

Lovesong - a review

As I first walked into the Mill theatre I knew I was in safe hands, from the gorgeous photo display in the foyer, to the clean lines of the set framing a large screen at the back of the stage, and the all-important bed on the stage left side. I loved the set-in fridge - what a delight!

The play is deceptively simple, charting a couple's marriage as they embark upon life in America, using flashback and movement to emphasise various significant moments in their lives - the highs and lows; the joy and despair; the alcoholism of him and the near-miss affair of her; not to mention the ever-present though (at least initially) unrevealed illness from which she is suffering.

It was beautifully staged, with a clever mix of mimed and real props, and carefully choreographed movement kept the action flowing as their story unfolded. Of special mention has to be the Bed Choreography, a particularly poignant piece of physical storytelling as the couples morphed and crossed the timelines, literally birthed and consumed by their marriage bed. Such detailed work must have been incredibly difficult to rehearse and yet the performers made it look seamless and almost effortless. Huge congratulations to the choreographer - and the bed designer.

There was a lovely blend of sound and image; I was really impressed by the care and attention to these elements of the production. The projections and music were very effective and set the scene with photographs of, for example, the tree in the garden, as well portraying the passage of time via images and music of the day. In fact I would have liked to see more.... And I loved the use of sound effects, particularly the sound of water as the actors mimed washing their hands! The lighting cleverly picked out the different areas of the stage and scenes, not easy when actors are jumping back and forth across the decades and in and out of the house... And the costumes, hair and make up styling were spot on.

All four actors gave beautiful performances, and the emotions and relationships were incredibly believable. The younger couple were utterly delightful, which made their inevitable decline all the more tragic. I loved how the older Billy observed his younger self across the years - and he gave a sublime speech towards the end of the play as he tells Maggie how he will cope (not cope) after her death.

Congratulations to all for a well-created, finely tuned production. I loved it.

Ruth Sullivan