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Someone Who'll Watch Over Me by Frank McGuinness

"Perfect setting for outstanding play" Review by Graham Trelfer

Frank McGuinness's brilliant play evokes the memories of the Lebanese Civil War where western hostages were held for astonishing lengths of time, no make matter worse, these were not soldiers, but civilians - teachers and journalists. While not based directly on the experiences on any of those captured 'Someone To Watch Over Me' places an English an Irishman and an American in a Lebanese prison cell as they count down the days towards either release or death. The first time I saw a production at Baron's Court Theatre I thought that this would make a great setting for such a play. On a stage no bigger than my bedroom and surrounded by brick pillars which can on occasionally get in the way of the action, stripped of virtually all set dressing it doesn't take a great leap of faith to believe you are looking into a prison cell.

The three strangers are thrown together and united by their situation, have duty to support each other through the tough times, but being trapped together they also start to grate on each other. As each day brings nothing new they reflect on their past, play games and lose themselves in imagination in order survive the ordeal. Of course with a cast of three chained to the walls you are very dependant on a good script to keep your interest and great actors who can carry it off. Fortunately you get both. The script is great since it doesn't swell to heavily on the past, it doesn't try to make a story from what went on before, but rightly focuses on present and the future. There is comedy, moments of hope and moments of despair, each emotion feeling real and fully justified even when cutting another short. It is great that the play does not get bogged down in religion and the motives behind the kidnapping but rather how the characters deal with the unimaginable situation.

Charlie Walker-Wise is amazing to watch as the often brass and confrontational Irishman, but it is the moments of silence, where he listens to a story or loses himself in a hundred mile stare. Sam Hoare plays the American who for so long tries to stay positive in the face of the situation, keeping back his own fears to spare the other two. His transition from bravery to despair comes along almost unexpectantly, yet feels so perfectly timed and natural.

Finally Robert Gill as the Englishman who can't contemplate how he arrived in this situation. For him the experience is the biggest rollercoaster, his age and background is in stark contrast to the other men and yet he has to find away to survive and get along.

'Someone To Watch Over Me' the play is a triumph, set in a most perfect venue, it is well worth seeing and while you are there make sure you donate to 'Help for Heroes' a non political group helping those men and women of the armed services wounded in the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Event Venues & Times

Showing until 18/10/08 Barons Court | 28a Comeragh Road, Barons Court, London, W14 9HR