

“Blue Beard Babes”

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The play “Blue Beard Babes”, performed as a preview at the Rosemary Branch Theatre before the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, is unique, a collective creation by eight female theatre makers. [...] Maria Alexe and Romina Boldășu [...] performed on 2nd August, in this little dramatic jewel.

The text is a realistic, modern but ruthless retelling of the history of Henry VIII and a tale of female servitude. The six actresses succeed one another on the stage, rapidly alternating between historical figures and modern-day characters. The wives of the famous English king are at the same time six actresses tied to one absent male character, similar to Henry VIII: the director.

There are no historic boundaries to the questions about female existence the actresses passionately raise. Maria Alexe (Anne) is both the penitent queen, and another female character fighting viciously for her part. Romina is the underage queen of Henry VIII and also a young actress who, while sitting with crossed legs and drinking with her mates on a Friday night, admits to having had relations with married men.

The show is rich in physicality, alternating with silent moments of intense drama. The exits of the condemned queens from the stage of power amaze us through the brutal realism. The play’s text is full of puns and shrewd phrases that sometimes make it funny, sometimes disturbing. It is of a complex structure, from the intense monologues of the queens before they are executed, to incantations.

"Divorced, beheaded, died, divorced, beheaded, survived" is the legato between the six female characters. [...] The six queens are caught in their own games of truths and meanings, each of them isolated in her own little piece of shared life with the king. Their envy, their fight for supremacy between them, the joy that they all feel when one has fallen, are as clear and well-defined as their red shirts and scarves.

The ruthless king is portrayed diversely by each of the queens. Pleading with before an execution, exempted, diminished or caricatured. His presence is treated sarcastically, his victims taking turns in interpreting him, wearing a fake beard made of paper fringe. The absent king (the director) is the great absent figure as well as the key character, lending weight the feminine struggle... "It's his show. Without him none of us would be here. Did he give you the role you deserve?!....Did he give you the love you deserve?!....".

[...]

Playing cards are omnipresent throughout the show. They pour down like wedding confetti, they slip among the queens fingers, they are laid down on the floor like a carpet, they become crowns or a dog leash. Using only one prop – the playing cards – the Blue Beard Babes symbolically convey the nothingness and solitude of power, its games and intrigues.

[...]

The young 17 year-old queen, executed by Henry VIII for having cheated on him, Catherine Howard, is played by Romina Boldaşu. Unlike the imposing queen Anne, young Catherine, is fragile, naive, laughs and cries easily, cannot master the rituals of power and even scorns them. [...] Romina portrays a moody, undecided queen, delicately sketching the contrast between the female personality and a political function. With a fine emotion, the actress manages to render dignity to young Howard as she is about to be executed. While preparing for the final moment as she would for a ball, fixing her outfit, Romina's character becomes so humane with just one line inserted among frivolities „I was wondering...does it hurt to die?!“