

Edinburgh Festival Fringe Review – The Trial of Jane Fonda ****



As the crowds file in to the rather regal Music Hall of George Street's Assembly Rooms, six men already grace the stage. A priest, a smartly dressed lawyer, a wheelchair bound amputee, a bar owner and a southern man engage in light, inaudible conversation and become comfortable with the stage. However, the most powerful performer is yet to arrive.

In the summer of 1988, a meeting occurs between an famed actress turned activist and the people of a small Connecticut town. As these passionate people try to blockade the actresses attempts to film her new movie in their town, she arrives to justify the actions that led these men to resent her so greatly.

Much like the people it presents, The Trial of Jane Fonda is an indelibly passionate affair. The play itself is crafted as a heated debate between the angered veterans of the Vietnam War and the actress who condemned her country's actions. The beauty of its execution is that there is no supporting cast – this is a production with seven determined lead performances, each with an opinion that doesn't influence the driving force of Terry Jastrow's powerful script. Each performer has their own moment of passionate reasoning, and it would be assumed that the intention of the production was to show Fonda as the true war hero. What Trastow does is create a Jane Fonda that is wholly flawed, subdued and lacking Hollywood pretence. She is a passionate woman, not a passionate movie star.

This is, of course, thanks to a riveting performance from the terrific Anne Archer. Her work here varies from, as mentioned

earlier, subdued, through to her striking portrayals of Fonda's speeches on radio and at war marches. In conversation with the men around her, she is quiet and well spoken. In her flashback sequences to pastimes, she mirrors Fonda's ardent bravado with a clenched fist and sharp tongued attitude. She is utterly mesmerising to watch.

Archer shines alongside a supporting cast that is just as impressive, It would be far too easy for The Trial of Jane Fonda to fall in to the trap of becoming a one-sided, condescending war drama, and the fact that it doesn't is testimony to its slick execution. This is theatre with a bold, bellowing voice.

[For tickets, head to the Assembly Rooms Fringe website](#)