

British Theatre Guide

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Gods Are Fallen and All Safety Gone

Selma Dimitrijevic

Greyscale

Northern Stage, Newcastle

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It's difficult to know where to start. *Gods Are Fallen and All Safety Gone* is very simple and yet very complex.

It's a series of conversations between a mother and her daughter. The beginnings are much the same but then the conversations diverge, sometimes in small ways, sometimes considerably, in subject matter (mainly mundane—the weather, the daughter's love life—but not entirely) but most especially in tone, reflecting the evolving relationship over time.

In the first conversation, mother and daughter are continually on the move, circling each other. Their movements are quick, almost jerky, reflecting a tension between the two, but the final conversation is quiet, still, full of pauses, contemplative. An adult lifetime of an ever-changing (although perhaps ever-developing might be more accurate) mother/daughter relationship is compressed into just over 50 minutes.

Two men play the characters: Sean Champion is the mother and Scott Turnbull the daughter. This wasn't something that writer/director Selma Dimitrijevic had in mind when she wrote the play but it arose from a previous show they were touring. "I was observing Sean and Scott, both on- and off-stage," she says, "and they were behaving more and more like two members of the family" so she decided on this casting.

And the gender-swap does not matter in the least. In fact, it helps. Perhaps it's because it generalises the story, moves it away from this particular mother and daughter to parents and children in general. Perhaps a kind of alienation device?

Champion and Turnbull's performances are sensitive, subtle, intelligent and totally convincing. They catch the changing relationship in all its complexity and emotional power.

They are not alone on the stage. Sitting at a table upstage right and doing what appeared to be a jigsaw puzzle are two women, an actual mother and daughter from the Newcastle area. A different two appear at every performance. They sit, do their puzzle, and watch. That's all. But their presence has an influence on the audience; it's a subtle influence, almost impossible to put into words, but it's there.

Perhaps this sounds like a deeply philosophical, intensely emotional piece and to a large extent it is, but it also has its moments of laugh-out-loud humour. Just like life, really.

Reviewer: [Peter Lathan](#)