

British Theatre Guide

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Full Circle

Alan Melville

Adapted from Les Enfants d'Edouard by Marc-Gilbert Sauvajon and Frederick Jackson
Theatre Royal, Newcastle, and touring
(2004)

Isn't it odd? You can come away from a production of a Shakespeare play and feel that you have been watching cutting-edge theatre and yet you can come out of a play written in your own lifetime feeling like some kind of theatrical archeologist. So it was with *Full Circle*.

Not that there is anything wrong with the production. An excellent set and beautiful costumes by Hugh Durrant; lighting (by Mick Hughes) which was perfectly unobtrusive - and therefore fulfilling its function; a soundscape (Crispian Covell) that performed in exactly the same way; acting that was in every case perfectly suited to the play; and direction (Patrick Garland) which was spot-on. And yet the whole thing was rather less than the sum of its parts.

I had gone along expecting it to be a vehicle for Joan Collins (God! that woman is ten years older than me and looks so much younger), and whilst it is so to the extent that it gives her the chance to be glamorous and desirable (something I have never been) (I must stop this!), it is more than that. It is a piece of *ensemble* playing in which a very experienced cast, including Jeffry Wickham, John Quayle, Nickolas Grace and Gary Redmond, and some who are less experienced but nonetheless talented, show just what they can do.

The audience were clearly there for Ms Collins - applause when she first appeared and for her dress in the second act - and obviously enjoyed the evening, but I felt the whole time that I was in a theatrical timewarp. There were some modern moments - some quite camp touches during the scene change in Act I and in the curtain call (during the latter the phrase "camp as a row of tents" came into my mind) - but otherwise there was little to tell us that this is the 21st century rather than the middle of the 20th.

Certainly the plot is very much of its time, based on values which are themselves very much of its time and which smack of hypocrisy today. In fact, as a rather ironic exposé of early fifties hypocrisy it works very well - dealing as it does with illegitimacy, it had to be set in Paris to make it acceptable to British audiences, because we all know what the French are like, don't we? Today, in a time when marriage is regarded very much as an optional extra in a long-term relationship, its values seem almost quaint.

It was an evening of pure theatrical nostalgia - beautifully crafted and performed, certainly, but nothing more.

"Full Circle" tours until 26th June, visiting Nottingham, Manchester, Norwich, Bath and Malvern.

Reviewer: [Peter Lathan](#)