

REVIEW: LIGHTSPEED

Smiths Restaurant, 23 September 2015

By Andrew Nevill

Organised Chaos were back at Smiths Restaurant with a brand new play. Lightspeed tells the story of Charlie and Emmas' romance – except it does it backwards starting with their last meet and flashing back until we reach their first.

On paper it sounds ominously like the worst type of experimental theatre but Clem Haran's cleverly written script means it works wonderfully. The structure of a series of short, sharp scenes means the piece is pacy and engaging. The script also uses its central idea to good effect by what I can only call reverse foreshadowing - an event occurs or is mentioned in one scene and you want to know what happened before to cause it or have it referenced. It's a great way to grab the audience's attention and keep it.

Taran Knight as Charlie and Francesca Heraghty-Smith as Emma gave slick, polished performances. The dialogue was delivered snappily and with pace, the actors often interrupting and cutting across each other. There was also a lot of non-verbal communication with the protagonists acting and reacting to each other and much of the time what wasn't said was more important than what was. It was brilliant to see that they weren't afraid to be silent. Sometimes it can be so tempting for an actor to fill a silence when in fact they can often communicate more than words.

The overall impression of all of this was that it all felt very natural and real. Together with the intimate space of Smiths, at times it was easy to almost forget this was a play. It felt more like we were eavesdropping on Charlie and Emmas' lives, standing a couple of steps away from the park bench that was the scene of their meetings. If this play is going on tour, I hope they keep it in the smaller venues as larger spaces might create a sense of distance, leaving the audience feeling a little disconnected.

And that would be a huge loss.