

The 2019 Trip to the Liverpool Playhouse

`Chyekhov`s First Play`: A Dazzlingly Strange Reworking of `Platonov` by Dublin Theatre Company, Dead Centre

It is 1921 and the dead Chyekhov`s sister finds the untitled, as yet unknown but completed manuscript of one of her brother`s plays. She takes it to the fledgling Bolshevik Government for their opinion. For them it is too long and too complex; just another Chyekovian retelling of a Bourgeois life to be consigned to the dustbin of history.

Fast forward to 2018 and the Dublin theatre company Dead Centre`s wonderful and technically brilliant retelling of the play which comes to be known as `Platanov`; (the protagonist). Dead Centre bring all those familiar themes of Chyekhov to the disaster of the failed Celtic Tiger economy with its Laissez-Faire Capitalism. There is the decay of empire with its boredom, decadence, drunkenness, easy sex; all those elements which meant that the Russian Revolution was inevitable.

All seems comfortably recognisable during the first act but you know instinctively that something is afoot because of the clever use of modern technology, with the audience wearing headphones and listening to the director`s thoughts thus giving `Chyekhov`s First Play` an astonishing feeling of intimacy and surprise. Suddenly, an unwitting, unprepared and very nervous member of the audience is literally plucked out of safety, wearing a wireless headset to play the part of the modern Platonov.

`Chyekhov's First Play` is something special; a dusty play is made diamond-sharp by the weight of a century's worth of failures and thwarted creative longings. It makes you think not only about current political and social issues but also those which are related in the past. I think that I must say that this is the best play which I have seen for ages.

Chris Devereux,

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