

This is to certify that

“Expectations”

has been awarded a

FringeReview Theatre Award

For outstanding theatre

At the Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2010, Pleasance Dome, Edinburgh, Scotland

The Review

Low Down

Based on the author's own experience, Expectations explores places we would rather not go. A first hand account of the complexities of carrying and caring for a severely disabled child on the one hand, contrasted with another couples' decision to terminate a pregnancy where the foetus is discovered to be severely disabled on the other.

This play is heart-breaking and heart-warming, powerful and poignant, morally-challenging and morally-uplifting, utterly engaging and painfully difficult to watch and listen to. Its a play where the central character doesn't appear, but is ever present. And when the play is over, you feel privileged to have seen it. It really is that good.

The Review

Kristina Branden Whitaker has written a play about having a baby with a difference. A very big difference. After nine months of first-time parents' expectations and hopes, optimism and fears, their baby is born very severely disabled. Unable to survive without the most intensive medical care, the baby is at the centre of the play, but is only heard not seen. Inevitably, the child comes to dominate and define each parent, and over time to challenge their relationship as a couple. In a contrasting parallel story, a decision to terminate a pregnancy where the same very rare condition is present has equally profound consequences for the would-be parents.

It is a painful, brutally honest play, whose writing confronts some of the most difficult and challenging issues any parent can face. It is superbly staged, with clever scene shifting and use of props and technology to produce as mesmerising and gripping piece of theatre as you will get on the Fringe this year. The staging cleverly enhances the impact of this quite extraordinary piece of work. The acting of the four main characters is uniformly strong. It is intense human drama, acted with power and pathos. From the very first moments, the piece grabs its audience and holds its attention in an hour of concentrated brilliance. Its hard to watch. Its impossible to look away.

It is not easy theatre. There are no gags and quips. It invokes deep concentration and emotions, only occasionally lightened by moments of real comedy. And this powerful human drama is played out in front of an audience as engaged as any theatre piece is likely to be this year.

Raw, honest, challenging writing is combined with an elegance and intelligence which carries the piece. It avoids the pitfalls of sentimentality and mawkishness. It doesn't shy away from hard, difficult issues, but rather confronts them full on. It is all the better for so doing. It is utterly gripping and beguiling, and the audience showed its deep appreciation at the end with some of the most sustained applause you will hear this year.

It is a real privilege to see Expectations. It isn't easy. In fact its very hard theatre going. But you will be rewarded with one of the best hour's drama you will see. It really is that good. It deserves all the plaudits it will inevitably win. Go see it, and be transfixed and possibly transformed by the experience. *(Review written by Mike Fitzgerald)*

Signed *Pawlsdy* Editor

Date *12th August 2010*