



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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THURSDAY

Brink Productions and English Touring Theatre

Norwood Concert Hall

Until 16 March 2013

Review by John Wells

"Thursday" is not many things that it might appear to be: it is not a play about the London bombings of 7 July 2005; it is not the documentary story of Gill Hicks, the Adelaide woman who had her legs amputated after suffering horrific injuries in the London carnage; it is not about terrorism or international politics; it is not about hate or apportioning blame.

"Thursday" is a reflection on our anonymity and personhood (what we might once have called our souls). It is about how the ceaseless churn of unremarkable lives can be transformed in an instant – here, by unspeakable, violent tragedy - and how we respond to the terrible change. "Thursday" is a plea for us to recognize what links us together, rather than to focus on what separates us. It shows that growth and forgiveness are sinewy, difficult actions.

Brink Director Chris Drummond and playwright Bryony Lavery have crafted a compelling and compassionate production. There are many carefully shaped snapshots of theatrical beauty and moments of poetry in the text. Designer Dan Potra's multi-layered space – hiding as much as it reveals – is cleverly lit by Colin Grenfell. Quentin's Grant's piano soundtrack is subtle and metronomic, like a heartbeat, sometimes fearful, sometimes comforting.

There is a breadth to Drummond's artistic ideas: set design, music and lighting all inhere in a complete and cohesive vision.

The narrative of interwoven stories is initially unclear and unsettling. Behind layers of see-through walls, the day begins. The shifting group of characters are united by their ordinariness: they grudgingly get out of bed, shower, dress and spend varying amounts of time on the loo. Their pre-occupations are particular and personal: giving a lecture, seeking petty revenge, revealing a secret, examining a fractured relationship. They make their way to the tube and to their unknowing fate.

The ensemble piece is built around Rose, an sharp, acerbic Australian. Rose is wonderfully played by Kate Mulvaney with a bracing, almost gleeful abrasiveness, in a complex and honest performance. Much of the emotional heavy lifting is done by Bonita (Emma Handy), who loses a fiancé in the bombings and later nurses Rose. Handy's performance is bewildered and raw. Tom Mothersdale's turn as a wheelchair-bound guest on an imagined "Parkinson" show is appallingly funny.

The production is not without flaws: the build-up to the bombing is gradual and becomes laborious. The denouement, too, is slow. The gentle unfolding of the story diminishes the immediacy of the production. The various threads muddle the clarity of the action and create emotional distance from the characters.

But "Thursday" is a strong and powerful piece; its sadness, humanity and sense of muscular hope stay with you.