

Last Train to Oxford **- a thought thriller**

Someone called Jacques Derrida, the philosopher, someone called him on the phone, someone who was dead. A mystery, he thought, a mystery that begins in 1968 when Derrida visits Oxford and there he dies, several times. Murder, he thought. So too thought my father, an Oxonian, in his final nightmare years. And so we investigate, not just the Oxford of the 1960s but the Oxford of the 1930s and a public school in the middle of the Second World War. In the end, the question is: Can one die of another's death? Or can one live?

.....

Last Train to Oxford

a play of voices

by Fred Dalmasso & John Schad

based on

Someone Called Derrida

by John Schad

Scenography by Ben Hughes

Soundscape by John Vickers

Directed by Fred Dalmasso

Performed by collect-ifs

Last Train to Oxford is a play based on John Schad's 2007 book, *Someone Called Derrida*, a book that examines not only the famous French philosopher, Jacques Derrida, and his complex relationship to the University of Oxford, but also the final years of Schad's own father (1990-1996), years overwhelmed by dementia and nightmare. The play, in contrast, consists in wandering voices, echoes and figures, rather than characters or people. Some of these voices are text-based: the words of the author's father are exactly as transcribed at the time by his mother; the Philosopher's words come mostly from Jacques Derrida's wonderful book *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); and the words that detail life both in Oxford and at the boarding school attended by the author's father all come from published accounts. All references are supplied in the novel.

- 'an extraordinary performance' (Sir Frank Kermode)
- 'caught my imagination straight away' (Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury)
- 'an amazing book... one of the most original on Derrida' (J. Hillis Miller)
- 'a remarkable novel' (Ian Macmillan, on BBC Radio 3's 'The Verb')
- 'the play is a deeply moving (for being playful, and restrained) search for the truth hidden in the confabulations of a memory that may not be trusted any more, an attempt to communicate with a father with whom direct communication becomes impossible, or subject to doubt; a sort of Synecdoche, Oxford where it is not one's self but, even more alienating, one's father who is being sought; the story of a new boy looking for an old boy who is supposed to live inside him, whose memory might or might not be dead, with whom it may be possible to communicate only if the new boy, whose memory is supposed to carry the story of the old boy, lets his memory die the same death as the old boy's may have, or if the new boy believes the old boy's nightmares tell the truth; or perhaps the old boy can be found in the memory of the books that have burnt him.
<http://theprimordialscratch.blogspot.co.uk/2012/04/life-of-jewish-crusader-according-to.html>



- 'very classy in terms of writing, dialogue, appearance, acting (especially the acting!)... very captivating, and at times, very emotive (the ending especially was, at the same time, suavely and compassionately done). Sort of made me think that it could've been written by Beckett, had he carried on trying to write like Joyce...' (an Oxford Playhouse spectator)
- 'I felt I was in the presence of something immense'
<http://www.litfest.org/two-reviews-from-freya-gallagher-jones/>

For more information, please contact John Schad j.schad@lancaster.ac.uk or Fred Dalmasso f.dalmasso@worc.ac.uk (collect-ifs.org)