

Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2016 REVIEW: Wind Resistance *****



Directed by Wils Wilson. Dramaturgy by David Greig

4 August – 21 August 2016

<http://lyceum.org.uk/whats-on/production/karine-polwart-international-festival>

Karine Polwart's solo performance in the Rehearsal Studios, across the way from the theatre, is an enchanting and no less revelatory ensemble of many disparate themes brought together through the unifying medium of her music and songs. Together with back projection films of wildlife and natural soundscapes her particular focus relates to the magical September return of the pink footed geese to her beloved Fala Moor loch and peat bog. Her appreciation of these wonderful creatures goes way beyond the aesthetic or sentimental, inarguable though that is if one has similar experiences along the East Lothian coast around and about Aberlady Bay.

The science behind their skeins' flight formations is besotting, how they take mutual advantage of the wing created slip-streams to radically reduce the wind resistance. Clue is in the title there. She charming calls them 'Sky-born Socialist' and you can relish the delicious ambiguity of that at your leisure.

There is an aeons old expression taken from Welsh, which translates as 'Holding your breath in your fist.' Upon and around Fala Moor Polwart shares her secret, she reaches out her fist, opens it and blows. The whole of the sky reveals its

majesty. We learn of the medieval monks resident at Soutra Hill, in the North Borders, whose medicinal herb-lore was based on empirical practice, much of which still informs modern pharmacology.

Squatting on hunkers as she would say, there unfolds a fascinating explanation as to how recovered seeds were combined to provide both anaesthetic and childbirth care. Take care she minds us. Hemlock can also be a poison! Socrates choose it to end his life rather than exile from Athens.

Polwart circumvents Plato's classical account of his mentor's demise with the neat deduction that, 'Welll, he was a bit of a pain in the ar*e!' An accomplished story teller, multi-instrumentalist Karine Polwart has a wry and canny eye for self-effacement and irony. No tree hugging hippy her, though many of the latter's ethos was founded on a recognition that the Earth is finite, arrogance and exploitation terminal. 'Look at me with all my gear and things,' she quips.

There is an ambience of profound tactile sensuality with this performance and you really feel you ought to go out and give Nature a big hug. Her set list of songs draws principally on her original compositions together with arrangements of other artists' work. Inevitably, Burns' Now Westlin Winds features prominently.