

If you take a holiday unusually late or early, you may care to note the foggy areas and the snowy regions. Most fog occurs within 60 miles of London and in the industrial

varies widely. The worst part is the high ground in the centre, with some 80 inches a year. The driest parts are the north-east coast and a southern strip around Castletown.

# HIGH LOW COMEDY — IN STRETCHES

THE "Lysistrata" of Aristophanes is perhaps the bluest joke in world drama. For eroticism of theme, it can be compared only with "The Country Wife"; for double-entendre of dialogue and action, with "Sweeney Todd."

And one of its lines at least ("Are you a man, or a fertility symbol?") has a Rabelaisian grandeur matched solely by Mercutio's "The bawdy hand of the dial."

Unfortunately, the play doesn't maintain this level throughout; and Michael Almaz's production at the Questions Theatre, though in the good scenes it is very, very good, makes the bad ones appear—if not horrid—at any rate even weaker than they actually are.

The farcical interludes involving the male and female choruses, heavy-handed in humour at the best of times, here become still more so, due to staging at once too noisy and too slow.

## Monotonous

Slowness, again, is a defect of Awen Griffiths' portrayal in the title-role; her deliberate drawl, vaguely suggestive of a junior Ginkold, is witty for the first few minutes, then grows monotonous.

There remain, however, both

in writing and performance, several stretches of what one must call high low comedy.

The opening, in which Lysistrata and her girl-friends decide to deny their men amorous rights unless the war against Sparta is ended, is a classically crisp, uninhibitedly funny bit of exposition.

In it, Jo Arundel as a reluctant abstainer, takes her chances with frustrated gusto: while Mr. Almaz brings some happy inventiveness to two young ladies from Lesbos who sing to each other "I Can't Give You Anything But Love, Baby."

## The climax

But the climax, in every sense, comes when Lysistrata's plan goes into practice, causing much dejection to Greeks and Spartans alike. Laurence Nixon, John Allcock, Nick Tagliacozzo, and above all Lawrence Irvin, enact these passages in a manner to make the most of them.

DOUGLAS McVAY.