



[Life Stories](#) at [Salford Arts Theatre](#)

Reviewed by [Stephen Bowler](#) February 2016

Produced by [Radius Opera and Theatre](#)

All art is quite useless. That's why we need it. Because we aren't tools, but men and women with interests beyond utilitarian calculus. Soul is what matters; soul and sympathy and human understanding.

If such is your view, ***Life Stories*** is the evening for you. A pithy, prescient two-parter, *Life Stories* bounces one tale off another and leaves us asking for more.

First-up is ***Rest in Peace***, which draws on a Chekhov tale about a man who is us – everyman, with a shopping trolley full of memories that prompt stream-of-consciousness style statements which, taken overall, chart an arc of experience we know to be true. **Ja**

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breathes life into this character with a lush, flexible bass tone that gains colour and depth as he dances through the highs and lows of memory. All too soon his time is up. He –

Ezdeyev

– will suffer the cold no more. But neither will he know human warmth. An ordinary man, he asks where ‘the snows of yesteryear’ have gone?

Good question! Where indeed did they go? Will they return? Is this a meteorological or a metaphysical enquiry? What lesson might we learn from things that recur, like snow, or human life? Are we in charge of our own destiny? Is there more to consider, in terms of contingency, fate and character? Such themes link the two *Life Stories*.

