

THE SQUIRREL PLAYS

By [Carla van der Sluijs](#), 20th Aug 2018 ★★★★★

Many productions at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe this year discuss female freedom of choice, but few do so as creatively as *The Squirrel Plays*. In this show from Part of the Main, Tom and Sarah are young professionals thrilled to be buying a new home. There's just one problem: the couple live in fear of a squirrel infestation. As they and their neighbours take extreme precautions to 'protect their attic,' it becomes quickly apparent that Tom and Sarah aren't talking about squirrels at all. Pregnancy, abortion and the pressure on women to have children are all examined in Mia McCullough's elaborate metaphor. The resulting performance is just as entertaining as it is clever.

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Through bold colours in lighting and costume, this production is tinged with a glossy sheen. A presence of magenta throughout gives the impression of a sweet and sugary neighbourhood in which difficult or challenging subjects are not welcome for debate. Depth is also added to the performance from its close attention to minor details. For instance, Sarah's dressing gown mirrors the grey of Tom's jumper as he tries to take control of her predicament.

All performers achieved an excellent balance between the play's moments of comedy and more serious undertones. Through inventive physicality, they embodied items of furniture in the home to much amusement of the audience. In her role as Sarah, Amy Reitsma brilliantly presents the conflicted situation many women find themselves in regarding motherhood. Her conversations alone with a squirrel who had slipped into the attic were poignant and brought tears to my eyes.

The Squirrel Plays is a vital production for those in search of feminist theatre at the festival. Part of the Main have created a sharp and polished performance that captures a wide spectrum of opinions on abortion without lecturing the audience. It's complex yet comprehensible.

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