



## Review: An Interrogation



Question time: Rosie Sheehy interviews the suspect played by Jamie Ballard in a tense police drama

*Hampstead Theatre, Swiss Cottage*

By Jessica Holt

**This is Jamie Armitage's first play as author and director and debuted to great acclaim in Edinburgh. For Hampstead Theatre, he expanded it to 70 minutes to explore moments that the Edinburgh audiences wanted developed in more depth.**

The police force is a huge and controversial topic to write about but by setting the play in an interrogation room with a young female officer and male suspect many ideas about our police are exposed in a subtle way.

Ruth, played by Rosie Sheehy, is persuaded to question the sus-

pect alone by her male superior officer, played by Colm Gormley. The crime is the kidnapping and murder of a young woman and the kidnapping and possible murder of a second victim. She questions him without a lawyer, raising the issue of why she is in with this suspect alone and what was her superior officer's motive.

There are many questions raised throughout the tense and economical dialogue. Our current climate regarding police practices is a real focus of the play. The suspect is held on very little evidence, so is it right to employ a young female officer to push him to confess to a misogynistic crime? What is the relationship between the pair?

All the characters are developed in depth, which is clever in such

a short play but, without giving anything away, I was left wishing the male suspect had been given a different motive to that which is ultimately revealed.

The whole piece is performed in the interrogation room and the audience is made to feel inside it as well. We are allowed some respite when the video of the interview is projected onto the back wall. Here there is a chance, however brief, to consider at close range the guilt and innocence of the characters. The intensity of the play is immense, and the questions and the manner of the questioning is a revelation at times. Let's hope the playwright, who has so far mainly directed plays, continues to write, as this is hugely engrossing.

## Review: Learning



Marriage on the rocks: Gemma Franco and Nick Delvalle play a couple trying to rescue their relationship

*Upstairs at The Gatehouse, Highgate*

By Jessica Holt

**Originally conceived as a series of monologues, Learning has now become a short, hard-hitting play about a marriage where the husband and wife are drifting apart. As Jonathan, played by Nick Delvalle, moves further towards Jewish orthodoxy, his wife Debs, played by Gemma Franco, moves further away.**

The play begins with piano playing and a harmonious couple in tune with each other, recounting their upbringings and sharing their culture with the audience. As their marriage deteriorates, they resort to separate counselling sessions, but this device is not as successful

as when they debate with each other.

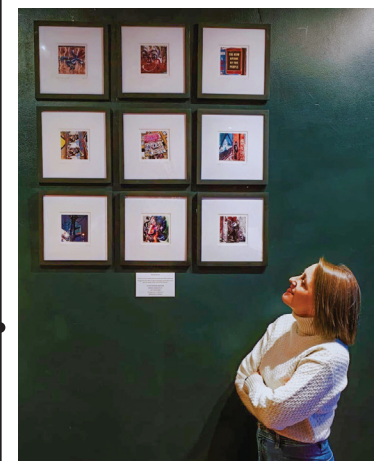
The glimpse of physical theatre lightens the mood and suggests the couple were once very happy and the play could benefit greatly from more music and movement.

Some universal themes were raised, one of which is the limitations religion places on women, whether it be the Catholic Church, Islam or Judaism. Another theme is individual freedom within a relationship and how it can be achieved. This could be further developed as a longer play. As it stands, an interval was not necessary; in fact it lost some dramatic tension as a result.

The stage is bare apart from the piano and a couple of stools that are expertly used by the actors to move around the acting area, creating the home and the con-

sulting room. Gemma Franco provides the play with a haunting original musical score. The purple light on the piano creates a quiet, comforting place. The play begins and ends with the image of Debs playing it and hints at a reunion of some kind.

## Ugly but beautiful



City scenes: Part of the display of works by Blank Canvas

London's streets tell a thousand stories but not everybody stops to notice them. Local photographer Blank Canvas, real name Natalie Blanks, does just that. Her latest exhibition, Ugly Beauty, captures the overlooked features of the city's streets and graffiti-covered alleyways, reflecting the unexpected artistry others might dismiss as signs of decay.

Her work is taking centre stage in an exhibition at the Old Marine Arts Group, a tattoo studio in Colney Hatch Lane, Muswell Hill, that looks more like an art gallery. It runs until the end of April.

When she's not out and about capturing the raw unpolished details of London's streets, the former Fortismere School student works at the Muswell Hill Club gym in Fortis Green. Find out more on Instagram @blankcanvasnb

## What's on at the Phoenix in March



By Rob Kenny, executive director

**March opens with Pamela Anderson's highly-rated comeback film The Last Showgirl, billed as a poignant film of resilience, rhinestones and feathers set in a changing Las Vegas.**

Then Bong Joon-ho makes his return to cinema after 2019's multi-award winning Parasite with an English language offering starring Robert Pattinson. Mickey 17 is a science fiction comedy about clone workers struggling to survive against the oppressive rules of a future human colony.

Actress Sadie Frost directs Twiggy, a film on the life and career of the British model and cultural icon, with appearances by Dustin Hoffman, Joanna

Lumley and Paul McCartney. We celebrate International Women's Day with a special screening of this warmly received documentary.

Also in March, we remember the recently-departed director David Lynch with a retrospective of his best films. The season starts on 1 March with The Elephant Man, followed on later dates by Blue Velvet, Wild at Heart and Mulholland Drive. Finally at the end of the month, the new NTLIVE offering is Dr Strangelove. The creative team behind this hilarious take on Stanley Kubrick's masterpiece include Armando Iannucci, Olivier-award winner Sean Foley and Steve Coogan.

To book, visit [www.phoenix-cinema.co.uk](http://www.phoenix-cinema.co.uk) or come into our foyer and talk to our box office team.

COMING SOON  
AT ARTSDEPOT

KATE MOSSE:  
LABYRINTH LIVE

Thu 6 Mar

HOP SKOTSHNE  
KLEZMER BAND

Wed 19 Mar

BING'S  
BIRTHDAY

Sat 15 & Sun 16 Mar

THE PICTURE OF  
DORIAN GRAY

Fri 21 Mar

...and lots more!  
See the full line up  
at [artsdepot.co.uk](http://artsdepot.co.uk)

arts depot

Box Office: 020 8369 5454  
[artsdepot.co.uk](http://artsdepot.co.uk)

artsdepot, North Finchley, N12 0GA