

Theatre in London

Two weeks of Theatre, History and Bangers and Mash
28 December 2004 – 9 January 2005

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Response Journal

Wednesday, 26 January 2005

A Note on my journal with a mind into history...

While in London, a place I had never been before, I had a strange sort of home-coming. I have always been rather idly interested in history, but I had never pursued it

nor had I felt particularly regretful at not doing so. I have, however, always had a long

Wednesday, 28 December, 2004
"Fix Up"

This play seemed to me, after some thought, to be primarily concerning the transmission of information from one person to another, from one generation to another, from one tradition to another. In most cases, there seems to be an urgent need for communication, a yearning by one or both parties to say something or assert something, and this necessity is thwarted or complicated in some way. By engaging historically both socially and personally, it set the tone for the entire trip.

Every character in this play is dealing with their own histories. The most noteworthy strugglings with this issue are Keve's, Alice's, and Carl's. Carl was lifted out

Wednesday 28 December, 2004
"The History Boys"

Reiterated countless times during this play is the notion of distancing one's self from history, the goal being that with objective distance will come the ability to analyze, if not understand. Young Irwin arrives to whip these underachievers into shape for their O-levels, and brings with him this new method of engaging with history. A poignant scene takes place when Posner, the Jewish student, is horribly offended at the use of the Holocaust as an essay topic, as it is so personally upsetting to him. To write about it, old

~~Heaterman, Irwin, and Posner, all three, offend Irwin. Irwin, in turn, offends~~

longer, having lost his ability to teach and nurture these boys in his own way. Irwin

even Hector's best student wrote about the Holocaust for his O-levels. Irwin, it seems,

Thursday 29 December 2004

If any play we saw had historical relevance, it is this one. The entire production itself felt to me like a memorial, like as a spectator of this play I was paying witness to

~~... this feeling was most profound~~

Thursday, 29 December, 2004
"By the Bog of Cats"

Hester Swain's character is like a dark sun around which all the other characters revolve in this play about fate and family. Personal history plays an important role in this

unaware of the events following are foretold and prearranged. The sense of impending

Even Hester's murder of Josie is done swiftly and fervently. But her strange dance with death, a balladic joining of forces through the knife, is slow and choreographed and gracefully final. It is the culmination of a fulfilled destiny.

*comment on the set,
especially the caravan, and how
it functions. Do more with differences*

Friday, 31 December, 2004
"Sleeping Beauty"

The Young Vic's production of "Sleeping Beauty" at the Barbican theatre established itself from the outset as being an atypical telling of the classic fairytale. Our narrator is Goody, a mischievous, ageless fairy who is currently looking for a prince to rouse Sleeping Beauty from her century-long nap. This seems straightforward enough,

as she attempts to keep her newly-established family safe, are the most pertinent updates made to this age-old story.

The production's staging supports this confusing morally-relative environment as well. The centerpiece of the stage is a multi-tiered platform that becomes a sloped, sometimes rotating landscape for the characters working on, above and below its surfaces. All of the blocking takes place in concentric circles around this structure, with the characters running into and out of our view around this enormous obstruction. The surfaces of this construction are also able to shift, creating intersections where there weren't any just moments earlier, and characters meet spatially over and over again to create a sense of inescapability within this world. It is also enormously entertaining for children of all ages to watch two characters run away from each other, in circles, only to bump back into each other only moments later.

While this was an unconventional retelling of "Sleeping Beauty," ^{but} it was, nonetheless, a fairytale, and it adheres to some of the major tenets of fairytale telling as such. Beauty is stripped of her parents and forced to recognize and weather an uncomfortable reality: Nobody is perfect. Through this awakening, she matures as she navigates the confusing forces of the world. She becomes self-reliant, a fiercely protective mother, and remains married. The play also contains a hilarious send-up of fairytale morality in the "Just say no/ Just say yes!" numbers. Beauty's parents' last message to her on her birthday is to say no to every temptation. This is both an age-old fairytale moral, and simultaneously a modern catch-all phrase that is taught to children ~~from a very young age in response to every behavior that they will at some point become~~

synthex

everyone is singing "Just say yes!" further reinforcing the need to recognize the complexity of every person and situation.

Goody embodies the modern notion of people as both good and bad for the audience, as she remarks when Beauty condemns her for cooking the babies, "I'm not *all* bad." This line encapsulates the intricacies of Goody's morality, as it was my own impression to this point that she was on the contrary, just not *all good*. She makes mistakes. She gets jealous. She *farts*. She also questions her moral position and engages her own self-doubt. This made her incredibly interesting to me, and she was in my

~~the most interesting of all the characters that is~~

Friday, 31 December, 2004
"The Mandate"

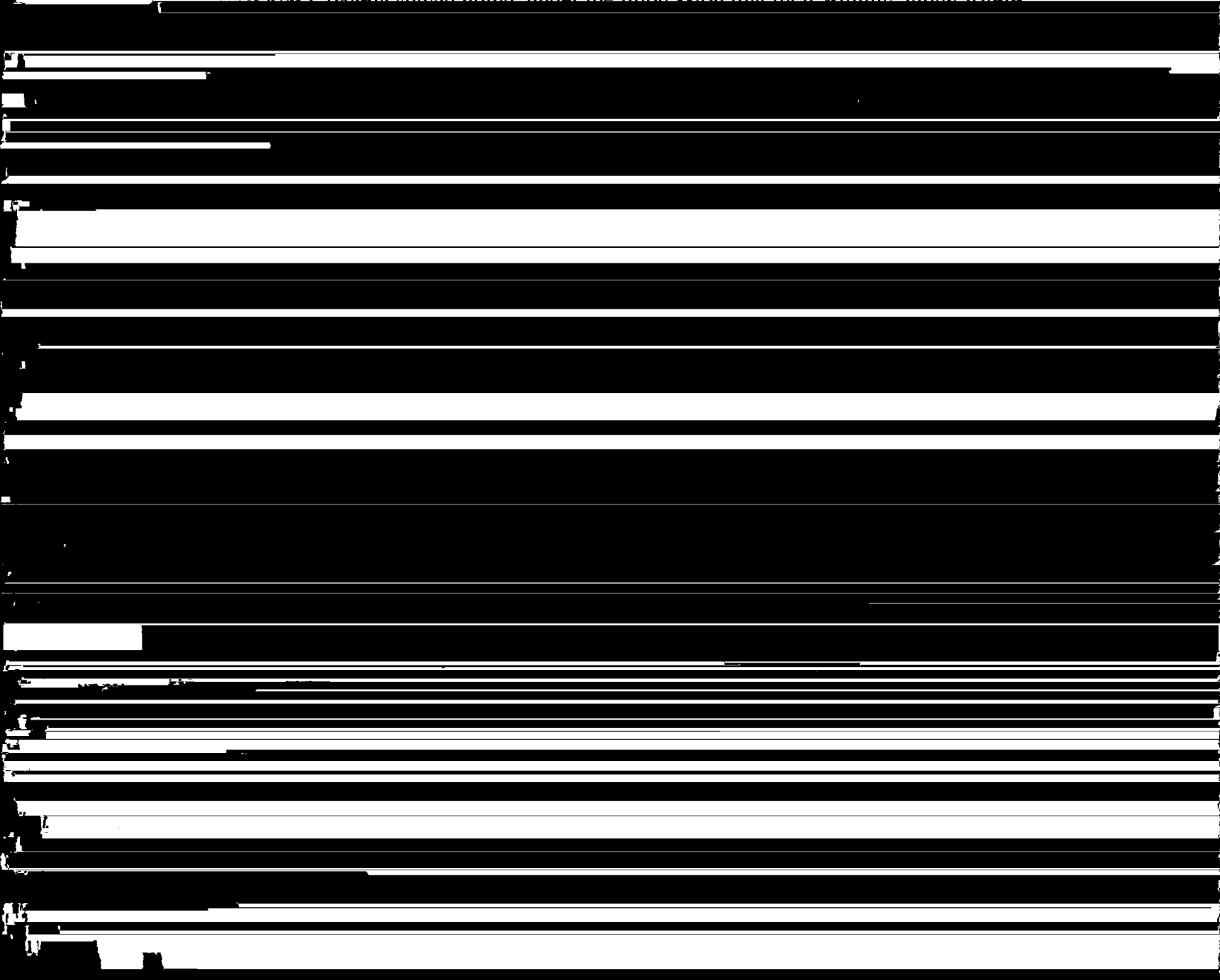
This political satire was enormously entertaining. Its use of physical humor was priceless as was the indispensable capitalization upon comedic timing. This play was

... clearly had strong opinions regarding

Send

pretty obvious that they do not have any political convictions at all, other than appeasing the current party to preserve their livelihood.

Although this play was immensely historical, it continues to have resonance in the current global environment of political unrest. It seems that everyone has something to say in criticism of America and of our President, but many are not doing anything to back up their words. Our trade continues to thrive internationally, every single modernized country in the world is dominated by our media, and domestically, there was an incredibly vocal outcry of Bush prior to the 2004 election, but where were all those votes
...stayed home, under the impression that their whining alone would



Saturday, 1 January, 2005
"His Dark Materials I and II"

...not only a splendid visual accomplishment and

of Knowledge of Good and Evil. As she is swept up in this epic adventure, Lyra

While asexual friendship dies Lyra discovers a more nuanced and mature love for Will.

Lyra quests to resurrect Roger, taking her to the land of the Dead, but she cannot remain

happen upon the Authority and unknowingly and quite innocently kill him out of a desire to help him. This, it seems, was Lyra's fate, but it grew out of the choices she made as she grew into a young woman.

... please in

The complex story of "His Dark Materials" was gripping and provocative. The staging of this immense production was also enormously gratifying to witness. Nowhere

Sunday, January 2, 2005

"Romeo and Juliet" performed by an Icelandic Acrobatic Troupe

We discussed at length the process of translating words to actions, of representing spoken language with physicality. While I was enthusiastic to see this production, I did not anticipate the performance to be so powerful. They used spectacle to heighten the

awkwardly smothers Tybalt, with both sets of feet on the "ground" of the stage, with the same hanging sheet that Tybalt wielded with a deadly meticulousness. This positioned Romeo's crime as one of passion compared with Tybalt's unfeeling act of malice. ✓

Of course the whole play is building towards the final deaths of Romeo and

such moods and appease the masses' desire for base entertainment. This Paris, with his neon tuxedo and completely over-the-top master of ceremonies attitude, proved just the ✓ distraction and release of tension that was needed. Furthermore, the lavishness of his lounge singer act coupled with his ignorance of the impending tragedy make his numbers even more entertaining and bittersweet. The comedy and joy serve to heighten the

excellent point

As a result, the audience is pulled from one extreme into the other with such force and

Monday, 3 January, 2005
"Festen"

... of ... *Christian's twin and closest friend* ✓

... *in time for* ...

Running water sounds and her carefree giggling serve as a soundtrack that could be real or that may be resonating through Christian's traumatized psyche. That the audience can hear it does not clarify this, but it is not a distinction that has any far-reaching implications in any case. The important facet of those sounds is that it ties Christian to the point in time when all of the deception began, as he struggles to make his family aware of what really happened all those years ago, what continues to happen in his mind and what put his sister in her grave.

Excellent description

Tuesday, 4 January, 2005
"Aladdin, a Pantomime"

Participating in this production was enormously entertaining. Initially, I did not know what to expect from a show structured to include the audience so much, but as the event got underway, and the children all around us knew what to do at every turn, I began to take my cues from them and shout and boo and hiss with the best of them. During intermission, a man turned around and spoke to us, presumably because we were obviously American and somewhat unfamiliar with the Pantomime format. He was with two young sons, probably ages five and eight, and both of them were enjoying the program enormously. I asked him how they both knew exactly what to do at every turn.

the production was watching the actors maneuver the fabulous set pieces in each scene.

A huge box opens to reveal a tiny castle in the distance and the pulling of a single cord transforms the distant castle into an enormous structure in the foreground. Aladdin falls

and the tiny castle is transformed into a glittering

Tuesday, 4 January, 2005
"A Doll's House"

It was interesting to watch a play performed in such a small space as the Playhouse theatre, but I was largely unimpressed with the performances therein. Having seen the vastly nuanced and thoughtful portrayal of Nora by Juliet Stevenson only months earlier, I expected more from the amateur cast. Admittedly, I expected too much.

Wednesday, 5 January, 2005

"Romeo and Juliet" by the Royal Shakespeare Company

53. 1.1. In the City of "Disappeared Juliet" that Lives

ceremonial in its design. No liberties were taken in any respect. This, however, had the unfortunate result of showcasing performances that were without a complexity of emotion or believable sentiment. The actors were playing at levels of feeling, in some places even reading the meter of the text. Instead of being an engaging example of traditional Shakespearian drama, it was flat and uninventive, which was disappointing.

This blandness was most obvious in a comparison between the culminating death scenes in the RSC's version and the Acrobatic version. In the RSC's production, Juliet's body is a burden to Romeo. He struggles to pull it up onto the stage, and her body's lifeless weight pulls him to the ground. The difference is remarkable in the Acrobatic interpretation of this scene, and the contrast is quite literal. Juliet's body, although not yet roused from its drugged sleep, is anything but a burden to Romeo. They dance across the stage in their final moments together, as he gracefully removes her from her tomb.

Thursday, 7 January, 2005
"Two Gentlemen of Verona"

During our historic trip to Stratford-upon-Avon. I marveled that I was walking

betrays his friend and forsakes his fiancé. It all begins why he lies to his decrepit father and is sent away to Milan. Had he not lied, he would have remained in Verona and left his integrity intact. As it goes, however, he must tell lie after lie to reach what he

when?

Thursday, 7 January, 2005
"Julius Caesar"

In another splendidly interpreted Shakespeare play, the Royal Shakespeare Company found an opportunity not just for creative storytelling, but for vastly significant political commentary. This was also among the most historically pertinent plays that we saw while in London. "Julius Caesar" was a historical play at its inception half of a millennium ago. So oft performed with togas and olive wreaths, the RSC modernized it to a contemporary age of fascist regimes and totalitarian media machines. This is a provocative and exciting retelling of an ancient story of political maneuvering.

well put

It is a very intelligent reading of the text. One of the most noteworthy moments of this is during Marc Antony's eulogy for Caesar. Read into the rhetoric of the original

... "Brutus is an honorable man." The

W / P ~~it seems like~~ Dick may be one such figure head: he seems at times to

this trip, in fact, consider the problems inherent in legal and political systems: "Two
Gentlemen of Verona" "The Mandate," "Simply Heavenly," even "Journey's End" and

Friday, 8 January, 2005
"Grand Hotel"

The resident voice of the Grand Hotel is Dr. Otternschlag, who is present on the stage for what seems to be the entire duration of the production, watching the goings on from the sidelines. He lives in the walls, he sees everything. He "will stay one more

He "will stay one more

1. In the Grand Hotel, both of them think for a moment that they have found

their dreams' fulfillment, but the death of the Barton deeply affects each of them. The

money that is proven to unravel lives. The conclusion of the play only happens when Otto and Flaemmchen realize this and look for something else. Ironically, however, it is only when Otto is financially free after hitting it big in the stock market that he can take Flaemmchen away from Grand Hotel and all of the perils of high society.

comment on her



Saturday, 9 January, 2005
"Simply Heavenly"

This... presents itself as one that is carefree and escapist in nature.

It makes no claims to political or social agendas other than entertaining^{ment}. The *tion*
undercurrent of racial inequality and social injustice bubbles just beneath the surface of
this show for much of the first act, lending the show a multifaceted depth, like the
~~gorgeous~~ poetry of Langston Hughes. It makes its point here and there, subtly and in

dancing and vocal solos. The balloon was burst, however, by Jesse's grumpy, lanky

~~... Jesse's grumpy, lanky ... This show would have been~~

~~... I need these lines with bitterness~~

Saturday, 9 January, 2005
"The Producers"

"The Producers" was an excellently positioned play within our curriculum. After two weeks of theatre, we are privileged to watch a play that dramatizes the process of putting on a production from concept to review. Further pertinence lay in that Brooks'

them if he can take the armbands with their coats, and they become suddenly aware of