

Premiere: Gaflaraleikhúsið Sunday 14th of October 2018.

There is a first time for everything. Those words certainly apply to the show *My First* because shamefully I must admit that this was *my* first time critiquing a youth theatre production at Gaflaraleikhúsið. The artistic directors of the theatre have over the past years been very ambitious in growing this scene and have put a lot of effort into supporting young people in writing and starring in their new productions. For example *Stefán Rís* by Arnór Björnsson and Óli Gunnar Gunnarsson Directed by Björk Jakobsdóttir in 2016 and *Unglingurinn* by the same authors Directed by Björk Jakobsdóttir, which was nominated for the Icelandic Theatre Awards in 2014 as children's show of the year as well as new writing of the year.

In *My First*, Arnór and Óli have joined forces with Berglind Alda Ástþórsdóttir, Inga Steinunn Henningsdóttir and Mikael Emil Kaaber to study the many different first times of the teenage years, whether it be your first crush, date, kiss, relationship, sex or breakup. This involves conversations about menstruation, unrealistic beauty standards, shame, tight foreskin, guilt of watching porn, queef, penis size, inferiority complex and masturbation. The authors largely base the show on their own stories and show admirable courage and sincerity in talking about issues that many would find uncomfortable or even impossible to discuss.

The show is critical about the lack of sexual education available, limited only to how to put a condom on, which they have likened to your math teacher teaching you division and then expecting you to learn the rest online or from your friends. The myth that first time's will always hurt and that it is best to get it over and done with is thankfully busted. Admirably the show does not only focus on heterosexual experiences. Most of the show is spent in working against the typical gender stereotypes, but the group's take on periods focuses sadly on old myths about women's unstable mood swings. Here they could have instead focused on the hormonal swings of both sexes during the time of puberty, that delicate stage where the individual is not yet an adult and no longer a child and how it can be hard trying to find a footing in the world. In light of how well they explained the importance of communicating before engaging in sexual activity, they could have mentioned sexual assault as we know that a quarter of teenagers will have experienced that before turning 18.

Script management and direction falls in the hands of Björk Jakobsdóttir, who manages to bring the absolute best out of these talented young actors, who not only write but star in every role. It is obvious that the directors years of experience in stand up comedy have proved very useful to the cast, humor is used to its fullest meaning during this show, and I think it is safe to say that *My First* is the funniest show in the city right now. It is not only for the teenagers of today but speaks to everyone who has gone through puberty. The show consists of multiple small scenes where one idea leads to another and so it flows very smoothly. The show is in many

places informative without ever feeling patronising or sounding like a cautionary tale. Arnór, Berglind, Inga Mikael and Óli jump effortlessly between playing themselves and playing a variety of other characters that serve the plot of the show. Their comfort on the stage could especially be seen during the premiere when some of the technical aspects failed or someone misspoke; they improvised their way out of any situation with ease. Unlike the young people who were the subject of the story it seemed like nothing could phase the players on stage, mishaps were clearly no threat - which always puts you at ease as an audience member.

The production around the show was exemplary to say the least. Whether that be the simple but rich set designed by Björk who also takes credit for the stylish costumes and the amazing choreography, the phenomenal lighting by Freyr Vilhjálmsson, outstanding video content by Vignir Daði Valtýsson, Arnór, Óli and Björk often quoting famous films, brilliant sound mixing by Kristinn Gauti Einarsson, fantastic musical production by Hallur Ingólfsson or the original music by Hallur, Mikael and Teitur Snær Tryggvason.

Technology is used in a fun, innovative and effective way when Berglind and Mikael interpret the stress that comes with courting someone on social media platforms like snapchat. Arnór, Mikael and Óli do a breathtaking performance in a contemporary dance interpretation of "making out" wearing fierce pink leotards which came in useful in another scene where Inga decides to get to know her vagina in a hilarious interchange with Arnór. Berglind and Mikael were outstanding in the previously mentioned snapchat scene and no less so in the sex scene where a tennis match is used as an analogy. Óli and Inga were great as parents struggling with sexual education. It is clear that the future of Icelandic theatre is in good hands and it will be exciting to see the next project this group of young actors takes on. One thing is for certain, I will not be missing any more youth productions of Gaflaralíekhúsið in the future.

"There is a first time for everything"
My First...-

Silja Björk Huldudóttir