

The Mathematics of Longing

Arts News review by Jesse Chaffey, 8 June 2018

'The Mathematics Of Longing' by Suzie Miller (in collaboration with The Farm and The Uncertainty Principle) took some of the work of Isaac Newton, Stephen Hawking and Albert Einstein and gave it new life and expression in the form of theatre.

Newton's three laws of motion were personified in the stunning, stripped back setting of La Boite's Roundhouse Theatre. A singular raised platform with three sets of stairs was all that made up the set but no more was needed for the brilliant cast to pull off what they did.

Along with physical explorations of Newton's laws there were also moments of existentialism, breaking down the sheer mass of our world and the people who live in it. It made you realise how small we really are in such a huge universe but also how complex we are within ourselves... Each person on earth is so wildly different from the next.

It's important to mention here that theatre-goers must not be put off by that word in the title that can scare some – mathematics. Though its skeleton is built from the findings of mathematicians and physicists, the show expertly moulds these complicated observations into raw, theatrical scenes filled with expression.

As both performers and co-creators, Kate Harman, Todd MacDonald, Ngoc Phan, Merlynn Tong and Gavin Webber were able to authentically display a fully realised sense of familiarity with the work that translated beautifully on stage. Each of them brought a unique quality that contributed to the success of the final product.

Each of the production elements of 'The Mathematics Of Longing' were also factors that had a hand in making the show look, sound and feel as great as it did. Set Designer Ross Manning nailed the set which was beautiful yet simplistic enough to explore the depth and detail of the show's content. Composer and Sound Designer Ben Ely created great moments of emotion with his contributions of music. Ben Hughes lit the Roundhouse Theatre in a way this reviewer has never seen before. Rotating fluorescent tubes of light hung from the roof on corners of the stage and each step of the three staircases was lit up. It was so bright that no face in the audience was unseen. Absolutely breathtaking. It's worth catching this show based on its attention to detail in the production elements alone.

'The Mathematics Of Longing' was an hour-long existential realisation and exploration crafted intricately by gorgeous lighting, intelligent writing and a talented cast to pull it off. Though the idea of mathematics and physics may seem tedious in theory for some, the show proved beyond measure that it can be transformed into something beautiful, magical and – most importantly – genuinely comprehensible.

★★★★★