



Event: The Riddle

Venue: Salisbury Arts Centre

Reviewed by: Julia Hardcastle

I am happy to say that '*The Riddle*', a Summer Stage production, well exceeded my expectations. The small group of young people had spent the last two weeks devising, rehearsing and technically supporting this piece based on, as the name suggests, riddles. The hour-long play began with five people on a train, who end up in a mysterious place; in need of getting home. They are taken through five imaginative places, solving riddles and problems along the way.

Throughout the play, humour was frequently used. I found the seemingly-spontaneous witty remarks genuinely funny, and certainly laughed out loud more than once. I can confidently say from the reaction of the rest of the audience, that I am not the only one who was thoroughly amused.

The five main characters (played naturally by five talented actors) all had individual qualities and quirks, such as a rock guitarist and chatty girl. It would have been easy to make them clichéd, and although they were formed from stereotypes, each had a fresh twist.

One of my favourite scenes was set at a run-down fairground. I thought the bold characters of the balloon seller and fortuneteller, as well as clown, were portrayed well and some of the most memorable in the play. The atmosphere was very well created, particularly with the simple music that played in the background (created by the young people themselves). On the back wall of the set, there were images projected onto a screen as well as self videoed sequences. This greatly aided the minimalistic set, and further helped the audience understand the setting.

Synchronised movement and speech were effectively used a few occasions. One in particular I liked, was where several angel figures spoke in unison. I thought the accuracy at which they did this, in addition to their identical costumes, was very eerie.

One of the few downsides to the play would be the transactions between the scenes. It did seem disjointed at times and in one scene, I got confused as to how the characters had gotten to be there. This was something that was picked up on after the show when the team spoke about what they found tricky. However, the scenes in-between certainly made up for this and any confusion was quickly dispersed. Overall, the play was something the people involved should be proud of and genuinely enjoyable to watch.