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TRIUMPHANT 'FORSYTE SAGA' SERIAL ENDS

By SEAN DAY-LEWIS

After a habit-forming six months' run on B B C-2 television, "The Forsyte Saga" reached its swan song on Saturday, just as yet another B B C sound radio adaptation of John Galsworthy's story, in 48 weekly instalments, is about to start.

In the final television episode, to be repeated tomorrow, Soames duly receives his unlikely death blow from his prize Goya, and after a discreetly cut mutual roll in the long grass of Robin Hill, Jon returns guiltily to his pale wife and his cousin Fleur returns sadly to her pale husband.

The death of Soames, so symmetrical and full of irony, is more acceptable as novel than as dramatic technique but was so excellently acted as to jerk tears in all the copious measure intended.

Looking back the early episodes were most effective just as the early books are most satisfying, really because Galsworthy gave the old Forsytes more depth, variety and, in his Victoria nostalgia, some grandeur.

Kenneth More's early narration, seeming to offer a modern comment on Victorian materialism, was mistaken. But by the end only Soames and Fleur really matter as characters.

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Donald Wilson's dramatisation and production has been a considerable achievement, the dialogue often a real improvement on the book and the domestic and rural scenes mostly excellent in observation and period atmosphere.

Eric Porter's performance as Soames was definitive and future attempts on the part will be measured by his. Vera Dawn Rogers' beauty as the young Fleur and Margaret Tovey's sympathetic Winifred, a triumph of reading over acting, will also be remembered with pleasure.

And as the leading film stars, the production of the serial will be remembered with pleasure.



JOHN STRIDE
Romeo in America.



John Stride

2 He is in *The Scarlet and The Black*, Sunday's new serial



Photograph: Morris Newcombe

Franco Zeffirelli with Pamela Brown and John Stride preparing for tonight's A.B.C. Tempo programme "A Wind of Change."



John Stride and Pamela Brown in *The Scarlet and The Black*

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8.50 THE part of Julien Sorel, the ambitious anti-hero of *The Scarlet and the Black*, is a subtle one, and demanding enough for any actor. But for **John Stride** the job of playing him on television has been doubly demanding since Stride is virtually a newcomer to the medium.

'I've found it's needed more concentration than almost anything I've done before,' he says, 'but it's worth it. The character is fascinating—particularly in the light of what's known of his creator. Stendhal appears to have been a kind of Walter Mitty who saw himself as a great womaniser; in real life he seems to have been a failure in this respect, so he fulfilled himself through characters like Sorel. But even in Sorel, something of the real-life Stendhal shows through.'

Stride is a South Londoner who went to R.A.D.A. straight from school, worked subsequently at the Liverpool Playhouse on a scholarship, and made his reputation in the Zeffirelli production of *Romeo and Juliet*. His films include *Sink the Bismarck*, and he has been a member of the company at the National Theatre since its inauguration.

He now lives in London with his actress wife, Virginia, and their two baby daughters, and admits to no interests outside the profession other than 'sun, wine, and driving.' Nevertheless, he is occupying his spare time just now by fixing up some fitted cupboards—'not because I particularly like do-it-yourself, but because I think an actor ought to do something practical as well.'

John Stride as Julien, with June Tobin as Louise de Renal and Derek Lamden as Yvon

