



Society : New Stagers
Production : My Romantic History
Date : 26th October 2013
Venue : St Anne's Hall
Report by : Tony Sweeney

Report

General

This is a relatively new play having emerged at the fringe in the last few years and thus has very little history (and therefore no preconceptions). Thus it was a brave decision to put it on, yet it's a decision that really paid off. Some strong character types, all of which are familiar to all in the modern world were examined from a number of angles, over time and individual perspectives and this was at the heart of its appeal.

I liked the way situations were examined and re-examined from each participant's perspective and how this allowed us to have a much greater insight into relationships and how they work. Drawing on the past also helped define the character since we are all the product of our experiences. Some exceptionally brilliant writing made the play extremely engaging and pertinent and the effort in concentration required of the audience was well worth it and the result rewarding.

The pre-show announcements to turn off phones not only dealt with what is an irritating aspect of modern life but also prepared the audience for the start of the play.

Players

A well-cast group of actors, clearly suited to their roles demonstrated some excellent and varied acting skills. It's good to see such gritty drama performed and this should be applauded.

Colin Sheehan (Tom) as the leading male character was a curious and complex individual and Colin gave a convincing and varied depiction which meant you moved from being sympathetic to antagonistic and the back to sympathetic to him as the play unfolded. This was an excellent piece of acting that brought the character with all his flaws and doubts to life.

Ailsa Wright (Amy) as the central female again gave life to a complex and diverse character. When viewing the situation from Tom's perspective she was timid and vulnerable. The same situation from her perspective was totally different and she portrayed both extremely well. This was an exceptional piece of acting.

Becca Stafford (Sasha) as Amy's boss played the part well, at times overbearing but with an outer confidence that disguised inner doubts. It was interesting how the character developed and she clearly felt empathy with the character.

Leah Quinn (Alison/Tom's Mum) playing Tom's childhood love and also his mother gave both parts full reign. Transforming from one to the other on stage by rearranging her hair and costume she slipped between them with ease. This was an excellent performance which helped define the overall dynamics

Peter Nower (Calvin) as Amy's past love who re-emerges as Sasha's gave a good performance showing how people change over time from a radical idealist to become more complicit

Eamonn O'Reilly (Various) having a range of roles allowed us to see a variety of characters from the overly-loud to almost-dull normal; it was a good vehicle for him.

Ruth Lo (Various) again had a number of small parts that interlinked much of what was going on. Again this allowed us to appreciate her acting range and confidence in a wider context.

Director

Orna Joseph clearly understood the play on a profound level and through this applied real creative vision to bring it to life. The plot was interesting and at times meandering but her interpretation was excellent, even down to devising her own stage directions. A really excellent piece of impact drama that resonated some familiar and universal themes to all.

Stage Management

The entrances and exits were well worked out and this helped the show's flow. The feel of the show was such that you were drawn in and this was in no small part down to the dynamics of the characters and their interactions.

Sound

A good and clear sound that was audible throughout the hall was needed to ensure the subtleties of the plot were delivered. Given that this was interesting plot lines with many little twists this was essential.

Lighting

The lighting was used well to underline different times of the day and helped define the atmosphere. A simple device of a spot on a glitter ball turned the whole thing into a night club with both ease and to great effect.

Set Design

A simple and flexible set was able to be modified with some ease to accommodate the changes in locations demanded by the script and given this is quite a small stage helped the audience's connection with the characters.

Props

The props were appropriate, available when needed and in keeping with the setting.

Costumes

The costumes, being contemporary, helped ground the show in the present and helped define the characters and indeed these needed to be firmly fixed in modern times since the play drew heavily on current cultural norms.

Programme

The programme was a simple fly sheet with the cast list and the off stage contributors was very effective and really all that was needed. In this case the play really was the thing and stood on its own merits as a drama with no need for any background information.

Front of house

As always with this group the front of house team do a great job making everyone feel welcome more like a guest than a member of an audience. That certainly helps the audience enjoy the evening and given the inclement weather the support was considerable.