

British Theatre Guide

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Found

Created by the company

Zendeh

Northern Stage, Newcastle

21–24 March 2012

Found is, a programme note tells us, an exploration of what it means to be found: "the moment when you are found and seen for the first time and what it means to be the person who found you."

Reminiscent in some ways of the work of Pina Bausch and of some European (particularly Eastern European) physical theatre, it uses text, dance, music, digital projection, soundscape and *mise-en-scène* to communicate with the audience, producing some beautiful visual and auditory moments.

At the beginning I found myself being drawn in by the slow emergence, at first fragmentary, voiced by one of the performers, but eventually filling out to the full song by that performer and then picked up by the soundscape, of one of my favourite songs, *La Vie en Rose*, which provokes a range of memories and feelings.

In this, I feel, lies one of the strengths but also one of the weaknesses of this style of production: like *Symboliste* poetry (the song made me think along French lines!), the reaction of the audience is as much guided by their own memories and associations as by what they see on the stage.

I suspect the song was used to anchor us in Paris during the Liberation of 1944 but, for me, that specificity was lost in a personal response which bore no relation to the piece. I suspect, too, that there would be other moments, images or sounds which affected other members of the audience in a similar way, and so there needs to be a strand which keeps us on track.

In *Found* that strand should be the text, but it was, I felt, under-used. It provides the narrative which holds the piece together, guides the audience through the layers of meaning and is the backbone for the almost dreamlike quality which the various elements combine to create. However in the performance it took on too much of the overall dreamlike, elegiac dynamic and, although there was emotion, indeed passion, in the words, they were not reproduced in the playing.

There is much about memory (beautifully represented by the hanging globes of light which form most of the set)—and, indeed, letting go of memories—but the performance of the text needs a harder edge and the overall dynamic needs more variety to fully engage the viewer emotionally.

The elements are all there and, as mentioned at the beginning, there are moments of great beauty but *Found* has the feel of a work in progress which, when fully developed, could be very powerful.

"Found" plays at The Maltings, Berwick, on 31st March.

Reviewer: [Peter Lathan](#)