



THEATRE

Roots

CHURCH HILL THEATRE,
EDINBURGH

★★★★★

A fat cat who gobbles up everything in sight. A king who tests his wife's fidelity with increasingly horrific trials. A man whose flatmate is Poverty. It's hard to ignore the scathing contemporary resonances in theatre company 1927's sly, witty new *Roots*, getting its first European performances at the Edinburgh International Festival.

The 1927 team cut its teeth in Edinburgh, in 2007, with the gleefully gruesome *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*. And *Roots* feels rather like a return to the company's own roots, but shines a probing light on our own times, never without humour, but with an unmistakable seriousness of purpose. Its short tales form a picture of a world that's



'Roots' shines a probing light on our own times GAELE BERI

unhinged, driven by greed and mistrust, and in which dark deeds are accepted as the norm.

But, 1927 seems to be saying, "twas ever thus". Writer and director Suzanne Andrade has assembled her stories from the British Library's Aarne Index, a catalogue of ancient folk tales from right across the world, given them a few modern twists – the odd oblique reference to Trump is unmistakable.

What really carry the show are its visuals, those gloriously inventive, sometimes troubling animations from Paul Barritt, as well as the white-faced, wide-eyed innocents inserted among them. And in *Roots*,

Barritt is noticeably broadening his design palette: a strikingly semi-abstract sequence on a sex change provoked by mating snakes is particularly memorable. Lillian Henry's warped music blends marvellously, as ever, with Barritt's eerie inventiveness, and it's played live on an impressive collection of instruments, from berimbau to bodhrán.

Roots is utterly captivating, gleefully macabre, and it makes its points so cunningly that they might just slip into your subconscious without you even noticing.

To 25 August (0131 473 2000)

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