

British Theatre Guide

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a profoundly affectionate, passionate devotion to someone (-noun)

debbie tucker green

Royal Court Theatre Downstairs

28 February–1 April 2017

debbie tucker green, who has written and also directs this new work, has never believed in making life easy for her audiences.

Instead, she writes challenging works about society today that reward effort and concentration. In the case of this new play, the experience is also physically as well as psychologically uncomfortable, since the only way to get a good view of the actors on their reverse-thrust walkways is to revolve on tiny backless bar stools, hoping that there are not too many tall people blocking the view at any time.

Part of the puzzle on this occasion might lie in a title which presumably any competent crossword solver would translate into LOVE.

The next issue is the identity of the five characters. The script/programme helps little, as those that do not recognise the actors try to work out who A, B, Man, Woman and Young Woman might be, let alone their relationships.

The opening 40 minutes, i.e. half of the running time, features a series of short conversations between a woman and her partner.

These feature everything from birth to death, love, sex and some serious power-broking arguments, all delivered in naturalistic language of the kind that most couples will instantly recognise. By the end of this section, sadness has become a major topic, drawing the best from Lashana Lynch and Gershwyn Eustache Jnr (respectively A and B).

The next quarter-hour comprises a whiny argument between nagging Meera Syal (Woman) and the hen-pecked Garry Beadle (Man) that once again may feel all too familiar to many viewers.

By this point, close to an hour in, viewers will still have no idea of the connection, if any, between the two parts that they have seen.

All begins to fall into place in the final 20 minutes after Man removes his top and seemingly sheds a few years to begin an encounter with Shvorne Marks (Young Woman).

Initially, they could be a particularly affectionate father and daughter but the cooing and gentle arguing slowly identify them as partners.

The pair also help to fill in the backstory, not only revealing their links with characters in the earlier sections but also shedding considerable light on what has gone before.

By the end, a sketchy but cleverly constructed portrait of love under pressure emerges, most visitors probably leaving the theatre relieved at making sense of seemingly obscure and abstruse material that comprises a fairly slight tale that can be both mysterious and moving.

Reviewer: [Philip Fisher](#)