



THE PHYSICISTS

BY FRIEDRICH DÜRRENMATT
TRANSLATED BY JAMES KIRKUP

Dr Mathilde Von Zahnd	Wendy Morris
Newton	John Fenner
Einstein	Jeremy Heynes
Möbius	Tim Willis
Detective Richard Voss	Kaz Sangha
Maria Boll	Sharon Sully
Monika Stettler	Julia Findlay
Uwe Sievers/Blocher	Janeke Babidioris
Murillo/Guhl	Daniel Barnsley
Mrs Lisa Rose	Angie Collins
Adolf Friedrich	Ed Statham
Wilfried Kaspar	Guy Devane
Director	Rachel Adams
Stage manager	Cath Lyon
Assistant stage manager	Hannah Brown
Set designer	Amy Rodger
Theatre technician	Kimberlee Green
Lighting designer	Robin Boyd, Gareth Roberts
Sound designer	Dan Outware
Head of wardrobe	Helen Brady
Head of props	Kimberlee Green
Set built and painted by	Richard Moore, Ian Asbury, Amy Rodger, Becky Howell, Vinny Aulak, Lisa Voss, Andra Opatowka, Monika Suniya
Lighting and sound operation	Left Technical team
Press and publicity	Jason Day
Photography	Richard Smith
Marketing	Yas Shilton
Advertising/Design	Gus Macdonald, Beccy England
Programme	Jonathan Gunson
Website	Gareth Roberts

Charles Essex reviews The Physicists at the Loft Theatre, Leamington

Knowledge is power. Who controls knowledge? Once the genie is out of the bottle it cannot be put back in. Three physicists are held in a sanatorium run by a psychiatrist who seems as mad as the inmates. Each physicist had a nurse who doted on them but the nurses were murdered by their respective patients. The exasperated detective sent to investigate finally gratefully gives up as he accepts the inmates cannot be held responsible or brought to trial.

But is it so simple?

Set at the height of the Cold War as super powers vie for supremacy in the arms race, the stark clinical setting focuses our attention on the dialogue between the trio. Two of the three scientists pretend to be mad to get access to the third, Möbius, a brilliant scientist, to try to persuade him to side with the super power they each represent. The nurses suspected Einstein (Jeremy Haynes) and Newton (John Fenner) were not mad and were murdered to stop them exposing the deception.

Yet, Möbius, brilliantly portrayed by Tim Willis, was not mad either and had taken refuge in the asylum to make sure the seminal physics theories he resolved did not fall into the wrong hands. The dialogue between the three bristles with ethical challenges.

Ironically they are caught out by their hubris.

The seriousness of the issues was tackled with wry humour and the cast were faultless. Again, The Loft has not been afraid to stage a play addressing challenging moral issues.

The Physicists

Loft Theatre, Leamington, until July 22

Reviewer: Peter McGarry

AT what point does science become the enemy of humankind? The dividing line is thin, rather like the tentative balance between sanity and insanity, comedy and tragedy.

Heavy stuff indeed, but Friedrich Dürrenmatt's extraordinary play, as boldly tackled by the Loft, attempts to lighten the load by colouring its complexity with manic absurdist humour.

On the credit side, this curious concoction is superbly performed by a company clearly committed to the task in hand. The humour, when it comes, is sharp and breathtaking through the sterling work of Tim Willis, John Fenner and Jeremy Heynes.

They are the inmates of a mental asylum, seemingly living out their individual fantasies and furthering their scientific ingenuity by resorting to what they see as justifiable murder. John Fenner's depiction of a self-styled Isaac Newton has a deliciously laid-back amiability while Jeremy Heynes as Albert Einstein exudes gentle eccentricity. Their excesses are controlled by a sinister woman doctor delightfully drawn by Wendy Morris with all the comical trappings of a mid-European Bond villainess.

Under the direction of Rachel Adams, the play has clever and striking moments but it founders on a tiresomely leaden opening section until Tim Willis bursts on the scene with a raging lunacy which is positively inspired, magnificently controlled – and physically draining.

Dürrenmatt's writing later creates another tedious sequence as the inmates pour out their emotions and motivations in a contrived round of socio-political analysis. Here we are required to consider the values of scientific development weighed against issues such as the Atom Bomb, the arms race and human suffering.

The overall problem is that like the inmates the play has an identity crisis, ranging uneasily between farce, black comedy, heavy symbolism and theatre of the absurd. In the circumstances, the company does a fine job with strong visual effects, a clinically clever set design by Amy Rodger and some notably good supporting performances from Julia Findlay, Angie Collins and Kaz Sangha.

It might be difficult going at times but this production is never less than provocative.



