

‘Too Long The Heart’ by David Hutchison ★★★★★

As an avid theatre-goer, I am always delighted to come across work produced by a company or a project that I had not known about. That Siege Perilous was founded as long ago as 2000 by Andy Corelli and Tina Finch just proves how much I have to learn. Siege Perilous operates from Leith and is a theatre production company which champions new writing. There is a mentoring programme for talented, emerging playwrights to help stage their previously unseen work under the guidance of their Writer in Residence Caroline Dunford. The company enjoys performing in unusual places to help make theatre as widely accessible as possible. One of these venues is the Malmaison Hotel in Leith, where I went to see. “Too Long the Heart” by Ayrshire based playwright David Hutchison.

The rather enigmatic title hides a gem of a play, and some seriously good acting. Set in a republican hideaway in Cork, a hostage is brought in by two young activists who believe he is an English army officer responsible for attacks on the IRA many years ago. There is mounting tension as they begin to realise that their hostage might not be this man. There is even more tension as an escape bid fails, the activists’ leader arrives, and the man’s identity is further in question. The strength of this play lies in the dialogue, the unfolding of motives as to why atrocities were committed, why bitterness continues to fester, and why the human heart continues to believe in causes and grudges and grievances and revenge. All performances are utterly believable – Clare Ross as hardened Caitlin, permanently damaged by her

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brother's murder many years before; Des O'Gorman as her boyfriend Marty, converted to her cause by love, Ian Sexon, the unforgiving leader of the faction, driven by a sense of injustice, violence and revenge. Andy Corelli himself as the hostage brings complexity to the role – a man using diplomacy and his wits to try and bring sense and rationality to a cruel and barbaric situation. This is an intelligent, well-written play, simply staged and well acted. The Irish accents seem believable, the underlying tragedy only too believable.

Ros MacKenzie “Lothian Life” 22nd February 2013