

Love Play Review

I went to see the third year BA Acting's version of Love Play. When I asked the cast, described as a "funky group of weirdos" by member Jake Varcoe, another member James Makepeace perfectly described the plot as "love and sex through the ages and how f*cked up it is." The play was a comedic delve into the history and roles of sex through different societies that have been prominent in British history.

It was performed with thrust staging, which made me feel more immersed in the play. The set also had projector screens to show what was happening on characters' mobile phones. I found this interesting, as it showed a hypothetical dating app which also served to bring us to our next scene. As the play was always set in the same geographical location, only one set was needed, and the set used suited it well. The scene changes were mostly done through dances or short character bits including the fictitious dating app which helped keep the energy and was a fun extra performance that I enjoyed.

There were scenes that involved themes of rape, prostitution, online dating, gender, sexuality, non-monogamy and religion, and the roles they played, and still do play, in societies. These are great critiques of how sex and love have been used and experienced in the past and, for some people, are still today.

The costumes helped to set up the eras in which the scenes were set. However, all actors had a costume of all black to set a tabula rasa in the scene changes. Whilst there was a practical aspect to this, as they were still acting in these costumes, thus still meant to be seen, it appeared, to me, to reflect the society of today; watching, living and loving but in different ways to how we have in our past.

The style of acting was more based on realism than theatrics, this made the gestures and voices flow quite naturally and was well suited to the humour of the play. It lived up to the ideal of "Everyone at every minute of his life must feel something. Only the dead have no sensations." set by Stanislavski (1936). The dialogue felt natural, as if it came from actual conversations of the time. The actors did an excellent job of portraying different characters and the struggles that they caused and endured throughout the play and differentiating the multiple characters each of them played. This helped to provoke the impact of the stories onto the audience.

However, there was a point where the pacing of a scene change, in which an actor was playing the character of primary focus in the scenes either side, was a bit too fast which left me confused on whether it was the same character played in an incoherent way or whether it was a completely new character. It was the latter. There were also moments where audience members vocalised at inappropriate points in scenes, which almost completely broke my immersion. The seating was also set up within the personal space of other audience members, which made me a bit physically uncomfortable and distracted at times.

Yet, overall, Love Play was a fun, energetic and immersive experience with great social and historical commentary and attention to detail. Each time I recollect it, I find more cohesion within the play and moments which went over my head.

Bibliography

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