

'The Children'

Written by Lucy Wilkinson
Directed by Susan Wilson
Presented at Circa Theatre

A surprisingly modern show, 'The Children' is set in a almost post-apocalyptic world where no one can enter "the exclusion zone" without the chance of developing cancer with all of the radiation. When I walked in the set was of a cute little cottage home, warm light shining through the window above the sink, and many kids' drawings stuck to the fridge. The impression I got was not of a sort of dystopian play with very relevant and modern ideas, but of a play about growing up and leaving home. One that I thought would be more suited for parents who have had their kids leave home instead of a high school student who hasn't left home yet. This impression was wrong. I was delighted when we were clued in about the disaster that had happened in the town, being a big fan of dystopian and horror films myself. The wholesomeness of the little cottage starkly contrasted the dark themes of the play, making the pictures on the fridge past memories of happiness that were now long gone.

The writing was exquisite, with overlapping dialogue followed by long silences that were sometimes comfortable and other times tense. Every bit of dialogue was so precise and every action had consequences, things you thought were meaningless details turned out to be a defining feature of the play. Yet, through the darkness and despair, I still felt like I was watching a family dinner with tension but still love.

The actors performed this intricate script marvelously, and didn't once break character or make us question their role. The characters' relationships felt real and you could tell that the cast had the right chemistry. Now, I question whether I could ever picture someone else as those characters.

The stage was also very impressive. The light in the window gradually became darker and darker, showing us the progression into the night as well as adding another element of tension. In one moment of the play, a character was cutting bread and I could smell it from where I was sitting, adding to the intimacy and the relationship between the actors and the audience. By the end of the play, the characters' home became the audiences' too.

This play surprised me with its themes about morals and sacrifice. Everything was so natural and yet meticulously done that it was a well balanced show I wouldn't miss. It has something for all audiences, and makes everyone feel at home. The detail of everything, including in the use of language itself, makes this play the gem that it is and doesn't shy away from conveying important and relevant ideas in a world that can be backward and unchanging.