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REVIEW: A DOLL'S HOUSE ★★★★★

September 30, 2016 // By: West End Wilma // [Plays](#), [Reviews](#) // [Comments are off](#)

This play, in this form, was first performed by the Royal Danish Theatre and the National Theatre of Oslo.

We turned up at the house of a nice suburban couple, who were expecting to host a party, and were surprised to find that they were performing, under the tutelage of a group of professional actors, a famously intense play.

We, the guests, marched into the house while the couple were still taking it all in. We were instructed to remove our shoes and sit wherever we wanted to in the sitting room, but leaving a space in the middle of the floor for the play to take place. The couple looked a little shell shocked but were game. It was clear from the beginning that the wife having to nurse her baby while acting was going to present something of a logistical problem, particularly when standing up and sitting down. However this minor problem was more than compensated for by the pleasure of having the baby there. And, the baby was obviously a born thespian as he seemed to always, well nearly always, burst into tears at the most apposite moments.

It was announced, much to their surprise, that they were going to perform A Dolls House by Henrik Ibsen. From that moment the performance crew took over instructing the couple in what to do and feeding them their lines. The professional crew comprised the excellent Cassie Raine, actress and founder of Parents in Performing Arts, Ben Samuels American actor/director and Jamie Zubairi, British born, Anglo Malay actor, artist and photographer.

The wife of the house played Nora, wife of Torvald. Torvald was played by her real life husband. Nora's friend, Christine Linde, was played by Cassie Raine who also directed Nora. Torvald's personal assistant, Krogstad was played by Jamie Zubairi who also functioned as Torvald's director. I know that this sounds complicated but if you take it bit by bit it's really quite simple. Honest.

The story was directed roughly along Ibsen's story line, but the husband and wife retained a degree of self-determination. As an example Torvald no longer exhibited his pathetic need to show off his wife and micro-manage her. As written by Ibsen, this is one of the play's important motivations. When asked what his wife looks best in he shrugged his shoulders and truthfully said "her jeans and white top", while looking at his wife for approval. Not a very dominant, Torvald like, response. Anyway she finally made an entrance in a very glamorous black dress looking beautiful. Obviously not chosen by her husband but more likely chosen by Cassie.

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Half way through, the story was paused, lively music was put on and we were all urged to get up and dance. This was not the proudest moment of the evening for me, because I dance like a granddad. Also thirty or so people doing a Conga around the ground floor of a semi detached house is fun but not elegant.

The main thread of the story concerns a decision that Nora made many years before, for the very best of motives, but felt unable to share with her husband. Now, years later, that decision has come back to bite her. When Nora is finally forced to tell Torvald what happened he is unable to demonstrate any empathy for her and tells her he no longer loves her for lying to him. She is then forced to consider his worth as a human being and finds him lacking.

At the end there were a few tears in the eyes of the audience, including myself. The production required many simplifications on the original play but the intimacy and the humanity more than made up for that. See it when you can, it really is unmissable.

Reviewed by Graham Archer

A DOLL'S HOUSE plays on various dates until 10 December 2016

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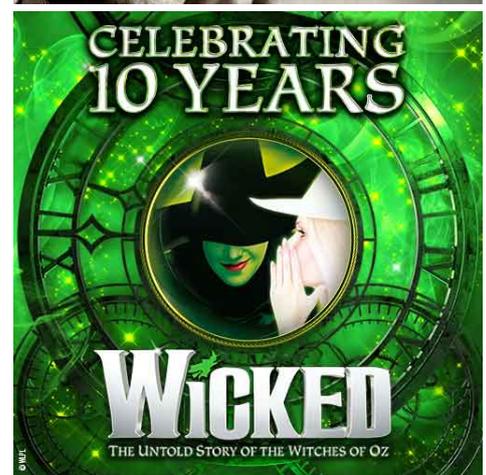
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