

Stoppard's Hound will make you howl

The Real Inspector Hound

At Presentation House in North Vancouver until Jan. 25

Tickets: 604-990-3474

Reviewed by Jo Ledingham

SUCCESS IS BOUND TO DOG the heels of *The Real Inspector Hound*, a murder mystery spoof by Tom Stoppard at his silliest. In the play, Moon (David C. Jones) and Birdboot (Tristan Ham) are theatre critics, seated just off-stage, pens at the ready to review a thriller in the old British style. Character Mrs. Drudge (Leanne Koehn), the parlour maid, tells us we are in Muldoon Manor, a "lovely old Queen Anne House" belonging to the widow of the late Lord Muldoon "who," Mrs. Drudge continues, "had lately brought his beautiful bride back to the home of his ancestors, walked out of this house 10 years ago, and his body was never found." In the style of those old thrillers, the exposition is packed in as tightly as we holiday over-indulgers are packed into our jeans.

But the real story focuses on the pair of critics, both of whom are stand-ins for their newspapers' first string critics. Jones and Ham (as Moon and Birdboot) exchange insults and try to outdo each other in elaborate analyses of the play whilst consuming a box of chocolates. (Warn-



The Real Inspector Hound, featuring Tristan Ham (L) and David C. Jones as vicious critics, is silly and without any social relevance but it's also a very good time.

ing: the smell of chocolate will drive chocoholics in the audience to drink.)

Also getting the farce just right are snarling, racquet-swinging Denise Jones (as Felicity), scarlet gowned Eden Parker (Lady Cynthia), wheelchair-ridden Jeffrey Leigh Fisher (Magnus), smooth talking Jessie Clark (Simon) and the real Peter Abrams (Hound).

The Real Inspector Hound takes off like the hounds after a fox when Moon, frustrated at the ringing

phone on the stage, gets out of his seat, mounts the stage, finds himself in the spotlight but answers the still-ringing phone anyway. "It's for you," he says in a stage whisper to Birdboot. The hunt is on.

Produced by Esdecy Arts and Presentation, and directed by John Paterson, *The Real Inspector Hound* is totally silly, completely without redeeming social relevance and, in the words of Birdboot, "a rattling good evening out. I was held."