

THE VOID

Online Magazine

Review: here is where we meet

June 22, 2013 Written by: Mark O'Neill

As the audience take their seats in the intimate Marlowe Studio, four performers trace frames of forgotten windows, peer in phantom cupboards in search of half-remembered items, ask themselves: 'Was it here?' For minutes they unseeingly circle each other, lost in wavering memories.



Described simply as 'a brand-new performance', *here is where we meet* takes John Berger's short stories of a spectral Lisbon as its jumping-off point, but is the brainchild of Accidental Collective, the Marlowe Theatre's first Resident Associate Company. The piece is structured as a series of elliptical scenes and anecdotes which mix, through poetic collage, exchanges from Berger's fiction with recollections from the performers' lives. The latter are spoken with almost squirm-inducing intimacy just inches from the front row, spotlight on the lone storyteller as they bear their soul as if to a dear friend at a night's end. Such communication is important in an hour which begins with the earnest declaration: 'You are not alone.'

The stage is cluttered with odds and ends. Lampshades, boxes, colour-drained rugs, a lone stepladder sit on a mishmash of carpet scraps and laminate flooring. Walled on three sides by white sheets, this room hosts all of the performance's comings and goings, acting as a visual representation of memory and a reminder of the traces we leave behind. Objects are gradually removed, as if the associated reminiscences have either been lost or at last found their place. Not even the set is safe. Forget breaking the fourth wall: Accidental Collective freely dispense with the first, second and third.

Working in tandem with this playful deconstruction are scenes of a writer (Kascion Franklin) talking to his dead mother (a nicely-judged Emma Darlow), conversing with an old friend, visiting an empty theatre full of echoes from its past. Moments are softly arresting, whether a plaintive violin or the projection of bygone photographs on a wall. These overtly fictional scenes segue into Daisy Orton and Pablo Pakula's personal monologues, and what could have been a repetitive device is saved by an unbroken feeling of sincerity.

While the stories told (fictional and otherwise) are specific, such as the plump, stub-nosed girl who each June brought her classmates strawberries, the piece is concerned with what we share: the misremembered details,

misplaced names, and connections with people long-gone, some of whom we may never have even met. When Orton shows photos of a great aunt performing at Chatham's Theatre Royal while reading an email from a man who knew her, we're reminded that the concerns of each life – however distant in time – remain strikingly similar. 'So time doesn't count, and place does?' asks the writer figure to his mother's ghost, and the question lingers.

The performers' anecdotes are sprinkled with humility and humour and the show moves briskly from one idea to the next, ensuring accessible profundity where a less talented group may have veered into sombre pretension. Owing to the disjointed nature, we also never know what to expect from minute to minute, and in this way the production resembles the dreamily ordered workings of a mind.

It's an exciting piece for the branches of reflection it inspires, shooting out in multiple directions as you ponder your own links to the past, and indeed to the future. Rather than leaving a definitive impression of what it is trying to say, here is where we meet provokes thought in the purest sense.

- See more at: <http://the-void.co.uk/theatre/review-here-is-where-we-meet-accidental-collective-501/#sthash.L7pjHOgR.dpuf>