

British Theatre Guide

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Metamorphosis

Wu Hsing-kuo

Contemporary Legend Theatre

King's Theatre

10–12 August 2013



In recent years, the Edinburgh International Festival has lost its taste for traditional plays. Instead, its commissioning team has favoured experimental interpretations, often deconstructing the original text and forgetting to put it back together again.

In that spirit, there is some doubt as to whether Franz Kafka would have recognised this two-hour-long piece as inspired by one of his masterworks.

Instead, Wu Hsing-kuo who writes, directs and performs, has created a work that might better be classified as dance than theatre, although, since it follows Peking Opera principles, that medium might also be a better classification.

The opening and closing scenes are stunning in their use of computer generated imagery. Most of the activity in between features the auteur from Taipei strutting his stuff.

He lugs around a beautiful beetle costume of clear Chinese ancestry, sings in a high-pitched voice and dances, carefully and at times attractively, especially when theoretically naked, though in fact merely chalky white.

The script is spare to say the least. It is therefore helpful to have read the novel or synopsis in the programme. Without these promptings, you will be struggling with the core of the story about a man who wakes up a bug (to use the Americanised translation).

Even fans of Kafka will not know what to make of the long Little Sister scene and they, like most other viewers, would be best advised to let the experience pleasantly wash over them and forget about divining too much meaning.

Instead, they can at least enjoy (one hopes) a chance to go through a very oriental artistic experience and witness a dedicated performer, both of which might otherwise have remained unknown to British audiences forever.

Reviewer: [Philip Fisher](#)