



A YOUNGER THEATRE

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REVIEW: CUCKOO, UNICORN THEATRE



CHRISTOPHE LOCATELLI (<https://www.ayoungertheatre.com/author/christophe-locatelli/>) * JANUARY 20, 2014 * OFF WEST END

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"Obligations are fucking terrible," Erica drunkenly tells Nadine, foreshadowing the fact that we are about to find out how committed this middle-class teacher and parent is to her obligations. What happens when our obligations conflict with our morals? How do we know what our duty is?

Cuckoo analyses an unlikely friendship between a sheltered, kooky, unpopular teen, Jenny, and the troubled outspoken Nadine, while Jenny's mother Erica gets herself stuck in between the dysfunctional relationship the two girls form. We see Jenny come out of her shell while questioning who she is, Nadine simply looking for someone to care for her, and Erica's maternal side getting caught up in the life of someone who may not actually be her responsibility.

From the girls dancing all night, experiencing their first hangovers, questioning sex and scaring the school bully, to sappy lines expressing the importance of friendship and family, *Cuckoo* by the incontestably talented Suhayla El-Bushra never falls short of entertaining the audience. The audience go on an emotional journey with all three of the characters. Jenny (played by the excellent Eden Howard) has us feeling sorry for her undeniable loneliness and complete gratefulness to Nadine for her company, until we see her slowly losing her mind and we worry about her sanity. Nadine, portrayed by the charming Kate Lassman-Long, is lost and does not simply crave a friend but a secure family unit. Jenny is yearning for friendship, yet we hopelessly watch Nadine cling onto somewhere to call home for once, and we question the saying 'blood is thicker than water'. They are completely opposite yet exactly the same.

Sarah Malin perfects the character of Jenny's mother, Erica, with her portrayal of a laid-back unconventional mother who constantly dreams of living back in Africa. The audience feel warmth towards her as she is constantly attempting to be a perfectly selfless person.

So what is it that makes *Cuckoo* one of the best shows I have seen at the Unicorn theatre for the past eight years? This show has left a bruise on me. I came out questioning all the ties I have with people, and to who I truly owe gratitude. This play does not only question the importance of having other people to keep you sane and alive, but what unconditional love could stop you from

Cuckoo is playing at The Unicorn Theatre until 25 January. See [The Unicorn Theatre website](https://www.ayoungertheatre.com) (<https://www.ayoungertheatre.com>) for more information.

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