

British Theatre Guide

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Panic

Devised by the company

Improbable Theatre

Courtyard Theatre, West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds

(2009)

'Improbable has grown out of a way of working that means being prepared to create work by the seat of your pants and the skin of your teeth, stepping onstage before you are ready and allowing the audience to have an integral part in the creation of a show So at the time of writing it is hard to say what it is you will see tonight, but somehow, some way, it will feature the Great God Pan '

Quote taken from the programme for this self-indulgent ninety minutes.

There is much which is good about this show, as you would expect from the more than adequately gifted and inventive Improbable. Some lovely visual/video effects and shadow play. Phelim McDermott being as funny, winning and whimsical as we know he can be from earlier shows. Great sound. Some good performances from Angela Clerkin, Lucy Foster and Matilda Leyser as Phelim/Pan's 'nymphs'. And, for the school kids in the first two rows, even the realisation on stage of 'my pal Billy has a the ten foot willy ' plus other willy jokes and wank jokes. The kids loved it. Older audience members were less enamoured.

After an embarrassing *faux naïve* set in which the performers introduced themselves and pretended to be unrehearsed, the show got under way with McDermott giving us a sequence that brought to mind the great Ken Campbell's *Furtive Nudist*. Great stuff, though McDermott rather wimpishly chickened out and wore boxer shorts. However there was promise that we would be treated to much visual humour and McDermott's lovely twists and turns and gear changes. But as the minutes crept by several older audience members crept out the back.

There was nothing shocking, nothing disturbing, nothing new, just a jumble of stuff quite obviously stitched together from lengthy impro sessions. No narrative: chop out a few scenes and no-one would notice. And with no dramatic structure - there's no need to hang around if you are not being delighted by what you see. And sadly on this occasion Improbable fails to delight. Good bits of business of all sorts are dragged out until the audience begins to shuffle. Other bits of business are intrinsically boring.

So not for the over twenties. Not unless they lose at least 30 minutes and find a coherent narrative.

1st April - 9th April then Barbican, London, 15th April to 16th May 2009

Philip Fisher [reviewed](#) it at the Barbican

Reviewer: [Ray Brown](#)