

British Theatre Guide

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Strangers, Babies

Linda McLean

Traverse Theatre Company

Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh

(2007)

Good plays ripen with time; they plant the seeds of ideas that grow over subsequent days and leave an audience member thinking over ideas which the playwright raised. Torben Bett's *The Unconquered* is an example of such a work; two weeks after seeing Stellar Quines' show premiere at the Byre Theatre (it is currently on tour in Scotland) it is still raising questions about its subject matter.

In contrast, twelve hours after Linda McLean's *Strangers, Babies*, I still struggle to glean anything lasting from this fragmented work.

Five scenes between May (Gillian Kearney) and various men in her life sketch an ephemeral cloud around the character and her situation. The situation and May's history are difficult to pin down, in that although the audience is given flecks of information regarding the central 'mystery' over the course of the play, it was highly difficult to string events together into a coherent whole. In fact, as the male characters only appear in one scene each and their impact on the chatty, minutiae-obsessed May is never really felt, this was a piece with which it was exceedingly difficult to become emotionally involved.

Even with contributions from a number of highly skilled performers, once the pattern of a male character being in only one scene had been established, it was difficult - if not impossible - to engage with the scenes. There was no evidence of May's attitudes changing from one scene to the next, and as the initial impression one received from her nattering about birds with broken wings did not establish her as a particularly likeable or even interesting character, trying to track her emotional development over the course of the 90-minute play seemed little more than pointless.

While McLean's dialogue in both this and her previous works has been lauded as highly poetic, framed in this manner it did not make for an entertaining or thought provoking experience.

Reviewer: [Rachel Lynn Brody](#)