

Reviews of plays we saw during 2017-18

What Shadows

Eight U3A members attended the Lyceum in Edinburgh to see this play by Chris Hannan, directed by Roxana Silbert.

The play moved between two time periods:

1968 - When Midlands MP Enoch Powell had something to say. Something he felt needed to be said. Something that could divide Britain forever. Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech is the post-war's most polarising political speech.

1992 – Saw Oxford academic and daughter of a Caribbean immigrant, Rose Cruickshank who wanted answers. Enoch's controversial words about immigration had shattered her childhood. Would a meeting with the man himself allow her to find the inner peace she desperately craved?

While this play raised a lot of questions I did not feel engaged with it and the way the material was presented. I found it confusing and sometimes had difficulty in hearing some of the dialogue, and there was a lot of dialogue! Most of the group felt the same although one member really enjoyed it. This just shows we all have different tastes and viewpoints.

However I am sure that over the whole season we will all find something that we will both enjoy and make us think.

Cockpit

Thirteen of us attended a performance of Cockpit written by Bridget Bolan at the Lyceum theatre.

An enjoyable afternoon was had by everyone. The entire theatre was the stage with props distributed throughout.

The topic was about displaced persons following the end of World War 2 being returned to their homeland, different nationalities, ethnic backgrounds all together and all with different views and opinions and beliefs. No easy task as it is proving to this day with Europe as it is. Have any lessons been learned??

The Belle's Stratagem

Eleven of us went to Lyceum to see The Belle's Stratagem. Set in Georgian Edinburgh, we follow the story of Letitia who has been betrothed since birth to Doricourt. Unfortunately the handsome Doricourt, upon his return from France, declares that continental women are much more sophisticated than Scottish lassies. Letitia wants his love and assisted by 3 other "belles" plots to seduce him. The result is hilarious, good Scottish humour with a bit of slapstick, including the fat man in a dress. Needless to say the women win! A super fun afternoon was had by all.

Rhinoceros

Eight of the Theatre group attended Rhinoceros at The lyceum, Edinburgh.

Zinnie Harris has created a new version of this classic play by Eugene Ionesco
'In a sleepy French provincial town, a rhinoceros rampages across the market square.
Another crushes someone's cat.

A woman sounds the alarm: it is the townspeople themselves who are transforming into these raging beasts. As more and more of the citizens embrace their future as rhinos, just one man – the drunkard Berenger – refuses to transform. But why does he feel so out of step with everyone else? And what will his refusal to conform cost him?

This 1959 play is an uproarious absurdist farce – and a chilling examination of conformism, nationalism, fascism and fundamentalism that has been compared with Orwell's Animal Farm and Camus's The Plague. It considers the countless ways in which humans are content to adapt themselves to new and horrifying circumstances, and give in to poisonous ideologies.

Alongside its piercing political insights, it is comic, thrillingly theatrical and deeply human, focusing on the unlikely hero of the everyman Berenger, and the possibility of resistance to what might seem inevitable.'

This is a short play lasting about 1hr 40min but in that time it delivered everything promised in the publicity. It was thought provoking, very funny and the staging was exciting and unusual. I particularly liked the sound effects which almost brought the rhinoceros into the auditorium and here were a number of surprises like a giant beheaded cat landing on the stage – you had to be there. The whole group loved this production which we would recommend to everyone.