

A raging Jude Law adds fine fury to an otherwise passion-less play



Plod. Plod. Plod. I am really not sure how Ivo van Hove, the much-celebrated Belgian director, managed to turn Luchino Visconti's 1943 film about sex and passion into this rather dull affair, but he has.

He has taken the story of a drifter named Gino (Jude Law) who stumbles into a couple's home asking for help and instantly falls into hot smokin' love with the wife, Hanna (Halina Reijn), and created something pretentious and quite ordinary.

We are told to expect sexual scenes, nudity, gunshots and (worst of all) cigarette smoking. But they forgot to warn us that this production by van Hove and Toneelgroep Amsterdam, a Dutch theatre group, was also going to bombard us with clichés. The dialogue is, at times, painfully bad. "Could you love me?" asks Hanna, slowly, vacantly, having got a huge hunk of meat on the counter for dinner. There is a pause. "Yes," says Gino, empty as a pocket.

There is precisely zero chemistry between these two on stage. Hanna has a more intense relationship with her (matching) lingerie than with the man she was supposedly madly in love with.

As for Gino, he's conflicted, having murderous thoughts about her husband, Joseph, between his endless pauses of nothingness. It's so bad that he has to play the harmonica.

Ann Treneman, The Times, ★★☆☆☆