

Playing Houses

4/5 stars

Martin O'Connor has been a vibrant presence in recent Glasgays!, and Playing Houses sees him take his natural, witty monologue style into a four way meditation on the role of fathers

Event review by Gareth K Vile.

Published 15 October 2009

Rather than adopting a traditional script, Martin O'Connor interweaves four monologues into a satisfying whole, that moves to a dramatic, if slightly forced, conclusion.

O'Connor's strength is his humour and ear for the spoken word: he eases the audience into the domestic horror with typical Glaswegian humour, littering the text with religious references and pop-culture punchlines. The cast capture his poetic lilt, and carry off both the tragedy and comedy expertly.

At times, the absent father becomes like a God-figure, as if O'Connor is mourning the death of God as well as the trauma of single-parent households. It could be seen as socially conservative, suggesting that a disappearing dad undermines the stability of the household. Yet this fiercely moral play is suffused with compassion.

As the jokes fall away, the story plunges into its dark finale with the inevitable power of Greek tragedy, weakened only by the double disaster, which introduces a sub-plot about repressed homosexuality and queer-bashing that overloads the narrative and extends the running time. Yet it is marvellous to report that O'Connor is developing his ambitions and a very impressive approach to larger scale work, without losing his voice or laughter.