

The Arts



Family strife: Pettle's drama charts the collapse of relations between cool, sexy, hard-to-hear Amy (Raquel Cassidy) and Alan (Corey Johnson)

The ever decreasing circles of a talent that once flowed

EXHIBITION

Ian Davenport
Waddington Galleries, W1
Nick Hackworth

IN ANOTHER place and time, Ian Davenport's paintings — along with those of his contemporaries Gary Hume and Damien Hirst — might have been part of a movement in painting that sought to eradicate the trace of the hand of the artist.

Davenport, who was nominated for the Turner Prize in 1991, aged 25, and was included in the Tate's Days Like These this year, has made a career from the process of pouring. His first well-known works consisted of household gloss poured in successive layers on to the tops of narrow rectangular canvases, creating semi-circles that flowed down into curtains of paint, leaving only thin bands of the previously applied colour exposed.

Like Hirst's spot paintings and the "Hospital Door" series that Hume was painting up to the early Nineties, Davenport's works combined a nod to the demotic — in the use of household paint — with a disavowal of personal expression.

However, like most of the YBA crowd, Davenport isn't interested in theory,

as he observes in the catalogue accompanying this show, more "post-pub" than "post-modern".

A decade on, the rectangles have become squares and the poured shapes are now circles made using a watering can. The squares are occasionally fitted together to create larger works that explore various colour relationships, but the work looks increasingly banal. Where the poured shapes of his older paintings had some grace to them, these circles are diminished by their domestic scale.

The choice of colours, meanwhile, is strangely naff. One work of six square panels coloured various shades of red and pink resembles an abstract homage to Valentine's Day. Meanwhile, the two largest multicoloured works, each made up of 12 panels, are bright enough to adorn the walls of a primary school.

The two most attractive paintings here are made in the old vein, with expanses of black gloss framed by thin, elegant red and blue lines.

● *Until 25 July.*
Information: 020 7851 2200.

Playing too safe

IN her 15-year tenure as Hampstead's artistic director Jenny Topper has been responsible for valuable stage premieres and an impressive list of West End transfers. But this last decade her selection of plays and the season she has programmed to launch Hampstead's new theatre, of which *Sunday Father* is the final, feeble offering, have been characterised by a taste for domestic drama of a soft, safe sort. Adam Pettle's *Sunday Father*, which recently premiered in Toronto, is a case in point.

Although peppered with imposing allusions to gods and goddesses who got up to no end of bad in Greek mythology and to the fatal animosities of Cain and Abel, *Sunday Father* rises to no more than a shrill, simplistic *cri de coeur* about families: if only we could love each other a little more and hate a lot less. At heart, and

THEATRE

Sunday Father
Hampstead

Nicholas de Jongh

what a bleeding one it is, Pettle stages a sprawling, two-hour meander through the fraught lives of two adult, thirtysomething, Jewish brothers — sports-writer Jed and lawyer Alan (Corey Johnson) — whose respective troubles have to do with an adulterous wife and an unloving, unseen daddy. The problem of their own relationship looms later.

The three-hander is spliced into the minute, inconsequential segments and multiple locations beloved of television soap opera. The yawning spaces of Ashley

Martin-Davis's inappropriate stage design — the back walls as high and blank as a warehouse — are regularly littered with stagehands bringing odd items of furniture on or off. Between scenes, childhood tapes of the brothers putting on a show impart a contrived air of pathos. Rupert Goold's jerkily uncomfortable production charts the collapse of relations between the *Sunday Father* of the title, Dan Fredenburgh's vulnerable Jed, a doting daddy and husband, and Raquel Cassidy's cool, sexy, hard-to-hear Amy who opts for another lover. The brothers' joshing, affectionate relationship unbelievably erupts into impure hatred when Alan's father leaves him little in his will. Corey Johnson's eloquent raging cannot atone for the play's dying fall or general vacuousness.

● *Until 9 August. Box office: 020 7722 9301.*

Jacques Brel comes to Corrie

FOR one so plaintive on record, Barb Jungr in person is rather a surprise. Encased in black Lycra and built like a younger, blonder and bonnier version of Martina Navratilova, she's more your personal fitness trainer than bruised cabaret butterfly.

Not that we're being sizeist. Many operatic and folk divas are chunky women. It's just that when dealing with vulnerability, as Barb's songs usually do, the wronged woman shouldn't appear

CABARET

Barb Jungr
Purcell Room

Jack Massarik

quite so capable of grabbing her two-timing lover and slapping some sense into him.

Of Czech ancestry but raised in Stockport, Barb comes across as a homely, down-to-earth Northerner,

easier to see as a guest actress in Corrie than a slave to passion in Paris. Backed tidily by pianist Adrian York and bassist Julie Walkington, she was good on anger and pain. Yet while introducing *Don't Think Twice, If You Go Away* and other Jacques Brel or Bob Dylan tear-jerkers from her forthcoming album, she chatted happily about colleagues, parents, friends and recent travels to New York and "Los Angeleaze". "How d'you feel about

obsession?" she asked, introducing New Amsterdam. "I think it's okay myself, quite a healthy thing, so long as it stops short of stalking."

And on Brel: "For a man who sailed round the world and did just as he pleased, it's funny he ended up with just as much existential angst as people who never did those things."

Factually sound, all this, but hardly sexed-up. A little less Victoria Wood, please, and a bit more Ute Lemper.

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