

British Theatre Guide

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In Loyal Company

David William Bryan

Pleasance Courtyard

2–28 August 2023



It warmed my heart to see a 340+-seater filled at a fringe show that was not a musical or comedy and did not feature a 'name'. It shows how a bare stage with one chest and a man can fill it.

Apart from the well-written riveting content (David William Bryan), the consummate acting delivery of Bryan himself, barely pausing for breath, moving from one character and scene to the next, is hypnotic. All costumes are in the on stage chest so changes are effortless, or appeared so!

Bryan connects with the audience immediately, telling the true story of his great-uncle, missing World War II soldier and Prisoner of War Arthur Robinson, while playing his relative, a very personal experience. After joining the 18th reconnaissance division, Robinson was deployed to Singapore, where his ship is destroyed by the Japanese and is declared missing. Bryan then exposes the horrors of the internment camps, his friendships, how he survived and what eventually happened, but I leave that for you to discover when you see it.

While this is a harrowing wartime story, it does have humour to ease you in. Johnny Ryan's sound and lighting effects greatly enrich the story, setting scenes from bombed-out streets to dance hall to jungle combat. Adding to the personal subject, Bryan is on hand after the play to speak with the audience and answer any questions.

This is a remarkable true story of survival and, for a 75-minute solo show, flies.

Reviewer: [Anna Ambelez](#)