

'Still It Matters'

This triple-bill of short pieces by Nikki Tomlinson, rotozaza and Rajni Shah Theatre really exploited the peculiarities of Hoxton Hall's space.

Tomlinson's saw/sore/soar dance solo played to three sides of the auditorium, starting with movements that made the floor both a backdrop and a dance partner, and culminating in charges up and down the length of the space. Rotozaza's 'OOFF' took us via the bar into a studio room with a performance area marked out with numbered squares. Two unrehearsed performers struggled to obey instructions bellowed from onstage speakers: 'speed walk to A2', stick your leg out the side, circle your foot and blow kisses. Repeat when you hear this sound'; while gym-bunny Mimi coached, bullied, and then was bullied by them. The piece was played hard and loud.

Rajni Shah's 'The Awkward Position', however, stands out as a piece of immense vision and subtle beauty. Trying to describe it to a friend, I said it was as if you'd been rehearsing a very strange play for days, then had a nightmare about it. 'The Awkward Position' would be the play of the dream of the rehearsal of the play. It sits between performance and rehearsal, between dream and the bored reality of waiting. A figure (Sally Marie) takes a long slow walk along the edge of the stage, while two others (Yvonne Naughton and Dimitris Papakyriazis) helter towards each other from opposite sides of the stage, criss-crossing just when you think this time they're going to collide. 'House lights' - we're suddenly aware of the director's presence as she speaks from the sidelines. From then, the director's presence is a subtle disturbance: at once motherly and dictatorial. There is a delicate play in the performers' obedience to her as she nods or quietly directs them from one episode to the next. 'I want to speak', says the male performer and a long silence ensues. There is an anti-duet, in which the couple tug rather than guide each other, drop rather than support. When two performers deliver an impassioned speech about political engagement - in a complete deadpan - (while a third slides slowly off her chair) we sense that the 'awkward position' also describes our place in this world.

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