

Descriptive notes for *Girls and Boys* ASB Waterfront Theatre Sunday 22 September 2024

Prepared by Audio Described Aotearoa from the dress rehearsal

Please note this performance will not be audio described as it is a one person performance full of dialogue with no costume changes.

Information from the ATC website

The pulse-pounding London sensation with a tour-de-force performance by the brilliant Beatriz Romilly.

“I met my husband in the queue to board an easyJet flight and I have to say I took an instant dislike to the man.”

It begins with a chance encounter at an airport in Naples. How it ends will make you question whether it's ever possible to truly know the people we love.

This shattering, passionate solo drama by Tony Award-winning British playwright Dennis Kelly (*Matilda The Musical*) has gripped audiences in London and New York with its provocative take on gender politics as a family unravels at the seams.

From starring on London's West End to Auckland Theatre Company's stage, Beatriz Romilly (*King Lear*, *Grand Horizons*) takes on the funny, gutsy, messy woman who falls head over heels for a sexy, charismatic man who imports European antiques.

At first, they can't get enough of each other. “Our love was intense. Actually, it was insane.” But, as the heat of their passion gives way to the banalities of domestic life, her star continues to rise while his starts to fade.

As her story unfolds, from being madly in love, through frazzled interactions with her two squabbling kids, to confessional moments of heartbreaking intimacy, what went wrong with their relationship is slowly revealed. Raw and unflinching, *Girls & Boys* explores the dark shadow on the far side of love and asks what anyone of us is capable of.

Characters and costumes

There is one protagonist who narrates the whole story. She is played by Beatriz Romilly.

She wears the same costume throughout: wide legged white trousers with a neat, buttoned waistband, a white singlet and white socks and gym shoes. She has reddish brown hair tied back into a ponytail at the nape of her neck.

Most of the story is told in the past tense from her perspective, but some parts are acted out, using her body and voice to represent the other characters or just showing her reaction to them. For example, the guy in the airport queue is taller than her so she looks up when she's talking to him. She creates the models through quirky poses, pushing out her breasts and hips and pouting and talking in higher pitched voices.

She forms her interactions with the children by crouching down to the ground and talking to them at a low level and miming hugging or feeding them or lifting them up. This gives us the impression that the older child is a preschooler and the younger child is strapped in a high chair.

No props are used in this production.

Set and lighting

At the start of the piece the set is a square white wall positioned behind the actor. In this state the lighting is white covering the actor and the wall with the rest of the stage in blackness. This is the space where most of the storytelling happens.

The set can rotate. It turns slowly to reveal a darker area which is their home and the garden area outside. On the right there's a black square on the ground with a faint white outline that's the floor of the home. The wall behind is black. As we face the stage the area is split in half by a wall that sticks out towards us with a wide doorway in it. This is the threshold between inside and outside with the garden area on the left.

In the scene where the kid's creation gets broken the house is turned side on, so the garden isn't really visible to us. In the scene where they play in the garden it's turned diagonally the other way so that the interior of the house is mostly concealed but the garden is lit in a warm light.

Rotating part way back the doorway frames the actor with the white wall on the right – from this position she heads to the job interview, as if she has walked through a doorway and back into the bright lights of an office. As she walks towards the interview the set rotates slowly so just the white wall is visible behind her.

When she talks about being in bed with her partner, she sits on the floor with her legs out, back against the white wall. The light is streaked diagonally across the wall like light coming through a side window.

Sometimes the set is turned totally around so it's fully dark and then there's just a tight faint spot on the actor so she looks alone in darkness. In the scene where she talks about violence the black set is almost entirely invisible behind her, just a faint light shining from behind it at floor level. The set also turns to this black side when she is looking for Leanne. She is lit from the sides giving the scene a tense eerie atmosphere that builds with mist as she heads home afterwards, standing on the set as it turns.

Talking to her husband about a divorce, she moves into the kitchen, the white floor perimeter and the inner frame of the door lit with everything else in darkness. The set spins slowly as she talks throughout this scene meaning that sometimes she is not visible to the audience. The scene ends with her walking through the doorway, lit from behind.

She moves left and sits with her back against the black wall to the left of the doorway. The following scene is played out standing or sitting with this black background.

At the end of that scene, she doesn't speak for around three minutes. Music plays as she crouches down in the kitchen in a faint light. She rises to her feet and stands on the set as it rotates slowly. She wanders as if searching aimlessly, gazes up into a light that shines from the back right, and finally sits on the ground. Most of the rest of the piece is spoken from this seated position, until she rises to her feet at the very end for her reflection about the academic.

In the closing scene when the music plays she is seated on the ground legs out in front with the two kids leaning against her, stroking Leanne's hair.

Ends.



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