

British Theatre Guide

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Anders Lustgarten Plays: 1

Anders Lustgarten

Bloomsbury Methuen Drama

Released 6 April 2016

In his introduction, Anders Lustgarten sets out his stall, explaining that he is a political writer who has strong views about inequalities in society. These come out powerfully in this series of plays.

A Day at the Racists

A review of [*A Day at the Racists*](#) can be found in Contemporary English Plays.

If You Don't Let As Dream, We Won't Let You Sleep

Anders Lustgarten's Royal Court main stage debut is very much a play of two halves. The first act introduces readers to a varied group of characters.

Together, their experiences present a critical and highly unfavourable vision of British society today using satire as a vicious weapon to attack the status quo.

Amongst others, there is a government department selling out to financiers who are willing to make a turn on any transaction, even rape statistics.

A lonely widow is forced into penury by her refusal to pay an electricity bill, while a highly educated African immigrants faces the kind of racists at the centre of the first play in the collection.

The result is simultaneously deeply depressing and very funny.

Part Two, i.e. the second act, features a series of activists who try to set up The Court of Public Opinion, an attempt to put capitalism on trial.

While the characters may be recognisable and the underlying idea promising, it doesn't quite have the speed, variety and vibrancy of the earlier section.

Black Jesus

Gabriel or Black Jesus is the name of the title character, a Zimbabwean who could be seen as a freedom fighter, a terrorist or a torturer.

He is certainly a bad man as earnest Eunice discovers when she arrives to interview the incarcerated terrorist on behalf of the country's Truth and Justice Commission.

In a short piece, the characters explore the nature of southern African post-Apartheid society as it attempts to recover from decades of inequality.

On this occasion, nobody is quite what they seem. Gabriel is both a brute and an educated, thinking man. Government minister Moyo could fit that description just as well, while Eunice has not only a hidden past but is having an affair with her married, White boss.

By the end of *Black Jesus*, viewers/readers will have plenty of food for thought and a better idea of Zimbabwean society in the 21st century.

Shrapnel: 34 Fragments of a Massacre

Life on the Kurdish side of Turkey's civil strife is short, harsh and depressing.

By reviewing the Kurdish experience from numerous perspectives, including those of victims, their families, journalists, soldiers and weapons manufacturers, Lustgarten gives viewers an opportunity to see a society which rarely hits the headlines in our country.

Suffice to say that sitting through this play must have been almost literally terrifying, which inevitably means that undergoing it day by day without any choice will inevitably be very much more so.

Kingmakers

Set in 1225, 10 years after the Magna Carta, *Kingmakers* is a short work that uses satire to make its case about social inequalities.

It seems likely that Lustgarten wished his audience to draw parallels between the corrupt noblemen who rob and mistreat the poor and their political and social equivalents today.

The crux of the piece lies in an uncomfortable alliance between the highly intelligent Henry III and the noblemen who think that they can pull a fast one on the young King but discover that his intellectual resources are more than up to the contest.

The Insurgents

The last play in the volume is a very funny, politically astute drama that looks deeply into family relationships.

It is set somewhere in north London above a shop run by Kurdish Yilmaz. There, his sons Abdullah and Metin have kidnapped a businessman, whom they regard as the epitome of evil.

Wassermann has become a slum landlord par excellence, buying up the whole district, turning its residents into paupers while enriching himself.

The battles between father and sons, brothers and their guest provide rich food for thought as well as comedy in a satisfying package that deserves a revival and would work perfectly on the Edinburgh Fringe.

Reviewer: [Philip Fisher](#)