

The Review Theatre

GLASGOW GIRLS CONCEIVED AND DIRECTED BY CORA BISSETT

Presented by the National Theatre of Scotland, Theatre Royal Stratford East, Citizens Theatre, Pachamama Productions, Richard Jordan Productions Ltd in association with Merrigong Theatre Company, Australia

If you try to find Drumchapel High School on Google Maps, you will find that you also get told that it looms near the bottom of the academic league tables. The one internet review beside it says that it's a 'shite skool'. So much for internet reviews, so much for our abilities to measure what often matters more. I live and work a mere mile from Drumchapel High and I never knew a thing about the Glasgow Girls, the bunch of schoolgirls who decided that they wanted to defend their friends — who were asylum seekers, under threat of deportation.

Gallus and tender, this is the show to see if you have ever felt powerless, fatigued by bureaucracy, or alone in your struggle. The humour is acute: we are told it's not going to be a show with political drama and glamour but more a show that is 'more about photocopying'.

Cast left to right: Amaka Okafor, Frances Thorburn, Dawn Sievwright, Roanna Davidson, Patricia Panther, Stephanie McGregor, and Amiera Darwish.



Credit: Simon Murphy

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There are jokes about Edinburgh, football, and IRN-BRU, and audience-appreciated impressions of Tommy Sheridan. Then there is dancing: dancing, which is witty and zesty and often, especially in the mash-up with choreography drawn from multiple cultures, moving.

The lightness of touch does not detract from the depth of the story. The girls' teacher, Euan Girvan, has a classful of children to teach English as a foreign language to, and allows himself to be swept up with his pupils' desire to do something useful. And then there is Noreen, whom GPs up and down the land will recognise, as a 'wee wimmin' whose personal modesty disguises her enormous strengths: dependability, courage, and a quiet moral outrage turned to practical use. She'd keep watch for the dawn patrols of the Home Office deportation teams, and if they were seen at 5 am, driving down with handcuffs at the ready, would phone her asylum seeker neighbours in the blocks of flats and tell them to leave immediately.

I felt proud to recognise Noreen as the kind of unsung national heroine we all know the like of. But I'm embarrassed, not just about not knowing of the girls' campaign, but also by the kindness and generosity of people who were willing to do so much despite, often, not having much themselves. We are each other's neighbour. I will try to do better.

Margaret McCartney,
GP, Glasgow.

Glasgow Girls ran from 31 October to 17 November 2012 at the Citizens Theatre, Glasgow, supported by ScottishPower, and will be presented at Theatre Royal Stratford East, London in Spring 2013.

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NATIONAL TREASURES

Three new plays that recently opened at the National Theatre should appear on your to do list for 2013. Lucy Prebble came to prominence with *Enron*, in which video projection, geometric lighting, and choreography were blended with naturalistic dialogue to track the mechanisms of the financial scandal surrounding the bankruptcy of the American energy company. Again working with the director Rupert Goold, Prebble employs similar techniques in *The Effect* to depict a tightly-monitored trial of a new antidepressant in normal volunteers conducted in a pharma company facility. Two subjects, played by Billie Piper and Jonjo O'Neill, are attracted to each other, but are their emotions drug-induced or 'real'? And who is on placebo, and who is on the active drug? And whose functional MRI scans are we looking at? Do antidepressants work anyway, and what lies beneath the surfaces of the buttoned-down trial monitor and the plausible pharma medic? It's worth finding out.

Alan Bennett is a real national treasure and his new play *People* is, as someone sitting behind me pronounced, 'very Alan Bennett'. It is, as always, engaging, witty, and mischievous in its portrayal of the decay of a stately home and its inhabitants, beautifully played by the wonderful Frances de la Tour and Linda Bassett. De la Tour — Lady Stacpoole — has a gay archdeacon

Billie Piper as Connie and Jonjo O'Neill as Tristan. THE EFFECT by Lucy Prebble. A co-production between the National Theatre and Headlong.



Photo: Ellie Kurtz

The Review Exhibition

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sister who has taken it for granted that the National Trust will rescue the estate, but her ladyship has other ideas, which include using the house as a pornographic film set. There are plenty of memorable dotty moments and some great one-liners, as well as a sustained attack on the National Trust and a very funny scene where 'Reach for the Thigh' is shot on a four-poster bed, but I'll leave it to you to decide whether it all comes together in the last scenes.

The real treat, which kept me absolutely engaged for 3 hours, is *This House* by James Graham, which is set in the parliamentary whips' offices in Westminster in the mid-to late 1970s. The Cottesloe is done out as the House of Commons, and we sat on the opposition front bench. The cast is marvellous and Philip Glenister (yes, he of *Ashes to Ashes*) as the labour deputy chief whip and Charles Edwards, as his Tory opposite number, are superb throughout, particularly in the very moving ending. The battleground is the rejection of the pairing arrangements for voting in very closely-run debates by the Tories after a probably inadvertent breach of the agreement by the Labour whips. This resulted in MPs on oxygen and with post-operative dressings still in place being hauled in to the House to maximise the vote on key motions. The fast-paced action and riveting dialogue is peppered with famous events — Heseltine swinging the mace, John Stonehouse faking his death, Norman St John Stevas preening and mincing, and that woman from Finchley confounding them all. Kill for a ticket.

Roger Jones,
BJGP Editor, London.

The Effect is at the Cottesloe theatre until 23 February 2013, *People* is at the Lyttleton theatre until 2 April 2013, and *This House* is sold out and re-opens at the Olivier theatre on 23 February 2013. All at the National Theatre, South Bank, London.

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BRONZE

Royal Academy of Arts

15 September – 9 December 2012

In the Main Galleries, Burlington House

The first object that visitors see sets the tone for the whole exhibition. It is the haunting figure of a dancing boy, caught in the timeless, graceful act of a twisting body. It was created by a Greek sculptor in the 4th century BCE, and was found by fisherman working off the coast of Sicily in 1998. The curators have brought together a collection of bronzes covering an astonishing range of time and space. The chronological range span is from a Danish chariot of the sun, dated to the 14th century BCE, up to contemporary sculpture, including a Louise Bourgeois spider; the geographical from Europe, through Africa including some stunning heads from Benin, religious figures from India, and ritual vessels from China. All pieces are made out of a metal alloy of copper and tin that celebrates simultaneously the triumph of human technology and the artisanship

Dancing Satyr, Greek, Hellenistic period. Bronze, with white alabaster for eyes, H. 200 cm Museo del Satiro, Church of Sant'Agidjo, Mazara del Vallo Photo Sicily, Regione Siciliana — Assessorato Regionale dei Beni Culturali e dell'Identità Siciliana, Dipartimento dei Beni Culturali e dell'Identità Siciliana — Servizio Museo Interdisciplinare Regionale Pepoli Trapani.



© 2012. Photo Scala, Florence

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© Louise Bourgeois Trust

Louise Bourgeois, Spider IV, 1996. Bronze, 203.2 x 180.3 x 53.3 cm. Collection The Easton Foundation, courtesy Hauser & Wirth and Cheim & Read. Photo: Peter Bellamy.

of the caster: one astonishing figure was created specifically in order to show off the caster's skill.

If the only purpose of the exhibition were to show technical skill it may not be of much interest; instead, combining the technology and craft with artistic genius has created objects to make your hair stand on end with their beauty. My personal favourites were a wonderfully lifelike head of King Seuthes found in Bulgaria, a strigil of great simplicity whose handle was in the form of a naked female figure, herself holding a much smaller strigil, and a collection of tiny exquisite pieces, some cast from nature and used as gold weights in West Africa. They are only personal: I would challenge anyone to have toured the exhibition and not come across something that made them gasp in wonder. But taken as a whole, the exhibition was quite simply a celebration of the human race showing both its commonality and its diversity by means of a shared language.

David Jewell
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