

British Theatre Guide

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

Metamorphosis

A six-legged nightmare by Franz Kafka, adapted by David Farr and Gísli Örn Gardarsson
A Lyric Hammersmith and Vesturport Theatre production
Northern Stage, Newcastle, and touring
(2007)

Stage One at Northern Stage is a snug home for this dazzling production of Kafka's *Metamorphosis* adapted by David Farr and Gísli Örn Gardarsson. The strong duo also directed the play together and the result adds definite weight to the old cliché, 'Two heads are better than one'.

Metamorphosis tells the story of the Samsa family and how their lives are turned upside down when they discover their son, and sole provider of the family, Gregor, has turned into a monstrous insect. Gregor's metamorphosis creates a moral dilemma for the remaining family members as he is now unable to fulfil his responsibilities and retain their status.

It is safe to say that this haunting play reaches the heights of ingenuity in its design. Börkur Jónsson presents this split level set which seems to almost defy gravity and gradually decays alongside the humility of the Samsas. The ground level is the rather unremarkable living area where the Samsa's congregate and follow the routines of daily life, denying the cancerous 'scum' that dwells upstairs. Gregor's room is seen as a birdseye view which distorts the mind from the onset and allows Gregor's nightmare to become ours.

Coping without the aid of *terra firma*, Björn Thors is sensational as the hideous Gregor, dangling and scrambling about his desolate life. Thors' physical abilities are mesmerising and his gradual decline is truly uncomfortable to watch, scattering the ideas of identity, tolerance and acceptance around our conscience.

Nick Cave and Warren Ellis decorate this fantastical production with a fearful score that nudges this production into a truly exceptional night of theatre. *Metamorphosis* is an intense and macabre experience and, however absurd the story may seem, it is not too difficult to see (and very frightening to realise) the metaphor reflected in the world around us.

At Northern Stage until 8th March

Philip Fisher [reviewed](#) the original production at the Lyric in 2006, Rivka Jacobson [reviewed](#) the 2008 revival, also at the Lyric, and Lynn Rusk [reviewed](#) it at the Dublin Theatre Festival

Reviewer: [V Mitchell](#)