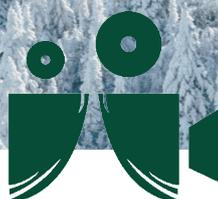


THE  
**REBCAT**  
COLLECTIVE



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*Staging Stories for Modern Times*

“Let them be....we are only here  
to facilitate their truth”

BHUPINDER SINGH  
*KNOWN AS PINS (ARTIST).....ON WORKING WITH CHILDREN*

# Editor's Note

WELCOME TO THE WINTER EDITION OF  
THE REBCAT COLLECTIVE.

Dear Readers,

A lot has been going on! We now have a number of episodes on our Rebchat Inside stories <https://open.spotify.com/show/5mIf-w6NgvccubxBqEyrKLx> with interviews from artists, writers and creative entrepreneurs telling their stories, each one unique.

Our other exciting news is the launch of Newsworthy, an audio series podcast, written by Cathy Dixon. Production starts in January 2022 and we plan to publish the series in early March. We are blessed to have a fabulous cast and crew. Watch out for us on [Instagram](#) and TikTok.

We hope you enjoy the contents of this edition and we sincerely thank all who contributed. Happy New Year to all!

Warmest regards,

The RebCat Team

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Books we loved in

2021

- THE REBCAT TEAM

*AMERICAN DIRT* BY JEANINE CUMMINS

*DARK DANTE* BY MAGGIE ROSE

*FOUR WINDS* BY KRISTIN HANNAH

*PACHINKO* BY MIN JIN LEE

*ON WRITING* BY STEPHEN KING

*CAN'T HURT ME* BY DAVID GOGGINS

*THE HEART'S INVISIBLE FURIES*  
BY JOHN BOYNE

*LOVE'S EXECUTIONER* BY IRVIN D YALOM

*KLARA AND THE SUN* BY KAZUO ISHIGURO

*BETWEEN THE WORLD AND ME*  
BY TA-NEHISI COATES



# Notes on Resilience

BY ANDRE LOPEZ-TURNER

I guess coming from the hottest and coldest part of Aotearoa New Zealand gave me an unconscious understanding of the words resilient and self-sufficiency. You see a lot of grimaces on the faces of people in winter as locals go about their business despite the frosts, wind, snow, and fierce sunlight. I recall my uncle (a cricketering great) squinting into the sun and stating over a blustering south westerly – “One must be self-sufficient when standing up to the quick bowlers, have an economy of movement at the crease

when they're slippery. After all it's you against eleven out there, there's no one out there to save you,” he smiled, then giggled. The words resilience and self-sufficiency entered my consciousness with more intensity at the start of the pandemic when a virus and the effects of climate change held neoliberalism and globalisation's weak supply chains and outsourced economies to account. Not to mention death staring us in the eyes.

Five years prior, the word resilience seeped into my lexicon when the Dutch ‘Iceman’ a.k.a. Wim Hof and a bunch of professional surfers stirred me into looking after my immune, and autonomic nervous systems, through breathwork and cold-water showers. A back injury and the ensuing inflammation led me to go deeper and search out Hampstead heath's ponds. I had to adapt. I could hardly move.

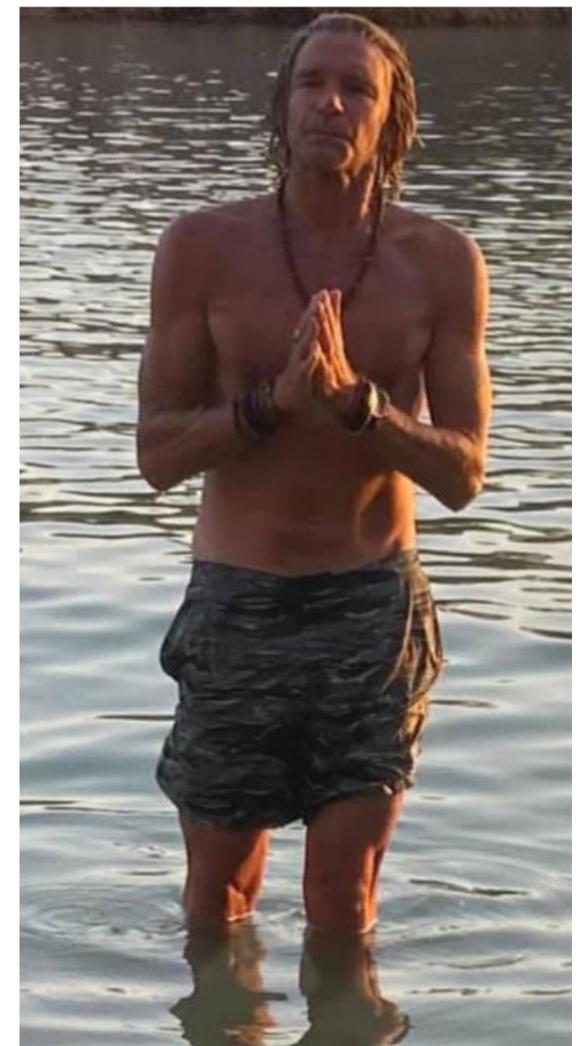
But dipping into and exposing yourself to cold water, either via a shower, a bath, a pond, or the sea, is not easy. It is uncomfortable. If you'd told me five years ago that I would be enthusiastically waking up to plunge into cold water and that I keep going back with a bunch of intrepid souls called the water rats (and searching for rivers, lakes, beaches etc when travelling) then I'd have said you're mad. Many an addict says the prior sentence. So yes, cold water immersion/swimming is addictive! I call it a healthy addiction.

The health benefits of cold water showers and immersions are numerous – reduced inflammation in the body, lessening of arthritis, a possible protein link to mitigating Alzheimer's, an ability to control and regulate the autonomic nervous system, specifically the shock response (the amygdala that promotes the sympathetic response of fight and flight), the ability to instigate our parasympathetic system (relaxation and digestion) happens thanks to conditioning, the conscious controlling of the mind and breath control. It instigates weight loss, the burning of white fat and the making of good brown fat that provides energy. Cold water showers, baths, swims release adrenaline and norepinephrine (a natural antidepressant), to name a few biochemical benefits. It also makes one a preacher! The old joke – how do you know if someone is a vegan? They'll tell you in the first two minutes. Well, you may have a competitor – the ranting cold water swimmer!

The other zeitgeist words of our time - resilience and community can be added to the

cold-water immersers' mix. Wherever a cold-water swimmer goes she/he will find a grinning and grimacing bunch of shivering, smiling, and for those of white coloured skin, pink coloured humans with sparkling glints in their eyes. There is an unspoken (often because of the difficulty of voicing anything other than a grunt whilst clothes are being awkwardly put back on) camaraderie, respect, and community around the crazy act of 'getting into anything under 13 degrees' etc.

I look at my fellow swimmers and get transported back to those rugged rural NZ phrases of endearment – ‘good on you mate, sweet as bro, there's another crazy bugger.’ I whisper these to myself as I watch them getting in. Mad dogs and Englishmen they say here. I tell myself to toughen up and look



around at my comrades of the cold before entering the water that instantly awakens and alerts me to the now, the present moment. I have no thoughts of the past nor the future! Hence cold-water exposure has been beneficial for those struggling with mental health. The trifecta of gaining access to one's natural antidepressants (adrenaline, nor-adrenaline, norepinephrine), the force of being made to embrace the now, the present moment, and the realisation that mother nature is a power bigger than you and us all combine to change one's biochemistry and take people out of their head...No wonder some doctors in England's Southwest are prescribing this.

“They're a bunch of resilient characters, and bloody tough by the sounds of things,” my father replied when I told him about the swimmers in our local ponds. “I need to try it in our increasingly polluted river, maybe the farmers will give us Greenies a bit more respect and we can get into dialogue about restoring a resilient, more sustainable and self-sufficient local economy here, anyway son keep building resilience there. We're all going to need it, been saying it for years.” We hung up our phones and I went back to being oh so modern and checked my Instagram feed. The first thing I see, Ian IGTV talk on building resilience by an ex-navy seal. I follow for his pragmatic tips on health, fitness, and homesteading, not the bulk of his political leanings, though I can find some common ground. I think the finding of common ground in our current bi-polar world is so needed. I'm reminded of one of my favourite lifeguards Dan, and his wry observation that there are people from “.....all walks and subsets of society in the ponds, but when they get in the cold water it's such an equaliser.”

Nevertheless, Mike Glover of field craft survival put building resilience down to three principles that I believe encapsulates why cold-water swimming/immersion is one method to build resilience, great health, and community. He spoke of resilience being formed and built through “exposure” to

uncomfortable things, the doing of activities that take one outside of one's comfort zones. In Mike's case it was going to the opera! He mentioned “Undertaking physical tests” – namely exercise and in his case Calisthenics (bodyweight exercises, derived from the Greek word Kallos Sthenos meaning beautiful strength) as a must for health, strength, and mindset. And thirdly – “A never quit never give up, never quit mentality.”

If the world, its current trajectory, and its political and corporate leaders (whom Dominique Strauss Kahn of all people described as a bunch of lambs leading a bunch of Lions and Lionesses - the people) continue their addiction to infinite and unsustainable economic growth on a finite planet and we consumers don't start changing our consciousness to one of, “never mind what they're selling it's what we're buying” then self-sufficiency, community and resilience is what we must build. Heads up – learn to swim, preferably in cold water..

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**Photo of deer taken by:**  
[@johnanthonyrichardsonspaintings](https://www.instagram.com/johnanthonyrichardsonspaintings)

**Other photos taken by:**  
[@jillianedelstein.co.uk](https://www.instagram.com/jillianedelstein.co.uk)





BANGKOK, THAILAND

GUEST CREATIVE

# Rus Hughes

PHOTOGRAPHER LOST IN ASIA

One day in the early 80s, when I was 7 or 8 years old, I stayed with my aunt in Bristol who gave me my first camera. I was incredibly shy at the time and took photos of the park and zoo as we spent the days together. There was little artistic merit to the photos and I still have them, but I loved that I could capture moments in time on film.

These photos were all taken during a 5 year period where I was seconded to Asia for work and are some of my favourite shots, all representing the different moods and experiences of those moments.

I was looking for a purpose to be in these countries outside of work and decided to create my own purpose through the lens of the camera. This gave me permission and opportunity to go to places I would never have gone before and meet people I might never have met under other circumstances.

I moved to Thailand, with 2 just bags, in 2015 after securing funding for a startup,

but outside of work there was no reason to be there, no real social circle and I had nothing to do. I saw a meetup group for street photography, so on my birthday I bought a second hand Canon 40D with a 40mm pancake lens. Initially as a way to rekindle an old passion, meet some new people and explore the new city I had just moved to.

Thailand is a beautiful country, vibrant, full of energy, colour and expression and these are two of my favourite photos from that time and also the earliest, where I was getting to grips with playing with colour theory and the rules of composition, the basic rule of thirds.



As I was travelling and shooting as well as learning more about the different countries I learned a lot more about composition. The black and white images in Japan all feature structure, much like their lives and the society of the people that live there. The leading lines, straight, horizontal and vertical lines, the sharp planes and black and white echo the confirming and restrictive cultural backdrop of Japan, where a child's entire academic career and life path are set on course by the very first school they attend.

This echoed my internal mood, bleak and muted. Whilst I had some amazing experiences, I did not fit in. There are very black and white barriers to visitors to Japan around integration. It took me months of trying to join a gym for instance. With a world of pre-set rules and regulations, I needed a way of dealing with this environment and spent most of my days simply walking around the city.

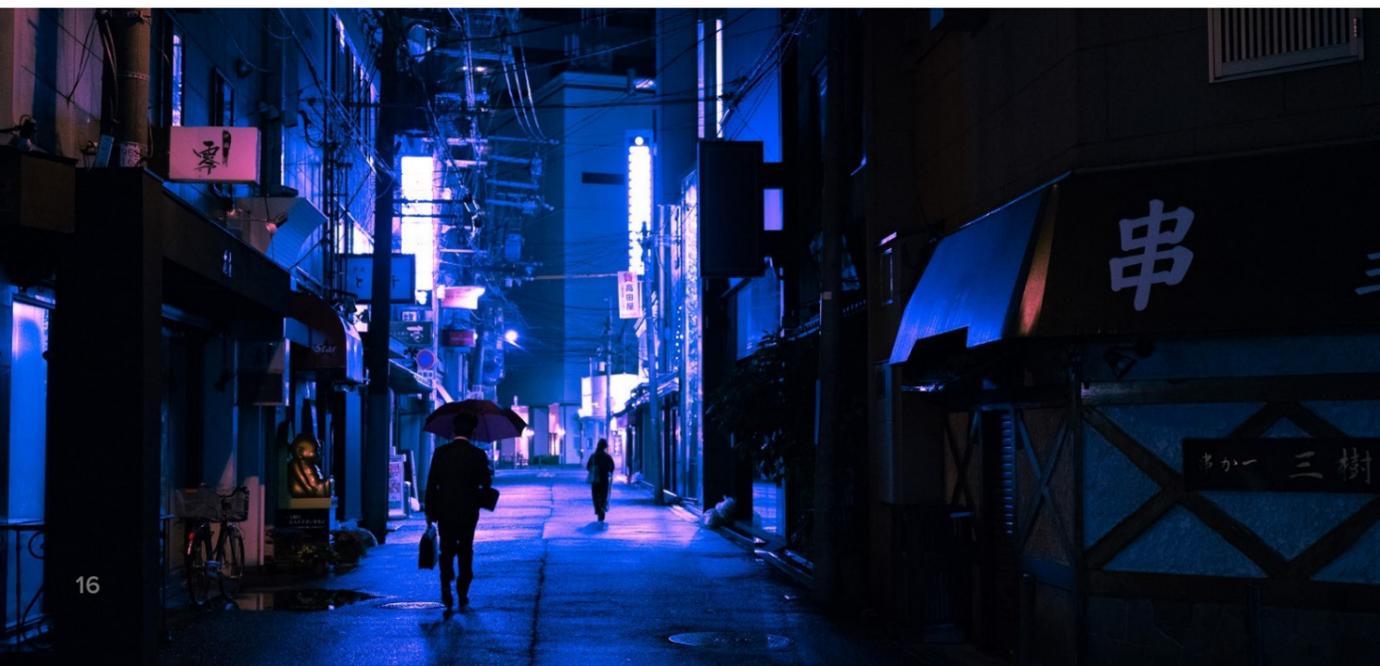
Towards the end of my stay, the feeling that I shouldn't be in Japan was starting to integrate more with my actions and I discovered that a lot of the buildings had unguarded stairways that lead to the rooftops. Trespassing in the buildings allowed me to capture cityscapes and perspectives from a position unknown to even the locals and frame the images in the way that I was starting to feel as a trespasser.

LEFT: OSAKA, JAPAN  
RIGHT: TOKYO, JAPAN





VIETNAM



OSAKA, JAPAN

My time in Vietnam, as a counterpoint, was wondrous. After the isolation in Japan I wanted more vibrancy and people in my life and started working more with makeup artists, models and designers. Vietnam is a proud country, full of artisans and beauty and a lot more inviting, and it was a natural evolution to flow with that environmental energy and work with the people I was meeting to create interesting experiences and photographs than do what I had done before, which was walking, exploring and then capturing what I had found.

The essence of photography is in framing the subject and that resonates with the reality we live in. How you frame yourself affects how people perceive you. When I hold a camera I feel more in control to create and frame the world around me in the way that I want. I can move myself, move the camera to create an aesthetic. This is the ultimate joy of taking photos - the creativity though framing.

FIND RUS ON INSTAGRAM AT [WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/RUSHUGHES/?HL=EN](http://WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/RUSHUGHES/?HL=EN)



# Expressive Art

THE ART OF RICARDO ALES

[WWW.RICARDOALES.COM/](http://WWW.RICARDOALES.COM/)

*"Birds for some reason have become a magnetic presence in my life. I suppose the intricacy and intimacy of drawing their forms attracts me. I just have this unwritten fascination with birds."*

Ricardo Ales's bird drawings are breathtaking. They stir something inside you, make you smile, stop to think, sigh and much more. Born and raised in Southern California, Ricardo Ales is an artist with an entrepreneurial spirit. When you visit his store [ricardoalesb@bigcartel.com](mailto:ricardoalesb@bigcartel.com) you can browse, admire, purchase a drawing or choose from an original collection of apparel, hats, pins, stickers and goods with his unique drawings imprinted on them.

Ricardo talks about himself as a husband, a soon to be father, an artist and a fifth-grade primary teacher. Rebcart Creations interviewed Ricardo to understand who the person behind these exquisite masterpieces is.

## EARLY INFLUENCES

I've been drawing since I was an infant at preschool. My mother has always seen something in me, knew that I liked to draw and encouraged it. So I just grew up drawing and drawing, it was my favourite thing to do. However, when I got into adolescence, I got a little self-conscious as we do at that age. I started skateboarding, learning the guitar and got into a band - not a very good band! I probably only drew a couple of drawings throughout my entire high school. After school, I got into the University of California in San Diego, but my major was undeclared. I was really intending to major in maths because I took AP calculus at the end of high school, and I loved it (looking back I think

my maths teacher was the reason I loved maths at school). I began to struggle with maths at university, I lost my motivation and interest and the desire to do well, which is a very important stimulant for me. When my first quarter ended, I went to a friend's house, where he happened to be drawing. I just picked up a pencil and I did a drawing on some loose-leaf writing paper. It was a video game character and I thought it was kind of good. By the way, it wasn't good, looking back. So, I started drawing again and I switched my major to studio art, painting and drawing. After that the rest has been a rollercoaster ride; an endless ebb and flow of high regard and self-loathing, leading me to where I am now, drawing funny looking birds.

### CHALLENGES

So many. But one is attempting to do things that I'm not good at. When I'm not good, I get really discouraged. My mother has always encouraged me in everything - you know, "You're the most handsome, you're the smartest, the best." It's great that you could have a mother that way. But it has definitely hampered me in certain ways, in terms of my motivation. It's determining whether my motivation is intrinsic or extrinsic. There have been times for sure, where I have felt like giving up and have had that feeling that I am worthless, and nobody likes me, and why am I doing this?

### FIRST BIRDS, FIRST GALLERIES

The first gallery I showed was in San Diego (2014). I did some DIY space stuff at a kind of punk venue in Temecula, which is just north of San Diego County. I drew a type of Venetian carnival porcelain mask with lace - the process is similar to what I do now. For the second show, I made this sort of double diptych - two birds and two birds, both different types. They had an eyeball growing out of their chest - super creepy! I had been following Stephen Russell Black (artist on Instagram) and felt inspired by him. They were the first birds I'd ever drawn or even

attempted to draw and I liked it and it was fun.

### OBSERVING BIRDS

If I look at other bird artists, I see that they are somewhat ornithologists, they know the species and the Latin names and all that kind of stuff. That is not me. For me, it is mostly an aesthetic thing. I don't seek out birds and I don't go out in nature and sit there for hours as such, but I do have a good bird radar. I will sit by the window and just watch the birds on the bird feeder we have in the garden. And, of course, I do actually know something about birds.

### CREATING A DRAWING

My work has taken a turn in the last year, indeed even in the last couple of months. I used to make quite a detailed sketch, with every line in pencil and then I would trace over them. I had a guide; I had a path to follow. But it tells of a lack of confidence, right? I have reflected a lot on my process. It, or rather I, lacked confidence because I didn't know what I was doing. I needed to put every mark in place so that I knew what to do because I was terrified that I would mess up. Since it was in pencil, I could erase anything I didn't like. But for seven years I have been really taking my work more and more seriously and doing ink work. So now, I start with a pretty loose sketch. The composition is all there - I know exactly where the eye, the beak, this or that foot is going to be. But I don't spend too much time putting every detail in. It is freehand now. I have worked up to this though, and it has been hard work and not an easy road!

### NAMING A DRAWING

I grew up watching cartoons a lot. I mean every single day of my life, almost obsessively. I joked the other day with my students that cartoons raised me whenever my mother didn't! I just loved and still love cartoons, they excite me - they are fantastic. They kind of anthropomorphize - cartoons are typically talking animals.



TOP LEFT: *WE WILL BE WONDERFUL AGAIN*  
TOP RIGHT: *SOMEONE IS WATCHING YOU*

BOTTOM LEFT: *TRYST*  
BOTTOM RIGHT: *I WILL GET THROUGH THIS*



TOP: *THE BEST WAY OUT IS ALWAYS THROUGH*

BOTTOM: *UNTIL YOU'RE BETTER*



Second to that, I am a big music fan, constantly listening to music, lyrically intricate music. Whenever I am drawing, I am listening to the words, I am thinking and reflecting. A lot of the titles for my work are borrowed from poems, lyrics and songs that I know and have listened to. The one pictured above, “The best way out is always through,” was inspired by a Robert Frost poem that I liked.

So, when I draw, I don’t start to draw something because it means this or that. It is not all in place at the beginning. This is something I kind of like about my process. There’s no real rhyme or reason. It comes from my brain. I have a cool image and then I put it on paper. Later, as I am listening to a song about something, I find the words to name it.

I named this one “Until you’re better.” I just drew the image. It was a time when I had been looking at this Russian Illustrator I really love. That was when I did that flower. Over time, towards the end, I started listening to some music, thinking about my grandmother who had broken her hip (she’s doing a lot better now). So, I was just thinking about that. I thought about the idea of “giving,” of giving to people and community, giving to each

other and helping each other out. What emerged was the idea of this bird making this offering of a flower - “I’ll give it to you until you’re better.”

**EARLIER DRAWINGS FEATURING HOUSES- ARE THEY ALSO INSPIRED BY LYRICS AND POETRY?**

I think it’s connected, but maybe they are more connected to the cartoons. And by that, I mean sort of the nostalgia of them (cartoons) and the sort of yearning for childhood. They also have aesthetic value for me. I started drawing those houses in maybe 2015/16 and they were initially rather detailed. They were like actual floating houses, with an address number and a door. They were bird houses. Over time they have become more and more simplified. Now they are just really simple doorways with no other details, pretty blank and boxy.

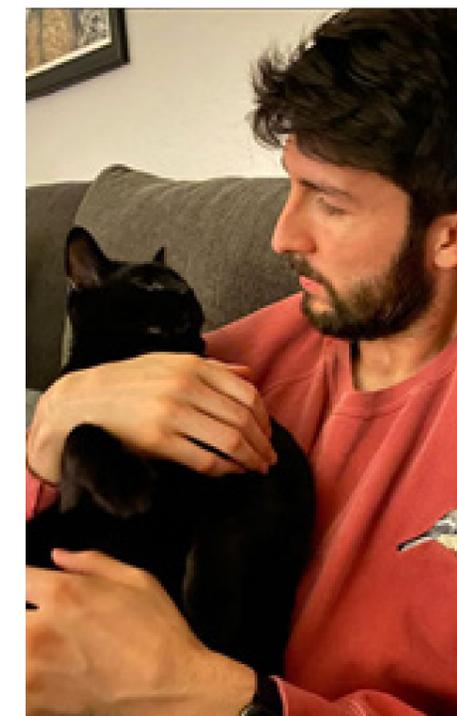
**MAKING A LIVING FROM ART**

I don’t do art on the side. I make and do a lot of art! However, I am now a fifth-grade primary teacher. It is my first year. I love the job but a big reason I got into this job was because art was not paying the bills. With a steadier income, I have been able to invest more in my art. I started in October 2021 with a promotion on Instagram, not a lot, just \$150. After the promotion someone bought some artwork and I decided to invest some more on another piece - \$200 and so on. I now have almost 6000 followers, investing a little, bit by bit. That is something I was always afraid to do. It’s no coincidence that the comfort of a stable job has also brought serenity and success to my artwork. I can’t draw when I’m stressed.

**WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IS THE MOST REWARDING ASPECT OF YOUR WORK?**

When it pleases me. I feel like someone is patting me on the back. I feel whole. I feel excited. I feel energized. When I make a certain mark and it is clean or I see a series of

marks come together and look nice. I think that is the part that keeps me going. But second to that and importantly, it is people like you reaching out to me and caring. I love the acknowledgement. I can get discouraged easily. I truly love it when people leave nice comments and buy my work- it is immensely rewarding.



RICARDO ALES

**REBCAT CREATIONS INVITES YOU TO GO TO RICARDO ALES’S WEBSITE, AND INSTAGRAM PAGE @RICARDOALESART. YOU ARE IN FOR A TREAT!**

# THEATRE

BY CATHERINE DIXON

ABOUT LONDON TOWN

# REVIEWS

## HABEAS CORPUS AT MENIER CHOCOLATE FACTORY

10-DEC-2021

RATING 5/5

Alan Bennett's farce *Habeas Corpus* is a story about an unhappy, middle-aged doctor and his family. The play, written in the early '70s, transports the audience back to another era where it was alright to call unmarried women spinsters and for older married men to prey on young women. In this world of "Carry On" humour and British stereotypes, the whole British class system is affectionately mocked.

The minimal staging consisted of backlighting to showcase the Hove and Brighton coastline and a black coffin placed on the central stage. The script dipped into clever prose and poetry and contained many cultural references which belonged to its time. The acting, music and sound effects were unilaterally superb: with slick and impeccable performances from the whole cast. The Chocolate Factory is a fantastic, well-run venue with welcoming and attentive staff.

## XENOS AT SADLER'S WELLS

03-DEC-2021

RATING 5/5

Akram Khan's *Xenos* is the story of a shell-shocked WW1 colonial soldier who expresses the horrors he has experienced through dance and movement. Akram Khan's one person moving physical theatre is utterly mesmerising throughout. He is accompanied by onstage international musicians and the music, by composer Vincenzo Lamagna, is hauntingly beautiful and hypnotic. The show was about 75 minutes and there were no breaks. The stark, vivid staging, the metaphors of death, consciousness and the machine nature of war all add to the sombre, moving production.

## VANYA AND SONIA AND MASHA AND SPIKE AT CHARING CROSS THEATRE

28-NOV-2021

RATING 5/5

*Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* at Charing Cross Theatre. This charming play is based in a family house in upstate New York. We meet the three siblings: Vanya and Sonia, who live quiet, unadventurous lives which are disrupted by the arrival of pretentious, film star sibling Masha and her young toy boy lover Spike. The dialogue is kept interesting and spiced up with the presence of Cassandra, the house-made oracle and her dire predictions for each family member. This is a well-cast, well-paced and well-structured play.

Vanya's poignant monologue and nostalgic yearning for a slower more mindful pace of life was the highlight of the show. The Charing Cross Theatre is a unique and delightful venue with friendly and attentive staff.

## BRIAN & ROGER – A HIGHLY OFFENSIVE PLAY AT THE MENIER'S THE MIXING ROOM

30-OCT-2021

RATING 5/5

*Brian & Roger – A Highly Offensive Play* at The Menier's NEW VENUE - The Mixing Room. The title leaves the audience in no doubt about what to expect. It is brimming with offensive language and questionable behaviour. This comedic two-hander follows the telephone tag conversations between two men who have become friends after meeting at a fathers' divorce support group. In classic duo comedic style, one is trusting and naive (the hero) and the other is manipulative and exploitative (the anti-hero).

This relationship dynamic is tested to the extreme and takes the actors from one increasingly absurd situation to another. The script is fast-paced, witty and sharply defined. Both actors gave an excellent, wholly credible performance. The Mixing Room venue is the perfect venue and size for this show. The staff are friendly and welcoming.

The lighting and photos cleverly staged each scene. If you love the comedy of the absurd with a huge dose of naughty humour, get a ticket - you will laugh for two hours straight.

### **THE MACBETH'S AT ROTHERHITHE PLAYHOUSE @ THE SHIP**

24-OCT-2021

RATING **5/5**

An outstanding and imaginative production of *Macbeth*. Each actor brought something original to the play and I particularly liked how the parts of Banquo and Macduff were performed by female actors - it worked. The pace never lagged and the whole cast kept the audience mesmerised for 90 minutes without interval performance.

The simple yet effective staging, lighting and sound effects all combined to create an atmosphere of brooding tension and intrigue. I really loved sitting in the back garden or the Ship pub in Rotherhithe, converted into an outside theatre. What a fantastic venue for *Macbeth*. Come well wrapped up with a coat and hat!

### **WHITE NOISE! AT BRIDGE THEATRE (SOUTHWARK)**

22-OCT-2021

RATING **3/5**

*White Noise* is a relevant play and prompts important discussions and reflections. Centred around the friendships of two mixed-race couples, we are introduced into the worlds of Leo, the insomniac, Ralf the wealthy yet to date unsuccessful aspirant writer, Dawn, a lawyer with a social conscience and Mischa, a vibrant radio host of a show called Ask a Black. The friendship is severely tested when Leo asks Ralf to take part in a 40 day social, fully immersion experiment. The results of this have life-altering consequences for each character. Each is faced with the real nature of their real intentions, their ancestral inheritance and their projections about their own identities. This was a bold play, with vigorous dialogue and superbly acted by all four actors.

The monologues were delivered with emotion and precision. The highlight for me was Dawn's interaction with her audience in the first act. In my view, the script would have benefited from being at least 20 minutes shorter, which would have tightened the tension and pace and impact.



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with us...

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