

Every Brilliant Thing

By Duncan Macmillan with Jonny Donahue

Court Theatre – April 6th – May 4th

Number 1 on my current list is Every Brilliant thing.

This is an amazing production. Surprisingly, given that it is about a young man coping with a family history of depression, it is joyful, funny, warm and totally engaging. After a standing ovation, the audience continued to clap and stamp until Trubie Dylan-Smith reappeared from backstage. It was a triumphant first night.

As a seven-year-old, with a Mum who has attempted suicide, the young man tries to help by compiling a list of things that create happiness. The room is covered by these words by the end and we are constantly reminded of the things that make life worth living.

It may have been written in Britain, but the message is universal and as the Court Theatre Company compiled the lists, the brilliant things resonate with all of us.

This is interactive drama, the audience is a key part of the story. Dylan-Smith is engaging and empathetic and gains the confidence of his audience even before the play begins. Walking and chatting to the audience he gives out numbered words and phrases to willing participants. The Pub Charity Studio has been set up for theatre in the round and this space is worked seamlessly.

As the story develops audience members play many of the characters, coached by Dylan-Smith whose considerable improv background allows him to handle any prompts he is given. Whole audience participation, singing, high fives and Mexican waves include those who have missed out on an individual part. It is a special talent that allows a Saturday night audience to become so comfortable they participate freely.

Ultimately, he can't save his Mum, but he has clearly helped himself to navigate the shoals of a difficult family situation. We know that he has been damaged along the way but the lists detail the things and the people that give him resilience.

The material may be confronting for some people and this is acknowledged by the performer and the Court's promotional material. Support resources are available at the conclusion of the performance.

I am looking forward to revisiting Every Brilliant Thing to watch the alternate actor, Nick Purdie, tell the story. A friend at the dress rehearsal was similarly enthusiastic about his performance.

This show is life affirming, empathetic and totally engaging and the sound track is great too. Make sure you book tickets, when the word gets out, this must surely be a sell-out.

Robyn Peers