

At the Lyceum – Cockpit ****

One of the best things about seeing something really good at the theatre is that it serves to remind you just how many good plays there are available to us here in Edinburgh. It also tells me that I should go back soon.



This afternoon I saw something extremely good in Bridget Boland's 1947 drama, Cockpit. And I am sure that all of my fellow theatregoers would say the same.

The play involved all of us no matter where we were sitting in the theatre. But I was sitting on the stage and felt very much part of the play from the word go. Yes, those people behind your muttering or speaking to one another actually were actors and not just theatregoers who had lost interest in what was going on.



In common with many other critics have seen the play this week I recognise that there is every reason to laud the playwright who wrote about Europe with such foresight. The single line about Brits not understanding Europe could have been written yesterday rather than 70 years ago. The struggle between all of the 'displaced persons' awaiting their journeys home at the end of the Second World War could be taking place now or even in two years' time. We are after all a Europe full of refugees, and who knows what the future holds.

It was a little frightening to be faced with actors scaling ladders to the first floor balcony, sitting astride the balustrade quite casually and climbing to the very highest point above the stage with fairly gay abandon.

There were moments of holding one's breath, but the best of those was a musical highpoint when song was chosen as the medium to bind all of the occupants of the theatre together. The soloist rendered us all spellbound and united as one.

The story continued but with a twist. With the possible threat of disease everyone was confined within the four walls of the theatre serving as a temporary stopping off point. This adds to the tension of the play and (since we were also at that point so confined) felt very real.

Bravo to David Greig for resurrecting this wonderful play and putting it on with the surroundings so perfectly set the minute one walked in the front door of the theatre.



Following the matinee performance there was a Talk Show, perhaps the first of many, with four guests who discussed not only the play but also the themes which it brought up.

They included Richard Demarco, Anjali Joseph, Dan Rebellato and Christine Bovill. It was a lovely reflective hour which mirrored the play itself, enhanced by songs from Europe performed by Bovill singing in English, French and German.

Talk Show will be repeated at various other times in the year with other productions. You can catch up with what was said this afternoon by logging onto the Lyceum website and listening to the podcast which will appear in the next couple of weeks.

Cockpit was directed by Lyceum Associate Artist Wils Wilson, known for her production of *The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart*.

Talk Show is an exciting new addition to the programme at The Lyceum. They are inviting artists, authors and thinkers to

come and watch a show. They will then take the stage themselves to share their response to the themes of the play with audiences. Expect, ideas, insight and stimulation through short talks, song, music, poetry and conversation.

Bridget Boland's *Cockpit* is set in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and written only a few years later in 1948, when much of Europe still lay in ruins. The great hope of the age was that the nations of Europe whether victors and vanquished could work together for a lasting peace. In this Talk Show guests talked about the hopes they hold today for the Europe of tomorrow (and the Brexit word was only mentioned once!)

Artistic Director David Greig talked with these guests:

- Richard Demarco, co-founder of the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh in 1963 He has been one of Scotland's most influential advocates for contemporary art through his work at the Richard Demarco Gallery and the Demarco European Art Foundation, as well as his professorship at Kingston University in London. Demarco has presented several thousand art exhibitions, plays, music, conferences, and various other performances, mainly in Edinburgh, involving artists from across the world. It is for his consistent internationalism that he was being successfully nominated as European Citizen of the Year 2013. This also followed from his exhibition "Scotland in Europe: Europe in Scotland" in Brussels in 2011.
- Anjali Joseph, author, was born in Bombay in 1978. She read English at Trinity College, Cambridge, and has taught English at the Sorbonne. Her first novel, *Saraswati Park*, was published by 4th Estate in 2010; it won the Betty Trask Prize, Desmond Elliott Prize, and Vodafone Crossword Book Award for Fiction in India. *Another Country*, her second novel, was published in June 2012. A third novel, *The Living*, will be published by 4th Estate in March 2016.

- Dan Rebellato, Professor of Contemporary Theatre at Royal Holloway, University of London, where he teaches theatre, playwriting, and philosophy. His books include *1956 and All That*, *Theatre & Globalization*, *Contemporary European Theatre Directors*, *Decades of British Playwriting: 2000-2009* and *The Suspect Culture Book* (2013). He has written eighteen plays for BBC Radio, including *Cavalry*, *My Life is a Series of People Saying Goodbye*, *Negative Signs of Progress* and was lead writer on the award-winning *Emile Zola: Blood, Sex & Money* for Radio 4.
- Christine Bovill, a renowned songwriter and jazz singer. She is a previous winner of the Glasgow Festival of Songwriting and her debut album, *Derby Street*, was selected as BBC Radio Scotland's Album Of The Week. Her sell-out and much acclaimed show *Christine Bovill's Piaf* has been performed at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe for the last 5 years and subsequently toured internationally. Christine recently completed her second album, arranged and produced by Glasgow's *The Strange Blue Dreams*, *A Roots Affair*, stirring in the tangle of vintage pop, chanson and Americana. Last year she launched her new show, *Christine Bovill's Paris* at the Edinburgh Fringe which garnered rave reviews.