



**MEDIA PACK**

Media Releases  
Media Reviews  
Photos

Written by Malcolm Hamilton  
Directed by Niall Henry

# A BRIEF TASTE OF LIGHTNING

# Media Release

A Brief Taste of Lightning by Blue Raincoat Theatre Company

Gath and Gertie live together as a couple in their own quiet corner of modernity. They work hard, live well enough and share with us all something of the relentless modern pursuit of happiness and meaning to life. The play opens onto the scene of a relaxing Sunday morning in their lives. But then Gath happens to open his newspaper onto a page of unfortunate news, and Gertie suddenly recalls she has come home the previous night from a wedding party they both attended without any shoes.

This play features Blue Raincoat Theatre Company members Sandra O Malley and John Carty and is directed by Niall Henry.

The author, Malcolm Hamilton is co-founder and writer in residence with Blue Raincoat Theatre Company. Malcolm's previous plays include: A Vinegar Fog produced by the company in 1995, Once Time in 1996, Still Life, two years later, in 1998 and Sanctuary in 2002. His last play 'The Strange Voyage of Donald Crowhurst' toured nationally and internationally to great acclaim and ran on the Peacock stage in The National Theatre in 2003.

# Media Review

The Irish Times, Monday November 15th, 2004  
A Brief Taste of Lightning. Review: Patrick Lonergan

This mesmerising Blue Raincoat production of a Malcolm Hamilton play begins with a marriage ceremony and several funerals. Gertie (Sandra O'Malley) and Garth (John Carty) have returned from a wedding party; she is sleeping, while he reads the obituaries in the morning newspaper.

We soon realise that Garth's interest in other people's funeral arrangements is a sign of his own fear of mortality. When Gertie wakes, she seems uninterested in her husband's feelings however, but is instead preoccupied with her appearance, and with her competitive relationship with Emily, her sister.

Both characters address each other throughout the play, but moments of genuine connection are rare: we're not watching a conversation here, but a series of occasionally intersecting monologues. Both Garth and Gertie seem exhausted, their lines delivered with bleary-eyed weariness - but the memories they describe present us with extraordinarily vivid images.

There is a hilarious story about arriving late for the funeral of an acquaintance. Garth tells us of how, when he was a baby, his father carried him across Turkey. Gertie describes a gloriously over-the-top spat with Emily. And we also hear of the couple's memories of how they once loved each other.

There is a moving contrast here between the vitality of these memories and the weariness with which they are recounted, which explains the significance of the link made at the beginning of the play between marriage and death. This is a couple whose relationship appears to be in the process of ending.

They are preoccupied with the past only because their present is so unsatisfying - as Garth illustrates in one brilliantly written sequence, in which he talks about how both of them are “dying” from the accumulated clutter of modern life.

We tend to associate Blue Raincoat and its director Niall Henry with an emphasis on the visual. Movement, gesture, lighting and music are all wonderful here, but so too is the script. This is a fascinating meditation on memory, love and modern life. And the acting is achingly good.



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