

REVIEWS

Joyous assault on the senses

Performance

10 Backwards, James Arnott
Theatre, Glasgow
Mary Brennan

THERE is a storyline in this show by Blast Theory: basically, a woman travels forward in time to 2009 but before she can adjust, she's pulled back to the present, only to live in a constant state of déjà vu. However, this narrative strand is really only a springboard for themes and images that no two people are likely to view in the same way. For whichever side of the long rectangular stage you sit on, your own experiences – of family, of illness, of place, of loss, of the passing of time – and how you define and remember those experiences are the filter and focus that will make you engage (or not) with this piece. The woman – played by Niki Woods – is first seen going through a series of preparatory “rituals”

that all connect into the documenting, predicting, re-arranging and controlling of personal space and time. These activities are videoed – in part so she can learn to rewind/pause and fast-forward her self image – and fragments of them are projected (at one end of the space) while the opposite screen holds shifting images of an external cityscape. Frankly it's not all that compelling until – around midway – she apparently ricochets into the future and back again, her hold on time and space utterly disorientated.

Then, it becomes absolutely fascinating: how can she combat her loss of actuality? The past is confused – was she ever really “there”? – and the present isn't really in as such, because it's hostage to her perpetual sense of déjà vu, something her step-brother feels is a manifestation of mental illness, thereby opening up more questions about how we perceive not just our own, but others' experiences. With hindsight, an increasingly thought-provoking event.