

# British Theatre Guide

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## Talk About the Passion

Graham Farrow

Andy Jordan Ltd in association with the New End Theatre, Hampstead, and Arc Stockton  
Arc, Stockton  
(2004)

If your only child, a six year old boy, is sodomised and killed and the killer produces a best-selling autobiography, how do you react? If the public turn on you and blame you because you let go of his hand at the crucial moment, what does that do to you? How do you behave when you confront the killer's editor who has made a fortune and a name from your misery?

These are the questions which Stockton playwright Graham Farrow's *Talk About the Passion* asks. It's a two-hander, just over an hour long, set in the office where father Jason Carroway faces Evelyn Ayles, editor of the autobiography of his son's killer. Beginning deceptively quietly, it rapidly builds to a brutally physical outburst which leaves Ayles, played by Phillipa Peak, shaking in shock and fear on the floor, but then the manipulative cunning which has brought her the success she enjoys in her career reasserts itself and she gradually and inexorably gains the ascendancy, provoking Carroway (Daniel Ainsleigh) to an act of vigilante vengeance.

The parallels with the James Bulger case are clear and quite deliberate: it was, playwright Graham Farrow tells us, what stimulated him to write the play.

It is not a pretty sight. All Carroway can do in his misery is to try to hit out and hurt, whilst Ayles embodies all that is wrong with our society: she is totally self-centred, so obsessed with her own career success that all she can see in other people's hurt is an opportunity for her advancement, and has no qualms whatsoever about causing suffering to anyone else as long as it suits her purpose.

It is a powerful piece of theatre, well directed (by Darren Tunstall) and performed, but I was left feeling curiously unsatisfied. Of course the father of the murdered child would be tortured, racked by guilt and want to destroy those who had murdered his son, destroyed his life and profited from doing so. And we know there are those who, like Ayles, are so pathologically egocentric that they cannot feel any empathy for others and are willing to manipulate everyone and everything to get further their own ends. But the really interesting and important question - why are we, as a society, so keen to wallow in horrors such as the rape and murder of a six year old? - is only glanced at.

*Talk About the Passion* is moving but offers no new insights.

Reviewer: [Peter Lathan](#)