

Theatre/Arts

Stamina test worth the wait



TIRED of sitting in theatres for three hours and falling asleep half way through?

Actor Matthew Scott was, so he took action and, along with co-director Jo Dagless, set up a new theatre company called 1157.

The group is now resident at Norden Farm Centre for the Arts and is fearlessly committed to performing challenging and progressive 'pieces of art', as Matthew describes their work.

On Wednesday, June 4, 1157 will stage 24 Hours, a 12-hour – yes, that's a 12-hour – performance about a man who has 12 hours left to live.

The whole experience of theatre, *pictured*, will be turned on its head in this production.

If you want to follow the action you literally won't be able to stay in your seats because different sets will be dropped into the theatre space as the day goes on and will be constantly moved around.

But audience participation is not essential. "You can stay and watch from the corner if you want to, but you might miss some of the action," says Matthew.

Neither is he expecting anyone to stay the full

course. Apart from a few die-hard fans Matthew anticipates that people will dip in and out. There are 12 cycles – stories within a story – in the performance, each starting on the hour.

All the cycles share common threads and there's a narrative that builds up over the 12 hours, but, should you choose to absent yourself for a while, 1157 use devices that help you to pick up whatever has gone before.

"For instance," says Matthew, "we use a lot of mixed media and we'll be recording part of the performance and playing it back in a different cycle."

Yes, it will be disorienting he admits, but that's the whole point of the piece which takes as its starting point the theme of time. "We did some research and we found that a lot of people waste time," he says.

"The people who do value time are those who are ill or don't have long to live.

"We hope that 24 Hours will trigger the audience to think differently about time, and to fill what time they do have with rich experiences, and to think about living pro-actively rather than watching something really inane on TV."

It's a style of theatre Matthew believes is relevant to today's audiences, and particularly to younger generations brought up on a diet of video games and YouTube clips.

"I respect what the RSC does, but I think they should be in a museum," he says, bluntly.

By the same token, 1157's work is the sort of theatre a lot of people would dismiss outright, but Matthew is unapologetic.

"It's very subjective. Personally I never watch EastEnders. It makes me want to smash up the TV.

"Yet I could happily sit in Antony Gormley's Blind Light installation for three hours."

Katalin Hanniker

Secret's safe at West Wing

IMAGE Musical Theatre will return to the West Wing Arts Centre to present The Secret Garden in its trademark 'family participation production' style on Saturday, May 31 at 2pm.

Based on the magical children's novel by FH Burnett, this is a story of revelation and transformation.

When orphan Mary finds herself alone in a bleak Yorkshire manor she meets two moorland children. As a result the household is brought back to life and ghosts laid to rest.

The show includes a rehearsal in which children in the audience are chosen to be in the production, and the rest are taught the choruses of four songs.

Suitable for ages five plus, tickets are £6.50 or £24 for a family (two adults/two children) and are available from the

Fancy a laugh? Check these out

Norden Farm Centre for the Arts, Maidenhead.
Wednesday, – 2.30pm and 7pm.

● Tickets cost £8-£10 and are available from 01628 788997 or www.nordenfarm.org

ONE for the family (ages six plus): Potted Potter – the Unauthorised Harry Experience – A Parody by Dan and Jeff, in which double act Dan and Jeff enact all seven Potter books in 70 minutes with the help

West Wing Arts Centre, Slough, Stoke Road,
Thursday – 8pm.

DESCRIBED as 'a brilliant new talent' by Irish comic Ed Byrne, Michael Fabbri, *pictured*, takes a

harsh controversial topics to light-hearted silliness makes for a refreshingly eclectic act.

He is joined by Wilson Dixon, the brilliant oddball country singer with a laconic style and a glacially laid-back delivery, who sings simple songs about his life, loves and land and his strange family, all the while plucking his guitar.

