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Dispatches from The Fringe - FLÅTPÄCK is perfectly assembled

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FLÅTPÄCK by Tom Lane, Ulysses Opera Theatre
Ulysses Opera Theatre

FLÅTPÄCK by Tom Lane

Rating: ★★★★★

Heimdal, Billy and Gorm. Three guides and three motifs. Dressed in dungarees, three guides escort the audience around a predetermined pathway through the dimly lit CHQ, to where three scenes will play simultaneously. Depending who you are grouped with will determine which scene you encounter first. In this, the final version of Tom Lane's, wonderful [opera](#), *FLÅTPÄCK*, produced by Ulysses Opera Theatre, Ikea's lifestyle choices, in all their generic familiarity, are set against the hearts, hopes and desperations of the people who purchase them.

In *FLÅTPÄCK*, relationships and tensions are sensitively explored in a series of superbly realised, musical vignettes. Tensions inform the relationship between a man sitting reading on the edge of a bed and the women who enters, laden with large, blue Ikea bags full of decorative knick knacks. Or a man playing scales on a piano while another tries fathom the instructions for building an Ikea

bookcase. Or a man and a woman in a kitchen where carrots, cucumbers, pots and appliances become musically invested as they prepare a cocktail. Throughout, tensions are given voice by the mantric repetition of the names of Ikea products, our relationship to which all our other relationships are contextualized and measured against.

Musically, Act One is a cleverly layered interplay of three, distinct, musical scores that combine to create a dissonant soundtrack, itself unique and individual whichever scene it informs. Chameleon like, music appears to constantly transform with every change of scene. Timing is impeccable and the simplicity of the motifs disguised the complexity of their arrangement with singers Rachel Croash, Rory Musgrave, Rebecca Rodgers and Richard Shaffrey bringing extraordinary range and depth to their performances.

Act Two has the audience move to where four individual performance spaces await, each built from Ikea products. A bedroom, a bathroom, an office and a living room are each inhabited by an isolated individual trying to communicate within, and across, distance. A man struggles to call and text a woman who, likewise, struggles in return. A woman surrounded by Ikea catalogues tears out pictures of desirable items and collects them in a bowl, imaginatively designing a room that will become part home, part prison cell. A man playing keyboards suddenly finds his keyboards playing by themselves. As the sun finally set on the darkening CHQ, *FLÅTPÄCK* wove the last of its powerful spell.

Throughout, Conor Hanratty's masterful direction created layers of texture and depth, whilst harmonising individual scenes and performances into a memorable and moving whole. As it drew to a close, *FLÅTPÄCK*'s chorus of solitude, under Hanratty's expert guidance, momentarily transcended their individual spaces, allowing their exquisite voices reach high into the rafters. Standing together, illuminated only by torchlight, music and voice opened onto a place of silence and stillness, less heard than experienced. Beyond the bedroom, bathroom, office and living room, all of which faded into the darkness, only the voices and music remained.

FLÅTPÄCK plays at the CHQ, Docklands, nightly till September 15th. Doors open at 8.00 p.m. Tickets are €14.00



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