

British Theatre Guide

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2:22 A Ghost Story

Danny Robins

Runaway Entertainment

Cambridge Arts Theatre

5–9 March 2024

A plot with many holes in it and some irritating screeching noises did not detract from what was an ultimately entertaining night out at 2:22, *A Ghost Story* at Cambridge Arts Theatre as part of a national UK tour. There are one too many jump scares in this production for my liking, yet the audience seemed to get what they had bargained for when coming out on an appropriately chilly night in Cambridge.

This was a really fun and engaging performance. It felt as though you could hear Danny Robins's voice coming through in the same way that it does on his podcasts, *The Battersea Poltergeist* and *The Uncanny*. The dialogue is contemporary and witty, often fast-paced, and presents many theories surrounding ghosts, fear and the tricks our minds play on us. There are some moments of hysteria where the dialogue gets lost within a shouting match between the believers and non-believers, but this is made up for with some moments of comedy and acerbic put-downs which draw audible responses from the audience.

I was particularly impressed with Anna Fleischle's set design, originally conceived for the London performance but one that has toured well, with Fleischle managing to create a real mix between contemporary and traditional, which is so central to the crux of the story. The set also allows for the characters to regularly interact with the outside world, with the dark garden being occasionally brightly lit by the outdoor security light suddenly leaping into action.

The use of Lucy Carter's lighting design also cleverly depicts a modern kitchen / living room, whilst also portraying warmth and coldness as the story becomes more spooky. The digital clock displays running slowly towards the vital 2:22 time also add to the levels of anticipation as we watch and wait for that moment to arrive. This aspect of the performance is helped by an often subtle use of sound design from Ian Dickinson, helping to build tension. There are some particularly irritating moments, and I am still at a loss to explain how the constant loud screams were allowed to stay in this production as they grate rather than enhance the experience of the audience, as do the aforementioned screeches of foxes which are far too repetitive.

There are no major celebrities in this production following the involvement of Cheryl Cole and Lily Allen. We are treated to stars of the small screen with actors from *Casualty*, *Emmerdale* and *Hollyoaks*. The Wanted vocalist Jay McGuiness is perhaps the most well-known after a stint in *Strictly*, and his performance as Ben is particularly strong. In some ways, this may have been a positive thing, because this was a strong cast who could portray their characters without being judged as famous singers-turned-actors, for example.

Ultimately, this play will be judged on its ability to tell a good ghost story. People will come and see this because they want to feel that adrenaline one feels when scared or engaging with the

'unknown'. In this sense, I can see why this production has toured so successfully and has the potential to give something more traditional such as *The Woman in Black* a run for its money.

Reviewer: [John Johnson](#)