

Hungry Ghosts

Reviews for the London production, 2010:

The Times:

With David Cameron fresh from negotiating the minefield of Sino-British relations on his recent trade visit to China, Tim Luscombe's angry new play is certainly timely. The hurtling collision of ancient traditional and ravaging modernity, and the uncomfortable contrast between the bright, shiny face of an emergent economic superpower and that same authoritarian country's disturbing record on human rights, are strikingly evoked in a drama that takes the flashy, expensive, dangerous sport of Formula One as its central motif.

From the Opium Wars to the Google war, via the Cultural Revolution, Tiananmen Square, Tibet and the Beijing Olympics, Luscombe, who also directs, crams in a vast amount of complex political history. The results are fascinating.

Luscombe's fury at what he clearly regards as the West's reluctance to tweak the dragon's tail of such a powerful trading partner blazed through the play and his production, bedecked with brand names such as Vodafone, Apple and Starbucks, gets off to a flying start. This work is full of passion, and forcefully reminds us that as Pin-de exasperatedly points out, freedom means much more than merely "being free to buy things".

(Sam Marlowe)

The Guardian:

As a writer-director, Tim Luscombe doesn't shirk the big subjects. His last play, *The Schuman Plan*, dealt with the European federal dream. His new one tackles both Formula One motor racing and Chinese political oppression.

I admire Luscombe's audacity, and, to his credit, [he] exposes the dodgy dealings of the Formula One world, where billionaire businessmen ruthlessly call the shots. He is also one of the few British dramatists to confront the fact that China, for all its embrace of a market economy, remains an oppressive, militaristic dictatorship.

Luscombe forges hidden links between the capitalist and communist systems by suggesting that both the downsliding Tyler and the upwardly mobile Zhi-hui are obsessed with status and crippled by guilt over the deaths of their fathers.

The author's own production has a hectic vitality.

(Michael Billington)

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Tim Luscombe's play is an inspiration, both for its effervescent writing style and for its fierce intelligence. It does not merely provoke thought - it commands it. It is also a play where no one is untainted, no individual - and no country. I left the theatre, my mind fully sated. Mr Luscombe directs the show with aggressive precision, and fast pace, interspersing the relentless tension with moments of razor sharp humour.

(Katherine Gregor)

Time Out:

When Formula One rolls into Shanghai for the annual Chinese Grand Prix, egotistical former world champion Tyler hits a crossroads. Is his team about to drop him in favour of a Chinese driver? The growing importance of Chinese money to the sport - and to everything else in the globalised economy - makes it a distinct possibility. And will he do the right thing when he becomes embroiled in a high-stakes family tussle with major political ramifications?

Tim Luscombe's play goes behind the 'Great Firewall of China' to reflect on the value of free trade without free thought. The script is strong on ideological ironies and the perversions of power, while its analysis of the way in which 'things are moving East' could hardly be more topical or on the button.

(Robert Shore)