

# British Theatre Guide

News, reviews, features and podcast on theatre across the UK

## Grand Slam

Lloyd Evans  
King's Head Theatre  
(2008)

*Grand Slam* is a tennis fairy tale that, appropriately enough, has opened during the first week of Wimbledon. Ironically, since it centres on one of those plucky British women who rarely make it out of the starting blocks, the opening night coincided with the demise of our last female hope for 2008.

You know that this is not the real thing as soon as our heroine, the anorexic Madeleine Rochester sympathetically played by Rachel Pickup, turns out to have a surname. She also belies the loser status, not only winning her first round match, as occasionally happens, but eventually travelling further in the championships than any British woman since Sue Barker over thirty years ago.

The story is as predictable as British fortunes on the Centre Court. We meet the gorgeous Miss Rochester in her comfortable, rented Wimbledon house as the tournament is about to begin. Her sole companion is a nameless new bouncer/bodyguard from the East End, Sam Spruell somehow combining pent-up violence with dry humour.

As the new British heroine (from Monaco) wins match after match, the relationship develops to the point where the pair psychoanalyse each other, revealing hidden weaknesses but also, after a great deal of flirting on the female side, real attraction.

There are some good jokes, not all of them original, and some charming scenes in what is generally an old-fashioned style, director Tamara Harvey somehow belying the limits of a script that sometimes has unrealistic pretensions to seriousness.

The director somehow manages to make the audience care about a "mad bitch snob from hell" whose ambitions mirror those of an aspirant Miss World, and a petty con who has mysteriously got himself a job minding a celebrity, suggesting that the security checks were unnecessarily lax.

*Grand Slam* must inevitably come into the category of harmless fun but might well attract and amuse the tennis set once our current flawed hero, Andy Murray, finally bows out of events in SW19.

Reviewer: [Philip Fisher](#)