

THEATRE

La Reprise

LYCEUM THEATRE, EDINBURGH



Who'd have thought a play about a homophobic hate crime could be so much fun? Well, maybe that's overstating things a little. But there are certainly lighter moments in *La Reprise*, a production by provocative Swiss-born director Milo Rau which investigates the torture and killing of 32-year-old Ihsane Jarfi in Liège in 2012 in a homophobic attack.

In fact, it's Rau and his International Institute of Political Murder ensemble's careful judging and pacing of mood that make the play so effective, and so memorable, too. From its disarmingly jokey opening the show slides inexorably to its pitch-black heart: a recreation of the crime itself that, as Rau's ensemble has established by this stage, is almost mundane in its cruelty.

But this being Rau, general enfant terrible of European theatre, *La Reprise* is also, naturally, theatre about theatre. Accordingly, casting processes get incorporated into the production, and there's a constant restless shifting between actor and role.

It's also a show about itself: as much as he's investigating issues around the murder of Jarfi, Rau examines his own production,

even at times questioning why they're tackling this horrific event on stage at all. He collides live and filmed versions of the same scenes, and even holds his own motives behind casting and staging decisions up for interrogation.

Does that sound insufferably meta-theatrical? It could be. But Rau handles his material – which is often admittedly pretty self-referential – with such elegance that this feels witty rather than worthy, transparent instead of self-important.

So, yes, despite its subject matter, *La Reprise* is a lot of fun, with both gags and intellectual sleight-of-hand going on. Its final image, however, makes clear the audience's own complicity and dares us to consider whether we're passive bystanders or active participants. It's an unsettling conclusion to a provocative but thoroughly entertaining work.

DAVID KETTLE

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JOKE OF THE DAY

👀👀 I find it hard to believe Melania Trump had a body double for public appearances. It would definitely be for the private stuff. 👀👀

Laura Lexx

Gilded Balloon, 5.15pm