

Edinburgh Festival Fringe – REVIEW Adam Smith-Le Grand Tour ****.5

Title: Adam Smith, Le Grand Tour

Company: Compagnie Les Labyrinths (France)

Category: Theatre (14+)

Dates: Aug. 3-11, 13-18, 20-26

Time: 3pm

Duration: 1 Hour

Tickets: £10



An intellectual and entertaining journey through the life and works of Adam Smith, explaining how his ideas on economics are incorporated into modern society, but in a distorted manner. The show is presented in multimedia form with two actors who interact with the big screen. The background film includes vox pops, which show how the founding father of economics and liberalism is unknown or misunderstood.

Senior economics lecturer and actor Vanessa Oltra plays Marie, a petite brunette, whose position as a senior economics lecturer and with PhD in the subject lends authenticity to the message of the play. Actor Frederic Kneip plays Fred with a rough charm as the couple journey through Scotland. The hushed audience of varying ages sit in the darkness silently, looking very serious. They number around 50, with the theatre two-thirds full.

The show begins with cinema sized film spread across the whole stage beginning with a sombre cab ride to Canongate Kirkyard in Edinburgh. Smith is buried here, and the actors are seen carrying a bouquet of white roses.

The actors appear centre stage dressed in camouflage from head to toe, as if ready to take on a battle. They are set against the film backdrop of a jungle.

As the play progresses, the scenes cut to the beautiful grandeur of the cloisters at Glasgow University, where Adam was Professor of Logic, and also to his statue on the Royal Mile, to the hustle and bustle of busy city streets where people are questioned on his philosophies, but know very little in comparison with his influence. In one scene, Fred plays the part of Smith himself, attired in a bright red floor-length silk gown with wide sleeves, and a white wig. He goes as far as to adopt a Scottish accent, in a comedic moment. However Marie who plays stage director asks him to tone it down, due to it causing confusion. She may be right as the Scottish accent coupled with his natural French one is a little odd.

Their aim is to educate the audience about what Adam Smith's work actually meant, with citations and references to it. They contrast this to the way it is interpreted by the capitalist system and government to justify their actions in terms of economics.

Beginning the performance, Marie talking as if to Smith, and says: – "Do you know you are the founding father of economics, your invisible hand has crossed many continents...I want you to wake up now and tell us what you think of this. I warn you, economics is not to do with morals and philosophy any more...or human beings".

Fred also discusses this same idea, attired as Smith. He talks about Smith's attitude towards pleasure, passion and sympathy

for others. He says melancholy comes from deprivation of a loved one, through death, which is a terrible situation and injustice for mankind. As a result “we sympathise for the feelings of others” and feel love. “We feel much for others and little for ourselves...mutual love and respect”.



Smith's legacy is illustrated in the interview with the president of the Adam Smith Institute, which is a UK policy institute supporting the free market economy. The president is shown on film, the screen in two parts on each side of Marie at centre stage. He is facing away from her and sits passively. She speaks to him about the difficulties in establishing any link with Smith, and suggests his ideas were not just as simple as we may think.

The screen goes blank briefly and white noise appears as the signal is lost. She then asks the director if she can submit a citation from Smith, book 5, for the website, but the president shakes his head, even when she offers a substantial donation.



At the end, symbolising the real Adam Smith and his work, the play comes full circle as Marie and Fred, are seen at the cemetery, in order to pay homage and lay the white roses at his grand tombstone. They aim to obtain entrance through its iron gates, access to which proves to be restricted

The play is tightly directed by Gerard David, in a successful attempt to fit in important aspects of Smith and his legacy into one hour. It therefore moves at a fast pace. What could be perceived as dry and serious material is transformed into an entertaining, appealing and comedic hour incorporating the film footage.

Smith and his philosophies are therefore successfully and

vividly brought to life.