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Hurt

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Publication Details

C. McKinnon 2016 Hurt 5.7.2016 This professional production of Hurt, by WhiteBox Theatre, directed by Kim Hardwick, at 505 Theatre Venue, Newtown, opened 5th July, closed 23rd July 505 Theatre Venue, Newtown, Sydney, NSW

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Abstract

Hurt from The Hurt Trilogy The modern world is full of new technologies, fast cars, fast foods, fast internet speeds but does our focus on the politics of the now means we lose the opportunity to set current dilemmas against more philosophical questions about what it means to be human? The Hurt Trilogy project queries whether our moral choices are important or whether we our lives are simply accidents being played out? Each of the plays examines whether, when faced with death-our own or the death of someone we love- 'truths' about our actions can be grasped? And more broadly, how shall we live and die? Hurt, the first play of the trilogy, explores the concept of moral choice. Three people- Mel, Dominic, and Alex-await news about an injured child. In seeking to come to terms with the potential loss of a young life are Dominic, Mel, and Alex able to reveal previously hidden truths? Or, do they lay blame on each other, pushing already fractious relationships into darker territory?

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Hurt



By Catherine McKinnon. Old 505 Theatre, Newtown, NSW. July 5 – 23, 2016

Playwright Catherine McKinnon explains that, as part of trilogy centred on the life-changing effects of traumatic events, "Hurt wrestles with the complexities of our actions towards one another at a time of crisis".

Three people, implicated in an accident involving a child, face each other in the stark, impersonal space of a hospital waiting room. Their emotions and reactions, distorted by guilt and grief and fear, expose the fragility of the human psyche and the tensions that arise when self control crumbles.

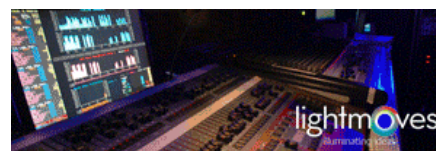
Director Kim Hardwick has found all this complexity in her interpretation of McKinnon's carefully drawn characters and their economic and very natural dialogue. The taut mood, established at first by darkness and rising discordant sound, snaps to the desolated, fluorescent glare of the waiting room. A mother, distraught, bone weary and ravaged by guilt agonises about her daughter ... she was playing with her brother ... the door was locked ... how did she get outside?

The tension she creates is palpable and it escalates as she is joined firstly by Alex, a witness to the accident, and, some time later, by Dominic, the father of her children. The direction is tight; the pace fast; the action edgy.

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Meredith Penman plays the distraught mother, Mel, with an intensity that finds depths of despair and wretched self-recrimination that resonate and reverberate. It's there in the her hunched body, her clenched fists, her anguished face. This is not an easy part to play because of the complications of the character and the resulting fragile hold she has upon her tenuous emotions. Penman finds all of this in a tightly controlled, finely wired performance.

Gabrielle Scawthorn plays Alex, concerned, sympathetic, seemingly for all the right reasons. Scawthorn uses pause and hesitance effectively to achieve both distress and unease, the reason for which is eventually revealed as covering underlying guilt and secrecy. Scawthorn finds the contrast with Penman's brittleness in tightly controlled reactions – facial expressions, swallowed sentences, bitten lips, spatial distance – eventually revealing her real strength of character as truths are exposed.

Dominic is played by Ivan Donato. This too is a role that requires a range of emotions - concern, blame, guilt, remorse. Dominic is separated from Mel, but the baggage they carry together, and the action he has taken unbeknown to her, hangs heavily upon him and the atmosphere of the play. Donato finds the juxtaposition of emotions in a performance that is at one moment strained, at the next self-reproaching, at the next almost tormented.

Distress and anxiety, apprehension and accusation transfuse in the play as different layers of the characters and their secrets are revealed. It is at times harrowing ... because it is also



very real.

Carol Wimmer

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