Reviews for Oh No It Isn't by Luke Adamson

Review of Oh No It Isn't at The Hope Theatre - LondonTheatre1

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Oh No It Isn't

From time to time the showbusiness columns, whether in print or online or both, will have a juicy story about backstage shenanigans, or perhaps an actor losing their temper and getting irate at someone in the audience messaging an acquaintance on their mobile phone. Or perhaps somebody considered by certain columnists to be well-known enough to be singled out in coverage about a show 'dries up' and can't recall their lines. But what if someone really oversteps the line, finds themselves saying something so incredibly out of order, in public, that their agent rings up pretty much as soon as they find out and 'drops' them.

Despite a clash of personalities apparently known to enough people working on a pantomime production of 'Cinderella', and a request by Mr Chancery (Luke Adamson) – for some reason it's last names only for these characters – to be given a separate dressing room to Mr Worth (Robbie Capaldi), they must share a dressing room for the panto season. It's a painful experience for both parties, especially as simmering tensions find their way onto the stage – or do they? It's never quite clear, given that the duo play the panto title character's 'ugly sisters', whether there is in-character sibling rivalry going on or if there is a 'real' (as it were) argument in progress.

Oh No It Isn't, aside from being a good opportunity to present selected scenes from a panto irrespective of the season in which the play is performed, including costumes in all their colourful glory, provides an insight into how the show must go on. It is 'an' insight – that is, it never claims to be the definitive guide to what

happens in a shared dressing room; other performers will have wildly different experiences.
Some of the punchlines, whether ‘on’ or ‘off’ stage (the dressing room chairs and tables are downstage left and right, and the panto stage is upstage, if you can envision it) are rather inappropriate for an actual panto. No matter – the publicity for the show is quite clear it is not suitable for children. But the strength of the script is not just in put-downs and tongue twisters: there are healthy doses of observations about the entertainment industry and its ruthlessness. I liked a running theme about scenes and dialogue that could be revisited and revised but are trotted out year after year at the panto simply because it’s not a proverbial train smash.
Late on in proceedings, there’s a wry remark about ticket prices becoming too steep. Ticket sales for this particular panto were apparently down slightly on previous years, though I personally suspect profit margins may have been slightly higher on account of the increased prices. Much of the rest of the audience liked an aside about a bottle of red wine from Aldi that “goes well with red meats and cheeses” – is the phrase well associated with Aldi’s own brand wine range? (I genuinely don’t know.) The brief performance was both entertaining and insightful, energetic and a tad exhausting to watch. It had my full attention from beginning to end. I haven’t laughed so much in a single show for quite some time. An excellent production.

Review by Chris Omaweng

OH NO IT ISN’T!
Hope Theatre, Islington, 13-14 May 2018
“Art imitating life – even in panto!” ★★★★

As a pantomime stalwart I was intrigued when the press release for this show pinged into my in box with a note from the Editor saying, “this one’s right up your street”, and it was. Joined by my Bessie mate, who just happens to be a judge for the Great British panto awards, we sashayed into The Hope – which is a great pub – full of great anticipation. One of the best things about pub theatres is the intimacy that the audience shares with each other and with the performers. This show is about two ugly sisters appearing in the season’s last performance of Cinderella. The Hope is tiny, even by pub theatre standards, and the costumes hung up at the entrance ready for the performers to change into and out of throughout the show took up almost as much room as the stage area. At one point one of the sisters, played by Robbie Capaldi, put his wig under my chair, which was so close to my seat that our feet touched as he sat at his dressing table. Personally, I love the fact that I could see the

greasepaint slide off the performers faces as they became increasingly drenched in sweat generated by energetic routines combined with being in a very small space. This was almost a metaphor for the disintegrating relationship of the sisters on and off stage, which was played with a juxtaposition of energy and pathos and was certainly exacerbated by the abundance of fur fabric frocks and synthetic wigs.

This show was written by one of the sisters, Luke Adamson, who is one of panto's emerging young talents. It was great to see such enthusiasm displayed for a genre that's so often reserved for children and their grandparents at Christmas time, on a Monday evening in May. Panto and the stories behind it, such as that of Cinderella's dysfunctional step family, is so relevant to everyday life – even if it's presented in such a loud, effervescent, and rambunctious way (now, there's a panto word for you!). The Hope aims to present new work such as this on Sunday and Monday nights, when the main show isn't playing. Do try to catch Luke and Robbie and other such emerging performers and writers – whether or not you enjoy audience participation, as we all did during last night's show. A little bird tells me Luke's already a hit with panto aficionados, having already been nominated for an award for his performance in Jack and the Beanstalk at York's Theatre Royal. Oh no he hasn't. Oh yes he has!