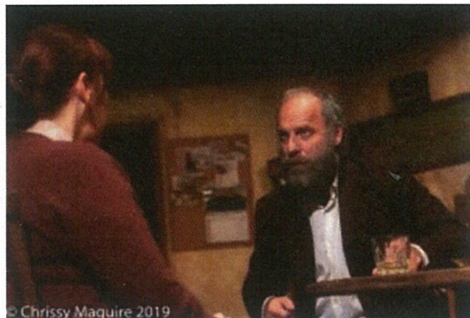




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- [Directory](#)
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- [Community Theatre](#)
- [Schools](#)
- [History](#)
- [On Stage](#)
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The Weir



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By Conor McPherson. TheatreiNQ. TheatreiNQ Theatre, 50 Allen Street, South Townsville. 27 February – 9 March, 2019.

Anyone who is fortunate enough to be amongst the smart people who have booked in advance is in for a theatrical treat.

It is indicative of the following that Townsville's TheatreiNQ has that this production sold out before it even opened. The body of work that this theatre company has produced over the past six years or so continues to excite and enthrall, and even if the play itself has faults (this one does not), the production itself always shines immeasurably through its accessibility and the emotional truth that the actors demonstrate. This is borne from a company which loves and carefully nurtures the people that participate in it, and once again these values ring true through this warm, emotive and wonderfully crafted play.

The Weir has reached Townsville with an interesting pedigree, including a sheaf of international awards, and this production marks an interesting change of focus for artistic director Terri Brabon. She is extremely adept at drawing amazing things from enormous casts, so it was a refreshing change to present a play with a cast of five - Brendan O'Connor, Ron Pulman, John Goodson, Bernie Lanighan and Terri Brabon herself.

All five have worked closely for many years in numerous productions, and this comfortable familiarity was a remarkable place to begin this story of friendship, life and loneliness. And their performances were as one – keenly observed, subtle and delivered with warmth and emotional truth.

The Weir is set in a shabby rural Irish pub which has seen better days, and it is frequented by a collection of idiosyncratic characters – all of whom believe in the world of the fey with its stories of faeries and tales of the other side. At the heart of the play is great tenderness, made all the more interesting with sparkles of great humour.

There is a cranky bachelor (Brendan O'Connor – cheerfully channelling his obvious Irish heritage) who has an ongoing love affair with Guinness. He regrets losing the one woman in his life because he couldn't see any reason to leave the village. Then there is another actor of Irish heritage (Bernie Lanighan) as the local boy made good; the wifeless publican (Ron Pulman) and the good-natured horse-racing punter (John Goodson) who looks after his difficult mother. The friendship between these four men has survived the years – their experiences, their differences, their wins and their losses – and typically don't hesitate to have a dig at each other while at the same time ribbing each other.



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Into this comes an outsider, who also has her reasons for loneliness, and she is the lone woman. Terri Brabon gave a poignant, emotive performance as she talks to the group about her personal tragedy which has led her to moving to this rural village.

As a director Brabon has taken this work to heart and once again she observes the rhythms of the work and has woven a piece that has you laughing out loud minute, amused the next, and then spellbound with the drama. This is not only a mark of excellent writing, but from a director's perspective to observe, carefully pace and dramatise these subtleties is an art in itself.

The intimacy of the play is assisted no end by the fact that the production has been mounted in TheatreiNQ's 60-seat theatre.

Every single moment of this play is to be savoured and enjoyed – rather like a good ale – and what you will leave the theatre with is a feeling of having shared an evening in this Irish pub with these wonderful characters.

Trevor Keeling

Photographer: Chrissy Maguire.

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