



[Kiss Me Quickstep](#) at [Oldham Coliseum](#)

Jointly produced with New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

Reviewed by [John Waterhouse](#) and Charlie Britten April 2016

As with so many plays, 'Kiss Me Quickstep' has a tantalising title. It might suggest all manner of possibilities, yet in the end the play struggled to grasp them.

For a supposed comedy, the production had far too few laughs, and far too many scenes of laboured dialogue. Apart from a comment about the distinction between Lytham and Blackpool - one that played well with a Lancastrian audience - most of the good lines came in the second half of the play. It was only then, moreover, that a clear plot started to emerge, and real characters started to arise out of what had until then been a tepid meander with little apparent direction.

Presenting three parallel stories of different couples in a ballroom dancing competition, the format had considerable - yet ultimately unrealised - potential: the match-up of the expensively-hired and enthusiastic Russian with a compelling back story - which was under-explored - and the local dancer with the over-possessive father; the star couple undermined by alcoholism, and the hard-up couple blighted by everything from car trouble to knee trouble.



The latter turned out to be on the brink of quitting dancing for lack of cash; if only this had emerged earlier in the tale instead of near the end, it could have added real depth and gravitas to their situation as they advanced through what was potentially their last competition. The story could have done so much more with all of these themes. Instead it remained underwhelmingly

one-dimensional until it was too late, presenting not a single character with whom the audience could feel even mild empathy.

For all that, the actual dancing scenes were excellent, making the on-floor meltdown of the alcoholic dancer all the more striking and one of the few stand-out moments of the play. It was just a pity that the dextrous movements of bodies and feet were let down by so flat-footed a script.

Review by Charlie Britten

Dancing is at the centre of '**Kiss Me Quickstep**' and so the staging has been sensibly minimised to provide a very ample area for the dancers to display their art and skill, at times with six couples dancing various Latin styles, with vibrant costumes to match. The feel of a ballroom was well created although the settings for all other scenes, such as the various couples' dressing rooms, were left to the imagination of the audience. For me, this was not a problem, with the acting and costumes being of more than sufficient calibre to tell the story; the only thing was that there was not much of a story to tell.

This show is more about the general feel of what goes on both on and off the dancefloor as we learn of the various character's issues, from the alcoholic struggles of **Samantha**, played with convincing detached style by

Amy Barnes

, the knee problem of

Justin

, solidly played by

Matt Crosby

or the paternal domineering suffered by

Nancy

, charmingly played by

Hannah Edwards

. In addition there are typical couples' issues, with Justin's partner

Jodie

, sensitively played by

Abigail Moore

and

Luka

, played by

Isaac Stanmore

with a certain innocence, presenting a nicely contrasting outlook as a native of Moscow to the Northern English attitudes of most of the cast.

