

Ch Ch Changes, Citizens Theatre, Glasgow Sunday Herald Review

30 Oct 2011

Martin O'Connor's new play *Ch Ch Changes* – playing as part of the annual Glasgay! festival of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender arts and culture – is a less ambitious, but more complete theatre work.

The title of this solo piece is inspired by the music of David Bowie. Excerpts of this play while fine actor Grant Smeaton makes the on-stage costume changes required by five monologues for a very disparate group of gay, bisexual and transgender men. The drama's focus upon the experiences of men of such different backgrounds, and sexual and gender orientations, makes for a richly varied, poignant and humorous evening's theatre.

At the outset, we have a 50-year-old Glaswegian gay man taking a breather from the religious funeral of a former lover who never came out, either to his family or the wider world. In his youth, our speaker arrived in New York City, only for his delight in the city's hedonistic freedoms to be punctured by the onset of the HIV/AIDS crisis.

From there, we meet a heterosexual transvestite; an "80% gay" bisexual man, struggling with the pain and guilt of leaving his wife and son; a self-confident and hilarious gay guy talking, 19 to the dozen, about his most recent house party; and a worker, seduced by his bisexual male boss, who finds himself in a bizarre ménage à quatre on an expensive holiday.

The "changes" of the play's title are, on the political and social level, largely positive ones; from the decriminalisation of male homosexuality in Scotland in 1980 to the right to civil partnerships for lesbian and gay couples in 2005.

However, the barbaric murder of 28-year-old Stuart Walker in Cumnock last weekend (which some believe to have been motivated by homophobia) suggests we have many positive changes still to achieve.