

Theatre review: Ch Ch Changes - Citizen's Theatre, Glasgow

By Jay Richardson

Rating: ****

FIVE gay men in late middle-age reflect upon the ways in which society's attitudes towards homosexuality have changed in recent decades.

Based upon conversations conducted by writer Martin O'Connor with men in the LGBT community, and directed and performed by Grant Smeaton, these compelling monologues are suffused with a droll humour engendered by the actor's empathetic, playful approach. But these are profound expressions of pain and honesty too, of progress made and progress yet to be made, within families and the wider world but often within the troubled individuals themselves.

Interspersed with snatches of David Bowie's back catalogue and emulating his penchant for reinvention through dressing up, the resulting tapestry is vividly detailed, depictions of prejudice and self-discovery overlapping and looking forwards as well as back.

The sense that tolerance and understanding have moved beyond those times when a man's sexuality could remain unknown to many at his funeral is exemplified by the teenage son who regards his father's bisexuality with nonchalance, even as his father's debilitating regret and his parents' estrangement festers.

Smeaton doesn't rely on his extensive wardrobe to evoke the characters, rendering them believable with bold flourishes of gesture and demeanour, though never obscuring the subtleties in O'Connor's script, which frequently reveals more in what remains unsaid.