

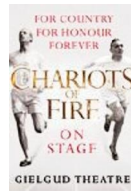
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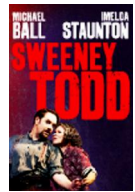
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The Lodger

Venue: [Pentameters](#)

Where: Inner London

Date Reviewed: 13 August 2012

WOS Rating: ★★

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Publicity image for The Lodger

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[Paul Birtill](#)'s new version of his 2004 play *The Lodger* has all the ingredients to make a very interesting and dark piece about lonely characters and their need to connect but unfortunately it only touches on the wealth of opportunities the premise presents: Anyone who has ever been in a flat share can very much relate to confrontations with neighbours, bringing back the boyfriend at night, thin walls and no milk in the fridge.

The main story is a classic triangle conflict: [Cameron Harris](#) as the poet Steven has all the characteristics of the self-loathing man with a vulnerable side. [Amy Brangwyn](#) as the beautiful lodger Clare is a perfect match as the law studying, open and friendly woman, stuck between her boisterous boyfriend Basil ([Paul Bonner](#)) and her growing affection for Steven.

Visits from Steven's father ([Michael Halden](#)) help demonstrate Steven's isolation while the slightly mad neighbour Jake ([Alexander Humes](#)) adds some comic variety. [Isabelle Rose](#) as Clare's friend is warm and supportive but unfortunately her role adds little to the story and feels lost in too many scenes.

Director [Conrad Blakemore](#) uses the intimate space efficiently and with a great amount of detail. But there is a superfluity of scenes and too many characters that exist only to add an unnecessary element of exposition; the central love story consequently takes too long to build and suffers from a lack of momentum.

Scenes outside of the flat tend to be highly over-acted; the doctor's scenes (Jimmy O'Rourke) would be more engaging if they did not try so hard to be funny. Badly choreographed fight scenes and fake playing of didgeridoos create the air of a poor student production.

But the cast put in a lot of energy to create distinct and unique characters and there are strong moments, which make us care for the central couple's fate. There is potential in evidence here but the play needs a lot of editing and more juice in the relevant scenes to make it work.

- Fleur Poad

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