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## Theatre review: The Edinburgh Passion



IN A COUNTRY something like Scotland, a yes/no referendum is taking place – “yes” for a radical change, “no” for the status quo. Many ordinary folk, particularly the poor and disadvantaged, are leaning towards the “yes” side, while the suit-wearing establishment – all spin-doctors and dodgy anti-terror laws – are desperate to secure a “no”.

The Edinburgh Passion - Princes Street Gardens, [Edinburgh](#)

\* \* \*

And to complicate matters, there’s a new force in the land, a young preacher who doesn’t care which way people vote, so long as they reconcile themselves with God, but whose suggestion that there is an alternative set of values, beyond earthly power and wealth, is perceived by the establishment as a serious threat to their dominance.

This is the scenario developed by playwright Rob Drummond for his 2014 Edinburgh Passion, played out in glorious sunshine in Princes Street Gardens on Saturday by a company of more than 30 community actors, led by one professional, Duncan Rennie, in fine form as Christ.

Its early scenes, played out in the Ross Bandstand, certainly succeeded in generating some moments of electrifying power, as the political establishment – notably a powerful Elaine Palmer as the spin-doctor McCayfus – battled with Jesus’s little band of followers for the hearts and minds of the crowd.

The Last Supper scene, too, played out under trees in the garden, was a little masterpiece of touchingly persuasive updating, Rennie’s impressive Jesus struggling to accept his fate, while the star-struck landlady shyly asks him to pose for a selfie.

In the final scene, Suzanne Lofthus’s strikingly well-choreographed production made a strategic error, moving on to an awkward setting beside the ice-cream hut rather than returning to where it started for the climax of the story, and offering a final blast of the kind of dire pseudo-pop song that too often features in 21st century Christian worship.

Yet although this was the quintessential one-off theatre event – it will be a long wait for another Easter Saturday, in the run-up to a crucial [Scottish](#) referendum – it left some vital questions behind it, above all about the role of goodness in a world of politics so damaged by

cynicism and lies, and about how we would react today if a young teacher appeared who really tried to speak truth to power.

Seen on 19.04.14



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