

Review: Migrations

By Dulcie Harrison

***Migrations* at Theatre Royal Plymouth**

The Welsh National Opera presents this wonderful new opera that truly speaks to the heart of its captive audience. With beautifully interwoven stories told through a number of ways, *Migrations* invites you on a voyage through time.

The migration of birds - simple when you think of it, but really, how do these birds know where to go, what place do they really call home, where they can nest and raise their young? These questions asked by the young birds make you actually think about the fundamental reasoning behind their migration, flying for miles across the seas, with no compass or map. The adult birds reassure the young, to open their mind and see it there, imprinted genetically to follow this instinct to the place they call home.

Crashing quickly into the 1620's and we are on board the Mayflower, the Pilgrims setting sail to lands unknown, putting their faith in God and in their own convictions to make it across the seas to start a new life. Cleverly entwined with modern day asylum seekers also setting sail across the seas, only this time fleeing war and persecution but also to start a new life it makes us stop to ask the question - were the Pilgrims really so different to these people wanting to start over in a new land? Why do we see the Pilgrims as visionary yet see those seeking asylum here so differently?

The mixing pot of those who come from all over the world within one small classroom with each wanting to tell their story, their skills, why they left, who they left, it makes us question why we don't perhaps view with more empathy when we see these images on the news, have we become desensitised to our fellow humans suffering and them as individuals rather than a group of faceless souls.

The importance of preservation of our lands and habitat was brought to life by the story of a woman's plight against the government and how important it is for the plants and wildlife to exist far beyond her years as they provided so much to the stability of the land and the people who use it. Losing the battle against the Government's progress of oil the stark reality of how it is us humans destroying our own world creeps in and yet we empathise so much with her cries of help.

Migrations forces us to face the uncomfortable reality of our pasts, with the treatment of those held as slaves and their stories silenced with the cruelty that was acceptable in the day.

The beautiful voices provided a moving chorus that echo the voices of past generations ripped apart by the slave trade and those who were left undignified by the standards of the age.

With each of their six passing and sometimes challenging stories, *Migrations* allows us to see the importance of belonging, the importance of identity and the results of when we lose sight of this in ourselves and when we lose sight of this value in others

The orchestra was a pure delight to listen to with them being a beautiful compliment to the WNO company which filled the auditorium in triumphant chorus. The use of the correct cultural instruments was a wonderful touch and really helped bring the story to life of the Indian family in the second act.

Overall, I was so impressed. It is a clever, modern opera which uses history as its backdrop and familiar current affairs as a mirror image. As a culture, it is important we value fundamental basics such as who we are, what we can contribute and allowing others to give.

It proves Migration provides opportunity, safety and the ability to learn and grow. It enables us to have rich and well-rounded safe lives and how history should be used to learn lessons from and also not to repeat.

Another triumph by the Welsh National Opera, which manages to bring the audience together to realise their own identity and the beauty this can bring when accepting the diversity of everyone else.