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# Aneckxander

## The Patrick Centre

## Birmingham Hippodrome

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**THE stark, minimalist setting in The Patrick Centre with only a white stage cloth for dressing, set the mood for this solo performance by Alexander Vantournhout.**

Dressed in black, he carried on his keyboard and props, which he placed with meticulous precision on to the blank canvas. It was patently obvious that this was going to be a performance of unique content.

Every movement and gesture was measured, even the rolling and folding of the floor covering. Then, with a couple of huge ocean like waves of the cloth, Alexander, as if unfurling a flag, swept it away, revealing himself unadorned.

A spontaneous gasp of surprise from the audience was almost the only audible input throughout. In silence, we were enthralled at the agility, strength, angular shapes, contortions and sheer athleticism of this incredible young man.

Every muscle, sinew and bone stretched, flexed and moved into the most amazing postures. His sudden drops and lunges onto the floor with painful thuds made one recoil with anxiety. Ouch!

Just remember, he is naked!

The haunting music he played, then used for accompaniment, added to this extraordinary piece of theatre with its dramaturgy by Bauke Lievens.

The concept delivered both comedy and tragedy provoking interesting, varied thoughts. At times, the beautifully expressive Alexander appeared dejected, vulnerable by his nakedness, appealing or seeking approval from the audience, but in other sequences the self-inflicted harshness, flagellation even, echoed doubts and insecurities, the struggle with life.

Like a piece of contemporary art, the idea behind anything unusual or quirky presents a huge range of differing opinions and so it is with this . . . dare we use the word 'installation'?

At the end, Alexander took the customary bows with generous applause from the appreciative audience, but, like the ubiquitous expression, "it ain't over 'till the fat lady sings!" he continued to perform, in short bursts as we sat transfixed, and were told by a member of the Hippodrome staff that as long as there are people sitting, watching, he will carry on, for a couple of hours on occasions. Brilliant!

A most innovative, unusual experience

**Rosemary Manjunath/Elizabeth M Smith**

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