

# Time Out

## London

THEATRE PREVIEW

## Reviews

### 'The Timekeepers'

New End Theatre *Fringe*

Dan Clancy's moving one-acter is a rare examination of the relationship between a Jew and a homosexual in a concentration camp in 1941. The cellmates are complementary: Benjamin is concentration – the best horologist in Berlin, he bends over his desk, fiddling with cast-off timepieces and licking them into shape in a vain attempt to fix time. Hans, meanwhile, is camp – a nervous, preening, trilling singer, whose love of opera earned him the nickname Madame Butt.

As in Joshua Sobol's 'Ghetto', this play is a celebration of singing as a salve for those enduring the horrors of the Holocaust. When Benjamin begins to sing, Hans rounds on him queenily: 'And you're sure you're not one of us?' Soon they fantasise about a world tour – prisoners 1793 and 9355 on the road, performing in Dachau and Buchenwald. They find common ground between the two most marginalised of groups – 'Yellow and pink just aren't in fashion, that's it,' Hans declares, pointing at the triangles on their convict outfits. And, of course, they both just love festivals...

Clancy is never simplistic, and ensures that the prisoners share common prejudices – one fierce interchange finds Benjamin calling Hans 'God's mistake', for which he receives the familiar money-grabbing insults in return. By the end, however, each has put his neck on the line for his friend. Both actors deliver humorous and charming performances that force us to appreciate the human as opposed to the victim. Their bond is reminiscent of Red and Andy in 'The Shawshank Redemption'. Benjamin, like Red, is an eternal prisoner, inured to imprisonment by his habitual, menial task; Hans, like Andy, is a bird that was never meant to be caged – his wings are just too bright. *Benjamin Davis*

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