

‘Turning to the Camera’ by Simon Jackson ☆☆☆☆

In Simon Jackson’s enjoyably fast-paced “noir thriller” directed by Andy Corelli, tabloid photographer Ian Thompson finds himself the focus of undesired attention after witnessing an Egyptian diplomat being thrown from a fifth-floor window. As he recounts the series of events to a pair of police interrogators, we learn that whilst the camera never lies, the photographer may be being more creative with the truth.

The first performance in the new space at Ocean Terminal, *Turning to the Camera* is a technically ambitious production, featuring video projection sequences helping to put the action in context. On the whole, this works well – and is cleverly-deployed in places, such as when two characters stoop down, Gulliver-like, to peer into the windows of a projected bungalow. The sequences where the streets of Edinburgh are used to indicate the characters are car-bound are perhaps less effective, bringing to mind the effects of early Hollywood movies: but in general the filmed sequences add to the piece rather than detract from it.

Ian Sexon is superb as the paparazzo, exuding just the right amount of sleaze and questionable morals without verging on caricature. Sexon brings a manic physicality to the role – which is perhaps just as well, as his character spends around half the play’s 65 minute length clad only in his boxer shorts.

The other three actors play multiple roles, as characters in Thompson’s tale enter and exit. Adam Tomkins has a similar commanding presence to Liam Brennan and shows his versatility with roles as diverse as a threatening gunman and an eccentric professor. A slightly-underused Adrienne Zitt has less to do, but she brings an effortless touch of female strength to her walk-on parts, helping to counter Thompson’s male bravado.

Lewis Hart breathes life into the piece’s most intriguing character: a Welsh Muslim extremist. Again steering clear of caricature, Hart injects Bilaal with an intelligence and vulnerability which transforms him into one of the play’s most sympathetic – and morally true – characters.

SIEGE PERILOUS

The ink on Jackson's script is still wet (there are references to the late Ken Russell; and to the November 30 strikes); it is also tightly-plotted with just the right number of twists and turns to stop it being confusing. Some political points are skirted over a little too briefly, and there is a slightly jarring mini-lecture on the history of defenestration, but on the whole the piece gels together well. And as Jackson also shot the film sequences and composed the noirish jazz-based soundtrack, it is certainly an impressive showcase for his talents.

Turning to the Camera proves to be sharply-focused and well-developed thriller with enough comic asides and interesting characters to stop it being heavy-handed. And as a snapshot of what Siege Perilous are capable of, it comes highly recommended.

Keith D; "Edinburgh Spotlight"