

week

The Critics

HANNAH AND MARTIN

The Courtyard Theatre, Pitfield Street, N1

HANNAH and Martin takes as its basis the relationship between the eminent philosopher Martin Heidegger and his one-time pupil and lover Hannah Arendt, also a philosopher in her own right.

Sent to report on the Nuremberg Trials for the New Yorker after having fled the Nazis at the start of the Second World War, Hannah finds herself looking back over her life, reconsidering her motives and those of the people around her.

Kate Foder's play seeks to blend Hannah's personal reminiscences with the philosophies of Heidegger and Karl Jaspers – the other major figure of influence on her intellectual development.

It is only partly successful as far as this is concerned, never fully engaging with the philosophical material, but Foder does give a good sense of the political and intellectual complexities of the period and the piece as a whole is nicely evocative.

Although distractingly tense to begin with, Vivienne Rowden gives a solid performance as Hannah. Greg Patmore, as Martin, is also convincing. There is no sexual chemistry to speak of between them but as the play progresses both relax enough into their roles to offer an interesting insight into this relationship.

Pat Garrett's unadventurous direction brings little to the play – this combined with underwhelming performances in the minor roles makes Hannah and Martin drag at several points.

Despite this, the play as a whole is thought-provoking and worthwhile for those interested in the period.

– JO CAIRD

THE REVENGER'S TRAGEDY

Oliver, National Theatre, South Bank, SE1

MELLY STILL'S modernised version of Thomas Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy* is a lavish and richly visual interpretation of a play which demonstrates that the bloody path of retribution leads ultimately to terrorism and mass murder.

This dark Jacobean revenge tragedy follows the downfall of Vindice when he seeks vengeance against the corrupt and avaricious Duke for the murder of his betrothed.

Still aptly expresses both the macabre and satirical qualities of the play, and presents this tale of blood-letting in gruesome animated detail. The production's mixture of modern and period design allows us to draw parallels between the Jacobean era and our own.

The neoteric elements imbue the play with additional layers of contemporary cultural symbolism, and the mixed-medium staging adds modern production values.

Still draws out the imagery in the text and makes it a visual presence on stage. The tripartite revolving set is dissected by a series of back-alleys which provide visual metonymy for the underhand dealings of a corrupt court.

And the imaginative costume design plays with the ways in which sexuality, in all its multifarious forms, can be expressed through clothing. Rory Kinnear's is one of British theatre's rising stars, and he gives a fine performance as Vindice. However, one wonders if he could have done more to express the torment which motivates his character. Similarly, the murder of Lussurioso appears perfunctory compared to the Duke's brutal and torturous death.

If you can stomach the grim subject matter, this production is definitely worth seeing. Superb.

– CINDY WILLIAMSON

FAST LABOUR

Hampstead Theatre, Eton Avenue, NW3

ILLEGAL economic immigration is an ever-growing political topic in London – everyone has their opinion but how often do we look at the other side of the coin?

Steve Waters' hard-hitting play takes no moral stance but tells both sides of the story, using satire and irony as his tools.

Victor is a savvy, shrewd Ukrainian. Successful in his native country with his own sausage factory, he finds himself at the bottom of the chain now that he's fled and is living illegally in the UK.

But Victor sees a way past the badly paid, menial jobs. He wants to get ahead and he's prepared do whatever it takes.

So he starts his own recruitment company – Fast Labour.

Anita, a naïve Scottish personnel professional who has a soft spot for Victor from the start becomes involved in his new venture. And with his Russian and Lithuanian henchmen and an army of immigrants desperate for work, how can he fail?

But before too long Victor's Fast Labour becomes exploitation. Has Victor just turned into the image of his boss before him – and just how far is he prepared to go?

The show is interspersed with clips of the English countryside and there are some great music tracks which complement the action perfectly. The dialogue is sharp, with sarcasm and laugh-out-loud moments throughout.

Craig Kelly as entrepreneur Victor and Kirsty Stuart as Anita give some excellent performances. And viewers will recognise Kelly from his roles in TV's *Queer as Folk* and *Clocking Off*.

A powerful play that reminds us that cheap labour can come at a high price. This is well worth a visit.

– EMILY GOVAN

RONI SIZE AND REPRAZENT

London Jazz Café, Parkway NW1