

# Review: The Kite Runner at King's Theatre



Khaled Hosseini's acclaimed tale of guilt and salvaging redemption through the eyes of Afghan children, *The Kite Runner*, has had its fair share of adaptations over the years. Adding to a list that's already bursting at the seams, is Matthew Spangler's startling stage production. It arrives at Edinburgh's King's Theatre in the capable hands of the Nottingham Playhouse Theatre Company; soaring as it should.

*An Afghan refugee living in America looks back upon his life and the bonds he has made. He looks back to his time in Kabul with his childhood friend; flying kites over the city in competitions and developing a brother-like relationship; that seems to fall apart as easily as it came together.*

Scored almost entirely from the stage by percussionist Hanif Khan, the simplistic set up is immersive from the onset. Projections on to curtains and carpets mark location changes from Amir's grandiose estate and Kabul's cultured, dusty streets. Ben Turner's leading performance as an guilt stricken coward is wonderfully diverse, as he steps in and out of his character's adult and child self. He performs, for the first act, almost entirely alongside Andrei Costin – an actor who descends into the vital, vulnerable role of Hassan competently. Although a supporting character, his part is vital to the first act's complex, upsetting climax that leaves the audience shaking as the curtains fall for interval. It's a production rife with personality, in both the bright and morbid sense.

The second act takes on a significantly more rushed pace, moving from The Middle East to the tackily portrayed United States of America with such strong deviation it threatens to

take away from the emotional gravitas of the first. But as it develops, it saves itself from being swallowed by hyperbolic romanticism; ending on a teary, charming note.

As the curtain fell on the King's Theatre to rapturous applause, I heard the woman behind me speak a phrase that can either be interpreted as great praise or a true insult: "I've never seen anything quite so faithful to the book." Spangler's appreciation of Hosseini's talent means that it doesn't veer too far from the source material, instead soaring in its faithful, moving translation to stage. By turns shocking and choking in its emotion, The Kite Runner is a production you will be truly sorry to miss.



The Kite Runner plays at The King's Theatre until Saturday November 15th. Tickets are available from [EdTheatres.com](http://EdTheatres.com)