

British Theatre Guide Review: Here You Come Again

Bruce Vilanch, Gabriel Barre, Tricia Pauluccio, Jonathan Harvey

Leeds Playhouse

Malvern Theatres

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Photo credit: Hugo Glendinning

[Theatre review: Here You Come Again at Malvern Theatres \(britishtheatreguide.info\)](https://britishtheatreguide.info)

A Dolly Parton musical you say? I saw the lady herself at Glastonbury a decade ago and it is quite the memory, so I admit I had some preconceptions going in to see *Here you Come Again*. Surely anybody trying to 'be' Dolly would just be an impersonator? Enter upstage right, in a flash and puff of smoke (quite literally) like a fairy godmother, Tricia Pauluccio—co-writer and a scarily incredible mimic of the lady herself. Let's face it: when it comes to *the* Dolly Parton, you go big or you go home, and Pauluccio absolutely nails it.

It's 2020—what seems like all too recent history to be the setting for any play—and 40-something Kevin (Steven Webb) has returned to his childhood home, isolating in his parents' attic while they wait out the global pandemic. It's a slow start, but the familiar nods are there: sanitising your shopping, stocking up on more toilet roll than any human could possibly need, some casual binge drinking. Webb's characterisation is so nuanced that, for a moment, I wonder if he's somehow forgotten his lines, but we soon learn that he's an

aspiring stand-up comic and we're his unimpressed audience—I mean, we came to hear the songs, right?

Dolly uberfan Kevin is stuck in a 'pee-hole' (not a description his idol favours), both in terms of his career and his love life, and it's time to ask himself "What would Dolly do?". The premise of this entire show should mean it's utterly corny, but it really isn't. The script by Paoluccio's co-writers Bruce Vilanch and Gabriel Barre (with additional material by Jonathan Harvey—*Gimme Gimme Gimme* and *Coronation Street*) somehow resonates on a deeper level. You don't have to be a fan—of Dolly, or country music for that matter; you just need to suspend your disbelief for a little while and become invested in Kevin's world.

There are some brilliant touches: a sprinkling of magic tricks, the little details in designer Paul Will's attic set and his costumes. We had an unintentional wardrobe malfunction with a sparkly number, but, undeterred, and with some light giggling and ad-libbing, the iconic "I Will Always Love You" was delivered, albeit with the need to firmly face front. The musicianship from the whole cast was flawless throughout—and I cannot reiterate enough how good our Dolly is.

By the end of the evening, even the non-believers had to admit that a sprinkling of Dolly Parton is exactly what we all need in our lives. It's OK to be down, but ultimately, we're responsible for our personal happiness—we're the stars in our own lives—with or without an icon cheering us on.

Here You Come Again is at Malvern until 20 July before heading to Edinburgh, and the tour continues into December, ending in Liverpool.