

Somewhere between heaven and hell

It's the after party of the premiere of Ariel Dorfman's *Purgatorio* at the Baxter. The play was heavy. An overall haunting, claustrophobic and disturbing experience. Somewhere between the bar and buffet table, academics are having a philosophical discussion about morals. So for we normal human beings, the smoking balcony outside and wine means sanity. We all knew very well, a play doesn't get any better than this. And despite our division the collective reaction was "sjoe" and "wow".

 By Johann Smith ^{25 Jul 2011}



"Fuck! I'm jealous!" says a veteran actress, who asked for her name not to be published. The ash of her cigarette flakes as she throws her arms around and further exclaims: "I mean, how good was that?! I'm so happy to see work like this."

And the twist is ...

Written by Ariel Dorfman, directed by Fleur de Cap winner Clare Stopford and starring Dawid Minaar and Terry Norton, *Purgatorio* is set in an asylum. In this imaginary metallic, vacant and cold purgatorial institution man and woman, who have done murderous wrongs to each other, are each assigned a "healer" to help them find redemption through forgiveness and accountability. Ah, but the twist is that they are both healer to each other, a fact neither knows as the healers are in disguise and may not reveal their identities. They are therefore, doubly tasked with forgiving each other at the same time.

The tables constantly turn as the two argue, either as a vulnerable patient or as a healer with the power of setting a soul free. The story starts like a maze, twists itself in several knots and is like watching two able-bodied men trying to drown and save each other at the same time, depending on who's who and which face are being argued.

Despite the food for thought this play is for academics, the general feeling is as instinctive as bile and sorrow. It rewards the viewer with a desire for redemption and a desire to see this thought-provoking play again.

ABOUT JOHANN SMITH

Johann M Smith is a music journalist turned content hacker. Known as the IDMAG launch designer, Johann specialises in entertainment, travel and social commentary. Or as he puts it "speak as and for companies through social and design."
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