

British Theatre Guide

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Immortal - Coming out Alive

No Fit State Circus

Recreation Ground, Mumbles Road, Swansea, and touring
(2004)

Theatre at its best can fire our emotions and help us to attain a richer understanding of life and of how we fit in to the general scheme of things. This is what No Fit State Circus achieves.

This show is a combination of physical skill and intellect. Being a part of the promenade audience is like being drawn in to a strange surrealist world where recognisable images weave their magic around you and take you with them on journeys of vivid imagination.

You soon realise that this is no ordinary circus. Yes, there are circus acts (no animals): tumblers, acrobats, jugglers and skilful ladies on the flying trapeze, and much more, but here we are looking at a life cycle acted out before us.

We are constantly being reminded of the beauty and the power of the human frame and the strength of the human spirit. The ropes and swings we see all around us are not simply the apparatus of the circus performer but they are the obstacles we all face in life.

Each act becomes a drama and with the help of evocative music and lighting effects we are part of that drama. These are beautiful moving pictures, with a vivid symbolism that touches the core of our very existence.

A man and a woman scale a rope. They reach a height and through their mutual strength and skill they weave together in a moment of sheer tenderness. No words, and yet all the romantic words ever written could not have expressed man's capacity for love more than this.

A group of people are held in a giant net, or is it a web? They are trapped and have to struggle to escape. If this were a painting each of us could put our own interpretations on to it, and the same with this performance. We each bring our own experiences to this show and we find ourselves looking into mirrors because what we see is a true reflection of our own life's experiences.

A woman dressed in an elaborate black mourning dress spins above our heads and her blank expression reminds us all of the pain and loss that bereavement brings to us all.

In a moment we are surrounded by grieving characters and as they touch and move amongst us we too are carried along on a strong wave of emotion. We are allowed to contemplate our own destinies for a while and then we see an image of hope, an embryo of life to come. The circus of life has no end.

This is rich, powerful stuff and overwhelming in its diversity of ideas. It makes you laugh, it makes you think, and it has the rare quality of moving you to tears, which is a tribute to a well constructed piece of theatre.

Being part of a promenade audience was interesting, although at times frustrating with my view obstructed on occasion by tall, forceful characters who liked to stand in front of everyone else. I particularly felt sorry for those in wheel chairs. However, obstructions don't last for long as the audience is skilfully moved around as the focus changes to various areas of interest.

The show runs at Swansea's recreation ground on the Mumbles Road until the 15th August. It then transfers to Pembroke Dock on the 20th to the 30th August.

Reviewer: [Tony Layton](#)