

ENGLISH CABARET with C theatre

Dreams of Peace & Freedom

A song cycle by Sue Casson

There are a number of different ways to commemorate important milestones in our history, and the individuals who took part in them. Several people have suggested to me that I should write a book, but too many history books are not bought, and those that are bought are left unread. A couple of people have suggested that a statue should be erected. This has been a rough year for statues, a statue's permanence makes it vulnerable to the tides of history, that quite rightly wash away the unacceptable.

Our protagonist placed himself on the wrong side of the future history that his early actions we describe, realised.

So, we commemorate by touching lightly on events of great weight, and seeking to divine the deeper magic that was at work after the war and after 30 years of warfare and depression. The war crimes trials at Nuremberg and the early meetings of Congress, Council and Assembly of Europe were 'Camelot' moments in their progress and imperfections. David Maxwell Fyfe was a leading figure in both. The events themselves and what he did there should be remembered if we are to believe in Albion.

Like people who have over thousands of years, we tell our story in words and song, the better to evoke the magic.

TDMFB

MUSICAL TALK

THE UK'S INDEPENDENT MUSICAL THEATRE PODCAST

Thos Ribbits first heard *Dreams of Peace & Freedom* at C South when it premiered as part of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2014. In August 2020, he spoke to its' composer Sue Casson on his podcast, introducing his listeners to the recently released recording. You can hear the interview in full (MusicalTalk episode 0681 #VirtualFringe2020) at apple podcasts and tunein.com.

About the Piece

At heart, *Dreams of Peace & Freedom* is tackling enormous themes - freedom, democracy, liberty. It tells the story of David Maxwell Fyfe and explains how he helped to develop the world we live in today. This is a man who can genuinely lay a claim to being one of the architects of freedom and liberty for the post-war world in which we are still living. It also looks at how those liberties were won and how we still need to defend them in an increasingly unstable world.

On the premiere - a 'secular hymn to humanity'

I was transported. I found it incredibly moving, incredibly humane - humanity is the golden thread throughout the whole thing - it's a very positive view of what humankind can be and should be and should aspire to be - the optimist over the cynic, which of course is that dynamic that runs through Maxwell Fyfe's own thoughts.

The macro and the micro

David Maxwell Fyfe's own personal beliefs and story are interwoven all through that - drawing a macro from a micro and in reverse. The humanity of David Maxwell Fyfe informs his professional career, and his professional career is informed by his humanity which then goes on to become one of the principal blueprints for the modern post war world. We live in David Maxwell Fyfe's world in a way, so that is why this is such an important story in that it illuminates him, as he illuminates the world we're living in today through the funnel of time.

On its' title

We all have dreams of peace and freedom. You'll have to go a long way to find someone who doesn't believe in peace and doesn't believe in freedom.

On Natural Justice

The story of an injustice in the family from 100 years beforehand colours Maxwell Fyfe's view on natural law, natural justice, and the need for law to stop arbitrary behaviour. And then he practices that, both on the bench and in a political environment - law is infused through any government. Post-war, that legal situation is writ larger again in a collaboration of different nationalities, Russia, America, France and Britain, who at that time philosophically were not necessarily seeing eye to eye, but were able to come together on this very important matter. In this case showing the world that totalitarianism didn't work and that the ideals of the Allies - which were liberal, democratic and law-based - would then be applied: 'We will hold a trial and we will show the world the worth of the rule of law.'

On Rupert Brooke as its' lyrical godfather

A philosophy of idealism was taken into the First World War with Rupert Brooke and in a much more practical way those virtues are interwoven with Maxwell Fyfe's own philosophy to come out of the Second World War. An odd two world war synthesis of ideals.

On the idea of it as a protest piece

There is something bigger in this. It's not a piece with a message that you punch into somebody, it's beautifully done. This will still I think be a work of importance in 10 years time.

To sum up

It is a magnificent work. It is genuinely important, thoughtful, uplifting, and yet far from complacent, it generates a whole panoply of different emotional responses - it's a such a beautiful tapestry. This is a piece to which you have to have some response, and that as a work of art is a really marvellous thing to be able to say.