

## NOEL COWARD DOUBLE BILL

Reviewer – Michael Gray

An entertaining couple of Cowards from *Writtle Cards*. The more substantial piece – *Still Life* – was directed by Laura Bennett. Better known in its celluloid version – *Brief Encounter* – it has a clever dramatic structure. Nick Caton and Michele Moody caught the style of their two characters very well, helped by careful costuming. Their hesitant relationship was nicely contrasted with the free-and-easy station staff: Daniel Curley's saucy Stanley, Boot Banes's fruity ticket inspector and Sharon Goodwin's matronly Myrtle. I liked the set, with its girders and its vintage advertisements, and the way the passage of time was suggested by fresh flowers on the tables of the Station Buffet.

Less secure in its social setting perhaps, but constantly entertaining nonetheless, was Hazel Reilly's *Fumed Oak*. It starred Boot Banes, relishing the role that Coward wrote for himself: Henry Gow, the Clapham worm that turns and walks out on the three generations of women who have made his life a misery – Doris, his missus [Elaine Reynolds], his pigtailed daughter [Claire Williams] and his refined mother-in-law [Jean Speller].