

Wednesday, May 15th

London's Fringe

Two show day!! I know, sounds like a lot, but today we get to experience two of London's best Fringe theatres and two shows that promise to be fantastic!

Think of London Fringe theatre like you'd think of Off-Broadway in New York City; smaller, more intimate venues catering to a more discerning and/or neighborhood audience and the quality remains top notch. Artists working in fringe theatres have a bit more freedom to experiment and try something new.

Kiln Theatre



The Kiln Theatre is in a multicultural neighborhood called Kilburn, so if you want to arrive early for lunch, you'll have lots of interesting options including Nigerian, Greek, Thai, Indian, and sushi. The theatre also has a café with food, coffee, and drinks; similar to the National Theatre, this is a community gathering point where friends can meet before a show or film (there's a cinema in the same building).

We will be seeing a new play with music (but not a musical) called *The Ballad of Hattie and James* by Australian playwright Samuel Adamson. It is described as "an epic, life-spanning tale of friendship, music, and the moments that change you forever. You will likely have seen the two actors playing Hattie and James before, especially if you've seen *The Crown*, *Downton Abbey*, *Harry Potter*, and *Four Weddings and a Funeral*.



Royal Court Theatre

The Royal Court is in Sloan Square, mere steps from the underground stop. It's a bit of a bougie neighborhood and surrounding restaurants are likely to be pricey. BUT, like the Kiln, there is a café and bar in the theatre. Last time I was there, the food was quite good! And they had lots of vegetarian options. There is also an onsite bookstore, for all you theatre nerds who collect plays.

This venue has an important place in the history of British theatre as the home of the English Stage Company when it was founded in 1954 to advance new playwriting. John Osbourn's *Look Back in Anger* was the first of many new plays from a group dubbed the "young angry men," disaffected youth who had thought the modern world would offer them more. In 1968, Edward Bond's controversial play *Saved*, produced at the Royal Court, led to the end of censorship laws. Feminist playwrights like Caryl Churchill also produced new work at the Royal Court, challenging audiences as well as hierarchies in theatre production. Today the Royal Court remains a vibrant producing venue and continues to support new playwrights.



Sabrina Ali's *Dugsi Dayz* was inspired by John Hugh's film *The Breakfast Club*, and it features a group of Muslim women studying in a mosque who tell stories to one another when the power goes out. Ali is both an actor and writer, and the comedy is a direct response to her desire to see more Muslim

women represented onstage. It was sold out at the Edinburgh Fringe, an annual festival of new theatre, and received rave reviews and awards. During our last Maymester, the new play we saw at the Royal Court was one of the student's favorites, so we have high hopes for this one.

#UKinMay assignment

- Reflect on the difference between spectators who attend new plays at Fringe theatres from those who attend plays on the West End or at the National Theatre. Take and post a photograph (not in the auditorium of either venue; this isn't allowed) that expresses this difference.