

Review: You Cannot Go Forward From Where You Are Right Now, Traverse Theatre (****)



You might expect the writers of the successful 'A Play, a Pie and a Pint' lunchtime offerings to have rather modest ambitions in their 45-minute plays. Not so David Watson in this week's 1pm slot at the Traverse Theatre. He summons an enormous array of characters, sometimes bewilderingly diverse situations, not to mention live sound effects, to create a reflection on technology that is by turns angry, humorous and moving.

Using just three actors – the excellent (and adaptable) Rebecca Elise, Rachel Ogilvy and Jack Reid – Watson takes us to a talk radio station, a morgue and a downbeat pub, among many other locations, to listen in on seemingly unconnected conversations and witness everyday events in which technology is ever present. A daughter wonders why her father has bought her a guitar when the music she makes is electronic. A wife laments her husband spending more time with his laptop than with her. Police officers decide on their responses to an unseen emergency through the crackle of their walkie-talkies.

Watson's handling of the fragmentary structure is sure and confident, and his writing is remarkably idiomatic. Except for an enigmatic pronouncement seemingly by a representative from the world of machines near the end, the theme of technology emerges only slowly and is left largely implicit. Yet it's what binds the disparate stories together, and Watson is brave in allowing the tales to begin to merge, yet denying us a glib conclusion.

The three actors have their work cut out moving between the succession of bite-sized scenes, yet they bring the recognisable characters to immediate life. James Grieve's production places the nuts and bolts of theatre centre-stage, with props and sound-producing materials everywhere. If the play's central question – whether we rely too much on technology – is an obvious one, Watson's refusal to give a simple answer is the piece's strength.

***You Cannot Go Forward From Where You Are Right Now* is on daily at [The Traverse Theatre](#) until Saturday 23 October, 1pm.**