

MONSTROUS REGIMENT

Liverpool Echo, Thursday, October 8, 1981

REVIEW

Tips on Yoga

WALTER HUNTLEY
Everyman Theatre

Martha's little yoga group was once 20 strong; now it has dwindled to four women and a man.

It is not difficult to see why—as Rose Tremain's play Yoga-class unfolds at the Everyman in this production by the Monstrous Regiment company.

The women are all dissatisfied with their lives to a greater or lesser degree and have come seeking escape—and perhaps, even the secret of how to change things.

It does not make them the happiest of company as they pour out their problems, but it is an interesting formula for a debate on women's role today.

There are flashes of sardonic humour, particularly from John Slade as David, the representative chauvinistic male.

But it is Dianna Barrett as Martha who holds it together so naturally; it is a thought-provoking play but I hope Monstrous Regiment are not going to be obsessed with man's inhumanity to woman, I'm told there are women who actually get fun out of life; it would be nice if someone could write a play about them.

Monstrous Regiment Limited
4 Elder Street London E1 6BT
Telephone: 01-247 2398

Registered in England number 1332483
Registered Office: 49 South Molton Street London W1Y 1HE
Charity number 274517

Directors: Ms C Bowler, Ms J Cupido, Mr G Garside
Ms G L Hanna, Ms M McCusker, Mr J Slade

MONSTROUS REGIMENT

CRITICS

EVERYMAN/Philip Key

A yoga class study of feminist positions

SOMETIMES a play and its cast mix together like a gin and tonic: it happened last night at the Liverpool Everyman where the Monstrous Regiment company took on a new play by Rose Tremain, *Yoga Class*.

The company—a feminist bunch who order up plays by women writers—managed somehow to produce something that was about people as much as women.

The characters inhabiting the class of the title faced the problems that so many people face—unsatisfactory relationships, unfulfilled aims, over-confidence and self-doubt.

On the surface, this was occasionally blamed on men, with three of the five women suffering from

men who either dominated or didn't understand them. But under the surface, most of the problems were of their own making.

With a minimal plot, much depended on the actual performances, and here the five-women, one-man-strong cast showed some strength.

The structure of the play suited its subject well, with characters sometimes addressing the audience, sometimes each other. A bonus was the songs (music by Helen Glavin), sung without musical accompaniment, but quite intimidating.

Maybe not a lot happened physically—apart from the yoga exercises themselves—but director Caroline Eves kept the stage busy.

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LIVERPOOL EARLY POST
THURSDAY 3TH OCT 1981

Liverpool Echo, Thursday, October 8, 1981

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MONSTROUS REGIMENT

SOUTH WALES ECHO, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23, 1981

Dramatic meditation

FIVE women and one man gather in the gymnasium of an adult education centre for their weekly yoga class...

If yoga means a disciplining of the intellect, the emotions, the will, the body, with the aim of achieving harmony with the world, a true balance, then these six certainly are in need of yoga.

For each, including the class instructor, have their hang-ups and problems, from a mere sense of futility, to near mental breakdown.

This is the framework of *Yoga* class by Rose Tre-

THEATRE by JON HOLLIDAY

main, staged by Monstrous Regiment as the final presentation in the three-week Fringe Festival at the Sherman Arena Theatre, Cardiff (until tomorrow).

And it works beautifully, the exchanges between characters given added meaning by soliloquy and aside, and bursts of song

that seem just right for no clearly discernible reason.

There's plenty of punch and power in the production by Caroline Eves, and all six in the cast — Joanna Field, Diana Barrett, John Slade, Norma Cohen, Aviva Goldkorn and Chris Bowler — have their effective moments.

All are seeking emotional props to get them through the day, through life itself, and the revelations, even when expressed with humour, are pretty painful, too. It would be an insensitive person indeed who could not recognise something of him or herself in these characters and their anxieties, attitudes and carefully constructed defences.

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MONSTROUS REGIMENT

REVIEW

First class yoga

Yoga Class, Monstrous
Regiment.

Birmingham Rep
Studio Theatre.

Relax with yoga.
That's a familiar sug-
gestion for healthier
living.

But the Yoga Class of
Rose Tremain's
thought-provoking yet
entertaining play for
the lively feminist
company, Monstrous
Regiment, turns out to
be more akin to a ses-
sion with a psychoa-
nalyst for all its mem-
bers.

As the class proceeds
— with interruptions —
each "student" reveals
some kind of hang-up.

Jean, the 50-year-old
widow, has regrets for
the children she never
had. Warm-hearted,
vulgar little Annie hates
her drunken husband.
Sensitive Jennifer can
never feel free of her
children.

David, the only man,
is insecure, yet scornful.
Militant Nancy
demands more action.
And Martha, the
teacher, makes a con-
stant effort to keep her
emotions suppressed.

It seems a very
informal performance,
which is the measure of
success of the intimate
theatre play.

Here it is a tribute to
the talents of the
director, Caroline Eves,
and all the cast, parti-
cularly Diana Barrett
as the sad but serene
instructress and Aviva
Goldkorn as the mother
who longs to be — a cat.

MORAH LEWIS

BIRMINGHAM Evening Mail

12p

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1981

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MONSTROUS REGIMENT

Yoga Class

...at The Birmingham
Repertory
Theatre Studio

In this production by the Monstrous Regiment Company of a first play by Rose Tremain, artistic licence is used to give us more talk than yoga and also to enable us to have a privileged audition of the individual character's thoughts.

A phenomenon is demonstrated here more clearly than I have seen it demonstrated before; the personalities of the performers are far more vivid than the characters they are playing. More than that, the performers are clearly stronger people than those characters, too strong to allow us to believe in characters who tell us they are miserable,

oppressed, in a mess. The very existence of the production is at odds with the story it tells.

As a play *Yoga Class* is a large dose of social, in particular, feminist, debate that is presented to us more or less straight, within which are fragments of insight and description of experience that are fluently stated and clearly important to the author.

In the cast of six there is one man, a jokey sexist character who is surely in the yoga class only because the author put him there as a stooge. One of the characters complains that the class never really achieves the common singlemindedness that it is meant to achieve, and the same might be said about the play itself. Out of a welter of words and some songs no purpose emerges that tells us the material had to take this particular form.

D. J. HART

The Birmingham Post, Tuesday, November 10, 1981

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MONSTROUS REGIMENT

FLASH BACK

Last Week's Shows

YOGACLASS

Lesser Free Trade Hall

THE YOGACLASS performed last Monday and Tuesday explored in microcosm the lives of its students.

Five women and a token man met for their class which rapidly became a problem-solving encounter group, philosophically exploring - often through song - the nature of yoga, life, women's oppression.

Norma Cohen (sporting a shirt proclaiming: 'Only Rotters Kill Otters') had some of the best lines in her role as the community - minder Annie Elspeth Vrolet, while Chris Bowler (as Nancy) worked through her often - aggressive confusion to provide the most coherent feminist analysis.

When Annie, for instance remarked that 'greed is as much to blame as men for oppression' Nancy's quickfire reply was: 'Who do you think of when you think of a greedy bugger? Men! Fat men in suits who drink whisky on trains!'

John Slade as David - the Brut-drenched jogger with little but sex on the brain - added a certain spice to the proceedings which ultimately, proclaimed the message that 'no - one has an the answers, but at least feminism asks, the right questions'. - Mark Hornby



Monstrous Regiment limber up on stage in the Yogaclass

MANCHESTER FLASH

28th Nov 1981

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MONSTROUS REGIMENT

ARTS GUARDIAN

Wednesday October 28 1981

EXETER

Allen Saddler

Yoga Class

MONSTROUS Regiment, a group that started out with cheerful sock-it-to-them feminism, are going through a phase of introversion, which I find painful and pre-tentious. Yoga Class, by Rose Tremain, takes a novelist's approach to play writing:

Most of the plot takes place in the characters' heads, which means, (apart from constant yoga exercises), that not a lot happens on stage. True, the characters speak their thoughts aloud. Occasionally, without warning and without much reason, they burst into song.

The members of the yoga class are a mixed bunch, which, if at all typical, shows how far women have to go to stand on their own feet. In fact, the only independently minded member rounds on

the others, accusing them of timidity, wasting their time and endless apathy.

I must say I felt some sympathy for the outburst. And yet the only man in the cast, a male chauvinist pig, was too simple-minded to be true; which must cast doubt on the veracity of the female characters who had enough hangups between them to form neurotics unanimous.

It seems to me that Monstrous Regiment moved from a strong case on status and economic differentials, to a much more delicate and ill defined argument about emotional responses to traditional roles. In doing so they have evolved a sententious style of presentation which is hardly helping their cause.

Yoga Class is quite well acted, and produced with a kind of clinical distaste. A feminist of long standing, sitting with me, summed it up as "good points, badly made."

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CITY LIMITS

"Yoga Class" by Rose

Tremain presented by Monstrous
Regiment.

The play takes a weekly Yoga class as the focus of six lives. Amid the chat little work gets done (structural problem: without chat there wouldn't be a play...) but Tremain uses this anarchy to illuminate, through the interaction of personalities, the function of the class as a sanctuary. With the exception of the male pupil, easily the least convincing, her characters are rounded, credible and sustain our interest until the crisis of the play's climax gives the plot a timely boost.

Monstrous Regiment, who have clearly worked hard on their Yoga, handle this gentle material with characteristic sensitivity and concentration. (Ros Franey)

CITY LIMITS NOVEMBER 27-DECEMBER 3, 1981

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