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## Theatre reviews: Over Lunan

As we face a fresh age of rising waters and apocalyptic change, *Over Lunan* invites us to travel back in time to consider how humans faced up to the crises of the past, writes Joyce McMillan

By [Joyce McMillan](#)

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*Over Lunan* – a promenade performance in the dunes of Lunan Bay, Angus, created by Angus Farquhar of Aproxima Arts with dramaturg and former Artistic Director of the Unicorn Theatre Purni Morell. PIC: Al Smith

Where are we, when we are **Over Lunan**? In one sense, this new event created by Angus Farquhar's Aproxima Arts company could not have a stronger sense of place; it is made and performed at Lunan Bay, Angus, one of Scotland's most breathtaking beaches, and is immersed in the history and lore of that part of the Angus coast.





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Yet like other site-responsive works created by Farquhar over the years – in locations from Alloway in Ayrshire to Glen Lyon and Skye – Over Lunan is also a hugely resonant piece of work, that invites us to travel not only in space but in time. Inspired by the work of journalist and documentary-maker Charlie Ross, who died at Lunan in 2015 while gathering material about the bay's history and meanings, Over Lunan leads us for 70 minutes or so on a short but precarious night walk through the huge sand dunes that guard the bay, towards a dazzling final glimpse of the sea itself, glowing faintly in the dark.

At first, we are in a sheltered circular space full of glowing small lights and fires, each one illuminating an object that reflects on the history of Lunan, both recent and ancient. The show has an accompanying radio play about Charlie Ross's final weeks in Lunan, that helps us to understand these objects, at least a little. The bay's strange name, for example – and a chance beach encounter with a Syrian migrant now living in Scotland – sets up resonances that link the place with the earliest days of human civilisation, and M

knowledge passed down by “fish people” who came from the sea; one of those demigods, the last of them, was called Lu-Nanna.

Then there is the mythology of the moon – luna – reflected in the crescent shape of the bay; also the fact that this whole North Sea landscape was reshaped, 8,000 years ago, by a huge undersea landslip which caused a giant tsunami and primal flood. All of this begins to come together, as we walk – while listening to an audio account of Lunan’s story – to the show’s second arena, a larger space surrounded by high dunes. **Here, we sit to experience the centrepiece of the show, a 20 minute ritual or symphony created by composer Andrew Knight-Hill, with choral sections written in the ancient Sumerian language Akkadian, and performed in spectacular style – against a backdrop of blazing dune fires –** by musicians Cameron Sinclair, John Kenny and Farquhar himself; then it’s out onto the beach itself, past a powerful tableau of refugee arrival and tragedy, back to our starting point.

Over Lunan, in other words, is a tremendously complex piece of art, whose meanings are difficult to decode in any immediate way, and which takes us on a journey that requires sudden, huge leaps of imagination. Yet it’s an experience – co-created by Farquhar with script-writer and dramaturg Purni Morell – that lingers and challenges us, as we face another age of rising waters and possible apocalyptic change; and invites us to reach back beyond history into myth and legend, to seek to understand how human civilisation emerged in the first place, how it was transmitted through crisis after crisis, and how the sea – now as much a graveyard as a source of life – has both shaped our story, and helped to carry it from shore to shore across the globe, across the centuries, and the millennia.

