

Review of Wild at Heart (event/215410/wild-at-heart/)



"The Underbelly Of Happy N'Orleans"

by Saul Reichlin (user/3037/saul-reichlin/) for remotegoat on 06/11/16



(reviews_official.php)

Settle into the cushioned comfort of this friendly, intimate, fringe theatre, and pretty soon the producer, the redoubtable Leonie Scott Matthews, will welcome you. This is not the bored usher telling you to switch off your phone and informing you that there is one interval. Leonie gives you an old fashioned, warm welcome to her emporium, of which she is justly proud, having kept it alive through thick and thin since 1968!

Continuing in her tradition of bringing to her boards only the finest material, Wild At Heart is for Tennessee Williams lovers. The programme is a quartet of one-act plays seldom seen, dating from early in the playwright's career, and is redolent of his preoccupation with the disintegration of hopes and dreams. The guillotine descends as the poor creatures finally face the shattering truth of their lives. Williams' masterpiece, A Streetcar Named Desire, comes to mind particularly. In the ironically named At Liberty, and in Hello From Bertha, facets of the early life of Blanche du Bois from Streetcar can be witnessed.

In At Liberty, there is a full blooded performance from Ava Amande as Gloria la Green (a version of Blanche du Bois), in the final stages of denial at not having realised what she yearns for, at the ripe old age of 34. This is raw Williams, with the intimate audience almost able to smell the garish outfit she has worn so often in the hopes of finding love. The theatre gods appear to have given Miss Amande a real bronchial cough, which actually added to her portrayal of tragedy, and was a testament to her courage and emotional power.

In Mr Paradise, the wasted life is that of an ageing poet, who cannot abide being finally recognised after 25 years of being ignored. His potential saviour comes in the form of a young woman who has fallen in love with his poetry and is determined to resurrect him. Alice Ivor was delicately watchable as the young enthusiast, displaying an excellent understanding of an upper class lover of poetry with determination (and contacts). As the poet, Phil Gerrard carefully trod the line between defeat and a clear, but pained understanding of life's drama.

Sarah Dorsett, in Hello From Bertha, is provided with a much larger than life stage in the breakdown process. She goes tearing down every road that leads to her destruction, a broken, alcoholic, psychologically disturbed woman, bitterly, pitifully, and finally movingly showing us her innermost sadness.

In the last playlet of the evening, Talk To Me Like The Rain And Let Me Listen, there is a surprising monologue by Alice Ivor, a disillusioned young woman's dreamlike visualisation of her drift down the years into nothingness. A Williams speciality, beautifully felt and acted.

Director, Seamus Newham is to be congratulated in bringing a period, yet contemporary feel to classic Tennessee Williams drama. He is ably supported by sensitive lighting, sound and music, all in harmony with the time and place. The Williams faithful, a full house, showed by the warmth of their applause, that they were well rewarded.

The evening was rounded off by Leonie Scott Matthews informing us that after 48 years, the theatre has finally been listed. So glad that you cannot now be converted into an apartment, Leonie!

The fringe is alive and well at Pentameters.

Event venues and times

until 20/11/16	Pentameters Theatre (venue/443/pentameters-theatre/) above The Horseshoe Pub, entrance in Oriel Place, 28 Heath Street, London, NW3 6TE
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