

Review: Riotous in Every Sense

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Little Riots and Other Stories

Young & W!ld

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33 Kerbau Road, Studio K2

“Riot” is an interesting word that, depending on the context, one may welcome it, shun it, not make sense of it, or have a rollicking good time with it. In this light, this production is aptly titled for I had a bit of everything though I am not quite sure what it was I had.

The company was split into two groups and the audience had to choose which showcase they would like to watch. The showcase I watched consisted of a variety of characters that ranged from the everyday to the fantastical as all their stories and tenuously held together by “The Magician”, a tarot card reader.

Director Serena Ho made the right choice of not making the actors line up and deliver their monologues, but she wandered too far into the other extreme. All the stories were stuffed so tightly that none of it was given a chance to resonate with the audience. While the modern audience may have short attention spans, good writing and acting would relieve the tedium in any era. Unfortunately, they were not given a chance to show what they could do.

Furthermore, the self-reflexivity in the transitional scenes seemed to beg the pardon of the audience as we were reminded that they are still students or that we were watching a devising process. The parodies of classroom situations or acting classes were mildly amusing but nothing new.

Newness seemed to be emphasised quite a lot — not being solely an actor training programme, non-traditional theatre making — but there were stock characters and predictable set-ups (Singapore Kindness Idol anyone?) within this new framework.

Yet, there is much to look forward to. Matthew Fam and Lim Jun Jie must be commended for their respective portrayals of a girl with cerebral palsy and an old man who was knocked down by a vehicle and is trying to find his way home. These stories should have been developed further and not marred by a twist designed to milk the laughs for the former and random transitions for the latter.

The ensemble as a whole had chemistry and they picked up the cues from each other very well. While stock characters may have fallen out of favour, it is foolish to deny that skill is still involved in it and the ensemble did well in that respect. There was also some potential in the writing as a couple of witty lines and jokes could be found which makes the over-condensation of the monologues all the more regrettable.

Trying to create something new is difficult and one often starts with what is familiar. *Little Riots* is certainly representative of that but it also holds the promise of something new and exciting in the later stages. It is with that promise that I look forward to having riotous fun at the next showcase by Young & W!ld.