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The Time Machine

Dyad

Assembly Roxy

3–28 August 2017



Screaming his way onstage as he bursts through time, Stephen Cunningham's evocation of H G Wells's time-traveling pioneer scientist lets us know instantly that this will be a high octane, frenetic and deeply intense performance.

Alternating between laughing and clutching at his stomach in pain, we are regaled with the story of his adventures into the future; regaling us with glee and horror about the future of mankind and the origin of his anachronisticly modern trainers.

In the classic style, which Dyad Productions has staked out as its own, *The Time Machine* is a captivating and clever adaptation of the original source material, written to be naturally close to the original yet organically branching out in small ways to make the piece more immediately palatable to a modern theatre audience.

It's clear that Elton Townend Jones and Rebecca Vaughan have plundered the original material mercilessly yet judiciously to stage a brilliant retelling of the cautionary story. Indeed it's admirable of Dyad to forsake the temptations to sanitise or alter the plot in ways similar to other adaptations and leave the story as top-heavy as it always was, with the story of the Eloy and Morlocks serving as the meat of the early plot, moreover to give the story a resolution that, frankly, is more satisfying than the original's ambiguously open framing device.

Cunningham gives an energetic performance filled with manic energy. His scientist is an obsessive, borderline manic and teetering ever on the edge of being unhinged. His disregard for preparation and his own safety constantly explained in a wild-eyed and excitable intensity that is consistent, if however slightly grating, over a 90-minute performance.

It's clear he's not supposed to be a classical hero or even wholly empathetic, more of a aspergian supergenius, liberally sprinkled with clear yet subtle allusions towards Dr Who, a theme also echoed in the TARDIS-like sounds of the Time Machine's operation.

The other great aspect of this play is the staging, a masterstroke in simplicity, with a bare handful of props and ingenious use of simple lighting changes and a few sound effects to evoke a scenario told through a performance that defies its own expositional nature to create a play that captivates and amazes.

Reviewer: [Graeme Strachan](#)