

'One Elliot Park' by Lindsay Miller ☆☆☆☆☆

Obsession, compulsion and disorder are all on display beyond the doors of One Elliot Park. There's been a break-in at One Elliot Park – and Chloe, the quiet girl from the ground-floor flat, is nowhere to be found. As her three mismatched neighbours re-live their petty squabbles, a dogged policewoman uncovers a disturbing secret. Chloe thought her life was in peril, her stair-mates conspiring against her as pawns in a sinister plan. It's a paranoid fantasy, of course. Or is it?

Lindsay Miller's tour-de-force script poses constant questions, from its disorientating opening right through to its disturbing finale. It's gripping, in part, because the characters are so familiar; we've all met the likeable but feckless Mark, or straight-laced manager Douglas. The self-obsessed, judgemental Debs makes up the trio – and her casually dismissive cruelty is beautifully observed, for all that her constant repetitions began to annoy me for real. It's left to LaVerne Hawthorne's nameless police inspector to express what we're all thinking, and her facial expressions as she listens to the neighbours' carping prove a continuing highlight.

The sense of mystery is aided by cleverly fluid staging. Kirstin Rodger's elegant set allows Hawthorne to move from flat to flat in a single stride, opening the way for some neatly interlocking dialogue which reconstructs the events of the weekend. With each character confined to their own corner of the stage, it could easily have felt a little static, but director Andy Corelli maintains visual interest through a series of neat motifs. The missing girl, on occasion, is actually in full view; the inspector's overbearing boss is played by three actors at one time, and there's an hilariously unexpected ensemble song, which deftly weaves together the cast of characters' by-then well-established mannerisms.

It's thought-provoking and entertaining, combining sharp observation with plenty of wit. But I have to admit I doubted, two-thirds of the way in, that the storyline was actually going anywhere, and that Miller had anything truly meaningful to say. Happily, I was wrong. The policewoman calls the neighbours together, Poirot-style, at the scene of the crime, and the script's worthy mission is deftly revealed: exposing our cosy thoughtlessness towards those around us, it's nothing less than a Scottish tenement reboot of *An Inspector Calls*.

Or at least, it *seems* that's what it is. But there's still a seed of doubt – a question mark over whether that really is the end of the story. Of course, we know that Chloe's scribbled diary is the product of an unbalanced mind; but her urgent logic is disturbingly compelling, with each inconsequential observation yielding further evidence of a shadowy masterplan. Fight it all you like, but you'll find yourself drawn in... waiting for that final twist, for another sting in the tail.

And Miller's script responds with a breathtaking conclusion: chilling and credible, brutally unexpected, yet the only plausible explanation for all that's gone before. It's the kind of play which leaves you wanting, now you know what's happening, to watch the whole thing all over again – to spot the clues, pick up the references, and notice the telling lines which passed you by. With a compelling script matched by selfless, near-flawless acting, *One Elliot Park* transcends the confines of its tiny venue. Don't miss this chance to learn just how good small-scale theatre can be.

Richard Stamp; "Fringe Guru" 17th June 2012