



[All the Way Home](#) by Ayub Khan-Din

Presented by [Library Theatre](#) in association with [The Lowry](#), directed by Mark Babych

Reviewed by [Jane Turner](#) October 2011

Award-winning playwright Ayub Khan-Din has returned to his native Salford for the world premiere of his new play ***All The Way Home***, performed by the highly respected Library Theatre Company opening their new season in association with The Lowry.

Billed as a contemporary and emotional comedy-drama set in Salford that details the life of a family as they unite to face the death of their brother from cancer, it is directed by Mark Babych who has assembled a team of excellent actors from the local area. Familiar faces include, from Coronation Street, Judith Barker, Paul Simpson, Kate Anthony, Sean Gallagher and Naomi Radcliffe while actors Susan Cookson, Julie Riley and James Foster will be known to regular theatre-goers.

Ayub Khan-Din rose to fame in the 1980's, appearing in "My Beautiful Launderette" and "Sammy and Rosie get Laid" but is most famous for writing "East is East" and "West is West". He called on his own experience of losing a sibling to write this play which explores the relationships we have with our roots, and with those we love but don't always understand,

where “long harboured resentments rise to the surface and loyalties get tested as family bonds unite and divide”.

Whoever said the “family is a haven in a heartless world” was probably right, all things considered, for most people most of the time. Yet the family is also quite often a place of war, of bitter rivalry, resentment and mis-understanding. But haven or war zone or simply at a moment of cease-fire, when trouble comes calling that’s where most of us ultimately return despite our differences, disagreements and squabbles – home, back to our roots, our families, where we came from, no matter what has happened to all of us in between times and while other things, people and places may have changed us, we start and usually end with the family.



When Brian (played by Sean Gallagher), bound by duty, returns to a Salford in the throes of regeneration, to a family living in the shadow of cancer, he finds that although his hometown and family are familiar they are also very different too, and there are neat parallels drawn between the developments in Salford and the changes he sees in his family. While confined within the walls of their Salford home, a house in a street of boarded up houses (largely played out in the small kitchen) awaiting the death of their brother Frankie who lies dying upstairs in bed, his empty chair in the corner of the room symbolic of his waning presence (and that of the

old Salford). They are at the same time trapped and united and caught between feelings of love and resentment, tenderness and cruelty as each family member struggles to come to terms with the loss of a brother and how they feel about each other, demonstrating equal amounts of love, anger, jealousy and mis-understanding.

This poignant, intelligent and witty script shows us the family in its raw state, looking at each other like a face in the mirror and seeing past, present and future combined. It is a brilliant observation of human behaviour, and much of it will touch a raw nerve with many. On such a sad occasion they are understandably occasionally maudlin as they remember the old times and hardships but more often than not as befits a tough working class family, they display flashes of humour as they re-live their lives together, their shared experiences, happier times and also revive past conflicts.

Scene after scene is played out around the kitchen table – the representation of the heart of the home - with relatives coming and going. This small and busy family kitchen in a run-down Salford home is adorned with all the usual clutter and paraphernalia of a working family room, and overcrowded with people, tentative and tense one minute and then laughing and crying the next. The back door is always open, and the rain more often than not falling creating an air of darkness and gloom and providing an atmospheric backdrop befitting of a Salford scene (I always maintain that it never stops raining in Manchester). There were more cigarettes smoked in that tiny back kitchen in a couple of hours than I've seen lit up for years and alongside the kettle the packet of 20 was the most-used prop in the play.

