

# British Theatre Guide

News, reviews, features and podcast on theatre across the UK

## Boy Gets Girl

Rebecca Gilman

Royal Court Theatre Upstairs

(2001)

The American writer Rebecca Gilman is fast building a reputation as one of the best young playwrights around. She has won awards for her first two plays and there seems no good reason why *Boy Gets Girl* should not follow suit. Her main strength is writing coruscating single-issue plays. *Boy Gets Girl* explores the relationship between men and women.

Teresa is a thirty something literary journalist who has difficulties in building relationships. She agrees to go on a blind date with Tony (Demetri Goritsas), who seems to be quite pleasant if dull and humourless. It is immediately apparent that they have nothing in common and Teresa is keen to call a halt at once.

Tony has different ideas. He begins to call her and send her beautiful bunches of flowers. From there, it is only a small step to persuading her not very bright PA, played hilariously by Lucy Punch, to supply her home telephone number. In no time at all, he is calling her through the night and soon his tone becomes threatening.

Teresa also has problems at work as she struggles to get on with Jason Watkins as a new colleague. Her boss, Nicholas Day, seems to believe that she will make a good gutter journalist. As a consequence, he sends her along to interview a film director. It turns out that Les Kennkatt has built up his career on the size of his actresses' breasts. Karl Johnson gives this part more humour than it would seem to promise and also characterises the man convincingly - not an easy thing to do!

The star, however, is Katrin Cartlidge as Teresa. She starts off as a witty, sassy young woman at ease with herself. As the pressure of being haunted by a possibly murderous stalker builds, Cartlidge's body language and facial expressions show the stress that she is under. By the end of the play, she has cracked and a tearful actress introduces her new, heavily symbolic pseudonym, Claire Howells. This really is a bravura performance from a very talented actress.

Under Ian Rickson's strong direction, Teresa's dilemma is well exposed and explained. He uses many clever devices and perhaps the most powerful is asking his actress to change costume on stage. This brings home the vulnerability that a threatened woman must feel.

Gilman's weakness at present is that she does not know when to stop. All four of her male characters are misogynistic, but rather than assuming that her audience is sophisticated enough to understand this, she insists on demonstrating this repeatedly. Gilman might almost benefit from an injection of bland characters!

This is but a small criticism of an excellent young playwright. In the same way that her previous play, *Spinning Into Butter*, left one feeling like a hidden racist, *Boy Gets Girl* will leave many a man

embarrassed by his gender. There may be a touch of overkill in Gilman's plays at this stage but underlying them is a real desire to promote tolerance.

This play gives a real impression of what it must be like to be stalked. It is both very funny and capable of sending more shivers down the spine than any other for some time.

*The play runs until 15th December*

**Reviewer:** [Philip Fisher](#)