

LOVEPLAY

**The
Guardian**

by Moira Buffini (dir. Dan Jones) at Y Llwyfan Studio Space, 30th November - 4th December 2022

Witty, raw, and unmistakably tragic, *Loveplay* covers ten scenes depicting love, sex and the complications that accompany over a span of two thousand years.

Despite only appearing on the stage for a small slice of time, each character was as engaging as the next, allowing the audience to become invested in the moments of intimacy before moving on to the next. The relationships shown were completely different to one another, and yet depicted so clearly the ways in which modern love ultimately shares the same difficulties faced by couples centuries ago. This is reflected in the scenography, with an unchanging base set representing a Roman latrine transformed into housing, offices, a nunnery – one singular location occupied by the screams of the very first female character in the play, seemingly haunting the women residing there. Calloway (2022) stated that the usage of props and costume were focal points for designing the set to a standard that allows the audience to differentiate one time period from the next whilst keeping the building consistent and the scenes coherent (para), which mirrored the implications of the overall message in the play; that love as a concept has changed significantly over time, but the foundations and hitches remain age old.

I felt that Buffini has structured a play that could resonate with any audience, shrouding themes of rape and infidelity in comedy for a frighteningly realistic depiction of mistreatment in relationships and how these occurrences are received by society. It was, at first, incredibly uncomfortable to witness such dark parts of the play be told alongside sarcastic one-liners, but I believe it was Buffini's intention to unsettle the audience through light-hearted depictions of morally terrible scenarios, and this was executed perfectly by the actors.

I enjoyed the use of the performance space, being seated on the same level as some of the main action created a more engaging atmosphere and resonated with the content of the play, aligning with the theme of togetherness by physically drawing the audience closer to the characters, particularly in scenes that actually incorporated those watching the play. Typically, I find audience involvement awkward and slightly jarring, but it was carried out with comedic value for a suitable length of time and didn't hinder the performance in the way I usually perceive it to. Though I personally was seated almost front and centre, the audience extended round the sides of the performance space, which I feel worked incredibly well for quite a few parts of the story, especially the Shakespearean era trio. I can only describe this scene's argument as somewhat of a ping-pong match across a love triangle, and the audience were almost divided into teams, though it was clear that neither man was particularly worth rooting for.

Overall, I was enthralled from start to finish. A truly memorable performance of a unique story told unlike anything I've seen before.

REVIEW BY ELLA ROUTLEDGE FOR THE GUARDIAN

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Calloway, J. (2022) Interview with BA Set Design and Acting students of UWTSD, December 1st

Loveplay by Moira Buffini (2022) Directed by Dan Jones [Y Llwyfan Studio Space, Carmarthen, Thursday 1st December]