

British Theatre Guide

News, reviews, features and podcast on theatre across the UK

Jack and I

Daniel Henry Kaes

DhK Productions

C nova

1–25 August 2014



Jack and I is a musical about the infamous Jack the Ripper.

Jack, killer of prostitutes in London in the late 19th century, was never found so is a great resource for both theatre and literature. There's not too much new to discover and lots that you can make up. And this is not the first musical about Jack the Ripper.

Daniel Henry Kaes has penned a musical with great energy and, at times, lots of fun. With the first musical number, Kaes sets the tone with the men in drag playing prostitutes: "When you open with a chorus line we'll put a smile on your face. Let us show you a good time and we'll take you out of this place".

It is sometime the story of the detective, played by Chris Chalmers, and his relationship with his wife, played by Lizzie Camps. A female detective is provided as his new partner, played by Sara Basso de Marc, with the required jokes about men and women working together. And though the part of the Ripper is not constant, everyone has a go, it is mostly the domain of Matt Lim.

Chalmers makes a charming and engaging leading man, although with not too much grit. Camps takes on wife and owner of the brothel.

There is a lot of humour both in dialogue and song: "some of us are going to die, but, like *Les Mis*, no one explains why."

But this is a musical. And although all four have decent voices, the story and music are quite a muddle. It seems to leap from joke to joke; extremely well done and funny. Sadly, it doesn't quite know what it wants to be. Sometime it's a comedic musical and other times the songs are serious ballads. Mr. Kaes could probably do either.

The men seem to have polish and control the stage. Less is required of Lizzie Camps, so she gets lost in ambiguity. Ms de Marc looks like she walked into the wrong play; not totally her fault.

Where it fails is in the vision of the director. It's truly lacklustre and messy. It doesn't know if it's a serious musical or a send up. It doesn't know if it's a play or a skit. It doesn't know if it's 19th or 21st century.

Although the play, the musical, the performers are bristling with potential, it starts to look too much like amateur night at the improv.

Reviewer: [Catherine Henry Lamm](#)