

# British Theatre Guide

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## The Goodnight Bird

Colleen Murphy

Part of the In Their Place season

Finborough Theatre

(2011)

*The Goodnight Bird* is the third in the series of work by Finborough Theatre's Canadian Playwright-in-Residence, Colleen Murphy. As the women playwrights "In Their Place" season draws to a close, Murphy delivers a dark comedy about "old love and new courage".

The play is set in a bedroom in Canada where married couple Lilly and Morgan are fixed in their routine of pills and gentle bickering. But when a strange homeless man lands on the balcony of their new condo, he highlights the things they didn't know were missing and they begin to question their comfortable passivity.

Karen Archer plays Lilly, the slightly overbearing wife who is happy to gabble on without listening to a word that anyone else says, talking French at the stranger in her room and completely ignoring the fact that he speaks English.

There is great chemistry between Archer and David Weston as Morgan. Both actors give a solid performance as they descend from why there's spit on the bathroom mirror to why they got married in the first place.

Although the questions in Act Two are the basis of the play, it loses the momentum of Act One. The argument is a bit too true to life instead of artful as it rambles on, and the presence of their night-time visitor is sorely missed.

Damien Lyne is hysterical as Parker, the homeless man who loves stars and nature and claims to be able to smell cancer. He completely lacks inhibition as he discusses sex, describes how he peers through peoples windows and jumps naked on the bed. Lyne's performance is sincere and fearless in his depiction of a man who has no concept of social conventions.

Murphy's script is full of sharp wit and great lines. Lilly and Morgan's overly familiar bickering is plausible and funny, and as the action becomes more tense the script never loses its humour. Parker is the perfect antithesis to the settled married couple, and it's this stark contrast that makes the small Finborough stage bubble with liveliness and hilarity. The relationship between Parker and Lilly is particularly satisfying as she switches from fearful to authoritarian to sympathetic, finally agreeing to "liberate one tree" from the shared roof garden.

The play is funny and enjoyable, but somehow unmemorable. At the end, the married couple have been shaken out of their unthinking passivity, but it seems a somewhat feeble ending. The play is an enjoyable snapshot of life, but whilst the stakes are high in Act One, Act Two loses the urgency where it should have been heightened. After the excitement of the nutty Parker, the domestic argument is a bit of a let down.

Reviewer: [Emma Berge](#)