

Expose! Mistresses Of The High-Rise

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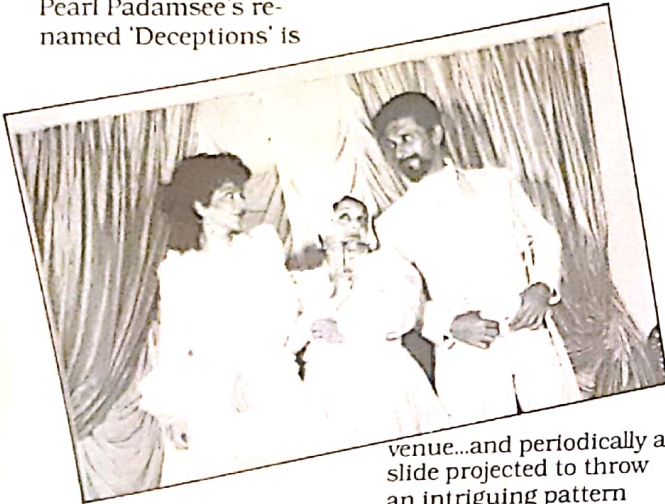


Rajashri & Shrikant Jichkar: A Vedic Match

Theatre

Encore!

Games of deceit and sexual manipulations—that's what director Pearl Padamsee's re-named 'Deceptions' is



about. But this is one play no one can dismiss in a sentence.

Based on an 18th century novel by Choderlos de Laclos, 'Les Liaisons Dangereuses', Christopher Hampton has woven a savagely witty period piece on the decadence of the French upper crust in pre-revolution times. This Magnum Production is visually lavish: champagne-toned costumes (Bharati Jaffrey) including a graceful cloak beautifully handled by Naseeruddin Shah; a background of

slatted screens, used to excellent effect to conceal players from each other, yet reveal themselves to the audience (set design by Urshila Kerkar); a bare minimum of 'period' furniture, with the chaise lounge's position being changed to indicate a change of

venue...and periodically a slide projected to throw an intriguing pattern over the set.

The entire play is all sensuousness and sophistication—a mood primarily set by the lead players: La Marquise de Merteuil (Sabira Merchant) and her once lover Le Vicomte de Valmont (Naseeruddin Shah). 'Deceptions' is really a dangerous game of sexual chess, La Marquise out to destroy what is good and pure through deceit and manipulation. The ultimate in moral decadence of the period being the total lack of

guilt—until the great seducer, Le Vicomte, falls in love with a virtuous young wife (Ratna Pathak-Shah).

The opening scene is a tableau struck by all ten members of the cast, including Pearl Padamsee who plays a cameo role, a spotlight moves from one to another introducing them and bringing them to life. But it is undoubtedly a play carried by Naseeruddin Shah and Sabira Merchant. I've loved most of what Shah has done on film, seldom what he has done on stage, but this was a bravura performance! There is here style and grace, without the put-on mannerisms of period plays. In fact, everyone seems totally natural—a credit surely

due to the director. There are no cheap sexy jokes here—although the play is about how sex is used. Nor are there any bare thighs and wriggling bottoms, or brassy music. But make no mistake about it: 'Deceptions' is not to be missed. For it's a rare theatrical experience.

Erna Vatchaghandy

Photography

Breathtaking!

Muzaffar 'Umrao Jaan' Ali is currently in Kashmir with Dimple Kapadia transferring his dream to celluloid—'Zooni'. And as the pictures by Ben Ingham



ZOONI عزونی

reproduced on this page reveal, 'Zooni' appears to be a visual masterpiece in the making. 

