

JUNK JUNK JUNK

Barefoot actors meandering freely around the studio, chatting to the audience; actors tearing cardboard boxes apart tooth-and-nail and painstakingly piecing them together again; a building, inescapable cacophony of noise and overlapping stories: JUNK JUNK JUNK is a show like no other.

With a focus on the wastefulness and materialism of the theatre industry itself, this budget less production rolls immersive theatre and ecological awareness into one chaotic, unmissable experience.

It was not what anyone seemed to expect. This production took place on the floor of a large studio using in-the-round staging, giving each audience member a unique vantage point. More strikingly, it had no distinct beginning or end. The only prop was a large cardboard box, and lighting depended solely on torchlights from mobile phones. In this bizarre but exciting approach, the success of this production has to be attributed to its actors.

Through seemingly unchoreographed movements and free-flowing dialogue, the actors were able to achieve a fascinating balance between solitary and group interactions. One actress's experimentation as a shadow-puppeteer transformed into joyous comic relief when Niamh Smith used her own shadow to attempt to 'lift her up.' Interestingly, there was an acute focus on numbers. The performers, somewhere amid their various anecdotes, frequently offered a contextless number into the air. Each number found its context through conversation: Lucy Doig requesting numbers in a re-enactment of 'Countdown,' the amount of bricks in the room, how much energy is used manufacturing a single pair of jeans. Alone, these figures were useless. Together, they created a worrying picture, reminding us of the sheer volume of items produced in the world, with no easy answer for where all this junk ends up.

Each actor was charmingly creative, unafraid to 'yes *and*' their fellow actors, following new leads - one of which led to Dylan Rowe giving a startling piggyback ride. These unplanned moments of collaboration were a delight, and communicated a message of unity: that, alone, our actions can be incomprehensible and amount to very little, but, combined, bring about a remarkable effect, and even positive change.

I would argue that there is room for improvement in this piece. As a piece of immersive and explorative theatre, it was undeniably a success. JUNK posed questions, inviting its audience to search for answers in amongst the giddy disorder of the play. The performance built nicely in terms of pacing, particularly as the lights turned off and the performers broke unspoken rules, such as addressing the audience. However, there did come a point when the pacing failed to build any further and would have benefitted from further nuance or even a greater sense of focus. Despite this, the show was not lacking - rather, it has untapped potential to cross even more lines. I would be excited to see where else this production could go, considering the remarkable talent already shown. This performance both figuratively and literally crossed lines, resulting in a show that felt just as much like a conversation with the audience as it did between the actors themselves.

"Excuse Me, Can I have a Leaf out of that Book?"

The Beautiful Absurdity of 'Junk Junk Junk'

There is no definitive beginning of this performance. The cast join you on your walk upstairs, chatting openly. The conversation of the cast adopts a more performative overtone as the audience's chatter fizzles out.

The water bottles onstage, the use of the DSM as an indicator of timing, the mobile phones as torches - there's nothing concealed about this performance. The influences of Forced Entertainment were particularly prevalent in how unapologetically outward the show was. Hannah directly turning to me after taking a drink and saying, "Minty, It's Minty. I forgot it tastes Minty," was a lovely instance of humour highlighting the theatrical intimacy maintained within the room.

Interactions overlapped and games were played between performers. There is a beautiful sense of play. A solid area of development could be in refining these games played between performers. Games performed under duration need clear goals in order to engage the audience. When searching through a box with a torch, show you are looking for something specific. This way you have the audience's investment in achieving the goal, regardless of whether it is accomplished or not.

Dialogue is fragmented and hardly delivered outwardly. One has to work to listen to what the performers are saying. Many of the segments included word play and Lucy Doig's ramble about the fluctuations in the price of a plastic bag of chips was a fascinating moment. Themes of commercialism, materialism and the deterioration of language ran throughout the play and I would be excited to see how these themes could be extended.

A thrilling moment was when Dylan Rowe lifted Hannah Harding; her legs over his shoulders, holding her feet and carrying her on his back. This difficult lift to attempt radiated trust between performers. I held my breath every time Dylan took a hand-off Hannah's feet to gesture to the audience. There was something exceptionally tantalizing about this section, which was further juxtaposed by Dylan's bumbling ramble and Hannah's repeated, "Bloops".

The elements of physical theatre were scattered and intriguing. When movement enters the realm of difficult or dangerous even, the audience grow enthralled. More moments of weight play, more lifts and more contact improvisation would certainly elevate the show.

As for the sustainability of the production, it was self-contained and efficient. The shadow play up the wall of RS2 with phone torches was certainly resourceful. Extending these themes into the dialogue would amplify the intentions of the theatre company as minimalism is already regarded as relatively economical.

Another striking moment was when Dylan ripped open the central box, which I believe was accidental, completely tearing through the audience's light mood. I would be intrigued to see more of these instances of stillness and silence in the performance.

'Junk Junk Junk,' presented itself far more as a charming piece of walking art rather than a play. It forced one to be perceptive to the bodies in the space and to truly listen to what was taking place. I am utterly fascinated to see how it develops.

Ripped Cardboard, Ripped Childhood

The depleted childhood of 'Junk Junk Junk'

The Studio Production 'Junk Junk Junk' from the Student Workshop ran on the evenings of the 28th and 29th of October can certainly be defined as one of a kind. It is not the main question 'what role can theatre practice play in sustainability?' the major feature of this production. As a matter of fact, many are the performances, especially in the last decade, that went down the path of free-budget productions, relations with scavenging, space and objects surrounding us.

What strikes us the most are the "*in-use definitions*" implied throughout the whole show. For "*in use definitions*" Ayer indicated 'a symbol... showing how the sentences in which it significantly occurs can be translated into equivalent sentences. In this sense, we can individuate our in-use definition in the undercurrent relations between the idea of a neo-liberal, late capitalist and multinational-ruled market-society, and the consumers of this market-society immersed in what could be defined as a *present dystopia of wastage*.

The translation of such a definition is easily readable in the childhood-adulthood contraposition underpinned throughout the whole performance. Since the beginning, the small talks going on between the performers, the childish games and sounds present us a fully grown-up kindergarten. The performers are at the same time children and adult, playing this trembling game of knowledge and ignorance wherein greed lies as the obnoxious and invisible background. In this fluctuating and never-ending exchange of balance, the idea of multinationals' exploitation slithers in every action an image undergoing in the show. The ripped cardboard stays as a Symbol, an unheard, ridiculed but visible voice: waste has become our true creed, and greed is its cult.

The ripped cardboard goes in parallel with the idea of a ripped childhood once broken you cannot put it back together. What Junk Junk Junk tries to communicate to the audience is that the childhood displayed is not only a role game to define the relation between multinationals and consumers, but the true notch of the conversation that, still, is ignored and casted aside. A conversation where the interlocutors are merely our most profound and most loathsome contradictions. What Junk Junk Junk is shouting towards our faces is to stop "looking for our piece of paper" and start doing something meaningful, avoiding the covering of our wrongdoings with environmental words. Just like the cardboard laying on the floor at the end of the performance, here we are as tired scatters of people, ripped children, deprived of their role in changing the world.