

Translation of El País Madrid Sábado article on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> September 2013.

## King Ubu: bourgeois, incisive and hilarious

Ubu, wealthy.

### **UBU ROI**

Author: Alfred Jarry. Associate Director: Michelangelo Marchese. Set design: Nick Ormerod.  
Director: Declan Donnellan. María Guerrero Theatre. From 26<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> September.

Javier Vallejo, **Madrid**

Ubu, a man without conscience, a hybrid of Macbeth and Falstaff, is a nightmare presaging the totalitarianism which, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, would unleash a string of genocides, 2 world wars and our bloody Civil War. 100 years later, with such regimes in decline, an equivalent parody of the elites which secretly control finance, economic processes and the direction of political action in our representative democracies waits to be written. The British director Declan Donnellan successfully presents a similar parody in his dazzling Ubu Roi, set in a bourgeois flat, where the owners, a couple with adolescent son, are waiting to entertain another married couple of friends for dinner.

While his wife gets herself ready, a hand held video films the rest of the flat which we see projected at the back of the stage. It is as if we are in the set for a kitchen sink drama: the bedroom still untidy, the kitchen, the bathroom, the lavatory bowl, complete detail a stain of "shit" (the first word that Ubu utters in Alfred Jarry's text) which, along with another stain on the bedside table glass, symbolises the dark hidden part of such polite people. In a simple click the sunlight in which Pascal Noel has bathed the set suddenly becomes black light and the two perfect hosts suddenly reveal externally what they are internally, their souls gripped by epileptic fits.

The play jumps like the knight on the chess board from the smart world of appearances, a comfortable family which speaks banalities in a hushed voice, to the conspiracy and hysteria of the Polish court. King Wenceslas is embodied by one of the dinner guests, crowned now with the shade of a standard lamp), and later assassinated when a kitchen hand mixer is stabbed into his head.

In summary, an incisive play, to the point, and very amusing.