

Review: Still Floating

By Sara Lamerton

***Still Floating* at Theatre Royal Plymouth**

Still Floating written by BBC award winning writer/performer Shôn Dale-Jones, directed by Stefanie Mueller, and co-produced by TRP, hits The Drum this week fresh from the Edinburgh Fringe.

Set partially in an alternate reality where the Isle of Anglesey dramatically breaks away from mainland Britain, we're swept out to sea with its residents. As the rift deepens, the island is pushed further into isolation by the Farage-esque figurehead, Mr Morgan. We follow both the island and a young Dale-Jones as they simultaneously grapple with their new found independence in an attempt to find belonging and genuine connections.

Fast forward to the present day, Dale-Jones returns to the island to visit his ailing mother and a heart-broken friend, Dylan, after his German wife, Greta, leaves him. Supporting both in their hour of need, he longs to understand his own place in the wider world and comes to terms with some familiar demons and doubts.

Despite its madcap scenes, plot twists, and multitude of jovial antics, this unexpected tale where past and present collide centres around timeless, universal themes of disconnection and connection, love and loss, despair and hope all set in a surreal world only a talented, yet mildly crazy mind like Dale-Jones' could conjure up.

At its heart *Still Floating* tackles several hard-hitting subject matters whilst expertly masquerading, if only on the surface, as a comical, frivolous piece of theatre. Wrapping himself in often wild, fanciful buoyancy aids, Dale-Jones sets a course across the Atlantic Ocean, deep diving into his past to embrace and understand the people, places, and struggles seen across the globe from one decade to another.

Still Floating, a reimagining of Dale-Jones' award-winning show, *Floating*, first found its sea legs in 2006. The pre-financial crisis, pre-Brexit, pre-pandemic world might have looked very different on the outside, however, the central themes and subject matter evolved to reflect the changing, yet all too familiar faces of politics, power and (dis)connection.

In the post-show talk, Dale-Jones mentioned how the high energy *Floating* concentrated on and kept the comic pace consistent. Although *Still Floating* certainly keeps the audience on its toes with continual changes of pace, costumes, effects, 'expensive' theatre techniques, and diversely different central characters, its underlying message is one of varied depth and perception: a call for us to reflect upon the ways we as a society, as a neighbourhood, as individuals treat one another.

Following Dale-Jones and the Isle of Anglesey colliding with, reflecting upon, and returning to their starting points, we're reminded that all of us are looking for a place we can call home. No matter where we started from, or where we're going, the ties that bind are stronger than those that divide.