

<http://www.thepublicreviews.com/convictions-every-coin-soho-theatre-london/>

Convictions: Every Coin – SOHO Theatre, London

Writer: Carlon Campbell Robinson

Director: Esther Baker

Reviewer: Deborah Klayman

The Public Reviews Rating: ★★★★★



Written by a currently serving prisoner and performed by a professional cast, Synergy Theatre Project's production of Every Coin is a truly exceptional piece of theatre. With the writer drawing on his own experience of the justice system, the play feels authentic from beginning to end, managing to be funny, fearless and thought provoking all at the same time. Set in a male prison divided by race, religion and gang affiliations the audience are introduced to Mark, who has been transferred from Belmarsh and is nearing the end of a six and a half year sentence. From this we follow him as he navigates the pitfalls of prison life whilst trying to maintain his relationship with his family, get parole, and stay alive in the highly charged environment.

The play cleverly explores the relationships between the factions of prisoners, and the growth of Islam in the system and the tensions that go with it. Mark is caught between old friends and enemies, and a prison officer who seems to understand parts of his darker past, each believing they know the best way for him to survive his incarceration. The whole cast are strong, but particularly noteworthy performances come from Terence Maynard as the commanding Islamic leader Ikrimah, and Ben Bishop as the dangerous but likeable Liam. The threat of impending violence that runs throughout the play is undercut by humorous exchanges and up to the minute cultural references, leaving the audience unsure as to whether each conversation will end in comedy or tragedy. Due to this, Clifford Samuel's central performance as Mark is

intense and enthralling, with his fate always in the balance. There were a couple of moments that felt like they were there mainly for exposition that could perhaps have been worked into the natural run of the play, but this was only a minor issue and did not take away from the power of the piece.

With a truly outstanding cast, apposite set design and stellar direction, it is no small accolade to say that the writer, Carlon Campbell Robinson, is the true star of the show. A play that is synchronously eloquent, incisive and relevant, Every Coin is a testament to both the playwright's skill and the importance of the project that has brought it to the stage. Convictions – which also includes Michael Ashton's The Archbishop and the Antichrist and three rehearsed readings – is Synergy's first festival of new plays, but judging by this distinguished debut it will certainly not be their last.

Until 14th May.