

FOREIGN BODIES by Skin in SIN

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“More Skin In The Game, Please“

Reviewer: Isaac Tan

Performance: 6 January 2017

Comprising expatriates and Singaporeans, Skin in SIN touts itself as a burlesque troupe with a socially progressive twist. In this maiden production, the company creates a tantalising encounter with the Other; the *Foreign Bodies* that are performing on stage.

To paraphrase Madge of Honor (the voluptuous host of the show): it is not so much the taking off, but how it is taken off. This tip for appreciating burlesque may refer to clothes, but the same can be said with regard to appreciating the significance of this new venture.

The fact that it is performed in a building that was originally intended to lure international acts; convince expatriates that Singapore is not boring; and show Singapore’s economic might to the world must not go unnoticed.

Despite this reviewer not being one to cheer at the slightest jiggle or shoulder shrug, I found myself constantly looking at the ten performers out of sheer curiosity. I wonder about their choice of personas, what their gender identities are, and why they choose this form of self-expression.

So it did make me think and question.

To top it off, the performances are not just mindless titillation. Consider Aloysius D’s political commentary, Hank Spank’s search for affection, and Patch Dogwood’s quirky scientist persona – these creative acts set out to show the possibilities of burlesque. For the admirers of camp, Lykie Liquour treats the audience with an impeccable lip-syncing act, while Aura Hahn teases with the classic conceal-and-reveal routine using feather fans.

That said, there are acts which provide neither risqué entertainment, nor food for thought. Datin Coconut Muffin’s lack of commitment to her saucy housewife persona as she walks around and poses tentatively is saved by the brief duration of her act: any longer she will incite scorn. While Kitty Padi being covered in shopping bags is fascinating, the novelty wears off quickly due to a lacklustre performance, and the awkwardness of not being able to remove one’s costume seamlessly.

While *Foreign Bodies* is an overall success, various questions remain: Where does Skin in SIN go from there? How does the company better bring out the socially conscious element in future shows? What is significant about the act of disrobing in performance? Repeating the mantra of vulnerability and empowerment will soon wear off, and there is a risk of future shows just being an exotic meat parade.

I applaud the performers for taking a first, and very brave step.

Now we need more skin in the game, in all senses of the phrase.

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ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

FOREIGN BODIES by Skin in SIN

5 – 7 January 2017

Esplanade Recital Studio

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Isaac started reviewing plays for the student publication, Kent Ridge Common, and later developed a serious interest in theatre criticism after taking a module at university. He is also an aspiring poet, and has a passion for acting and flamenco dancing.