

Time Out

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'Abduction'

ICA

In an unguarded moment, as she stares out of the bedroom window and fiddles with bits of her body, Margaret is visited by an extra-terrestrial in film-noir homburg and greatcoat. She soon finds herself pulling down her pants and flashing at him. Is he making her do it for his own evil ends, or is this something she's al-



ways hankered to do but never dared? The extra-terrestrials in Hilary Westlake's exciting and atmospheric show are benign, almost avuncular beings, who visit three entangled characters (two women and a man), with tellingly different results. Westlake explores questions of permission and coercion, desire and fulfilment, fear and self-knowledge in characteristically oblique ways.

Jeremy Peyton Jones' score, for tenor and counter-tenor voices and electric guitar, is at times sci-fi moody, at times ethereally beautiful. Live, on-stage noise is overlaid with a pre-recorded soundtrack, the singing of the ETs is mixed with their own amplified voices, and the lighting design (by Simon Corder) is luxuriant: it's a technically adventurous show, but never at the cost of emotional engagement. After recent cosmic misadventures, Lumiere & Son are clearly back in orbit with what looks intriguingly like a 'proper' play — a searching look at the human psyche but, mercifully, not a psychiatrist's couch in sight.

Clare Bayley

THEATRE

Abduction

ICA

Claire Armitstead

THE LATEST show from Lumière and Son makes a refreshing change from others in the ICA's new theatre season — here is a company which uses technique and technology as means rather than ends. There are three televisions on

the stage, but their purpose is not to reflect on the nature of the theatre-making process, with a succession of the usual talking heads. It is to reveal the cacophony of voices that impinge on the modern consciousness, as exemplified by three very different characters in three bedrooms. The telephone also features, and the answerphone, whether by accident or design, becomes a shield against the very intimacy that the telephone is supposed to encourage.

Into this world of missed connections and misdiagnoses walk three "aliens" in Dr Who scarves and Raymond Chandler raincoats, who sing in spooky, amplified harmony, and act as catalysts for submerged passions. Their role, in Hilary Westlake's fluent and atmospheric production, is not reductive but creative. In scenes of almost unbearable self-exposure, the sexual hysteric, Margaret (an incandescent Anne Lynch), is licensed to fiddle with herself, thus getting back in touch with her own sexuality and releasing her hysteria. The liberators also succeed in transforming Paul into a half-good trumpeter, but fail miserably with Eileen, ostensibly the most level-headed of the three but in fact the most deeply and intractably inhibited. David Gale's dialogue and the heroic, Mass-influenced music of Jeremy Peyton Jones combine to create a world in which one person's liberation can be another's futurist nightmare.

The Guide

The Guardian arts and entertainment selection

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WEEK

THEATRE

Travels with My Aunt (Wyndham's Theatre)

Gils Havergal's all-male staging pits the mimetic skills of four actors against Graham Greene's astute comic novel. Though initially "against" seems the operative word, as the quartet fight their way through the crowds of characters (taking shares in retired bank clerk, and moral virgin Henry Pulling), the adaptation gradually begins to exert its own charm. Simon Cadell stays just the right side of parody as the insatiable Augusta, leaving Richard Kane and John Wells to devour most of her amours and enemies. You won't see better acting in the West End.

Abduction (ICA)

Last chance to see Lumiere and Son's exploration of passion in the tele-age (television, telephone, a cacophony of irrelevant messages and missed connections). Anne Lynch is heart-rending as an hysteric who is put back in touch (literally) with her sexuality by one of three benign aliens in Dr Who scarves and Raymond Chandler mags. Hilary Westlake's production is brave and provocative, with a stirring score from Jeremy Peyton Jones.

The Wexford Trilogy (The Bush)

From the customary gloom about new playwriting emerges the cheering beacon of Billy Roche, whose powerful trilogy of small-town Irish life is in repertory until December 22, under the direction – as originally – of Robin Lefevre. Here is a writer who can spin a yarn that keeps you bound to your seat. A Handful of Stars is on Monday or Tuesday, with Belfry tonight or Friday and Poor Beast in the Rain on Wednesday and Thursday (or blow out on all three next Saturday).

CLAIRE ARMITSTEAD
