

REVIEW

‘Difficult Women’, at Lyttelton

“Difficult Women”, at the Harbour Lights Cafe. September 29 and 30. Compiled by Lin Van Hek and composed by Joe Dolce. Running time: two hours. Reviewed by Michael O’Brien.

Lyttelton’s Harbour Lights Café has great atmosphere on any occasion but with an act of such freshness, depth, and strength it was electric.

Totally appropriate for [this year], “Difficult Women” looks at women of strength with hearts of truth who were censored by self-interested males or sweetened by a society unable to accept their openness and “deviancies”.

It is a show in which Lin Van Hek delivers well-chosen extracts and readings which are linked by songs. Joe Dolce is masterful in his accompaniment on harmonica and guitar.

The first subject was Katherine Mansfield, the unexpurgated original, sexually ambiguous, gutsy and frank. Just as powerful was Sylvia Plath, brought to life by the savage reality of her pain, words and hate.

Alice B. Toklas on Gertrude Stein completed the first half’s colourful characters of grit, pure voice and courage.

The second half was less cohesive in theme but equally riveting. Witches and slaves, their slaughter and suffering, and the subsequent loss of vast knowledge were highlighted.

Van Hek’s last monologue was a portrayal of Mexican painter Frida Kahlo, a moving, fascinating take of immense bravery and, like the others, a celebration of women’s worth and power.

Dolce’s songs were lyrical and punchy, rendered with much feeling by this impassioned pair. Dolce’s poem set to music solo, “Miles Delight”, was an absolute classic.

This is a show of great class, inspirational, yet comfortable human. The shame is it has only a two-night run. It is a “must see” for both sexes and all ages.

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