

"A Voyage Round My Father" ...A review by Maddy Woods ...

John Mortimer's "A Voyage Round my Father" is a series of autobiographical snapshots of his life, seeking in vain for a word of praise or affection from his bombastic father (Peter Ingledew) and long-suffering Mother (Hilary Westlake) in their strangled, middle-class English world. As directed by Rosemary Nice, Henfield Theatre Company's production was rather uneven, although there was an engaging, haunting quality.

The adult "John" (Nick Roughton) held all together with a quizzical air, finding fateful events wryly amusing, even with his father at his most irascible. As his exasperated wife, Elizabeth (Becky Mills) declared - "Nothing seems to matter!"

The young "John", as played by Billy Henman, introduced a lively innocence and his scenes with Iris (Emma Harris) and Reigate (Sam McIlhagga) were most enjoyable. The schoolroom with shell-shocked teacher, Ham (Kevin Locke) and Headmaster (Jerry Nice), the advice in the Film Unit from Sparks (Nick Darby) and the Remembrance Day Service when the irreverent Father sang along with "Polly Perkins" worked well, and there were lively cameos from John Coit as Ringer Lean, Mary Matson in her various roles and Sylvie Ashthorpe as Miss Ferguson.

Father, blind but indomitable, continues his career as a barrister securely wrapped up in the all-embracing help of his wife. However, evincing faint surprise that he actually possess a son, the tendrils of their love for each other seep through, as in the care of their beloved garden, towards a tender and moving conclusion.

Maddy Woods