

British Theatre Guide

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

Postcards from America: Elective Affinities / Eric LaRue

David Adjmi / Brett Neveu
Royal Shakespeare Company
Soho Theatre
(2006)

As centrepiece of the RSC's second season of New Work, first seen in Stratford last autumn, this American double-bill, directed by Dominic Cooke, gives Royal Court theatregoers a foretaste of what they can expect when he takes over the Sloane Square helm later this year.

These two plays lay bare an almost unimaginable streak of violence and anger lurking in apparently civilised strata of American society, from an elegant tea-sipping Manhattan culture vulture to suburban housewives in the Bible belt.

In *Elective Affinities*, a chilling 20-minute curtain-raiser by David Adjmi, Suzanne Burden is superbly cast as a lady of taste, whose self-satisfied charm and knowing intimacy soon has us eating out of her well-manicured hands, chuckling with delight at her droll put-downs of a best friend, absent husband and society *mores* in general.

But beneath this chic, urbane exterior lurks a savage monster — suddenly barking, almost literally at one moment — who sees no point in routinely assigning innate human rights to the dispossessed, and can recognise no conflict between civilised values and the routine use of torture as a necessary response to terrorism.

Reviewer: [John Thaxter](#)