

Weird and wonderful farce not to be missed

by **Alan Chadwick**

Hotel Paradiso (Pleasance)

Funny beyond words ★★★★★☆

BERLIN-based theatre group Familie Floz have gained international recognition for their work in the field of theatre with masks.

Here they return to the Fringe for their only UK date with a hilarious dark farce about a small family hotel set in an Alpine resort, directed by Michael Vogel.

Pitched somewhere between the frustrated absurdities of Fawlty Towers, the unsettling eerie weirdness of The League of Gentlemen, with a touch of the Bates Motel if Samuel Beckett ran it, it's a show without words.

But it's one far from lacking in emotion or plenty of laughs as the multi-tasking four-strong cast in over-sized masks brings a multitude of characters to life in what is a masterclass of physical comedy.

The head of the family is a crotchety, walking-stick wielding matriarch busy trying to keep in check her squabbling son and



Cartoonish: Hotel Paradiso offers a masterclass in physical comedy

daughter as they try to assert who's in charge.

Pining for her dead husband, whose portrait looms over them all and who appears ghostlike at times to survey the goings-on with portents of death never far behind, it isn't only the family who are

dysfunctional however. The staff are a rum lot too: a chef far too fond of chopping things up, even cadavers; a kleptomaniac maid in love with the son, and a cocky bellboy who is soon cut down to size in more ways than one.

Featuring themes of forlorn

love, jealousy, sibling rivalry, faded hopes and death, as both family and staff implode as the hotel goes to seed in a series of ever-increasing farcical situations, you'd imagine the show would make for grim viewing. But it's anything but. Quite the reverse in fact.

THE sheer exuberant cartoonish brio on display as guns are produced, doors slammed and romantic longings dashed makes for fantastic viewing.

Punctuated throughout with musical interludes and a clever use of props and slapstick, Hotel Paradiso is alternately heart-wrenching and riotous.

One particularly poignant scene shows the maid contemplating suicide.

Elsewhere the old matriarch trying to get up on a chair to dust her husband's portrait is pure circus, while the bellboy buzzes about the stage like James Corden in One Man, Two Guv'nors.

Throw into the mix cameo appearances from some mixed-up guests, two bungling coppers and a robber on the run, and the end result is a weird and wonderful show not to be missed.

● Pleasance Courtyard until Aug 31.



News



Scottish Daily Mail

10 Aug 2015

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