

Tú amarás

BONOBO

(In-) correctly human



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Best-kept secrets are served up and skeletons come out of the closet to fight — Bonobo's 'Tú amarás', or 'You Shall Love' , unravels like the nightmare wedding party you'd rather, but never will, forget.

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Entering the theatre, the ambient, sugary music is just a bit too loud not to set the nerves on edge. I'm already tense and on my guard. I wish I'd had a drink before the show. But, unexpectedly, the first scene shakes me out of myself. It's a surprising flashback that smacks of a Shakespearian comedy of errors: a peasant and a 'noble' in fast-paced interchange about mistaken identity, bestiality and guilt. The snappy dialogue makes taking in the surtitles a workout for eye to brain coordination. Nevertheless, I gradually gather that it's in the cringing hypocrisy of the Spanish coloniser in search of moral absolution, that the sketch provides a prophetic, Monty Pythonesque teaser for what's to come.

Fast-cut to 2019: a seedy conference-cum-courtroom-cum–forlorn-wedding-reception all-purpose venue with unforgiving lighting and a carpet in clashing colours whose mildew you can almost smell. Two, weary, gold-collar workers, a man and a woman, are discussing a presentation they have to prepare. Together with fellow physicians, they are to reveal how their profession could help 'restore dignity' to a recently arrived community of extra-terrestrial immigrants: the Amenites. We're quickly introduced to three more men, also vaguely of the medical profession, and grasp that they are part of a watchdog organisation that aims to safeguard against malpractice and discrimination towards the Amenties.

What ensues is an exquisitely gymnastic whodunit where the protagonists deftly deny and then unwittingly reveal their own misdemeanors in the very area that they are supposed to be morally policing.

Unmasking our convoluted incoherencies and heresies

To divulge the web of tragic-comic intrigue that unwinds would be a shameful spoiler. But the brilliance of the piece is in its unmasking of our convoluted, human, conscious and unconscious incoherencies and heresies. They make us both chuckle and squirm in self-recognition. The colleagues' belligerent bickering has, simultaneously, a deadening and tantalizing effect. In their bland, work-a-day suits complete with regulation plastic ID badges, they serve to remind us that banging the drum of political correctness can, nevertheless, perpetuate hostilities and that not one of us is 'pure' and prejudice-free. There is an enduringly chilling truism however, delivered in a faltering recording, we presume by the young, black, female doctor pictured on a screen. It's the opening speech of the fictional conference and intimates how muffling the 'flawed' parts of our characters effectively dehumanizes us, reduces us to the status of animals…or of Amenites.

Waiting for the tension to subside or ease is a recurring mantra threaded through the text. It's a vain hope, as mocking as the harsh strip-lighting that flickers on and off during the piece and flatters none of us. The work lays bare the widening fault-line of today's world of blaming and shaming the 'other'. Luckily the humour and dexterity with which the Bonobo collective does this helps us face these uncomfortable, topical realities full on. And no, I didn't need that drink after all.