

Bringing the past to life in ambitious new production of a classical comedy

The Satyricon at the Assembly Roxy, Edinburgh, 4 - 8 October 2022

Three footloose young men encountering adventures of seduction, theft, violence and more; what could go wrong? In a new production of the classic story *The Satyricon* writer/director Martin Foreman looks at first-century Rome through twenty-first century eyes and brings to life both its comedy and its darker side.

In this fast and funny - not to mention filthy and philosophical - play, narrator Gaius Petronius (Steven Corrall) introduces the audience to Encolpius (Joseph Cathal), Ascyltos (Ben Blow) and Giton (Scott Adair). "I'd like to call them heroes," he adds, "but they're not handsome or virtuous and if they've got brains they haven't learned how to use them."

Accompanying the trio is a cantankerous group of twenty-first century actors who play dozens of characters from the wealthiest to the poorest in Roman society. In the background the god Bacchus presides over the tale; in a climactic scene Trimalchio (Alastair Lawless), the richest man in the Empire, is revealed as both a genial and a terrifying host; and from time to time Petronius wonders aloud what has happened to his creation.

The Satyricon is one of the earliest stories portraying the lives not of heroes and gods, but of ordinary people, from sailors and slaves to poets and prostitutes. Much of the plot is driven by sex - between men, between women and men, between young and old. Throughout the story sex is sought, offered, denied, suffered and imposed. Even impotence raises - or rather does not raise - its head.

Because first century morality was very different from today the challenge of the play is to present the Roman perspective on sexual behaviour without condoning or criticising it. "Given how rapidly attitudes towards gender and sexuality are changing today," says Martin Foreman, "it's foolish of us to condemn the past for not adhering to our standards. After all, we can be certain that future generations will look back at our behaviour with an equally critical eye."

In addition to the sex and comedy the play has moments of darkness and includes scenes that some theatregoers may find upsetting. Foreman is unapologetic about these: "*The Satyricon* is about life and life is sometimes offensive, painful and unpleasant." For these reasons the audience is limited to 16 years and older.

A strong team has come together to create *The Satyricon*. Foreman's previous work includes winning the 2018 Pitlochry Festival Theatre Short Play Award and productions based on *Death in Venice*, *Volpone* and the life of Giacomo Casanova. He is supported by assistant director Junior (Graciela) Cross, who moved to Scotland in 2017 with twenty years' experience in theatre in Buenos Aires. The varied cast includes both recent drama graduates and experienced actors and lighting by veteran technician Gordon Hughes. The

minimalist set makes full use of the large thrust stage of the Assembly Roxy, transforming from forum to brothel, inn to forest, bath-house to ship and more.

A co-production between Arbery Theatre and Edinburgh Graduate Theatre Group, *The Satyricon* premieres at the Assembly Roxy at 19:30 on Wednesday 5th October (preview 19.30 Tuesday 4th October). As noted above, the audience is limited to 16 years and older.

Website (general): <https://thesatyricon.uk/>
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The Satyricon

Assembly Roxy, 2 Roxburgh Place, Edinburgh EH8 9SU

Wed 5 - Sat 8 October, 19.30, plus matinee Sat 8 October 14.30, tickets £18 (+£1 booking fee)
preview Tues 4 October, 19.30 £15 (+£1 booking fee)

2h 30m

TICKETS

0131 623 3030

<https://assemblyfestival.com/roxy>



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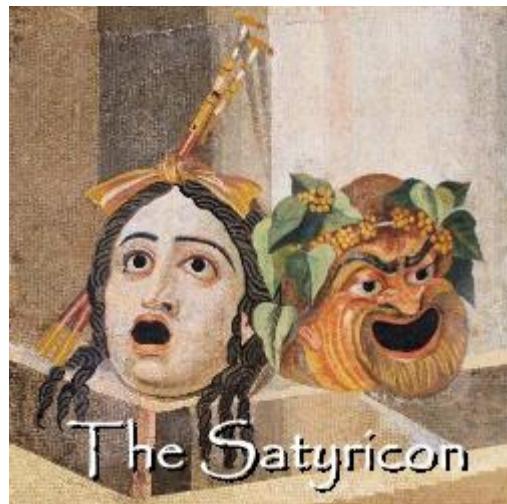


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Ascyltos, Giton, Encolpius
(Ben Blow, Scott Adair, Joseph Cathal)
prepared for whatever life may throw at them
photo: Robert Pereira Hind



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