

# ANY GIVEN MONDAY

by Bruce Graham

Torquay Theatre Troupe

Directed by Gay Bell

Reviewed By Deborah Fabbro – November 5, 2018

I am always happy to return to see a production at Torquay Theatre Troupe as I enjoy their willingness to present something new and different. This was the case with *Any Given Monday*. The programme advised that the show contained “plenty of coarse language” (this was in context) and both the director’s notes and the blurb about the playwright talked about political correctness. However, the dark, satirical humour offers lots of laughs (even while one is asking oneself “Should I really be laughing at that?”) as well as presenting moral and ethical questions that give the audience something to think about.

The story is set in Philadelphia and opens with the first of a number of monologues by Sarah (Siobhan Linde), a student majoring in philosophy, talking about her father Lenny, an English teacher, and his love of the film *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Cut to Lenny (Fred Preston) lying on the sofa watching the end of the film. We then find out that his wife, Risa (Lisa Berry) has recently left him for another man, Frank, and he is sitting there alone and depressed. Until his friend, Mickey (Michael Baker) arrives to watch the football game and lets Lenny know that he has taken action on behalf of his friend to ‘remove’ Frank and thereby have Risa return to her rightful place with Lenny. Sarah, who has returned home from college, overhears Mickey telling Lenny and has her own take on the situation. I won’t say any more about the plot except to say it does open up a lot of philosophical and moral questions for the audience to ponder. Still, it is a comedy, albeit black, so the laughs are plenty especially from the character of Mickey, who has some of the best lines which were superbly delivered by Michael Baker. Mr Baker owned the stage from the moment he entered with his physicality and was a joy to watch as the brash but down-to-earth Mickey. He has seen it all in his job in the tunnels of the subway and his ‘take’ on life is reflected in the coarse language and politically incorrect ideas he propounds. Mr Baker embodied this so well.



(l-r) Fred Preston, Siobhan Linde and Michael Baker in Torquay Theatre Troupe’s *Any Given Monday*. Photo by Dragan Jovanovic.

A wonderful counter to Mickey was Fred Preston’s Lenny. We saw a man struggling with the pain that has been inflicted upon him but who felt it necessary to maintain his usual diffident demeanour. Mr Preston displayed absolute control of his character and his skill as an actor was evident.

Risa was nicely played by Lisa Berry who believably presented a bored wife who has strayed but still has feelings for her husband. Ms Berry imbued her ‘conversations’ with Frank (unseen) with all the right emotions.

Siobhan Linde was excellent as daughter, Sarah. She portrayed the adamant young woman who sees things in the black and white absoluteness of youth but counters it with her philosophical theory, but ultimately familial ties make her abandon these and she recognises the need to adapt.

Gay Bell’s directorial hand was evident while still allowing her actors to project their own stamp on the characters. Ms Bell kept the play moving along well and made good use of the extended area to the side of the stage for Sarah and Mickey’s monologues and Risa’s conversations with Frank. However, I did feel that it was distracting that Sarah set and struck her stool each time. The lighting design was appropriate and the effect of the television was well created. This effect was also enhanced by the sound design by Don Bennett. There were some hiccups technically on the night but I’m sure these were sorted as the season progressed. Monica Spencer’s costumes were well chosen to suit each character.

All in all, *Any Given Monday* as presented by TTT was a challenging but very entertaining night of theatre.

*TheatreCraft* December 2018—Page 9