

British Theatre Guide

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Unsent Letters

Andor Szilágyi

Orange Tree Theatre, Richmond

(2003)

This 1993 play, directed by John Terry is the second in the Trainee Directors' 2003 showcase at the Orange Tree Theatre. The contrast with [The Hebrew Lesson](#) could not be more striking. From the dumb show prologue that heralds this piece of Absurdism, nothing is certain.

Szilágyi plays with both time and words as he unravels a tale of unhappy love between the dashing, rather lanky Captain Angelus (Peter Broome) and the beautiful Angelina, played by Elizabeth Healey.

It is not until the final scene that we see their initial, all too brief encounter. Before that, each is seen as both old and young in a structure similar to *La Ronde* as the two characters meet at different stages of their lives. This means that uncertainty is rife, as, for example, the young Angelina meets the old, drunken captain at the end of his life.

Terry shows great imagination throughout, creating several really memorable images and seems to have tremendous promise. He is assisted by his designer, Sam Dowson, whose surreal set is overshadowed by an umbrella tree that might have been drawn from Magritte.

This is a fine play, reminiscent of Bruno Schulz in its portrayal of a certain kind of Middle-European experience, and also of Beckett. It should prove very enjoyable to those who love magic realism or like problems without solutions.

The intriguing staging works well with the central couple shadowed by a mysterious, invisible (to them) narrator "O" (Gerard Bell) who carries a scythe, maybe indicating a role as The Grim Reaper. The fourth member of the cast is accordionist, David Yengibarjan, who, like "O", drifts around the theatre at will.

It would be good to hear more from both playwright and director and somehow one imagines that the admirable Orange Tree will give its audiences opportunities to do so.

Reviewer: [Philip Fisher](#)