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Dispatches from The Fringe - You'll like this Boys and Girls

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Boys and Girls
Dylan Coburn Gray

Boys and Girls

Rating: ★★★★★

Times may change but the game remains the same. The game being young, hot blooded students looking to hook up. Carnal cravings, thwarted and fulfilled, run rampant as four bright, young things take to the Dublin night in the hope of finding some action. Or connection. Or both. Told through a series of independent monologues written in verse, Dylan Coburn Gray's excellent *Boys and Girls* offers a contemporary take on the trials, tribulations, prejudices and practices of four young students negotiating the sexual pitfalls and possibilities during a single night in Dublin.

In *Boys and Girls* actors play nameless characters. Ronan Carey, as a predatory, misogynistic male seeks the affections and body of Laura. Sean Doyle as a good boy with bad thoughts struggles with the inner tensions this conflict brings. Meave O'Mahony, an unapologetic and sexually confident siren with strong views on the naming of certain feminine parts, sets out for a promising

night of passion. Claire O'Reilly, less confident and stuck in a long term relationship, struggles with a joyless sex life with a man she can't admire. As the night wears on and drinks increase, no good deed goes unpunished and the dawn arrives with its walk of shame when the debris of lust raises as many questions as it answers.

Dylan Coburn Gray's brave gamble of writing in verse paid off handsomely. A concentrated and ambitious script, *Boys and Girls* resonates with classic, verse conventions and is replete with rap overtones. But Coburn Gray bends both to his will, then adds his own rhythmic, poetic and descriptive stylings to craft something powerful and memorable. All delivered by an ensemble performing at the top of their game. *Boys and Girls* charismatic cast each delivered captivating, confident performances.

Though its language is rich and its characters alluring, *Boys and Girls* content didn't always do justice to the craft on display. Its exploration of gender risked reinforcing stereotypes, with gender politics confined to sexual politics and its sexual politics restricted to hetro-sexuals looking to do the deed. This over simplification risked reducing characters to their libidinal urgencies and *Boys and Girls* narrowly avoided being nothing more than a morning after recount of the night before. Equally, Coburn Gray's ambitions as a director didn't always equal that of the writer. Pace was managed to great effect, but like Ilo Tarrant's lighting design, direction was simple and effective without ever being as inventive or imaginative as the script. Yet both managed to ensure focus never wavered from language and performances which were the real highlights of the night.

In its pared back simplicity, *Boys and Girls* is a wonderfully engaging and impressive piece of theatre performed by an outstanding cast, revealing Dylan Coburn Gray as a genuinely promising, young writer with a strong, distinctive voice. This show deserves to be seen. Several times.

Boys and Girls runs at The Pearse Centre, Pearse Street, until September 21st. Doors open at 6.30 p.m. Admission is 12.00 euro



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