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The Centre for Contemporary Arts at Crewe

Negative Space 11th Feb by Hannah Whiston

Reckless Sleepers are one of the most internationally acclaimed names in Contemporary Theatre and having watched their latest project 'Negative Space', I can see why.

Upon entering, the audience were presented with a huge white box on stage. The name 'Negative Space' presented the notion of emptiness so my mind began to target what was absent, rather than what was present. Combined with the fact that the piece is silent, the audience is free to interpret the piece in their own distinct personal way.

The opening sequence featured two chairs and two cast members whose interaction was silent, creating a sense of unease and unfamiliarity with a nonverbal based interaction. As the show progresses, more characters are introduced and a variety of story lines emerge. A story of lovers, friendship, jealousy, melodrama and action unfold before our eyes. Perhaps the greatest achievement of this show is how the cast successfully intertwine so many stories, each minute building tension and simultaneously depict a variety of human emotions without the use of speech.

The show's conclusion is perhaps the most grabbing. As tensions rise the cast begin to destroy the box which is their stage, their reality. The audience had been teased continuously throughout the piece with a hammer being present on stage. Perhaps what makes the destruction of the box most shocking is the fact that subconsciously we know it is going to happen. It poses the audience with the question of what it is to destroy and at what point do our emotions take over rational actions. This show offered a new idea of theatre and how theatre can enhance and educate on societal and human issues which we all face. Reckless Sleepers put forth a physical metaphor which may make complex psychological issues easier to understand.

Alongside the amazing metaphorical substance within the show, the way it was rehearsed and choreographed warrant equal attention and respect. The cast show their nerves of steel as during some parts they are quite literally inches from serious injury as the other members hit around them with hammers and saws. To say I was on the edge of my seat the entire time is an understatement. Reckless Sleepers have set the bar very high with their latest project and have left each audience member desperate for more.

- Hannah Whiston