

AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS

Rain or Shine Theatre Company

The Playhouse Theatre, Cheltenham

Saturday 15th January 2022

Mad Spanish sea captains, obedient camels, a hot-air balloon and some highly suspect beards - these were just a few of the images

I was left with at the end of this **wonderfully whacky** adaptation

of Jules Verne's novel *Around the World in 80 Days*. At Cheltenham's intimate Playhouse Theatre, Gloucester-based Rain or Shine Theatre set out their inimitable stall once again, **delivering another madcap re-invention of a famous literary work**, and all told by a typically minimal cast, in this instance four actors assuming multiple roles and cracking any number of corny gags. The biggest laugh of the evening, however, came courtesy of a timely sideswipe at Boris Johnson's current woes.



An infamous thief known as the Nightingale has skipped the country with three stolen paintings. Inspector Fix of the Yard is in hot pursuit, while Phileas Fogg is trying to win a substantial bet by circumnavigating planet Earth in under three months. But Fix thinks the two events are connected, and our heroes soon become suspects, intercepted at every turn by the determined detective, splendidly played by Ashley Shiers whose relentless histrionics generated considerable reaction from the fully engaged audience. His fellow thespians followed suit in a **production that was certainly conscious of not so much breaking the fourth wall as totally demolishing it**, with the costume changes and jokes flowing thick and fast in what could easily have been *Phileas Fogg: The Pantomime*.

Around him, Anthony Young excelled as the overworked, Oliver Hardy-ish Passepartout, lumbering around the stage weighed down with suitcases (another fine mess) and cursing constantly in amusingly broken French. Rob Keeves, who co-wrote the script with director Jonathan Legg, excellently helped maintain a brisk pace to proceedings as Phileas Fogg, and Pippa Meekings was utterly delightful as the Fogg's haughty love interest Amelia Swift.

All **very entertaining, alternative and unpredictable**; where else would the instructions for an IKEA Billy bookcase double for a railway timetable, topped with dodgy dying scenes in Calcutta?

But that's Rain or Shine Theatre for you; it's what they do!

Rain or Shine are on tour with *Around the World in 80 Days* until 1st May. For details of performances, please visit www.rainorshine.co.uk.