



Theatre review: The Unravelling

By Sally Stott

THE SPACE @ VENUE 45

TO SAY Fin Kennedy and the Mulberry School for Girls are one of the best writer/education partnerships there is doesn't do them justice. To say they're one of the best companies at the Fringe comes closer.

Mulberry isn't a stage school, it's a normal comprehensive – such bright fresh perspectives and truthful performances couldn't really have come from anywhere else. The young people, who are predominantly of Bangladeshi heritage, provide a strikingly fresh and imaginative view of their cosmopolitan London home. Kennedy then uses this beautifully to weave together a fairytale version of their reality: a fantastic place where Tower Hamlets is a 'magical land', the Tube is a gateway to the underworld and you fly to the top of Canary Wharf and watch the sun go down.

As with last year's *Stolen Secrets*, the set is stunning, created through reams of coloured fabric that becomes the walls of houses, skin of monsters and the very thing that binds characters and stories together.

For the abundance of companies who seem to think you can't have a decent backdrop without a decent budget (and so consequently have none at all), then prepare to be proved wrong by Barbara Fuchs' beautifully integrated design.

With so much fabric around it's appropriate that the piece is set in the shop of a seamstress. She's a vivacious character who specialises in telling tantalising stories where the next chapter comes with the next purchase. Her three daughters – an emo, a wannabe and a princess – think she's a bit tragic. But when some shocking news threatens to blow their world away, they must learn to appreciate their mother before they lose her altogether.

As the rolls of fabric are unravelled, stories are unfurled, taking our characters on a journey from childhood to the brutal reality of growing up. The play's world is both fantastical enough to be enjoyed by the young and real enough to resonate with those a bit older.

While the show is essentially a morality tale that draws references from other well-known fables, it's conveyed in such a striking, original and passionate way that you easily forget this. The ending, in particular, is bold and surprising – you'd be a hard person indeed not to find it very moving.