



## **ROSE BOWL ADJUDICATION**

NAME OF PRODUCTION: **'ROAD'**

By Jim Cartwright

NAME OF COMPANY: **THE KELVIN PLAYERS THEATRE COMPANY**

DATE: 25<sup>th</sup> April 2019

VENUE: Kelvin Studios, Bristol

ADJUDICATOR: Linda Evans

### **OVERALL PRODUCTION**

From the start I could sense that this was indeed a very special Production for your Director, an ideal vehicle for him with all the personal associations. I would say this was quite unusual and gave an edge and depth to the performance. The play is brutal and depressing, the earthy humour revolves to a great extent round sex – which is about the only free activity amongst the characters. The comedy makes the play bearable to watch and this was brilliantly realised.

The casting was, on the whole, excellent and there were some outstanding characterisations. I did have concerns about Joey and Clare, through no fault of their own, they just happened to look too healthy and vibrant to succumb to what amounted to death by starvation, it just didn't seem credible. I wondered if you had considered 'swapping' round with the actor who played Skin Lad/Soldier/Brother and perhaps the actress whom played Chantel etc.

The staging worked very well with the symbolic road and scaffold tower. The lighting, music and sound enhanced the inset scenes, giving the actors atmospheric support. The costumes were well

thought out with an amusing eighties flavour. The choreography such as it was, was most entertaining and lifted the mood.

Above all the actors did a magnificent job in sustaining the accents and had fully identified with their roles, there were some moving performances amongst the comedy. The younger members of the cast injected the necessary vitality, giving contrast to the low moments.

## **SET DESIGN**

The traverse staging was a treat and adapted to all the scenes. The token stage dressing and props were appropriate. The sight lines were fine although the bedroom scene was a little difficult to see at times, from where I was sitting.

The scaffold worked very well and the cast used it efficiently with ease.

## **LIGHING AND SOUND**

This was an artistically thought through and enhanced the soliloquies in particular I enjoyed the toe tapping eighties selection of music.

## **COSTUMES**

Nostalgic and appropriate for the age and personality of the characters.

## **INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCES**

### **Brian/Manfred**

The scene with Marion I have to say stole the show for me. Brian's body language as Marion pursued him round and off the acting area said "it all". I can see it now! Brian's rather hesitant drunken walk with downcast eyes, his open necked shirt displaying a locket and feeble attempts to stand up to Marion was very funny indeed.

### **Scullery**

This actor 'ran' the show, acting as a sort of chorus or jester, he projected the action forward. The black leather jacket gave him a Machiavellian veneer. The familiar banter with the other characters revealed him as a true local from the road. His cynical awareness of the lack of hope for most of his 'friends' was held without malice. His unfailing cheerfulness helped everyone along. Agile movement with a strong stage presence carried all this through. A stellar performance.

### **Marion**

As aforesaid, this performance stole the show for me. Her stage presence and appearance was dynamic, the black wig and short scarlet dress with high heels as she pursued Brian was achingly funny. The fast paced dialogue and inebriated facial expressions were a memorable treat. Her character was totally convincing. I enjoyed the cloying episode with Brian's daughter! The teamwork with Brian was first class and quite honestly I wished I could have seen the scene again!

### **Brenda**

The audience loved this characterisation and so did I. An appearance, aided by the lank hair, costume and shambling movement convinced. The interaction with Barry revealed her addiction to cigarettes and booze without means apart from what she could sponge from family and acquaintances. The scene with Carol was uncompromising in her efforts to communicate, Carol throwing a pound in coins on the floor was a humiliation, but Brenda was probably past being hurt. This was a brutal glimpse into Brenda's world, a searing performance, body language, vocal tone and facial expressions said it all.

### **Clare**

A vibrant, talented actress, but like my comments on Joey, too full of vitality to allow her sense of survival not to have saved her. I felt the role needed an ethereal quality in appearance with perhaps an introverted naïve personality to make the situation plausible. I appreciate Clare projected naivety, but was somewhat miscast. I really enjoyed the dance and could see that there is a lot of potential.

### **Mrs Bald**

An amusing cameo as a down trodden and bullied wife, the one liners were pointed and well timed as she determinedly fights back to have her say.

### **Joey**

A very challenging role, I was rather surprised at how robust and healthy this Joey looked and had envisaged a thin, gaunt appearance of someone who was so depressed about the unremitting unemployment and his lack of prospects etc that he would have become a pale shadow of his former self. The delivery of the soliloquy which was a feat of learning had, I felt, too much energy. A prisoner in death throes against his will is very different from someone who has elected to go to the limits with literally only a door between life and death. I appreciate this episode in the play was a surreal symbolic act of defeat. The actor worked very hard, but seemed miscast.

## **Louise**

Louise and Carol are contrasting personalities in that they have different reactions to their situation, but both want and hope to break free of their environment. Louise has depth of imagination and is a sensitive girl, her life shows promise as she is introduced to new experiences by Eddie and Brink. Appearance, body language, vocal tone and facial expressions carried through her awareness of better things.

## **Mr Bald/Joey's dad/Eddie's dad**

An ideal appearance for these uncouth characters, set off by just the right costume. Mr Bald's vest being one example. Eddie's indifferent dad with the Hoover business was another, the comedy timing was spot on.

## **Chantel/Scottish girl/Linda**

I enjoyed these three cameos. A delicate appearance with an almost ethereal stage presence was an interesting contrast to the rest of the female cast.

## **Molly**

A perfect role for this experienced actress and much enjoyed. The nuanced characterisation was poignantly detailed with memories of the past to show a strong spirit who needed company, but realised her appearance would help to get the attention she hoped for. The song and dance was touchingly endearing and of course sharing the cat's milk bought the house down!

## **Jerry**

Another memorable performance from a clearly experienced actor. The picture of his youth meeting girls in dance halls, when morals were so different came through vividly and persuaded me at any rate, that they were better days, was sensitively played. He couldn't bear his life as he saw it, in the contemporary scene of the 80's. Recalling his national service days made a real impression and was indeed a walk down memory lane for myself and likely other members of the audience. A rivetingly nostalgic portrayal of a man lost. Technically very accomplished with excellent use of voice and timing.

## **Skin Lad/Soldier/Brother**

I was impressed by this gifted actor and his technical skill used to sustain the long solo speech on pg 23, 24, 25. His obsession with the Dharma had become an escape from all the potential violence, although he himself was a threatening presence. The unpleasant aggressive brother was immediately established. The 'toy boy' soldier was great, the relaxed drunken stupor a great help

to poor deluded Helen. As aforesaid, I could see that you could have played Joey and the Skin Lad, if feasible.

### **Helen**

A wonderful opportunity, almost a solo scene. The older woman with the very drunk toyboy soldier must have been a joy to play. Half wanting to mother him, but also hoping for sex made for a very amusing scene. The constant spillage of food and logistics of coping with two plates of fish and chips whilst soldier boy threw up and later when Helen tried a seductive dance with him, was pathetically hilarious. I thought perhaps the almost slapstick episode of falling off the bed etc could have been even more abandoned and uninhibited. The shamed regret at the end of the scene had a bitter sweet flavour.

### **The Professor/Bisto**

An interesting characterisation as the Professor held our curiosity as we learnt more about the road, albeit the worst of its seamy side. Here again the appearance convinced with the 'academic' beard and comparatively clean T shirt. The outspoken, incorrigible DJ image came through with relentless energy. The contrast between the two characters was achieved.

### **Valerie**

Valerie's dreadful situation was depressingly accurate and her hopeless soliloquy was sincerely delivered. Her description of her life with 'him' and her resentment over their lack of money, blamed on unemployment, was a highlight of the play. She says, "it's a nightmare all this" and it was. Her utterly worn out persona physically and mentally was reflected very well in her body language, vocal tone and facial expressions.

### **Carol**

Her aggressive traits were full on from the beginning in the relationship with her mother. As she says, "nowts nice' around me," and she wants to be "sprayed away". Her outburst to Brink and Eddie shows her anger at life. Like Louise she longs to escape the road and lack of prospects. A strong stage presence conveyed her frustration, a compelling performance.

### **Brink**

Like Louise and Carol, Brink is looking for something more. Eddie's influence is giving him hope through music. His hairstyle and appearance certainly gave the impression of aspiring to a life beyond the road. A pleasant stage presence convinced.

## **Eddie**

The scene with his father conveyed his lack of respect. The suit and 'respectable' appearance made him an unusual type for the girls to be with. His taste in music and aspirations generally were a symbol of hope amongst their usual dates. A many layered and considered interpretation convinced.

## **Lane**

Lane's determination to have fun, even with Scullery, illustrates her underlying desperation to find something to make her happy. Appearance, body language and facial expressions carried through her provocative image. The dance scene was a highlight.

## **Dor**

A very strong stage presence was enjoyed with the humour and outrageous behaviour realised. The appearance and movement reinforced the comedy and her lifestyle spent in the pubs of the road. The dance scene was great.

## **Curt/Blowpipe**

Curt's lament over the misery of living in the road added to the awful truth of its' hopeless symbolic existence. Although a cameo, the actor made an effective impression in his inebriated state. Blowpipe is a sort of clown and side kick to Scullery, the uninhibited actions supported him with humour.

Congratulations on 'pulling off' this very challenging and difficult play.

*Thank you for an enjoyable evening  
and Kind Hospitality  
Best Wishes for Future Productions*

*Linda Evans*