

EIF – Assembly Hall at Festival Theatre

The Scottish premiere of this programme was advertised as essentially dance. So I was a bit surprised to find the dancers lip-synching and acting as well as moving as one would expect.

It was quite an innovative approach to telling a story, and involved quite a bit of humour.

However, there were two major flaws. The first was that the lighting design was all wrong. Use of shadow is certainly a valid technique to highlight specific moods and movements, but the dimness of the illumination throughout meant that it was difficult to discern all of the dance moves.

I came to see dance and I was deprived of much of it. The second was the pre-recording of the words the players were supposedly mouthing; this was not always crystal clear and, again, some of the story was thus lost.

The set made effective use of the large Festival Theatre stage, and the costuming was intriguing. And the harmonisation of the action by the dancers at times was breath-taking. Since the tale revolves around the Annual General Meeting of a group of medieval re-enactors fallen on tough times, the decision to continue or finish the group provides a conflict among them. As the meeting proceeds, the distinction between reality and myth becomes difficult to determine.

Much is made of the “siege perilous”, the empty seat at the mythical round table reserved for the knight who would one day be successful in the quest for the Holy Grail.

The dancers deserve high praise for the complex moves required by Crystal Pite. It is a pity that the flaws, which included being overly long, reduced the enjoyment so much. Tom Visser has much to answer for.

<https://www.eif.co.uk/events/assembly-hall> until 24 August.



PHOTO Maxime Ragni



Photo Michael Siobodian