

Greenwich and Docklands International Festival review – 'eclectic and exciting'

Posted By *Dave Fargnoli* On Jun 28, 2017 @ 2:00 pm In Theatre | [Comments Disabled](#)



After more than two decades, the Greenwich and Docklands International Festival is still going strong, with an accessible, eclectic line up of exciting outdoor events. Clustered close to the Thames, you can find everything from acrobats, to interactive installations, to roving street performers in elaborate costumes.

On a vacant riverside lot, Belgian collective De Roovers stage a tight and timely production of Arthur Miller's **A View from the Bridge** (★★★★), which feeds on the perceived tensions around immigration. Robby Cleiren's exhausted Eddie Carbone is emotionally, and often physically, isolated from his family and community, roaming the space with hands buried in pockets. Wouter Hendrickx' blithe Rodolpho appears nonplussed as he is accused, revealingly, of both assimilating too much and too little.

The play fuses marvellously with its setting, the towers of Canary Wharf serving as a fine stand in for the New York skyline. The cast pause often to gaze wistfully at planes

wheeling overhead, to wave at passing ships. Gulls take flight in the shocked silence following the play's final confrontation, like doves at a funeral.

Silhouetted against the same spectacular backdrop, Soeun Kim's **The Border of the Water; The Song of the Wind** (★★★★) is an ephemeral, night time movement piece grounded by the consummate skill of its performers. Part of the ongoing Korea/UK 2017-18 initiative, the show features gorgeous aquatic choreography accompanied by skilled musicians playing traditional instruments – and a hypnotic electric guitar. Inside a cylindrical water tank bathed in pastel coloured lights, two performers contort themselves with supple grace, exhaling sugary clouds of bubbles as the music accelerates from elegiac to edgily discordant. As one simulates drowning, the other kisses mouthfuls of air into his lungs, artfully reflecting on our relationship with the elements which sustain us.

In a programme packed with family friendly shows, Bristol-based Fine Chisel have crafted something special in **Flip, Flap and Fly** (★★★★), the touching tale of a baby bird learning to spread her wings. Performers George Williams and Maia Ayling are delightful as the over-protective bird and his over-eager chick, respectively. Inviting their audience into a nest of woven branches, they tell their simple story with tremendous warmth, engaging gently with young audience members, treating the adults a little more robustly to fine comic effect. Communicating in a language of trills, whistles, and wordless melody, they add depth to their song with saxophone and acoustic guitar.

When Ayling finally leaves the nest, it is a moment of pure theatrical joy, as she races, singing and cartwheeling exultantly, out and around the surrounding gardens. Nearby festivalgoers are drawn in by her exuberance, even as the show concludes – which is all you could want from a festival which so reliably rewards curiosity.

Verdict

Inventive acts provide thrillingly diverse perspectives on familiar spaces in Greenwich's vibrant annual festival

Production

Production | The View From the Bridge / The Border of the Water; The Song of the Wind / Flit, Flap and Fly

Venue | Greenwich and Docklands International Festival

City | London

Starts | June 23, 2017

Ends | July 8, 2017

Authors | Arthur Miller/Creative Group SUM BI/ George Williams and Maia Ayling

Director | Soeun Kim/Tom Spencer

Design | Stef Stessel (A View From the Bridge)

Lighting | Bert Vermeulen (A View From the Bridge)

Cast includes | Robby Cleiren, Sara De Bosschere, Wouter Hendrickx, Luc Nuyens, Sofie