

British Theatre Guide

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

The Marriage of Figaro

Beaumarchais adapted by DC Jackson

The Lyceum, Edinburgh

23 March–14 April 2012

A cross between a romantic comedy containing lots of cross-dressing and a satire on Caledonian corporate culture. What at first seems an unlikely combination quickly becomes a likable comedy with many witty lines and some great characters.

Most of the action takes place in the offices of a bank that sounds suspiciously like RBS, with a crazy arrogant knight at the helm, The Chief (Stuart Bowman), and all sorts of dodgy accounting going on behind the scenes. Figaro (Mark Prendergast) and his fiancée Suzanne (Nicola Roy) are about to agree a merger with their company, which will make them millions on this their wedding day.

The piece is full of energy, there is back-and-forth office banter, numerous different sexual relationships and musical interludes as interns change the scene while Prendergast sings from the opera. Figaro's solos are probably the only time Prendergast gets to stand still on stage as he manically tries to stay in control of the situation with ever more outlandish schemes.

Bowman's Chief is a truly formidable creation commanding the stage as desperately all-man alpha male with a massive ego. You can't imagine him being any other nationality, there is something about the arrogance and down-to-earth language that make this a distinctly Scottish archetype. His swagger, constant horniness and speeches about banking are priceless.

There is much silliness, The Chief may be perhaps the most outrageous character but only just. The Chair (Briony McRobert) manages to be both haughty and mischievous as the (Chief's) wife plotting revenge. Lyceum stalwarts Molly Innes and Greg Powrie give great turns in supporting roles as does Jamie Quinn as the innocent officeboy from Ukraine. The costumes are fun with Innes in the most horrendous skirt / stockings combo and Quinn made up to look surprisingly similar to Suzanne.

The plot follows a well-worn comedic trajectory, however the characters like Bowman's cartoon Fred the Shred are so recognisably of our time. The audience can relate immediately to DC Jackson's script with its many well delivered references, not to mention the set with its precise office and, for the finale, Princes Street Gardens complete with grass and trees.

It might be feared that treating the serious target of the banking crisis with such frivolity might trivialise it and further that so specifically updating a classic work might end up looking clumsy. The effect though is that one enjoys laughing at the ripe current events without feeling that the play is too judgemental or worthy.

Reviewer: [Seth Ewin](#)