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The Night Falls Here

Barrie Darke

Theatre Cap-A-Pie

Whitley Bay Playouse and touring
(2006)

Theatre Cap-A-Pie was founded ten years ago, its aim being "to create extraordinary theatre experiences that excite, challenge, and raise the aspirations of artists and audiences." *The Night Falls Here* is Barrie Darke's first full length play to be professionally performed. Darke came to Cap-A-Pie with the initial idea for the play in February 2005. Previously the Company had not focused on new writing but the idea appealed to Cap-A-Pie's Artistic Director Gordon Poad who commissioned Darke to write the piece. The action takes place in the living quarters of a remote lighthouse, where three lighthouse keepers - Billy, Dobson and the much younger Ross - pass the time. The two older men tease Ross who is pining for his new girlfriend back on the mainland. To his credit, Darke never explains exactly why all three men have chosen this profession and the solitary lifestyle that goes with it, but over the course of the play we begin to realise that each man has his own personal issues and reason for being there.

Billy, played by David Whittaker, has a wife and son back home whom he telephones at least twice a day. At first he appears to be the doting husband and father, trying to keep open the lines of communication with his son. However, his attempts to control and organise their daily routines from his detached position in the lighthouse sound one or two warning bells.

Dobson, played by David Napthine, is the authority figure, a man who has dedicated his life to the safety of those at peril on the sea. He has no-one waiting on the mainland for him and when on shore, lives with his elderly mother.

Mark Labrow gives a very impressive performance as Ross, who has been sent to the lighthouse in an attempt to curb his somewhat unruly behaviour. At first it would appear that he is the most volatile of the three, but in the second half of the play the roles reverse and he assumes responsibility for the others and becomes the voice of reason.

In what appears to be a practical joke played on the gullible Ross, Dobson suggests they should perform an old seafaring ritual in order to summon up a legendary siren to keep them company. To their horror she appears, brought from her solitary island where she lives amongst the bones of all those she has lured to their deaths.

Lindsey Lennon plays Raidne the siren, a difficult role which could quite easily have been overplayed. Her performance, however, was faultless. She managed to engage her audience and create a tension whereby we were never quite sure what she was about to do next.

There is more action in the second half of the play, where the siren begins to play on the weaknesses of all three men to their detriment. The ending of the play is very dark with an almost apocalyptic prediction of humanity's fate. It is at this point that I would make one small criticism.

Throughout the play, which is set in 1957, the siren makes a number of ominous predictions, both personal and historic, which add to the overall eeriness of the piece. Darke attempts to bring to light contemporary issues; war, terrorism and man's destruction of his environment. However, at one point the siren predicts the death of Princess Diana and the destruction of the twin towers. Personally I felt this jarred somewhat and had the effect of instantly drawing the audience back to the present day, thus disengaging them, albeit momentarily, from the surreal situation that everyone had worked so hard to achieve.

There is an unexpected twist to the ending which cleverly links back to the beginning of the play when certain predictions were made. Darke's dialogue is sharp and subtle. To his credit, exposition is kept to an absolute minimum, thereby leaving his play open to a number of interpretations.

The set design by Daniel Peter Forth was very impressive and enhanced the production. The original soundtrack which was composed for the play by Greg Pullen, was eerily evocative and the multi-layered sound effects by Jez Arrow, highly effective.

This has been a one off project for Cap-A-Pie. A new play by a new writer and a touring schedule to organise was an ambitious project to take on for a small company. Gordon Poad said, "It has been a huge learning curve, but very enjoyable and it gave us the opportunity to flex our theatrical muscles." I would say it was definitely worth the effort and would encourage them to do more.

"The Night Falls Here" is showing at Whitley Bay Playhouse 19th-21st Jan, 2006 and then at The Maltings Theatre & Arts Centre, Berwick Upon Tweed on . 26th Jan, 2006 for one night only.

Reviewer: [Diane Kennedy](#)