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**Midlands: THE TWELVE DATES OF CHRISTMAS**

Posted by : RodDungate on Dec 09, 2012 - 07:55 PM [Midlands](#)

THE TWELVE DATES OF CHRISTMAS: Ginna Hoben

Old Joint Stock, Birmingham

Runs: 1h 30m, no interval, till 15 December

Info and Tkts: 0121 200 0946

Review: 09 12 12, Alexander Ray Edser

**A warm hearted treat.**

This is a totally engaging hour and a half. It's funny, touching, ups and downs, and constantly comes unnervingly close to our own lives.

Mary, the central character, is watching the big NY Thanksgiving parade on television – alone because her fiancé is unwell. However, she catches a fleeting glimpse of him with his tongue down another woman's throat. The story Mary tells us is her subsequent year plumbing the depths of despair (several times) and her clamberings back into sanity (several times) or not (just at the end.)

The script places Mary in a world so real we hear it, see it, smell it; all done with acute, and often cute, detail. Sarah Gain plays Mary, while dipping skilfully into a mass of other characters. These include her mother, Aunt Clara, Edward the great, Doctor John, Tiny Tim (and his father.) These are just a few.

Gain's warm-hearted character holds our attention, wins our trust and takes us into her world. As the story, with all its rich and glorious twists and turns moves forward, so we warm to her more and more. The downs become more shared, and the laughs, bigger. Indeed we warm so much to this character that we demand a happy ending; but Hoben's script is more skilful, enabling Gain to toy with our comfortable sentimentality; hooks us, reels us in, and we're hers. This is FUN.

There is no doubting Gain's skill. There is a sense, too, of a skilled directorial hand in this. Richard Poynton has carefully crafted a fine production with sensitivity and a pleasing sense of the theatrical.

Give yourself a little festive treat.

Mary: Sarah Gain

Director: Richard Poynton