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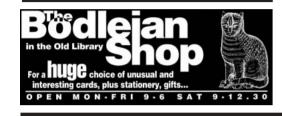
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Daily: 12.30, 3.00, 6.00, 7.00, 8.30, 9.30 Nicole Kidman gets spooked ATLANTIS (U)

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Ultimate Picture Palace 245288 AMERICAN DESI(12) Fri & Sat: 6.45, Sun: 5.45

Mon: 5.00, Tue - Thur: 6.00

College freshman comes to terms with his Indian-Amer ican heritage AMELIE(15) Fri & Sat: 9.00 Sun & Tue - Thur: 8.00, Mon: 2.30 A young French girl has the power to change other

people's lives LI E AND LET DIE(PG) Fri & Sat:11.30pm Sun: 10.30pn

James Bond thriller with Roger Moore SANSHOTHE BAILIFF(PG) Sat: 4.15, Sun: 3.15

50's Japanese drama **ARABIAN NIGHTS(18)** Part of the Pasolini seasor

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Phoenix Picture House 512526 GHOST WORLD(15) Daily (not Sun): 1.50, 4.10 6.30, 9.00 (also Sat: 11.30pm)

Sun: 2.15, 4.30, 6.45, 9.10 Coming-of-age comedy/drama

THE MAN WHO WASN'T THERE(15) Fri, Tue: 1.45, 4.00, Sat&Sun: 4.00, 8.45, Mon:1.45, 8.45, Wed: 1.45, 4.00, 8.45, Thur: 1.45, 9.15

ASOKA(PG) Fri & Tue: 8.45, Sun: 12.00noo Epic tale of King Asok LITTLE OTIK (15) Fri-Sun & Tue-Wed

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6.15. Mon&Thur: 4.00

Animated feature KIDS CLUB: HELP I'M A FISH(U) Sat: 2.00pn No unaccompanied adults

TO HA E AND HA E NOT(PG) Sat: 11.30pm Stars Bogart & Bacall THE SECRET AND THE PURIMSPIEL Sun: 12.00noo

Part of the Jewish Film Festival ELOGE DE L'AMOUR(PG) Mon: 6.30 French cinema preview

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Wilde's least Wilde-like play. Some images may disturb. DRACULA Tue 20th - Sat 24th: 7.30: Sat Mat: 2.30 Bram Stoker's classic adapted for the stage

793797 **Burton Taylor** AN IDEAL HUSBAND Tue 13th - Sat 17th: 7.30 Wilde's story of corruption, love and loyalty. DEATH OF A SALESMAN Tue 20th - Sat 24th: 7.30 Arthur Miller's tale of isolation and unfulfilled dreams

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REVIEW: THEATRE

An I deal Husband by Oscar Wilde

Burton-Taylor Theatre, to Sat 17th

'Continuous eloquence is tedious' was Pascal's verdict a century or two before Oscar Wilde was even born, and Ideal Husband's have a mournful habit of vindicating him. In the spirit of Groucho Marx I saw a spectacularly tedious play; but it wasn't this one - and with very little to declare but a lingering prejudice that all things Wilde are wildly overrated, it is fairly comforting to be proved at least half-wrong on occasion.

Ben Levine's production rarely works up enough speed to carry the script's inbred stodginess comfortably; instruction manuals should be written to instruct any actor who strays within a mile of Oscar Wilde dialogue that the way to deliver Oscar Wilde dialogue (eyebrow flutter, pregnant pause) is not in fact to act as if delivering Oscar Wilde dialogue (suppressed giggle, fumbled aphorism, ripple of uneasy laughter); and there is no excuse for an interval in a play this short.

Those quibbles aside, this came as close to a raging comic triumph as competence allowed, provided the moral rhetoric is allowed to fall by the wayside, as it should. Which leaves a cornucopic array of

frocks, requisitely hideous bonnets, and resident Honourable Gentleman Robert Chiltern (David Stevens) delivering a rather wonderful Douglas Hurd impression, a corncob stuck firmly up his thoroughly English arse. Genteel blackmailer Mrs Cheveley (Lena Al-Shammari) rides her rising tide of aphorisms beautifully while rescuing languidity from the brink of the soporific; the dialogue has flashes of agonising pedestrianism, but always rescued by the arrival of one of three Chilterns, lovable rake Lord Goring - not uninspired at times - or the walk-on clowns, milked for all their (considerable) worth. Insane, geriatric Lord Caversham travels the stage his head permanently ensconced in a cloud of talcum powder; Phipps the zombie-like manservant does a stirring work of conjuring persistent laughter from persistent repetition, and even theologically hypnotic virtue-bore Lady Chiltern (Rebecca Smith) is given the benefit of clergy and a grin or two, as well as the hint of moral perplexity happily absent elsewhere.

The net result is that the physical comedy, such as it is, drives and dominates the verbal swordfighting - and deprives Lord Goring, enticingly languorous though he may be, of the starring role. So much the better making an interesting woman of Lady Chiltern is work enough for any man, or, more pertinently, woman; and that particular feat alone makes this *Husband* worth more than just its weight in wit.

Jasper Milvain 14/11/01



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2. Queen Elizabeth's visits to Oxford were the occasion of much speechifying, by herself and others, in Latin and Greek. She attended debates, and a play was performed for her at **Christ Church.** Her final farewell, at Shotover, was an emotional occasion.

3. Her title as founder of Jesus college is somewhat an honorary one, though she was pleased to accept it, and the college possesses no less than three portraits of her. Jesus college has always been associated closely with Wales, and Elizabeth herself always regarded her welsh ancestry as important.

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REVIEW: THEATRE

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The Oxford Playhouse to Sat 17th The Theft of Sita is an adaptation of part of the ancient epic 'Ramayama', enacted

by Australian and Indonesian puppeteers and The story of a demon kidnapping a princess who must then be rescued by her prince and his helpers will seem at least half familiar to anyone who has ever enjoyed a fairy tale, but the staging is unique. The vast majority of the story is told in a style owing more to ballet than traditional drama, in shadows cast by paper puppets on to a vast sheet hung across the front of the stage. The skill with which these puppets have been crafted and the dexterity with which they are handled by the five puppeteers is astonishing, as a variety of things from tigers to logging machines to peasants are portrayed in a distinctive and often humorous fashion, encouraging com-

Python' and 'Bambi' The action is accompanied by relatively sparse dialogue, and music from a striking variety of instruments and styles, both Indonesian and western. This accompaniment shifts seamlessly from traditional Indonesian to jazz, rock and even electronica to suit the mood and style. The background too, while mostly in the form of shadows, occasionally features photos, paintings or even film, these sudden bursts of colour and motion all the more effective for their unexpectedness.

parisons as diverse as 'The Muppets', 'Monty

Ironically, given the skill with which eastern and western styles and traditions are fused to produce such a spectacular production, the moral of the tale is all too blunt. In a few rather clumsy and wordy pieces of expositional dialogue, the enemies of the piece are explicitly identified with western influences such as tourism and the International Monetary Fund. Destructive though these forces may be to the lives of Indonesians, it seems heavy handed if not actually propagandistic to equate such complex political, social and economic factors with the unmitigated evil of a fairy tale villain.

However, if you can look beyond a moral stance as black and white and twodimensional as the puppets, I strongly recommend this production. You will never have seen anything quite like it.

Alex Williams 14/11/01

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