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THE SATYRICON

ASSEMBLY ROXY



Ambitious new stage production of a classic comedy with a modern message

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EDINBURGH
ASSEMBLY ROXY
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The *Satyricon* is a first century Latin comedy brought back to life by this fun reimagining that embraces the themes of the time while simultaneously offering its own commentary on them.

Written and directed by **Martin Foreman**, this co-production between **Arbery Theatre** and **Edinburgh Graduate Theatre Group** aims to scrutinise the scrutiny that stories from long ago go through. Given the play is made up of surviving texts from an ancient and much longer series, the narrative is fairly straightforward, feeling like self-contained episodes with some recurring characters amidst the mischief.

We follow three sex and food starved men, pitiful gladiator Encolpius (**Joseph Cathal**), brash Ascytos (**Ben Blow**) and young Giton (**Scott Adair**), on their adventures around the Roman Empire. Narrator Gaius Petronius, played dutifully by **Steven Corral**, presents these stories while the characters that the trio come across are played by an enthusiastic group of twenty-first century actors.

From the get go the audience are made to feel included in the narrative as the open floor stage draws you into the action from all angles, moving from markets, to forests, ships, and brothels. Interwoven between each scene, we are treated to the observations of Petronius which offers context to the period in which they were written, making the piece more accessible to audiences old and new alike.

The cast's energy makes up for the simple props and costumes, their dedication to their roles and constant movement helping to maintain the audience's attention. The main trio bounce off each other with ease and are well cast in their roles. **Robert Wylie** especially stands out in two smaller, yet hilarious, roles as an old woman and Eumolpus; while many of the supporting cast switch between various characters with ease.

To our surprise, the characters even have the opportunity to question their creator. What happens when their stories are over? Will the women and slaves ever have their stories told? In a twist of fate, they do, in one of the more dramatic moments which contrasts with the raunchy yet humorous tone of the show.

Unfortunately, the final sequence takes a lot away of the ambiguity by over-explaining the point that future generations will always find a fault in the past. "They are just stories" Gaius argues, no lessons to be learnt here. Although *The Satyricon* is staged as a space for a modern dissection, the same effect could have been achieved without the final, seemingly never-ending, critique. Though perhaps that's also a critique in and of itself.