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A Doll's House review at a private home – 'a fresh and fascinating take on Ibsen'

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 Fix and Foxy's A Doll's House at private residence

Reviews (<https://www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/>) Theatre (<https://www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/theatre/>) by Tim Bano
 (<https://www.thestage.co.uk/author/tim-bano/>) - Sep 30, 2016

With its version of A Doll's House, Danish company Fix and Foxy has taken one of the most performed plays in the world and made it completely new.

In a real living room, a real couple have no idea they're about to perform A Doll's House. With prompting and explanation from three actual actors they live out the plot while an intensely voyeuristic audience, plonked on sofas and dining chairs, gawp on.

"This is acting, right?" tonight's Nora asks as actor Jamie Zubairi, playing Dr Rank, intertwine legs with hers. That's the particular strangeness of this production. V and J (withholding names for privacy's sake) aren't actors. The actual actors, Cassie Raine, Ben Samuels and Zubairi steer the couple into saying the right things (though that doesn't always go smoothly: long silences where V doesn't know what she's supposed to say prove very awkward).

They're a happy couple and the drama of the play's plot is alien to their daily lives. What do you do when you're angry J? "I don't really get angry", he replies softly. What would make him leave V? "I can't think of anything", she says, anxious at the very thought.

Fix and Foxy want to fuse fiction with reality, but in a strange way it's as far from the play as you could get. On one hand, minute details of marriage are magnified, the realism Ibsen would've wanted. Moments after Nora makes the momentous decision to leave, for example, she pops in with a giggle. The front door's locked and she doesn't have the keys. On the other hand, there's a colossal gulf between the fiction of Ibsen's play and the reality of this endearing couple on a weekday evening in south London.

The script left untouched on the table, this is both a hybridisation and a bifurcation, a big part of a production and, bloody Nora, it's a fascinating thing to watch.

Verdict

Despite some awkward improvisation, this fresh take on Ibsen is completely fascinating.



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