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THE PINK LIST at the King's Head Theatre



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“Michael Trauffer packs an enormous amount into this engaging and perfectly performed show”

The Pink List, from the creators of *Fabulett 1933*, explores the treatment of gay men by the German state through the eyes of Karl Hellwig (Michael Trauffer), a fictional character drawn from compilation of the life experiences of many concentration camp survivors including Karl Gorath, Heinz Dörmer and Josef Kohout. Only a very few courageous and resilient gay victims of the National Socialist regime publicly spoke about their experiences after the war, due to the continued criminality of homosexuality. This play with music, uses their testimony and first-hand accounts to portray events, including incidents in the camps, verdicts of criminal trials for ‘immoral actions’ between consenting adult men and their exclusion from the schemes for compensation of victims of the Nazis.

The pink lists created by the Nazis to allow them to track and target gay men for shipping to the camps, continued to be used to identify and

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humour, Karl's early crush on a fellow Scout and his finding of 'his people' in the cabaret clubs of early 1930s Berlin. The subject of one of the two songs that received a deserved round of applause, 'Home'. A visceral re-enactment of his punishing existence in the two camps in which Karl is imprisoned is delivered with conviction and appropriate emotion. The chilling image of a Christmas under guard contrasting starkly with that of the family Christmas of his childhood crush.

The second ballad to receive applause was the heartrending 'Nothing's Ever Really Over'. It describes Karl's post-liberation search for his past family & friends 'walking over the debris of a nightmare' with the 'shadows of the SS Guards right here'.

Whilst necessary to give a dramatic context the play, perhaps, dwells too much on the pre-war and wartime story that is well known from other dramas, films and novels. The more interesting and in a sense, more compelling part of the narrative; Karl's arrest, trial and imprisonment under the infamous Paragraph 175 of the German Penal Code, which was not 'de-nazified' as other parts of the law were after 1945, the sentence which would not acknowledge the years spent in concentration camps as off-setting time to be served for the 1957 conviction and his search for recognition and recompense for his persecution and victimhood seemed not to be given due time and space through re-enactment. The failure of the state to acknowledge that, and even to continue to use the Nazis' pink lists to maintain persecution of the victims by imprisonment is a story that needs to be told and awareness of it raised. This extended monologue with songs, delivered with emotion and flashes of humour by its author is a good start in doing that.

The final song, 'I'm Still Here', a rousing anthem for all of those, like Karl, who were overlooked and whose persecution was continued by the German state, gives further testimony of the struggles which

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THE PINK LIST may only be an hour, but Michael Trautner packs an enormous amount into this engaging and perfectly performed show.

THE PINK LIST at the King's Head Theatre

Reviewed on 5th August 2024

by Thomson Hall

Photography by Sarah Morrison



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