

Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2016 REVIEW : Finding Joy *****

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John Kennedy

By the gentle closing of its first night the audience embraces the poignant nuances of this show's subtle title.

This breath hushing performance has masked actors mime the incongruous meeting of two very different but equally disparate souls each facing an existential crisis. An elderly lady on the threshold of dementia is 'adopted' by a rough diamond scaly hoodie as she wanders confused by a busy road. Her ever busy carer (or maybe it is her daughter) rather disapproves of this fledgling friendship. Through a series of episodic vignettes accompanied by beguiling musical interludes and ambient natural soundscapes, we begin to appreciate there is a mutuality of reliance and dependence.



[The play is exquisitely witty, sentimental without a moment's faux kitsch contrivance, and deeply moving.](#)

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The masks are mute but are infused with intuited expression, the crafty guile of the creators is to feed both on archetype and stereotype and then allow the characters expressionism to explore and disabuse these caricatured, often subversive visual tropes. If there are themes, and of course there are by the Darby & Joan tombola load, they are of quintessential humanity, the defining dignity of memory. Spoiler alert! If you have shared with an elderly loved one their eventual fading into old age Finding Joy will embrace your heart and give reminiscence true beauty. Be ready for the mesmerising episode where the old lady shadow strokes her childhood dog at the seaside. No CGI could ever capture that. Be prepared to allow yourself to cry. And four people, some fabrics and fashioned foam, plus a fluffy toy dog – can do that? This is why theatre matters as much as it did in ancient Athens and since. Finding Joy has a short run at The Fringe and you cannot go home and face your loved ones with any excuse whatsoever for missing it. Have some compassion for your future memories. An absolute Fringe must!

The show is suitable for 12 years and upwards.

Finding Joy is funded by Arts Council England and Worcestershire County Council

Assembly Hall Venue 35

4-14 August 2016 at 16.30pm