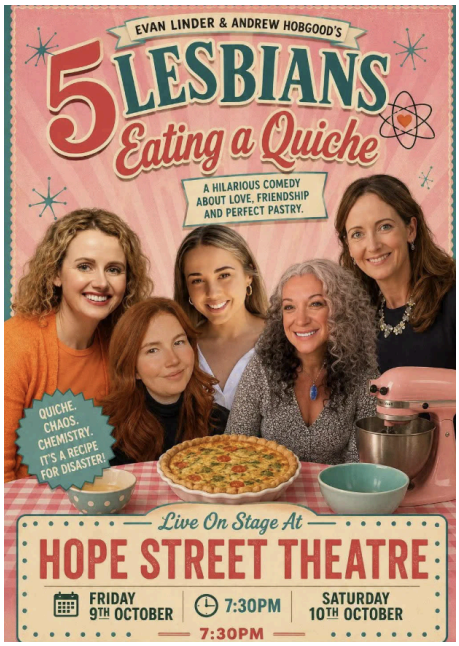
AMATEUR THEATRE REVIEW: 5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche – Blink of an Eye Productions



Five women, one quiche, a nuclear apocalypse and enough innuendo to make your grandmother blush. What could possibly go wrong?

There are some plays that make you smile, some that make you chuckle, and then there are those that are so gloriously ridiculous that you find yourself wondering how on earth the actors manage to keep a straight face. 5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche certainly belongs in that final category.

Presented by Blink of an Eye Productions at Liverpool's intimate Hope Street Theatre, this wonderfully outrageous comedy, written by Evan Linder and Andrew Hobgood, offers an evening of absurdity, double entendres, unexpected revelations and, of course, an almost unhealthy obsession with quiche.

Set in 1956, the story introduces us to the Susan B. Anthony Society for the Sisters of Gertrude Stein, a group of seemingly respectable widows gathering for their annual quiche breakfast. These ladies take their eggs very seriously indeed, and their motto, *"No men, no meat, all manners,"* tells you practically everything you need to know about the world you're entering.

However, when an unexpected nuclear attack threatens to bring civilisation to an abrupt end, the women's carefully constructed world begins to unravel. With their survival uncertain, their secrets start spilling out, inhibitions disappear, and what begins as a rather peculiar society meeting transforms into a wonderfully chaotic celebration of friendship, identity, love and self-acceptance.

It's completely bonkers, gloriously camp and, beneath all the silliness, surprisingly heartfelt.



At the heart of this production of 5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche are five leading ladies. This is very much an ensemble piece, and each actress brought something wonderfully different to the table, apart from the quiche.



Linzy Boden takes on the role of Lulie, the formidable president of the society and a woman who believes that rules, etiquette and a properly prepared quiche are the foundations of civilisation.

Lulie is a delicious character to watch. She's commanding, wonderfully particular and determined to maintain an air of respectability, even when the world around her is quite literally falling apart. Boden's portrayal offers the perfect opportunity for some beautifully judged comedy, with an authoritative presence and a wonderful sense of the absurdity beneath Lulie's polished exterior.

What makes Lulie such a rewarding character is the contrast between her outward composure and the emotions bubbling away underneath. Boden brings the character's contradictions to life, allowing us to enjoy the formidable society president while also recognising the vulnerable woman behind the rules and regulations. A wonderfully entertaining performance.



Kizzy Leigh plays Ginny, the society's secretary and perhaps the most endearingly awkward member of this rather unusual sisterhood.

Ginny is the sort of character you cannot help but take to your heart. Sweet, eager to please and wonderfully naive, she is desperate to belong, even if she doesn't always quite understand what she's getting herself into.

Leigh embraces the character's innocence and comic potential, bringing an infectious energy to the role. Ginny's nervous enthusiasm and increasing bewilderment provide some of the play's

most entertaining possibilities, particularly when her passion for quiche reaches rather extraordinary heights and had the audience in stitches.

It's a role that demands an actress willing to abandon all dignity in the name of comedy, and Leigh makes Ginny a delightfully memorable presence. Beneath the laughs, there is also something rather touching about a young woman simply trying to find her place in the world.



Rachel Sharples portrays Wren Robin, the society's events chairwoman and a woman whose enthusiasm could probably power the entire theatre without the assistance of the lighting desk.

Wren is bright, bubbly, relentlessly cheerful and wonderfully theatrical. She's the sort of person who would organise a committee meeting to discuss the arrangements for the next committee meeting, and she'd be absolutely thrilled about it.

Sharples brings an engaging warmth and larger-than-life personality to the character, capturing that gloriously exaggerated 1950s optimism and expert facial expressions that made Wren such a joy to watch.

But Wren is far more than simply the society's resident bundle of enthusiasm. As the story progresses, we discover a woman with genuine feelings and emotional depth, particularly through her relationship with Dale. Sharples has the opportunity to balance the character's effervescent humour with moments of tenderness and sincerity, giving Wren a heart beneath all that perfectly polished cheerfulness.



Abbie Reader steps into the role of Dale Prist, the society's historian and one of the play's most unexpectedly complex characters.

Dale initially appears sweet, somewhat innocent and quietly devoted to the sisterhood, but as the evening unfolds, we discover that there is rather more to her story than meets the eye.

Reader brings a lovely sense of individuality to the role, allowing Dale's more peculiar characteristics to emerge naturally. The character's personal history provides some of the script's most unusual moments, moving between the utterly ridiculous and the unexpectedly poignant.

Dale's recollections of her childhood offer an opportunity for both comedy and genuine emotion, and Reader's portrayal captures the importance of allowing those contrasting elements to coexist.

Her relationship with Wren also provides a welcome tenderness amid the escalating chaos, reminding us that underneath all the outrageous humour, this is ultimately a story about people finding the courage to be themselves.



Completing this fabulous quintet is Jade Fortune as Veronica 'Vern' Schultz, the society's buildings and grounds chairwoman and a woman who would undoubtedly know exactly what to do in a crisis, even if everyone else had completely lost their minds.

Vern is practical, direct, fiercely loyal and blessed with a wonderfully dry sense of humour. She provides a brilliant contrast to some of the society's more excitable personalities.

Fortune brings a commanding presence to the character, making excellent use of Vern's no-nonsense attitude and wonderfully blunt observations. There's something inherently funny about a character who remains determined to approach even the most absurd situations with a degree of practicality.

Yet beneath Vern's tough exterior lies a softer, more protective personality, particularly in her interactions with Ginny. Fortune allows that warmth to sit comfortably alongside the character's sharper comic qualities, creating a performance that is both entertaining and endearing.

Directing a comedy as gloriously eccentric as 5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche is no small undertaking. The temptation with material this outrageous is to push every joke to its absolute limit, but the real magic comes from understanding when to embrace the absurdity and when to allow the characters' genuine emotions to shine through and under the direction of Jordan Spratt, this production does just that and has all the right ingredients for a wonderfully energetic and entertaining piece of theatre. One of the great things about the show is the script, it demands precise comic timing, bold characterisation and a willingness to break down the

traditional barrier between actors and audience. The society meeting format allows the audience to become part of the proceedings, creating an atmosphere that is wonderfully intimate, unpredictable and occasionally just a little uncomfortable — in the very best theatrical sense. Spratt's direction made sure that the plays' more meaningful moments are never overwhelmed by the comedy and he did this wonderfully.

The Hope Street Theatre is a particularly fitting venue for a production of this nature. Its intimate performance space offers the opportunity to bring the audience directly into the world of the society, making them feel less like spectators and more like fellow members attending the annual quiche breakfast.

A relatively simple setting, supported by appropriate period details and carefully selected props, established the world of 1950s middle America while the use of projection really brought the action to life. The staging worked well as it allowed the audience to appreciate every raised eyebrow, disapproving glance and wonderfully inappropriate reaction.

Lighting also played an important part in telling the story. The contrast between the seemingly innocent atmosphere of a 1950s social gathering and the sudden threat of nuclear catastrophe provided plenty of opportunities for dramatic changes in lighting and Blink of an Eye Productions did this very well.

What makes 5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche such a wonderfully entertaining piece of theatre is its ability to disguise something rather meaningful beneath a mountain of eggs, innuendo and outrageous situations.

Yes, it's silly. Yes, it's wonderfully over the top. And yes, there are moments when you might question the sanity of everyone involved. But that's exactly why it works.

At its heart, this is a play about belonging, friendship, love and finding the confidence to be yourself, even when the world appears to be ending around you.

Linzy Boden, Kizzy Leigh, Rachel Sharples, Abbie Reader and Jade Fortune each gave us a character packed with comic possibilities, and together they formed the beating heart of this gloriously unconventional comedy production, along with Jordan Spratt’s directing and Derek Cross producing the whole team had a play that celebrates everything that makes intimate theatre so enjoyable: bold characters, outrageous humour, audience interaction and the occasional moment of unexpected sincerity.

If you're looking for sophisticated restraint and delicate drawing-room conversation, you may have come to the wrong society meeting.

But if you're in the mood for outrageous comedy, wonderfully eccentric women and more egg-related innuendo than you ever thought possible, then this is most definitely the quiche for you.

A gloriously camp, wonderfully cheeky and delightfully egg-centric theatrical treat.

And remember….

No men. No meat. All manners.

Although, after an evening with this particular society, I'm not entirely convinced about that last one!

Reviewer: Matthew Maney - AMT Productions

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