

British Theatre Guide

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As Is

William M Hoffman

Mice on a Beam

Bedlam Theatre

5–30 August 2015



Thirty years after its opening in New York, William M Hoffman's play *As Is* remains a powerful testimony to the shock of AIDS hitting the city.

It centres on the young writer Rich who, in the process of breaking up with his long-time partner Saul discovers he has AIDS. There are also the voices of relatives, friends and a hospice worker trying to cope with something that seemed inevitably fatal.

A pregnant woman who attends a support group, reminds us that gay men are not the only victims. We see many of the characters being compassionate despite their fears, and prejudices.

Short scenes record the progress of Rich's illness and the deaths of so many friends around them that Saul feels the disease is closing in on him. He jokingly describes the new fashion look as that of the corpse. The mood of the play is constantly lifted by the humour that is often a way the characters cope with the trauma.

This is a warm and confident production of Hoffman's surprisingly uplifting take on an issue that may no longer shock the community in the same way, but still remains a serious threat to health.

The director Milla Jackson describes it as "a beautiful love story of the 1980s that shows how even in such terrifying times the community can bring hope and support to those in difficulties."

Reviewer: [Keith Mckenna](#)