

Performance

SUSAN AND DARREN, TRAVERSE THEATRE, EDINBURGH

MARY BRENNAN

★★★★

THERE'S a moment when Susan looks at Darren and your heart squeezes at the raw honesty of it. It's the kind of look a mother gives her son, and Susan didn't acquire it on any acting course.

Susan's look has been glowing across 28 years, since she gave birth to Darren, saw him become a professional dancer, made friends with his various boyfriends and stayed in touch with his exes (which gets Darren's goat). It betokens a profound and mutual bond and – in this frank, affecting and life-affirming Quarantine production – it's for real.

Susan Pritchard is Darren Pritchard's mother. She's 52, he's 28 and lives at home with her in Manchester. She's a cleaner who's never been on-stage before; he's a dancer running his own company. And they're here, in front of

us, doing what they do – dancing together to Motown hits, interrupting each other's stories, offering glimpses of their personal lives while preparing to party with their guests: us. There's nothing in Susan's face to indicate a life troubled by hardship, violence and death. It's left to Darren to whisper the brutal details to us, voice a little matter-of-fact because they're not here to dramatise events, or trawl for sympathy. Susan and Darren are here as hosts, and what they share is a glorious, exhilarating joie-de-vivre. Watch them dance and what you get is humanity, warts and hugs, trust, love and all. Sadly, I couldn't stay for the party. I bet it was a blast.