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Written by Malcolm Hamilton

Directed by Tom Creed

THE LAST MILE

Media Release

The Last Mile by Malcolm Hamilton

Directed by Tom Creed

The Last Mile is a new work from Blue Raincoat Theatre Company co founder and writer in residence Malcolm Hamilton. Directed by Tom Creed and featuring Brendan Ellis, the production will premiere at the The Factory Performance Space in Sligo on May 7th and will run until May 16th. It will be the sixth of Hamilton's work staged by Blue Raincoat. Two of these prior productions A Brief Taste Of Lightning (2001) & The Strange Voyage Of Donald Crowhurst (2004) are part of the ensembles current national and international touring repertoire.

In The Last Mile, we encounter an old man in the aftermath of bereavement. Unable to contend with the unexpected nature of his grief he finds himself dislodged from the psychological fabric of his life and cast out from the physical structures of his existence. The play opens on the seashore where the old man first encountered his wife many, many years previously. In place of his wife is a discarded shop mannequin.

Tom Creed (Solemn Mass for a Full Moon in Summer: Rough Magic) joins Blue Raincoat Theatre Company for the first time as director of this new play featuring Brendan Ellis in the lead role and with design by Jamie Vartan.

Media Review

Sunday Independent May 10th 2009 Review: Emer O'Kelly
The Last Mile by Blue Raincoat Theatre Company

A moving study of life after death

Far too often, one man/woman plays are nothing of the kind: they are merely spoken short stories and suffer from a kind of stasis at being denied their natural milieu of the page and been subjected to the entirely different requirements of visual performance.

Often, there is an added disadvantage in that such “plays” are frequently the result of a combination of an actor’s frustration at lack of other work and a straitened budget, which results in less than adequate direction.

The Last Mile ticks none of these boxes.

Malcolm Hamilton’s new short work for Blue Raincoat is a small and very well formed dramatic tragedy, and it is directed by guest director Tom Creed to offer a heartbreaking combination of bluff bravado and quivering tenderness.

An elderly man shuffles on: at first he seems to be a tramp on a beach, communing with nature and living in the past where sexual desire and fulfilment were a reality.

But this is no imagined past: the man is fresh from his wife's death-bed, where she had waited acceptingly for the end, while he railed mutely at her, if not to stay, at least to be angry. And in the course of an hour, the man unpicks the devastating minutiae of life feeding on itself in its urge to peter out and be no more.

“What happens to your name?” he asks despairingly. “What happens to the sound of your voice”? as he cradles the mannequin he has dressed in his wife's clothes (against her wishes: she had wanted them all destroyed, but he had saved this one garment, literally a brand from the burning).

The Last Mile is his new life, the mile he will walk without her; and the author leaves us uncertain how long that mile will be. Will it peter out along the shoreline, or will he decide not to embark on even the first step?

This is a simple tragedy, given heartbreaking resonances of the beauties of small, mundane lives by Brendan Ellis as *The Man*.

Jamie Vartan designs, with lighting by Michael Cummins and sound by Joe Hunt, and the combination of the whole makes for outstanding production values in a sobering, deeply touching meditation on loneliness and loss.



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