



[The Return at HOME](#)

Part of [Push2018](#)

Reviewed by [Matthew Dougall](#) January 2018

The Return is a work-in-progress piece of physical theatre presented by Square Peg Theatre as part of HOME's PUSH Festival. PUSH is HOME's annual celebration of the North West's most creative talents.

The piece, as it stands at the moment is 40 minutes in duration, and is very much in the initial stages of development. The company are very keen to judge audience responses and attitude before going away to re-write and re-work.

Physical Theatre is a rather strange bird oftentimes, seeming perhaps abstract or incoherent, but that is also the joy of it too. It is a form of theatre where the physicality of the body carries more weight than the spoken word. Therefore movement, mime, gesture, dance etc feature more and carry the story rather than conventional narrative-driven theatre.

From my perspective then, what I witnessed this afternoon was too wordy. I know this is simply a personal preference perhaps and nothing more, but I would have liked to have seen more expressive movement and 'physicality'. Directed by **Michael White**, who also wrote the piece, the movement in the piece was excellent and visually interesting. It found ways of exploring emotion through the body which would have been difficult to express in words, and the constant reverting back to a wave-like unison movement - considering the story was set on an unspecified coastline - was clever and reassuring.

The story tells of Lynch and Giddens. Lynch is a broody and somewhat mysterious man who has taken for his bride, the young lady, Giddens, against her will. The women gossip and assure her that she will come to like him and accept him given time, and after Lynch gets her pregnant everyone hopes that this will bring the two of them closer. All, that is, except for Giddens herself and a certain Finnegan. Finnegan is the man spurned and yet they still love each other and so they decide to elope. At the moment of their elopement tragedy strikes.

The piece poses many questions, and leaves much to your own imagination and interpretation. This is something I really liked about the presentation. Theatre can often be guilty of tub-thumping and giving you everything on a plate; but there should also be a style of theatre which makes you open your mind and imagination and one which allows you to conjure your own ideas guided by what you witness. In this regard Square Peg's new piece *The Return*, is utterly magical.

The cast were a true ensemble of 6 young performers, **Sophie Coward** (who also wrote the music they sang and hummed during the play - reminiscent of Irish airs),

Chris Finnegan

,

Joseph Lynch

,

Sophie Guddens

,

Katherine Lunney

and

Kate Robinson

. They worked excellently together and sensibly wearing rehearsal blacks, added to the mysteries of time and place.

One thing though which didn't really work quite so well for me was the sound effects. These were created by the cast themselves, very much in the style of a radio play. One side of the stage was arranged props multifarious and a microphone which the cast would use to create the noises of other characters actually doing the action (throwing a stone, washing their hands, chopping carrots etc). The mimes were sufficient. I found myself distracted as the sound effect makers pulled my focus.

However, as I mentioned right at the start, this is not the finished article, and so I would finish this review by saying that Square Peg have started to create an extremely interesting and compelling piece of theatre which very much has legs, and I look forward to seeing where they go with this.