

Left confused by Leigh latest

MIKE Leigh's new play, *Two Thousand Years*, is a curious piece of theatre.

Its unusual structure – long, complex scenes interspersed with very brief ones – is distinctly unsettling, or perhaps that's the point).

And, although it is billed as a look at how a non-religious Jewish family copes when the son takes up religion in a big way, it is really a rambling and somewhat unfocused exploration of family fractures in general, leavened with not very original and essentially British ruminations on the crisis in the Middle East.

You can relate to these characters in their Cricklewood home, and Leigh's ear for dialogue is as acute as ever. There were signs of that wonderful traditional Jewish wit, but some of the jokes fell flat as a slice of matzo.

And I was not at all sure what the play was really trying to say.

The sense of dislocation wasn't helped by the rather abrupt ending – a silent scene where the lights are turned out on the two main characters, who seem to be going out happy. But who could really tell?

The story is that of Rachel and Danny, who are aghast when their 28-year-old son Josh takes up religion in earnest, donning a cap (skull-cap) and binding his arms with tefillin –

SUE LEEMAN reviews *TWO THOUSAND YEARS* by Wanstead Players



traditional boxes containing Biblical passages that are used by Orthodox Jews.

After Rachel's mother dies, her long-lost sister Michelle appears, and it was here – well into Act Two – where our interest began to be piqued, only to be rather disappointed, thanks to a lack of dramatic or character development.

Brian Seaton directed a spirited production for the Wanstead Players at the Kenneth More Theatre.

Sandra Ziles had moments of moving intensity as Rachel, and Spencer Simmons was reliably bemused as Danny.

Both parents are fixated by the change in the

unemployed Josh, played with a kind of dark and brooding spiritedness by Richard Saunders.

Liz Saunders played the couple's principled daughter Tammy, and Peter Chandler was funny as her kibbutznik boyfriend Tzachi.

The family that shouts together stays together, could be the motto of this family, although it doesn't always work.

Julian White was gloriously and convincingly irascible as Rachel's father Dave, one of the family members whose appearance was guaranteed to spark a shouting match.

The other was Michelle, played with not quite enough conviction but some style by Sarah Jones.

One of the most engaging performances came from Jason Markham, as family friend and bringer-of-allotment-produce Jonathan. Unfortunately, this was only a small part.

Some initial problems with the stage lighting were quickly resolved, and a forgiving audience got on with getting their money's worth.

Youngsters sing with fresh style

REDBRIDGE Schools Singing Festival took place at Oaks Park High School, Oaks Lane, Newbury Park.

About 70 students from 13 secondary schools, plus members of Redbridge Music School, formed a festival choir to provide the main core of a programme of traditional pieces, songs from the shows and classical items.

As always seems to be the case with this annual event, it is the freshness and vitality which the youngsters give to their items, which would make any similar sized professional group quite envious.

These singers seem able to capture the appropriate mood in a wide variety of music as the styles changed.

The programme began with the title song from Cabaret, and at once, the top notes rang out with confidence and clarity. The blend of voices was outstanding and not a single voice stood out to spoil the fine tone.

Elizabeth Kurton and Sinead Noone sang *Little Boats*, Thomas Martin sang *Home*, and Gwenan Bradshaw sang *Some Things are Meant To Be*. Natalie Powell sang *Caro mio ben* in Italian with a good deal of confidence.

Some members of the RMS Intermediate Choir sang Sting's *Fields of Gold*, a lovely arrangement of Chopin's *Tristesse* and Verdi's *Witches Chorus*, although this last item included some unfortunate mis-entries.

It is amazing how a simple round can provide such a delightful sound, and *Babylon*, sung in three parts, provided just that. A clever arrangement of *Hernando's Hideaway*, complete with actions, proved to be most enjoyable for choir and audience alike.

As is always the way with such an ensemble, rehearsals must have been a logistic nightmare, and Denise Deering (head of the borough's singing department) and her colleagues are to be congratulated for producing such a fine standard.

– MICHAEL CROMBIE

Music adds to romance of Cinders

ONE of the most treasured fairytales of all time, Cinderella was given the special Rodgers and Hammerstein touch when they turned it into a musical – originally written for Julie Andrews.

Now it comes to the stage, courtesy of Stage One Theatre.

This fantasy overflows with magic, colourful characters, irresistible romance and the unforgettable songs of two of musical theatre's great masters.

With great warmth and more than a touch of hilarity, the hearts of children and adults alike still soar for this Disney-esque musical treat for all the whole family.

Cinderella will be performed at the Kenneth More Theatre, Oakfield Road, Ilford from Wednesday, May 28 to the Saturday.



KENNETH MORE THEATRE
Oakfield Road, Ilford Box Office: 020 8553 4466
www.kenneth-more-theatre.co.uk

Thur 22nd - Sat 24th May THE MUSIC MAN A great musical with hit songs and all time favourites	Wed 28th May - Sat 31st May CINDERELLA - The Musical A musical treat for all the family with music and lyrics by Rodgers & Hammerstein
Sun 1st June CHAS & DAVE The 2 Cockney geezers who bash away on guitar and piano!	Wed 4th - Sat 7th June ANNIE GET YOUR GUN Every single song is a hit in this musical story of Annie Oakley

Fancy Dress & Costume Hire 020 8553 0444
Open: Thurs/Fri Evenings 6pm-8.30pm Saturday 11am-2pm



The Curry Emporium

The 1st Indian Restaurant in Essex
Est 1965

Menu

4 Course Meals
Starting from
£17.50

A Starter
A Main Course
Rice or Naan
Choice of Dessert

The Curry Emporium

Voted one of the Best Restaurants around from local customers



Serving the finest food for over 40 years. Our food is freshly prepared & cooked by one of the most experienced chefs locally.

For more info or bookings call us now on:
020 8551 5552 or 020 8550 7429
597 Cranbrook Road, Ilford, Essex IG1 6JZ
www.curryemporium.co.uk
e-mail: curryemporium@hotmail.co.uk

Players at home with G&S

DRIVEN out of their home ground at Chingford Assembly Hall by soaring rental rates, the Chapel End Savoy Players have set up stage at Forest School, Oakhurst Gardens, Snaresbrook, but it hasn't affected the quality of their performances.

The Players have an obvious enthusiasm for Gilbert and Sullivan's comic operas and it was refreshing to see a passion for the kind of innocent, quaint comedy that isn't so fashionable these days.

Marilysa Valtzanou as Mad Margaret and Alistair Rainey as Sir Despard Murgatroyd – the wicked baronet – captured the Gilbert and Sullivan sense of humour perfectly.

Their rendition of *My Eyes Are Fully Open*, with Simon Offord as Robin Oakapple – the disguised Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd – had me chuckling all the way through.

Stage director Jackie Mitchell and music director Graham Offord also deserve praise for that.

Mitesh Khatri shone as Richard Dauntless. With his wide eyes, open face, Roman nose, and high, expressive eyebrows, Mitesh charmed the audience in his sailor's suit and hat.

Joanna Raworth was clearly chosen to play Rose Maybud for her strong soprano, backed up by the chorus of bridesmaids – Jennifer Dorian as Ruth standing out among them.

And John Simpson's baritone as ghost Sir Roderic Murgatroyd was just as unforgettable.

But it was all the players together that made the night, and I look forward to seeing what they will do to Gilbert and Sullivan next.

– KAREN BURKE

IN BRIEF

FAST-TALKING conman, Harold Hill, charms his way into the hearts of the citizens of River City, Iowa, but – thanks to a child's innocence and the love of a good woman – his heart is soon skipping to the beat of a different band.

Meredith Willson's musical, *The Music Man*, is brought to the Kenneth More Theatre, Ilford, by Colin's Performing Arts Ltd, from today (Thurs) to Saturday.

The show includes such hits as *Till There Was You* and the all-time favourite *76 Trombones*.

Curtain up 7.45pm, Saturday matinee 3pm.

PROFESSIONAL cockneys Chas and Dave – the geezers who bash away on guitar and piano singing about rabbits, sideboards, snooker, and favourite football team Spurs – play the Kenneth More Theatre, Ilford, on June 1.

See next week's *Recorder Review* for an interview with Chas.

BARKING College School of Performing Arts stages a show at the Broadway, Barking, tonight (Thurs).

Stuffed is a cheeky double-bill exploring identity crisis.

Curtain up at 7.30pm.

THRILLS, dangers, perils, marvellous machinations and dirty-dealing, they're all featured in Digby Diehard's *Dilemma* by The Woodhouse Players at the Welsh Church Hall, High Road, Leytonstone, from Thursday, May 29 to Saturday, May 31, at 8pm.

Tickets are £6 (£3 concs) from 020 8504 3872 or email tickets@woodhouseplayers.co.uk