

2Graves



Poetic tales of the underworld Jonathan Moore

★★★★★

Arts Theatre WE

Until we get a full-blown verse drama revival (and personally I'm not crossing my fingers for it) this powerful curio is sure to turn some heads. Paul Sellar's verse monologue gives a surprising dimension to what would otherwise be a straightforward underworld shocker. When Bobby Topps loses spectacularly to Big Ron in the 1978 World Professional Darts Championship, his young son Jack suspects something's up. Ten years later Bobby loses again to Ron in an expensive backroom rematch, and Jack goes to work to pay off his old

man's debts, but only gets himself in worse trouble.

In Yvonne McDevitt's strikingly designed production, Jonathan Moore holds the stage as Jack sitting on a bizarre throne that looks like a poolside lounge crossed with an electric chair. His menacing delivery suits Sellar's tales of villainy – 'a screwdriver and a fiver, and they'd do you in their sleep' – and the darts matches and horse races lend themselves to tense poetic commentary. Elsewhere, though, the rhymes can be a bit Pam Ayres, and Michael Nyman's original music amounts to little more than a few dozen notes. Intriguing and rewarding, nonetheless. *Jonathan Gibbs*