



the few plays where Euripides' Chorus represents a real group, victims and fellow sufferers, whose lines contribute to the drama. The play begins with a woman carving names into a high wall that already has hundreds — like the memorial wall for the victims of Vietnam in Washington DC. It ends with Higgins's Hecuba frantically scooping a hole in the sand, like the dog that, according to myth, she would soon be turned into. The loathsomeness of war could have no better illustrations. This is a magnificent production. JP

Arcadia

Bristol Old Vic ★★★★★

Tom Stoppard's play is a piece of enchantment built on a steel structure; Rachel Kavanaugh's cool, beautifully paced production brings out its elegance, intelligence, melancholy and irresistible wit. A sad, funny, tough, generous play, it is set in a Regency house in 1809 and also in our time.

What exactly happened at Sidley Park? Nobody quite knows, and neither do the voracious academics researching its past.

This is a time play, a dunit, a who-done-what, a dance to the music of time. Did Lord Byron really visit Sidley Park? Who slept with Chater? Who reviewed Mr Chater's book? Can you trust history? Or the future, somebody says,

is disorder. Yes, but so is the past; and the present is where the past tries to resist the future, just as Lady Croom (Amanda Harris) resists her garden being turned into a Capability Brown landscape. Harris, with Hermione Gulliford and John Hodgkinson, leads an excellent cast, though some of the young ones need their voices seeing to. The Old Vic's new regime should be very proud. JP

Grim[m] Desires

Wapping Project ★★★★★

A hot-water bottle and a soft blanket are waiting for you when you take your seat for the Wapping Project's first long-run production, which might suggest that this former pumping station has become a comfort zone. Maresa von Stockert's beautifully choreographed variation on stories by the Brothers Grimm will soon disabuse you.

The performance space, a cross between the baths at Caracalla and a Tuscan church, can get chilly, but not as chilly as the sexual tension unearthed in the Frog King, Rapunzel, Snow White, Bluebeard and Cinderella. Von Stockert has cleverly morphed these stories together to make a strong narrative, a dance piece for a company of six, with the space itself as a seventh character, its walls serving as a springboard as often as its floor. The narration is witty and Jeremy Cox's soundscape well judged; the lighting is a performance in itself, while the costumes for the four girls echo the disturbing world of suppressed sexuality in the paintings of Paula Rego.

The Wapping Project and its backers, the Jerwood Foundation, want to know if there is an audience for this kind of work. When it is as good as this, the answer is emphatically yes. RH

John Peter and Robert Hewison