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The Road to Nowhere – review

POSTED ON OCTOBER 8, 2013 BY MARTIN PETTITT IN [OFF WEST END](#), [REVIEWS](#) WITH NO COMMENTS



The Road to Nowhere, indeed, leads to the Isle of Wight and three characters living on the crumbling edge of a cliff; busying themselves with sitting and waiting, procrastinating *Hamlet*-style, and enduring their isolation. Full of stories and reminiscences, they share a past and a fate with the holiday camp on the island, which is now long shut-down, neglected and disintegrating. Their dysfunctional, complicated, but ultimately tender relationship gives us a love story as everything is falling apart.

Cook's dialogue is sharp and handled brilliantly, especially by Derek Wright playing the character of Gurth. These are not Nietzschean Supermen staring over the ever approaching cliff, affirming their tragedy with a resounding 'Yes'; they are ordinary people, full of fears, flaws and neurosis, and yet they stay staring out over the cliff, clinging hopelessly to a dying dream. They endure their situation in a very British way – and the theme of a dying sense of Britishness along with the crumbling cliff and the holiday camp is present throughout – with a 'stiff upper lip' they are frozen and waiting for the inevitable to happen.

The show is well paced and the set was uncomplicated and impressively effective in adding an extra dimension to the story. The characterisations are very well performed and have the strange sensation of being familiar, not in the sense of being stereotypical, but down to the way the simplicity and delivery of the dialogue is so well observed. The speech is natural and subtle, the tragedy oozes through the lines in the utter banal way it does in everyday life.

There were however a few niggles that tugged at the production: there did seem to be an over-reliance on sex and anatomy jokes – some of them were extremely funny and natural in the context – but several came off as unnecessary, conspicuously so. I also felt that the figure of Geoff's wife, who had died several years earlier as the cliff gave way beneath her, was a missed opportunity; she was absent from the story except a few humorous stories about her death, which seemed strange. Was she the reason Geoff refused to leave the ever disintegrating residence?

There were so many levels to this show, it will keep my mind busy for a long time, and this for me is the sign of an excellent show; it works on both levels, conscious and unconscious, and eats away at you long after you have left the theatre. The strength lay in the naturalness and subtlety, the story didn't tell the audience what to think; it felt like an organic process, somewhat like the erosion of the cliff going on outside Geoff's front door in the play.

This was a well thought-out show, with lots of levels, brought together with humour and a striking simplicity, it's a shame it is only around for a short run. Be sure to see it when it gets a more extended play.