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THE  TIMES**The Paper Architect, Leytonstone Library, E11**

The Paper Architect by Davy and Kristin McGuire is a magical performance Davy and Kristin McGuire

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Is it theatre, is it animation, is it an installation? Whatever pigeonhole you stuff it in, *The Paper Architect* is a remarkable, quietly thrilling show that I would urge anyone to make the effort to see. In a way, the less you know before you walk through the door the better. Granted, anyone can get a sneak preview by looking through the windows at the white-paper model work that the show's creators, Davy and Kristin McGuire, are working with: gorgeously detailed buildings, foliage and figures.

But you will have to be one of the 13 audience members let into each 45-minute performance to see how this husband and wife team make that paper dance with memories, fantasies, music and melancholy. Sounds unlikely? Well, maybe I'm at a disadvantage, not having caught any of the earlier work that led to the McGuires winning the 2013 Oxford Samuel Beckett Theatre Trust Award. But this show, supported by the award and co-produced by the Barbican and Create London, is like nothing I've seen before.

We are in the workshop of an ageing model-maker, who sits surrounded by his model work, playing old LPs, turning his eviction notices into origami birds. He shuffles about, sticks an old album on his turntable. A cutout of a young woman falls out of the sleeve.

It all seems to be in no hurry to get anywhere. But then, magic. The figure comes alive on a tropical set with rope ladders, high trees, a treehouse, lapping water and a sky the same colour as the glowing bar in the architect's electric heater.

What follows makes the jaw drop and the head whirl. Using sound effects, paper props and millimetre-precise digital projection, it's a bit *Bagpuss*, a bit *Blue Lagoon*, but with a precision and ability to create images in your head that is all its own.

I doubt that the scriptwriter, Tom Wainwright, or the performer, John Cording, would mind me saying that the McGuires are the real stars here. There are some good jokes, an acute understanding of the pleasures and pitfalls of the mentality of a man who has made his own sensual but safe worlds in miniature. It's delicate, certainly, and on too small a scale to play to a large audience, but it's not precious. Where can the McGuires go next with this approach? I don't know, but I want to be there to see it.

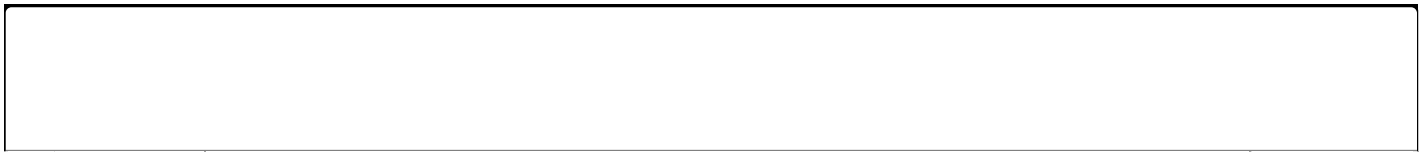
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