



So chilling you won't notice the autumn frost



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Heath-Larsen, Burns and Hansen-Styles: three's a crowd (Photo: Mark Jones)

In preparation for reviewing That Theatre Company and Why Not Theatre Company's current production of 'Old Times', this reviewer decided to do some research on YouTube clip, where she came across a 2009 production starring Alan Rickman. His deadpan delivery and unmistakable baritone voice made for some comedic viewing. So when I entered the intimate Krudttønden theatre in Østerbro on the opening night of Barry McKenna's production, I was ready for a night of amusement. Potential audiences be warned though, because this piece is not for the faint-hearted hoping for

a wry laugh, but a tense drama that will leave you pondering the disconcerting fate of the characters long after you have left the theatre.

That Theatre Company's leading man Ian Burns and Why Not Theatre Company regulars Sue Hansen-Styles and Angela Heath-Larsen make up the small cast. Deeley (Burns) and Kate (Heath-Larsen) have been married for 20 years, and as the first scene opens, we come upon them in their home: a minimalist staging with a makeshift bar, two doorframes, two movable chaise lounges and an armchair. As husband and wife discuss their expected guest, Anna (Hansen-Styles) stands with her back towards us. This seemingly intimate moment between man and wife is the only glimpse we get of their life together, as the imminent arrival of Anna plunges the three of them into the depths of a memory-based battle.

Heath-Larsen's Kate is fragile to the point of ethereal. Her movements and voice are fluid and almost anesthetised, which stands in stark contrast to the controlled and dynamic sparring of the other two characters. This makes for an all-the-more chilling final scene in which her amiable passivity is masterfully turned into an authoritative anger.

The famous Pinter pauses were numerous and frequent, some as effective as the text-heavy moments that preceded them, leaving the audience reeling after the tense power struggle on stage. Director Barry McKenna, a self-proclaimed Pinter enthusiast, compared Pinter's work to that of Shakespeare, calling the former "the heir to the king of blank verse". In light of the actors' control and restraint of language, this is a fair comparison. Deeley and Anna's verbal sparring was especially effective.

Harold Pinter's metaphysical domestic dramas are famous for their austerity and open-ended conclusions. McKenna's production is no exception, and the final scene closes on an ambiguous note. There is something a little frustrating about a production that leaves so many questions unanswered. But therein also lies the beauty of a production that has not simply entertained you for 80 minutes, but stays with you on your journey home.

'Old Times' will continue playing at Krudttønden in Osterbro until November 24.

Old Times

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