

# British Theatre Guide

News, reviews, features and podcast on theatre across the UK

## Terminus

Mark O'Rowe

An Abbey Theatre Production

The Maria Studio, Young Vic

(2011)

Having originally played in Dublin in 2007 and having won a Fringe First at [Edinburgh](#) in 2008, *Terminus* finally calls into London as part of its 2011 international tour. A retelling of the ancient Faust moral, Mark O'Rowe's play is darkly sinister and seductive, disturbing, yet delicious.

An imploded mirror fills the proscenium; three shattered lives centre stage. Two women and one man can be seen through distinct shafts of light; each one's story seemingly different, yet inextricably linked.

O'Rowe names his characters A, B and C. Three bold successive letters that start the alphabet, a series of consonants and vowels that exist independently of one another, but that only truly make sense when joined together.

As A begins to narrate we learn of her kindness and compassion for others. B takes over and speaks about love and the excitement of new romance. C recounts a night out on the town. But such niceties are merely a distraction from the destruction bubbling underneath. Each character has a twisted past and an even more disturbed future, for the world in which these characters live is one of demons and brutality; a cut throat society in which violence is an everyday occurrence.

Like unravelling the layers of an onion, the play's sting increases as it progresses. With each successive monologue the characters are stripped naked, revealing their inner thoughts, anxieties, passions and motivations. Bit by bit the audience pieces together the broken shards of glass that constitute the character's jigsaw puzzle of a life and are rewarded with a cohesive and coherent narrative that leaves them enlightened as to why A, B and C are who they are.

O'Rowe is a masterful writer, conjuring up beautifully vivid images with his rich text. Animal imagery abounds and O'Rowe even succeeds in making grotesque and disturbing acts such as rape and murder highly poetic. *Terminus* reminds us of the power of language and as the actors orate their lines, the text's inherent rhythm provides the piece with a pulsating heartbeat, complete with internal rhyme.

There are shades of Howard Brenton's *Magnificence* about the piece, along with Edward Bond's *Saved*. Abuse, justice, revenge; three prominent themes also found in *Terminus*. And one can't help but think that Guy Debord's ghost hovers over the play with its set design courtesy of Jon Bausor mirroring the shattered screen of the *Spectacle* that Debord so longed to achieve.

Olwen Fouéré, Catherine Walker and Declan Conlon give outstanding performances as the piece's three characters A, B and C as they engage the audience with their gripping story telling. This is theatre at its most simple and finest and it is credit to O'Rowe's writing and direction that not one of *Terminus*' finely crafted one hundred minutes lags.

A fantastical tale encompassing the morbid and disturbing darker tones of life, *Terminus* demonstrates that O'Rowe is one of the finest contemporary Irish writers around. Missing this production would be a sin in itself.

*Playing until 16th April 2011*

[Tweet](#)

**Reviewer:** [Simon Sladen](#)