plenty of light moments along the way and a worthwhile ring of truth in the approach.

It continues, all this week. JOHN DANIELS.



