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Thelma Good reviews for www.edinburghguide.com Cabin Pressure

The play is underway but the house lights are up? The actors are inside not one, but two proscenium arches and their voices and mannerisms are those of a period drama. And the fourth wall seems securely in place. The audience continues to tell their doings to their companions, watching the stage at times to see if anything might really be happening yet. The hubbub slowly dwindles and then as the house lights go down even the most persistent talkers finally are quiet. Then the scene starts again and the audience begins to laugh and engage with what is happening on stage.

This is a fascinating play about us, the audience and them, the actors and what happens when we share the same air in a performance. Far better than any dry academic lecture about theatre, this production excited and delighted the audience when I saw it last night and underlined the fact that theatre is not theatre if there is no audience. We are as necessary as the actors. As the play went on many approaches to theatre were explored and excerpts from plays, Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and Coward's *Private Lives*, were encountered during the journey in the play. The fourth wall was breached and the proscenium arches, showing clearly what differing effects theatrical conventions and acting styles bring to a production of a play.

One of the lines in the play is "theatre is an active culture, we don't lean back, we lean forward." Anne Bogart of SITI, New York, who conceived and directed the ensemble enabled a production process with devising work and a forum of audience members which has resulted in brilliant teaching for us. Will Bond, Ellen Lauren, Kelly Maurer, Barney O'Hanlon and Stephen Webber are the ensemble who play with the audience in delightful and enlightening styles, tremendous actors all of them.

By the end it is not clear where the audience is, or the actors; are we watching their performance or are they watching us? But we are in the theatre where everything is possible, the play has a line, "Do least on stage so that the imagination is released." There are some plays I have experienced this Fringe and Festival which could do with having this advice. This is not one of them. If you have ever been an audience member, this play is about you and me, how we are active in the production even when sitting down in the auditorium. Theatre is a place of magic where anything can happen, where there is danger and where there is no such thing as unstageable stage directions, just unfortunately stultified unimaginative directors or academics. Go along and see our selves as the others, the actors, see us, it's a great theatre essay which you'll understand effortlessly.

On till 22nd, matinee 22nd also

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