



Enniscorthy Drama Group's Latest Is A Thing Of Beauty

Shea Tomkins • The Enniscorthy Guardian

Enniscorthy Drama Group takes to the competitive road to challenge the best that national amateur dramatics has to offer with their latest production, Martin McDonagh's *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, following three highly enjoyable performances at the town's Presentation Arts Centre.

While McDonagh's *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*, continues to draw the masses to cinemas around the country, Enniscorthy theatre-goers were treated to a slick, humorous and jaw-droppingly dark production of the acclaimed director and playwright's first instalment in his 1996-penned *Leenane* trilogy.

Set in the heart of Connemara's idyllic, scenic, yet mind-numbingly isolated west, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* tells the story of a dysfunctional relationship between a domineering and interfering mother and her set-upon daughter who feels that there is little more to her life's purpose than fixing daily portions of Complan for her mother, and fodder for the chickens.

She daydreams of a white knight arriving on a fiery steed one day; the closest she gets are glimpses of the Australian hunks appearing on *A Country Practice* on the telly in the corner.

Tied to each other through obligation, rather than good old-fashioned love, both characters are bottomless pits of sinister secrets; the tragic details of which are drip-fed to the audience as the play develops amid cutting and side-splittingly hilarious one-liners.

Anne-Marie and Michelle Whelan excel as the sparring mother and daughter, biting and barking at each other with such venomous, and at times awkward, realism that you are watching with fingers over your eyes as to what will happen once the verbal onslaughts stop, and the threats of physical abuse eventually materialise.

Fintan Kelly brings his usual commanding stage presence to the role of charming Pato, the local heart-throb, while Brendan Robinson delivers a gag-a-minute as the hard pressed brother and reluctant messenger who in the days before mobile phones acts as a runner delivering messages between the romantic interests, when, as he says himself, he has better things he could be doing 'like watching telly'.

The Hitchcockian twist brings the simmering tension to a magnificent, and literally, boiling climax, and is a fine testament to an outstanding directing performance by Tom Reddy.

Once again, Enniscorthy Drama Group is in with a real shout for honours as this quartet of excellence acting performances will ensure that the judges will have plenty to chew over when their participation in the All-Ireland Three Act Festival gets underway on March 1st, 2018 in Kilmuckridge, Wexford.

"Enniscorthy theatre-goers were treated to a slick, humorous and jaw- droppingly dark production"

