



Review: Night Light

Upstairs at The Gatehouse, Highgate Village

By Jessica Holt

This one-hour play written by Tom Chandler and Maeve O’Haire is funny, thought provoking and thoroughly entertaining. On entering the theatre, the musical soundtrack puts the audience in a happy frame of mind despite the set displaying a run down, untidy studio flat falling apart at the seams.

When we meet the characters, they too appear to be falling apart at the seams. Rian, played by Jack McLaughlin, works nine to five at a call centre and appears to be content. His childhood friend and flatmate Robyn, played by Maeve O’Haire, is ambitious to become a cheerleader and is anything but content. The source of this becomes clear later in the play and is neatly symbolised by her attachment to her childhood night light.

The third character sharing the accommodation is Randy, the writer played by Tom Inman whose creativity has taken a turn for the worse until Rian tells him to “write about what he knows.”

Into the mix comes Laura played by Lydia Hopgood, Rian’s girlfriend and someone who has made good use of her wealthy upbringing which is in stark contrast to the Irish friends. She loves Rian and though he loves her back he questions his readiness for marriage. There are some familiar themes such as unrequited love, living on the breadline and social mobility, all of which are



Thoroughly entertaining: The cast of Night Light

explored through comedy.

The actors bring a real freshness to these issues through skilful delivery of dialogue combined with some comic movements and moments. The set at times becomes a character, the door that doesn’t open or shut properly, the fridge that gets stuffed with empty pizza boxes, the bed which supposedly sleeps three people and that night light which changes colour throughout the play.

There is much left unsaid in this one-hour show, leaving the audience rather up in the air and wondering whether more is coming: a second act perhaps? Whatever the company known as Giggle Riot Theatre decides, this production has a great future ahead.

Review: Marilyn – The Woman Behind the Icon

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By Jessica Holt

There have been several musicals about the icon that was Marilyn Monroe and this latest is marking the centenary of her birth. Written and directed by Andrea Milton-Furlotti and Laura Shipler Chico, this production succeeds in covering an extensive and controversial life in a pacy 70 minutes.

The director ‘seeks to tell Marilyn’s story with honesty’ and in this she is very successful. The audience is constantly reminded of the stark contrast between her public and private persona, and the pain this causes her and her loved ones.

Phil Newman, the set and costume designer, focusses our minds with a white dressing room where the ghost of Marilyn resides and observes her own life story. Played serenely by Donna King dressed in white silk night attire, she watches her younger self Norma Jean played by Alice Mayer as she struggles through failed marriages, addiction and time in a sanatorium.

However, at its core is Marilyn’s struggle to be taken seriously both as an actress and a human being. There are some very hard-hitting scenes that explore her troubled life such

as her wedding night with Joe Dimaggio played by Jamie Withers when she cannot convince him to separate her public life from her future with him. There are some moving scenes between her Aunt Ida played by Katherine Alpen and Marilyn’s mother played by Andrea Milton-Furlotti. Sadly, for Norma Jean they fail to support her through no fault of their own, with her mother suffering from mental health issues and her aunt dying from cancer.

Though a tragic tale this production is filled with fun and humour provided by a live piano and some memorable songs which lifts the production from its sombre themes. I would have liked to see some scenes developed further, for example, there is only a snippet of Marilyn singing “Happy Birthday Mr President” and



Natural wonder: Just one of the results of artist Laura Fox’s collaboration with children and teenagers

A collaboration between children and nature

Wrapped in Leaves and Laughter was an exhibition that brought together photographs, installation, drawings and printmaking in the East Court at Alexandra Palace at the start of last month.

The work, by East Finchley artist Laura Fox, mapped the interaction and experience of children immersed in nature and was made from an ongoing collaboration with children and teenagers from local schools, working in the Outdoor Learning Space in the grounds of Alexandra Park.

Often classes or small groups come regularly to the site, either weekly or half-termly, giving students the opportunity to witness seasonal

changes and forge a sense of stewardship and responsibility for the rich biodiversity. The exhibition celebrated these partnerships and the inspiration that Laura drew from the young people.

There was an opportunity for visitors to create their own work during the exhibition as they could draw with whittled charcoal pencils that had been made by teenagers, paint with clay that was recently dug from the ground by primary

school children and explore ideas around what shape and form a nest might take.

Laura also runs creative outdoor learning projects at the Archer Academy in East Finchley and with primary schools at Long Lane Pasture, near Finchley Fire Station, along with monthly mindfulness drawing sessions for adults in Coldfall Woods. For more information visit laurafox-artist.com



Tragedy and humour: The production delves into the Marilyn story

Arthur Miller, her famous playwright husband, is hardly mentioned. Marilyn’s connection to the mob is not explored and her politics and intellect are only hinted at but this remains an enjoyable and meaningful piece of theatre with huge potential for evolving into something much bigger.



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