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TOTALTHEATRE

Lu Kemp: One Thousand Paper Cranes

in Reviews | by Sarah Davies

Tags: Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Lu Kemp



Constructed with as much care and attention as the complex origami within the play, this visually stunning piece explores the real-life story of Sadako Sasaki, a twelve year-old Japanese girl who fell terminally ill in 1955 as a result of radiation sickness from the Hiroshima disaster. Hope unfolds in the form of Sadako's best friend Chiziko, who becomes transfixed with the legend that

constructing 1000 origami paper cranes will grant the maker their greatest wish. The play explores this endeavour, focusing on the process far more than the end result, echoing the programme notes' premise that the journey 'carries its own gift'.

Production values here are slick, with accomplished performances and excellent use of multi-rolling. Real highlights are the innovative use of props to create visual images and the skilled way in which the two adult actors (Julia Innocenti as Sadako and Rosalind Sydney as Chiziko) effectively capture the nuances and personalities of their twelve year-old characters. Indeed, each character in this play has a strongly defined need, and the stakes are raised higher and higher throughout, thanks to some clever and engaging writing and a well thought-out structure.

Lu Kemp's direction effectively captures the character's physicality and the use of space and **proxemics** is a strong point. I would have liked to have seen some of the key images and moments mined a little further for maximum effect, particularly the notion of the stage being flooded with paper cranes and Chiziko's reaction to her friend's demise. However, in all this is a strong piece in its tone and its use of humour and heightened characterisation to tell a moving and poignant story with theatrical panache.

www.1000papercranes.weebly.com

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Sarah Davies is a Drama Lecturer based in Kent, specialising in Playwriting, Directing and Contemporary Theatre. She has a Masters degree in Drama and is a graduate of the Royal Court Theatre's Young Writers Programme. Sarah also works as a writer and director and is New Writing South's Squad Associate. Recent published work includes short stories (including in Through the Line Anthology and Transmission Literary Journal), reviews (Total Theatre), and articles (The Tall Person's Magazine). Her plays include Nigel the Dark Destroyer, Bingo-ing Crazy and Humpty Smith.

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