



# P R E S S R E L E A S E

## Repertory Theatre

by Eldad Cohen



\*\*\*\* Eldad Cohen's script is fast-paced and offbeat. The comic flourishes are entertaining, but not to be underestimated as pure whimsy; pay attention in the first half, and you'll be rewarded in the second. This is definitely a show that will bear repeat viewing.

Repertory Theatre is a demanding show for actors Erez Drigues, as the neurotic artistic director, and Jeffrey Ophir, who switches between two characters with seemingly effortless precision. The pair give athletic and unabashed performances, and are unafraid of letting the audience in on the joke, commenting on their successes triumphantly.

The play mixes the childish joy of watching an actor spit outrageously during a monologue, with a fast-paced script that echoes itself ingeniously. The evidently exhausting performances are a pleasure to witness, and the audience would have been hard-pressed to be more appreciative.

Cleverly constructed and sometimes tending towards the charmingly grotesque, the piece is unashamedly silly, and definitely smart enough to get away with its excesses. Repertory Theatre is a truly entertaining hour and Elephant And The Mouse are certain to be a company to watch.



\*\*\*\*This is repertory theatre. We know this because the artistic director tells us, and the bookish young playwright sitting across the desk from him, that it's repertory theatre.

This is repertory theatre, and he's glad the playwright has brought him a new play about the playwright's father. He knew his father well, of course, before dad literally died on stage. It's not about my father, pleads the playwright in vain. The artistic director isn't listening. He appears to be off in his own world.

Despite its initially nonsensical appearance, this play from Israel's The Elephant and the Mouse company is a dazzling and unique piece of work: a meditation on playwriting structure and theatrical performance; a radical, avant garde reworking of Hamlet; and a damn funny comedy, all at once.

Actors Erez Drigues and Iftach Jeffrey Ophir, performing a work by Eldad Cohen and translated by Ophir, give tour de force performances in a piece which demands perfect timing and acute physical reflexes. It is multiple narratives folded back on one another, the impressive structural design allowing single player's performances to be transplanted from scene to scene.

It is, on one level, a clever-clever in-joke for theatregoers and theatremakers alike; the artistic director's obsession with Hamlet, the snippets of Shakespeare's play performed and the overriding layer of paternal angst all ringing bells.

Yet even for those who don't wish to deconstruct what they're watching, it's continually laugh-out-loud funny, from a masterfully spun-out gag about the word "Hamlet" demanding those who hear it rise to their feet, to a smooth demolition of the fourth wall when the pair imagine the ghost seats of the old theatre before them: "Ugly chairs, no air conditioning ... a phone rings on vibrate." Those in the front rows might want to take a tissue for the spectacularly phlegmatic over-emoting.



If theater is important to you, it's because you've had that moment in a theater, when something absolutely stunning and unexpected comes roaring at you like

an artistic freight train hell-bent for perfection. It makes your eyes pop open, or your jaw literally drop; maybe the hair on the back of your neck stands straight up. It's hard to quantify the recipe, but like one Supreme Court Justice famously said about pornography, you know it when you see it.

That's why audiences make pilgrimage to the Edinburgh Fringe. They are searching for it, an actor, a plot, a writer, a piece of music, a theatrical image -- and when they see it, they know. Too often, Americans especially view theater as something that is only done in the English-speaking world. One of the coolest things about Edinburgh is finding a hidden gem from the

It happened to me three nights ago, and I wanted to tell you all right away, all my best new Mouse, presented by a brand new Israeli company of young actors, Repertory Theater, had just delivered the biggest jolt of theatrical lightning I'd experienced in a long time. When the play was finished and the ovation over, I ran out to the hallway to try and find somebody, anybody, who could tell me who the hell this playwright was, because his work knocked me sideways in the best way possible. Surprise after surprise, turn after turn, delight after delight! I had never heard of this writer before, and I needed to hear all about him, because I now needed to read every play this genius has ever written. I imagined he'd had great training, and a long career, or maybe he was a child genius. All I knew before I walked into the theater was that the company came from Israel. And since nobody prints programs at the Fringe, I was without the traditional descriptions and recitations to guide me.

If I were an actor, I'd want to write about these actors, because Erez Drigues and Iftach Jeffrey Ophir were superb. Comic timing to die for, they raced like thoroughbreds through the one act play with aplomb and style. But I am a playwright, so as much as I admired these young men, I wanted, no, needed to meet the writer. I wanted to buy him coffee, dinner, drinks, and to talk to him for hours about his work. That turned out to be impossible.

Turns out this astounding piece of theater was written in Hebrew by a writer who knows very little English. I know this because, when we met in the hallway, the actors had to translate for him. Actor Iftach Jeffrey Ophir translated the play into perfectly lovely English, so that no one in the audience would ever suspect this was a work in translation. And wait, it gets even better!