

## Rosemary Mander:

Title: **BANANA CRABTREE SIMON**

Company: **Steve Day**

Venue: **theSpace @ Symposium Hall – Annexe**

Year: **2022**

I arrived for this production all too well-aware that it was not going to be a laugh-a-minute, but the reviews I'd read were consistently positive. Written by David Hendon and directed by Dan Phillips, it comprised a monologue by 'Alan', played by CJ de Mooi, who has become notable or even notorious because of his various activities. The monologue followed Alan's deterioration through the progression of early onset dementia.

The minimalist cast was matched by a minimalist stage set and props, featuring only an armchair and side table. Thus, the meanings conveyed relied totally on the actor's facial expressions and body language. Music was used to herald different points in the progression of Alan's condition, through to its inevitable conclusion.

Alan had been given some words to remember, which were recited *ad nauseam* like a mantra. He used these three words, also the title of the play, as a lifebelt, clinging on to them in spite of everything.

This play was disconcerting because it sought to portray the development of Alan's dementia. Although his paranoia was particularly insightful, there was little allowance for the variety of ways in which the condition may present itself. Those with relevant personal experience know that such one-size-fits-all attitudes are all too common.

The final scenario was especially difficult because Alan's speech changed suddenly and inexplicably. Rather than aphasia, he adopted an infantile intonation with an unexpected Yorkshire accent.