LOOT

New Recommended

Revisiting the second of Joe Orton's three great plays — the others being *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* and *What the Butler Saw* — one can't help but mourn his untimely, brutal death. Oscar Wilde's most obvious, if indirect, heir, Orton was a brilliant manipulator of language for comic effect, the best since Wilde, in fact. We must, therefore, be thankful when one of his few plays is well performed, as it is here under Darin Anthony's nimble direction. A classic farce, the play revolves around the burial of Mrs. McLeavy, who leaves a grieving husband (John-David Keller) and a gay son, Hal (Brian Foyster), who's been getting it on with the undertaker's assistant, Dennis (Nero Smeraldo), who has a thing for the late Mrs. McLeavy's nurse, Fay (Sile Bermingham), who is now determined to marry Mr. McLeavy. Then there's that bank robbery — the one Hal and Dennis masterminded and which Fay wants a piece of. And let's not forget Truscott (Rob Nagle), the bumbling police inspector trying to solve the crime by masquerading as an employee of the metropolitan water board. But the plot hardly matters; it's Orton's verbal volleys that prick up our ears. Theater East, 6760 Lexington Ave., Hlywd.; Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m.; Sun., 7 p.m.; thru Oct. 2. (323) 957-5782. **Written 09/08/2005** (David Mermelstein)