

REVIEW: Master Class – ****

☒ Maria Callas, the US born Greek opera singer made her name as La Divinia in Italy, where she triumphed in bel canto operas by Donizetti, Bellini and Rossini. Insecurity about her weight and experience of love, loss and poverty shaped her eccentric and powerful character. Stephanie Beacham resurrects Callas in Master Class where she passes on her wisdom to three young and ambitious singing students while reminiscing on both her failed relationship with Aristotle Onassis and glamorous career.

Terrence McNally's script divulges the fragile character underneath Callas' solid exterior. Despite several supporting roles, Beacham's performance is dominating and inspiring in what could be a one-woman show. As ruthless, fearless and funny as Callas was in character, Beacham is in delivery. Her ability to maintain the accent absolutely flawlessly throughout the whole performance is astounding. To get round Beacham's lack of singing ability the play is set at the end of the singer's career, when she had lost much of her former talent, but we are treated to some original singing by Callas in the background.

Despite an understandable questioning of her mental stability, she presents a case for art and its ability to enlighten. Beyond the biography is a bigger conversation about discipline, training and professionalism. As drastic cuts are made to the arts, and priority is given to science and technology, this is a refreshing perspective. Conservatoire training for theatre in Edinburgh no longer exists, and has been replaced with more economically viable alternatives. Unfortunately, there is no master class for funding artistic endeavour; it is an arduous process and no-one can afford to be a diva.

Running at the King's Theatre, Edinburgh, until Sat 12 Feb.

Booking information available [here](#). Don't miss it!