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# Dublin Theatre Festival 2013 - Critical acclaim for a Magical production

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The Critic  
*Rough Magic*

## The Critic by Rough Magic

Rating: ★★★★★

Rough Magic's interpretation of Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The Critic* is a twenty first century production, referencing twentieth century practitioners, set in nineteenth century Dublin, of a play first performed in eighteenth century London. This gives some indication of the breath and scope of its lofty ambitions. Yet these ambitions are fully realized with great charm and humor in a towering production that deserves to be a runaway success.

Invited into the parlor, we meet Mr. and Mrs. Dangle, the former a self proclaimed [theatre](#) critic, the latter less than impressed with theatre's politics, pretensions and pointlessness. Following a brief introduction outlining the history of the play and its current resetting in Dublin, a small company of esteemed guests arrive to discuss all things theatre. There's the malicious Mr. Sneer, a fellow critic to Mr. Dangle, the pretentious Mr. Fretful Plagiary, a third rate plagiarist allegedly immune to criticism and the swaggering hack Mr. Puff, a theatre manager and author of a new melodrama, *The Spanish Armada*, currently in rehearsal. Polite society was never this impolite and no one is spared as the foibles, vanities and pretensions of theatre's good and great are mercilessly and hysterically laid bare.

For the second act we adjourn to the theatre where Mr. Puff sets out to enlighten Dangle and Sneer with a sneak preview of *The Spanish Armada*. However, in his absence the lunatics have taken over the asylum and actors have ruthlessly cut his script to mirror their own preferences. What follows is a hilarious exposé of the theatre making process, which, despite its exaggerated and farcical nature, cuts painfully close to the bone at times. Frustrated writers, arrogant and condescending critics and vainglorious actors collide over inept discovery scenes, scenes of mandatory moments of madness because it's a rule and intense moments of gravitas where a page can supposedly be expressed in a single, silent nod.

Played in the round and performed across two venues, Lynne Parker's excellent direction kept *The Critic's* many plates spinning successfully. Stellar performances by a stellar cast, including Rough Magic regulars Peter Daly, Darragh Kelly, Ronan Leahy, Eleanor Methven, Rory Nolan and Karl Shiels where ably supported by young students from the Gaiety School of Acting, DU Players and UCD Dramsoc. Bláithín Sheerin's impeccable costume designs rounded out a production whose standards of excellence were of the highest order.

Rough Magic's *The Critic* is a ruthless exposé of the vanities of theatre, but its final image brings home what lies beyond the vanities. Here we are reminded that theatre is a way of life shared by a community comprised of many families of practitioners. Granted, they may be dysfunctional at times, entertaining petty rivalries and jealousies. But they share, live, love and celebrate in and through the act of making theatre. Rough Magic's *The Critic* is a remarkable, theatrical achievement and a joyous celebration of the art, craft and the often flawed people who comprise theatre's madcap family. This is a production not to be missed.

*The Critic* runs until October 13th. Tickets are €20.00 – €30.00.

For details on times and venues please follow either of the links below:

Dublin Theatre Festival

[https://www.dublintheatrefestival.com/Online/The\\_Critic](https://www.dublintheatrefestival.com/Online/The_Critic)

Rough Magic

<http://www.roughmagic.ie/Home/Articles/The-Critic-1>



**Chris O'Rourke**

Tulsa Theater Examiner

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