

# British Theatre Guide

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## Bracken Moor

Alexi Kaye Campbell

Shared Experience

Tricycle Theatre, London

6 June–20 July 2013

*Bracken Moor* is a psychological drama with more than its fair share of plot twists. The first scene of its 2¼ hours feels like an escapee from [Rutherford and Son](#), still playing at St James's Theatre, though Daniel Flynn's Harold Pritchard is better spoken than his direct equivalent.

The time is 1936 and the setting a comfortable home occupied by the Pritchards close to the colliery that the old man is about to close, as the aftermath of the depression continues to hit profitability.

With its intellectualised allusions, this really does feel like one of a plethora of left-wing plays written at the time or in the 25 years before.

With the arrival of house guests the Averys, the evening takes a very different turn. First, we meet young Terence. The beautiful boy hardly endears himself to his reactionary host, who distastefully labels the left-leaning would-be writer as a Freudian rationalist.

Terence quickly explains that he is not "the marrying kind" setting us up for an exploration of gay themes in a repressive context.

This is only developed to a degree, as Terence remembers the late Edgar Pritchard, a contemporary of his with whom he empathised to a remarkable degree prior to the youngster's death aged only 12, which took place on the lonely, titular moor ten years before.

The bulk of the plot is taken up with a genuinely chilling and at times unsettling ghost story that literally makes some punters jump out of their seats on occasion.

This brings out the best in a number of the actors including Joseph Timms as Terence but more particularly the star of the evening, Helen Schlesinger playing Elizabeth Pritchard. Edgar's mother is still almost literally distracted by grief, despite the passing of a decade, to the extent that she has a seemingly intractable death wish.

At one point, Elizabeth begins to introduce a new theme which threatens to turn the play into a post-Ibsenite feminist tract, before the remainder of the evening finally settles down to what could almost be viewed as a particularly dark and sinister comedy.

*Bracken Moor* brings together a somewhat unexpected combination of Royal Court favourite Alexi Kaye Campbell, teaming up with Polly Teale's Shared Experience under the roof of the Tricycle Theatre.

Miss Teale directs a good cast that can't always cover up somewhat weak characterisation with several of the individuals more useful in advancing the plot than revealing their inner selves.

Having said that, tough patriarch Harold begins to gain greater depth towards the end of the drama, while Sarah Woodward plays Vanessa, a comically terse wife who is only too happy to chide tediously dim husband Geoffrey, Simon Shepherd, whenever the opportunity arises.

*Bracken Moor* is unusual and, although it swaps themes around rather too often to allow members of the audience to relax, there is enough of interest to make the prospect of a visit to Kilburn both intriguing and thought-provoking.

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