

The Sash, Hector MacMillan

Stuart Christie

1974

In Glasgow's Pavilion Theatre you would not expect to see a play like THE SASH MY FATHER WORE by Hector MacMillan. Folks go there to see pantomime more than biting satires. And one has to admire the courage of the actors who can get up in Glasgow and tear into their lines that strip the Orange and Papist legends down to their pubic hair. It's about a stalwart Orangeman who finds to his dismay his long haired son is falling away from the faith of his fathers and the bits of realisation start coming out ... only fourteen miles from Scotland to Ireland... "Christ it's three times that f' Glasgow t' Edinburgh" and did you know "King William there 'of blessed memory' ... that's the man who wis responsible for the massacre of Glencoe ... your folk, the Macdonalds! that lousy bastart signed the order they were aw t'be exterminated ... it wis supposed to be a great Prodisant victory at the Battle o the Boyne ... Right? Then how come the Pope gied King Billy a big pat on the back for it? They lit up the Vatican like the fukn Blackpool illuminations!" You need courage to get up and say that in Glasgow ... though by Christ you'd need more than that to get up and say it in Belfast. There were oos in the Glaswegian audience at the conclusion that "we should fling the hale fucking religious thing oot the fucking windae" (possibly as much at the adjectives as at the sentiment) but packed audiences laughing their heads off at the Orange-Papist thing is an encouraging sign for Glasgow, however long it takes to get round to Belfast that as much in their prejudices and stupidity as in their obduracy and working class loyalties there's no difference between the workers whichever foot they kick with.

The moral for Belfast is obvious. As far as Glasgow is concerned, it's no mean city for razor gangs and muggings and senseless violence. But it isn't the workers who follow the long socialist tradition who are responsible – not the socialists, not the communists, not the anarchists. Not the freethinkers and atheists who have for so long preached the word was hooey on Glasgow Green... It's your sun shines out your arsehole Christians who go around with their orange or their green scarfs who wield the broken bottles at the football match and in the dreary back street. For them all concepts of morality are founded on a god they know is a lie for all that matters about Jesus is was he a Billy or a Dan.

The Sash My Father Wore: a Play, Hector MacMillan, Molendinar Press, 1974.

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