

New College of Speech and Drama (disguised as the Phoenix Festival Company since being swallowed up by the Middlesex Poly last term) also scored an unexpected triumph through Jon Deary's excellent but simple setting for "A Midsummer Night's Dream", which made the almost impossible room look purpose-built for the play. But not even Phil Brown's splendid attack and

conviction as Bottom and Lydia Vaughan Lake's pleasant and helpful musical arrangements could compensate fully for the lack of fluency, meaning and vitality in much of the verse delivery, the handicap of having to double all the Mechanicals (except Bottom) with female fairies, the female Puck's excruciating stage cockney accent, and Oberon's excessive (though male) sadness.

Bradford's 'Clownmaker' duly and deservedly completed a hat-trick of Scotsman Festival Fringe Awards for both the University and playwright Richard Crane. It owed much of its success to the perennial efficiency of the backstage technicians, theatre designer Dave Elliott, and director Faynia Williams. I particularly admired Tim Appleby's authoritative Diaghilev, Lauren Barker's wide-ranging Romola, and the superb integration of ballet music and theatre in the powerful "Rite of Spring" nightmare and the erotic "L'Après Midi d'un Faun" sequence.

Nottingham's "Golden Pathway Annual" was efficiently presented and acted. Bristol Revunions were up to their usual high standard, with three particular hits and their customary musical excellence. Stoke Poly's Ray Johnson gave us laughter and sadness with equal facility and effectiveness as "The Man who Almost Knew Eamonn Andrews". Oxford University Theatre Group almost made up for the uninspired quality of much of the rest of Oxford's student presentations with "Banzai Addio", tightly directed by Jon Plowman and well acted by Alan Halliday as the wealthy recluse and Simon Chandler as the young reporter whose personal hangups finally lose him the interview of his career. But with only a fleeting appearance by the all-important Samurai, the play seemed rather overwritten — though effective. Finally, Durham achieved an all-round success with Howard Brenton's "Revenge", thanks to good performances by Jeremy James and strong, sensitive direction by Mike Burberry, who also proved the outstanding actor in Davie Storey's "Home": his is a versatile ability of exceptional promise.

Clive Wolfe