

Fringe Review

Edinburgh Fringe 2009

Cocorico



Venue:

New Town Theatre, Freemason's Hall, 96 George Street

Low Down

Two French mime artists, physical comedian, Patrice Thibaud, and acrobat-musician, Philippe Leygnac, combine to marvellous comic effect. Thibaud's comic physicality together with Leygnac's understated impassivity and musical virtuosity sets up worlds of minute observation and set pieces that have the audience hooting with laughter.

Review

The stage is set: a piano, three white screens; a man carrying a suitcase wanders around inspecting the set up. So far, so ordinary – it's when Patrice Thibaud unpacks his suitcase that the fun begins. Slowly from out of the suitcase he unpacks his ventriloquist's dummy, except that this is no dummy, it is his sparring partner for the evening, Philippe Leygnac.

The pair are impeccably matched as the classic funny man-straight man comedy duo. Thibaud, a physical comedian is large and has a face fashioned from rubber while acrobatic multi-instrumentalist musician, Leygnac, is petite with a face that remains impressively impassive in the face of Thibaud's contortions – and Thibaud does things with his eyes, lips and chin that you would have thought impossible except for joke shop masks.

Out of nothing, with no words and very few props, the pair conjures up a whole world of illusions. Thibaud knows when to be economical with movement to convey a great deal and when to use overblown gestures to great effect. Meanwhile Leygnac, on a variety of instruments, plays ragtime, classical, jazz, film soundtrack with constant interruptions from his partner. How the two characters interact and play off each other with impeccable timing is one of the many delights of this show.

Thibaud is the overgrown child who tries too hard, who pushes the boundaries too far while Leygnac is the long-suffering buttoned down adult who suffers in silence until pushed beyond his limits. Their constant sparring and breakdown and resumption of relations mirrors the all too real interchange of human lives, and lift this show beyond being a series of sketches. With meticulous observation tempered with compassion, they parade before us our hopes, our fears, and our ridiculousness as human beings.

Thibaud is first a courier cyclist so adept at cycling he manages to multitask while cycling to side splitting comic effect. Then there is the spaghetti western – cowboys, Indians, arrows. The circus – lion tamers, lions, penguins. A wonderfully funny shadow duck play with a quack, quack refrain. Music and movement are immaculately matched – Leygnac at his piano provides the backdrop that allows a series of silent movies to be played out before us.

The set is simple but effective. The screens shift around and are lit to form the backdrop to many an escapade. They summon up celluloid France – think Tati, Hulot, Belleville Rendezvous – and beyond those shores to Stan and Ollie and Sergio Leone.

This is physical theatre at its best – it had me marvelling at their skill through my laughter. It was early in the show's run and the audience seemed conscious that this was a show that deserved a bigger audience and stayed on for several rounds of applause to show their appreciation. Laughter is so much more infectious in a crowd, even with a small audience the laughter rippled– hopefully the audience will grow and grow for this show.

Cocorico is a wonderful show by two performers both skilful in their own right but who together complement each other to provide a show without words that is both highly skilled and side-splittingly funny.

Reviewed by Clare Simpson 10 August 2009

Website :

<http://www.universal-arts.co.uk/>