



# Adelaide Theatre Guide

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PO Box 738  
MODBURY SA 5092

[info@theatreguide.com.au](mailto:info@theatreguide.com.au)  
ABN : 93 297 960 525

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## **BURIED CHILD**

**State Theatre Company of South Australia**

**Dunstan Playhouse**

Until 2 Oct 2011

Review by Brian Godfrey

Truly great drama not only entertains, but should confront, intimidate and provoke discussion. Sam Shepard's 1978 Pulitzer Prize winning "Buried Child" isn't the most entertaining of plays, but certainly fulfils the other objectives.

It examines the concept of family and the hiding of or wiping away of secrets. Holding on to the past, decay and disease are all very strong themes. Mary Moore's almost minimalist set crumbles away suitably and adds to the absurdist feel (heightened by Mark Pennington's mood changing lighting) of this production.

David Mealor's direction shows an understanding and respect for the text and allows him to form some wonderfully symbolic pictures. His use of the doorway and staircase is particularly ingenious - e.g. Jacqy Phillips' first entrance descending the stairs as if about to enter Hell. As strange as it may sound, Mealor has given his actors a sense of disconnection with one another that works extremely well.

Ron Haddrick, as crusty patriarch, Dodge, is brilliant and delivers a lovely cantankerous yet endearing performance. Phillips gives one of her usual strong performances as the wife clinging hopelessly to the past; with Patrick Frost giving some much needed fine comic relief in Act Two as Father Dewis.

Whilst Patrick Graham (Bradley) and Tim Overton (Vince) give good, strong support, it is Hannah Norris as innocent intruder, Shelly and Nicholas Garsden as slow elder sibling, Tilden who are standouts. Norris slides easily from giggly ineptitude to strong-willed realisation; Garsden dominates the stage with his empathetic slow movement and talking reminiscent of Lenny in "Of Mice And Men".

The play is heavy going (Opening Night saw a number of people leave at Interval) but seen to the end, well worth the journey. This production may cause some controversy, but that's what good drama is all about.