

THE MEMORY OF WATER by Wag The Dog Theatre

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“The Memory of Not Watching a Show“

Reviewer: Isaac Tan

Performance: 4 July 2017

In light of current events, in which a tussle within a prominent family has been aired on every platform available, Wag the Dog Theatre’s debut production of *The Memory of Water* is certainly a coincidence.

Alas, it is not a happy one.

The familial tussle of the show revolves around three daughters who have returned to their family home to arrange their mother’s funeral. In the course of doing so, all of them unravel at certain points as they have to confront certain memories, and come to grips with their own failings.

The Guardian’s Matt Trueman may have called Shelagh Stepheson’s play “a delicate treatise on human nature”, but neglects to inform his readers that it is bubble-wrapped with a lot of words, mounds of them.

Unfortunately, most of the actors fail to handle the text in such a way that engages the audience that uncovers meaningful truths for both parties. Deborah Hoon plays the uptight and well-organised Teresa, an alternative therapy business owner who feels that her sisters are not pulling their weight. Hoon seems uncomfortable in her performance because she is burdened with maintaining an accent while trying to find variation to Theresa’s tenseness, but ultimately fails.

Krissy Jesudason initially entertains with her exuberant portrayal of Catherine, the wild child of the family. While Catherine’s histrionics and unpredictable temperament is fun to watch, it starts to grate after three scenes of the same thing. When she finally unravels, one’s disdain for her is too great that it buries any sympathy one may have.

Thankfully, there is no family resemblance in Victoria Mintey’s performance as Mary, the cynical high-achiever with a chequered past. Behind ever scowl and caustic remark lie thoughtfulness and intentionality. As such, her final breakdown and subsequent attempt to pick up the pieces is as painful as it is wonderful to watch.

Mark Seow as Mike— a television doctor who is dating Mary while tending to his sick wife — is clueless in tackling his character. He opts to settle for an easy-going character and sticks with it. When Mike is supposed to be surprised by the possibility of Mary being pregnant, Seow is tentative and unassured, and quickly slips back to the default choice the first instance he gets.

This long-drawn show, like the one brewing outside of the theatre, could not have ended soon enough. If only Teresa could recommend a potion which erases selected memories, and recover lost time—all 150 minutes of it.

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ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

THE MEMORY OF WATER by Wag the Dog Theatre

30 June – 9 July 2017

Drama Centre Blackbox

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Isaac started reviewing plays for the student publication, Kent Ridge Common, and later developed a serious interest in theatre criticism after taking a module at university. He is also an aspiring poet, and has a passion for acting and flamenco dancing.