



[Slava's Snow Show](#) at Lowry Theatre
Reviewed by [Matthew Dougal](#) October 2017

It is quite incredible to think that a devised piece of physical theatre based clowning can have achieved such popularity and longevity. **Slava Polunin** first created this piece and showed it to audiences way back in 1993, and although it must have been through certain metamorphoses during this time, the basic premise of the show remains constant and continues to delight audiences around the world seemingly with no plans to stop.

The show works on traditions which are Eastern European based, and theatre practises which are not native to the UK. The clowns in the production are not the kind of clown we all know from circuses, and the style of the performance is not pantomime (I heard a few shouts of 'behind you' from the young audience at one point but this was obviously ignored and not

understood by the performer), nor is it able to be pigeon-holed into any UK theatre format. It takes as its roots the teachings of people like Grotowski and so I would assume that the production would be more accessible in other European countries rather than here in the UK. This, for me is both the greatness of the piece and its inherent problem.

As a middle-aged theatre practitioner who has been through the mill and am still active on both sides of the forth wall, I found this piece of theatre totally spellbinding and fascinating. The Slava company being absolutely at the top of their game. It was a complete and faultless presentation and highly skilful. Full of pathos, humour, slapstick, and with enough special effects - all of which were utterly spectacular and stunning - to make any producer take a second glass of whisky; but my concern lies with exactly this... the style of presentation is foreign to us islanders, and so to market this show as a family show suitable for young children, is perhaps not necessarily the way to go. I was surrounded by youngsters this evening... all anything from 5 years to perhaps 11, and all were quiet but somewhat bored in the first half. It took them a long time to latch on to the style and the premise of the show. Too long actually.

Some of the moments were sad and perhaps a little scary - and they went on too long for 21st century 8 year olds, and they only really began to emote and join in after the interval when things got a little crazier and the cast came amongst us with umbrellas dripping water everywhere.

The company of 8 (**Tatiana Karamysheva, Bradford West, Robert Saralp, Oleg Lugovsky, Nikolai Terentiev**

,
Aron De Casmaker

,
Christopher Lymm
and

Yury Musatov

) created a world full of non-sequential child-like imagination where a yellow clown slowly enters the area preparing to hang himself, and then is brought back from his sadness and reveries by 7 green clowns, and in between all of this the LX and SFX departments are working themselves silly. It is fantasy and fantastical, and since Slava Polunin is still in the driving seat as director it ensures that each show will, although undoubtedly differ somewhat due to the improvised nature of the piece as a whole, remain solid and have the same feel and earnestness each performance.

The final sequence of light and wind was incredible and with a surprise ending to please the youngsters once everyone has taken their bows, the children do go away with smiles on their faces having enjoyed it. For production values and the show's reverence to tradition then I take my hat off to them and give ten out of ten; but, and yes there is a but, I feel there should be some way of trying to communicate on the child's level right from the start and engaging them right from the start if indeed that is their intended target audience.