



[The Heretic](#) by Richard Bean

Produced by The **[Library Theatre](#)** at The Lowry

Reviewed by **[Helen Nugent](#)** October 2012

A trip to a production by the ***Library Theatre*** is like a visit to the Donmar Warehouse in London: odds are you will have a thought-provoking and hugely entertaining evening. And so it was last night at a performance of ‘**The Heretic**’ at **The Lowry**.

Boy, Richard Bean really does know how to write great parts for actors. Anyone in any doubt of this should go and see ‘One Man, Two Guvners’, his award-winning adaptation of a 1743 Commedia dell’arte comedy by Carlo Goldoni. Or, for that matter, ‘The Heretic’ for which Bean

relies solely on his own imagination.

'The Heretic' opened last year at The Royal Court but this new staging is its regional premiere. The production works well in the cosy surroundings of the Quays Theatre but was surprisingly badly-attended on a Wednesday night in early October. Perhaps the subject matter had put people off. Although 'The Heretic' is very much a comedy, the central character is a climate change scientist whose terminology is occasionally a little baffling. Or maybe everyone was next door at the RSC's production of 'Julius Caesar'.

For those who had dragged themselves out of the house on a rainy and blowy Salford school night, the effort was rewarded. Like 'One Man, Two Guvnors', the play rattled on without taking a breath. To my mind, the first half was the greater success; the second half let down by an overload of one-liners. In a past life, Bean was a stand-up comedian and there were times post-interval when it felt like he was cramming in all of his jokes before the curtain came down. As such, some of the most cracking comments were lost in a sea of mediocre quips which, given Bean's mastery of wordplay, was a shame.

Among a relatively small cast, Cate Hamer and Stuart Fox stood out as academics at a thinly-disguised University of East Anglia. Their verbal fencing as they debated opposing climate change convictions was a delight to watch. And Sophie Robinson as Hamer's anorexic daughter gave a convincing performance. But Ciaran Kellgren as an Earth Sciences undergraduate and Andrew Westfield as a site security official were less competent. At times it felt as though the two men's character portrayals were rescued only by the strength and quality of their scripts.

That said, I have no reservations in recommending a play about a scientist who goes public with her reservations about the accepted science of global warming. And, as a reviewer who has little love for Shakespeare's history plays, I for one was glad to spend the evening pondering one of the most important issues of modern times.

The Heretic by Richard Bean, until Saturday 13 October, 2012 at The Lowry - see <http://www.librarytheatre.com/event/the-heretic>

. Trailer video below: