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# Review: TheatreiNQ's The Weir

*A change of pace for Townsville's theatre company finds them in a warm and intimate space.*




*TheatreiNQ's The Weir. Photos by Chrissy Maguire.*

It has been some years since I began reviewing work by TheatreiNQ, Townsville's plucky (and so far unfunded) theatre company. The work that this company has continued to produce is not only diverse and extraordinary – but also continues to demonstrate quite clearly that there is professional excellence in regional areas. In fact, I would challenge any urban-based critic to assess this amazing group's work and find them wanting in way, shape or form.

As I write, Townsville is course is still coming to grips with the flood disaster that befell our community, and in this entertainment-starved environment (the Civic Theatre is closed until the end of March at least because of flood damage, and the lesser-known Riverway Theatre suffered major damage), it was strangely ironic that the latest production (sold out before it even opened) should be called *The Weir*.

And what a production it is. The play itself has an amazing pedigree, winning numerous awards since it premiered in London in 1997, and director Terri Brabon has directed a remarkable production, characterised by a warmth and intimacy which contrasts admirably with the large-scale productions with enormous casts which is a hallmark of her mainstream work.


Staged in the company's own 60-seat theatre, this intimate and engaging piece can be described as inherently beautiful because of its humanity – ordinary folk engaged in ordinary activities and communicating in familiar ways. The locale is a rural Irish pub (replete with numerous framed photos on the walls – chaotically mounted – of local events and Irish heroes such as Michael Collins and John F. Kennedy). The pub is frequented by quirky, lonely locals who are alerted to the fact that a single female has moved to the area and is currently being escorted around by one of their own – who happens to be married.

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This, then, is the background for this warm, human, expertly crafted play about people – their loves, their lives, their friendship and their loneliness. And all set in Ireland with its humour and its consciousness of the fey.

The five actors – Brendan O'Connor, Ron Pulman, John Goodson, Bernie Lanighan and Terri Brabon herself – have all worked closely for many years, and it is clear that this comfortable familiarity was no accidental contributor to conveying the warmth, knowledge, charm and intimacy of friendship that is so central to the success of this piece.

Bringing an ultimate truth to the Stanislavskian “art of experiencing”, all five actors in the company gave finely etched and observed performances – all of them held together with the unspoken bond of loneliness.



*TheatreiNQ's The Weir. Photos by Chrissy Maguire.*

There is O'Connor's grumpy, lifelong bachelor who loves his drink and regrets losing the one woman in his life because he couldn't see any reason to leave the village; there is Lanighan's local boy done well whose isolation comes from a suspicion he is no longer accepted in the community in which he grew up. Then there is Pulman's wifeless publican who has inherited the pub but his sisters keep him in check, and Goodson's good-natured character who looks after his elderly (and at times difficult) mother.

Added to this mix – in a touching and emotive performance – is Brabon's female outsider. She has come to this town to escape a personal tragedy, which isolated her from her husband.

All this sounds terribly maudlin – indeed it is not. While this poignancy may lie at the heart of the characters in the play, it is laced with characteristic Irish humour that has you rocking with laughter one minute and then spellbound with the drama of the retelling of the ghost stories the next.

It was with great delight that I learned that the entire season had sold out before it had even opened – but this is no doubt a sign of the company's reputation for excellence and the following that it has developed over the past few years.

Rating: 5 stars ★★★★★

<http://theatreinq.com/html/productions/past-productions/2019/the-weir.html>) *The*  
<http://theatreinq.com/html/productions/past-productions/2019/the-weir.html>) *Weir*  
<http://theatreinq.com/html/productions/past-productions/2019/the-weir.html>)

By Conor McPherson

TheatreiNQ

Director: Terri Brabon

Set Design & Construction: Brendan O'Connor

Lighting Designer: Heath Roberts

Cast: Brendan O'Connor, Ron Pulman, John Goodson, Bernie Langihan, Terri Brabon

5 Defunding the sector's R&D arm sounds a warning note for the future 



27 February - 9 March 2019  
TheatreINQ Theatre, South Townsville

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**TREVOR KEELING**  
Friday 1 March, 2019

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Trevor Keeling has been involved in the arts and creative industries for 40 years in Australia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. He has been an actor, theatre director, journalist and critic, publisher, broadcaster, music festival director, event manager and arts administrator.

Since coming to Australia in 1991, he appeared in numerous productions in Adelaide, and was Festival Director of the Glenelg Jazz Festival for six years. He was General Manager of Dancenorth in Townsville (2005-2006 and 2011-2014) and for three years was CEO of Mirndiyan Gunana Aboriginal Corporation, which included managing the world-renowned Indigenous Mornington Island Dancers.

He has worked in urban, regional and remote environments in Australia and has a particular focus on regional arts and the connection to community.

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