

Kst End

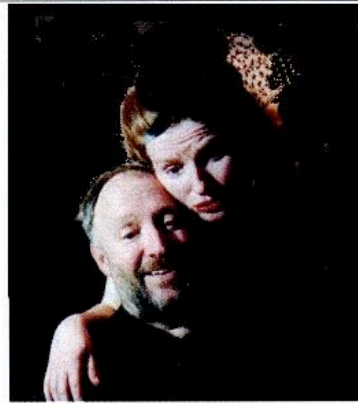
The Tragical History of Dr Faustus

★★★★★

Landor Theatre Fringe

'Dr Faustus' is a notoriously hard play to interpret, so why not stage it as a broad comedy with musical interludes, using only three actors, and throw in a couple of banjos for luck? Similar thoughts must have occurred to director John Wright, whose version of the classic invoking-the-antichrist-turns-bad drama comes with the slightly pantoish tagline: 'All in the words of Christopher Marlowe... (but not necessarily in the right order)'. The original text is cut and supplemented with pungent contemporary asides, as well as several songs accompanied by a variety of strummed instruments. The stage is dressed with touches of decadent gothic and the dim red lighting suggests a satanic boudoir.

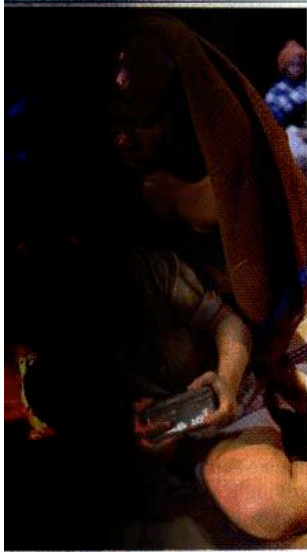
In the title role is the unheroic figure of Nicholas Collett: squat, bearded and balding, his not-so-good doctor is a perfect tortured soul, the eager yet reluctant plaything of his imposing guests. Anthony Gleave is terrifically suave as Mephistophilis, a sharp-suited reader of *The Guardian* with a handy line in conjuring tricks and most of the best gags. Keeping the standard high is Shelley Atkinson's polished Lucifer (publication of choice: *Heat*), a burlesque girl with a killer smile and multifunctional red leather gloves.



SARAH JANSILE

Nicholas Collett, Shelley Atkinson

The modern insertions illuminate without antiquating Marlowe's own verse, which is given room to shine relatively untrivialised by singularly thoughtful delivery. The compromise made by playing so much of the piece for laughs is that the drama, when facing away from comedy, lacks any real capacity to frighten or move, so we are left to sit waiting for the next joke. The denouement is tame and hopeful, but carried off in the same ballsy, devil-may-care fashion as the entire show. The attitude's underscored when, at lights up, we hear Piaf's famous growl: 'Je ne regrette rien'. Nor should they, for this is boldness at its best. *Robert Crowe*



RUPHIN COUDRYER

Oresteia' South African-style

uncaring persistence. And if the Matchen's Orestes lacks the of his female counterparts, and if l's Klytemnestra occasionally s into melodramatic villainy, it is ult to imagine a more gut-ching retelling of this ageless f vengeance. You have a choice, mnestra tells Elektra, holding rming tool that killed her stors in her hands, do not become in eye for an eye, Ghandi once ad, will tum the whole world ; Farber's scorching production gettably illustrates as much. Powell

atic arc - but there are enough ities in its portrait of religious and

IBSEN at ARCOLA

Arcola Theatre and Silkensaw present

the lady from the sea

by Henrik Ibsen