

British Theatre Guide

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A Big Day Out for the Goldbergs

Brian Daniels
New End Theatre
(2010)

When a production starts with the audience joining in with a round of 'Happy Birthday' you know you're in for a family show. In this case the show hadn't actually started yet, but nonetheless the writer took the opportunity to stand up and give a little talk before the show began.

The writer also being the artistic director of the theatre, this is understandable, but perhaps a trifle premature to be giving talks on this piece of new writing.

Only an hour's show, this is the story of the two daughters of the Goldbergs. They are a Jewish family, with all the 'proper' intentions for their girls despite the wayward path of their father, who has run off with a new girlfriend and children. The older daughter Lucille (Elisa Boyd) has found herself engaged to a rich, if selfish, man, and as the big day looms she begins to wonder if she has made the right choice.

However the story centres more clearly on the story of the rather more colourful younger daughter Michelle (Emma Gordon), who, with a tongue piercing and a taste for acrobatics, is all ready to run off to join the circus. In her case she really is running off to the big top, but it's to circus school she's headed, ready to carve out a heady career in clowning and children's parties. Will her hysterical mother accept her choices or will convention restrict the happiness of both daughters? Breaking the norms will certainly be a big day out for the Goldbergs.

In talking heads style, the actions splices between the sisters telling their stories, and convention, at least in theatre, is firmly maintained. While Gordon gives an extremely engaging performance, her clowning routine is more suited to the children's parties than the stage. Boyd provides a suitable northern sister weighted down by her responsibilities, but it is definitely Gordon who leaves the more memorable impression. However, she does have the more interesting role, but while 'sweet' and gentle, this is not a piece of writing to make to the high wire.

In a recognisable suburban bedroom, with everything delivered out front to the audience, one wonders if it wouldn't have made a better radio play, as the simple actions performed were hardly warranted. That said, it does make for a pleasant evening out for the older audience (and the gentleman gently snoring to my right!) who attended. Perhaps Radio 4 should be calling soon, because this piece seems more suited to being heard and not seen.

Reviewer: [Sacha Voit](#)