

# British Theatre Guide

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## The Verdict

Barry Reed, adapted by Margaret May Hobbs  
Middle Ground Theatre Company  
New Wolsey, Ipswich  
21–25 March 2023

If you love courtroom drama, then *The Verdict* is probably one of the best—and even if like me it's not really your favourite genre, this is still a cracking production of one of the most famous in the field.

Written as a novel in 1980 by an American lawyer, Barry Reed, it was adapted for film by David Mamet and starred Paul Newman and James Mason. Middle Ground Theatre Company is touring this new adaptation for stage by Margaret May Hobbs, and it doesn't disappoint.

The plot centres around washed-up Boston lawyer Frank Galvin who is presented with a case that he realises could make or break him. A young woman has been left in a vegetative state after a medical procedure goes wrong during childbirth at one of the big Catholic hospitals in the city. Her mother wants justice and compensation to give her better care—but it means taking on the might of the medical fraternity and the Catholic Church itself.

As Frank looks into the circumstances, he comes to believe that it's medical malpractice and the doctors are to blame. But how to prove that in court when he is up against one of the best defence attorneys in the country and a biased judge? Add in his own marital and drinking problems, plus a femme fatale and you've got yourself an intriguing and emotional story.

On a detailed set depicting in the first half both Galvin's office and his local bar, and the second half a lavish court room, this is a 'no expense spared' production with a large cast of 17 that really bring this drama to life.

Jason Merrells's (*Agatha Raison*, *Emmerdale*, *Waterloo Road*) superb portrayal shows Galvin as a man just hanging in on the right side of drunk but once galvanised into action is determined to fight every inch of the way.

He is well matched by prolific US actor of stage and screen Nigel Barber as defence attorney J Edgar Concannon—wily, clever and determined to win the case at any cost.

They are well supported by the rest of the cast who flesh out the various characters of this intense and absorbing drama including Richard Walsh as both the Bishop and Judge Sweeny, Vincent Pirillo as Galvin's mentor Moe Katz and Teresa Jennings in the sensitive role of Nurse Rooney.

The pace is good, the story cracks along with a few twists on the way and the audience on the night that I went were so engaged they audibly gasped at some of the plot turns.

This is a brilliant production of a first-rate story that should not be missed. Just a warning that it's a little long at 70 minutes each half.

Reviewer: [Suzanne Hawkes](#)