



[The Daughter-in-Law](#) by DH Lawrence

Performed at [The Lowry](#) , directed by Chris Honer

Reviewed by [Charlotte Starkey](#) February 2012

D. H. Lawrence completed his play *The Daughter-in-Law* in 1913, the same year in which he published *Sons and Lovers*, and one year after the miners' strike which had split the mining workforce in the Nottinghamshire coalfields, particularly in the Eastwood Colliery (Lawrence was born in Eastwood).

The play was never performed whilst he was alive, only opening in 1967 at The Royal Court. Before then he had written *A Collier's Friday Night* (1906), containing some of the ingredients of Lawrence's continuing concerns as a writer: a struggling mining family whose main wage-earner

drinks, is despised, and against whom the rest of the family struggle to find some sense of identity and purpose.

Since *The Daughter-in-Law* was performed in 1967, it has become more widely known but still deserves more attention. It is, therefore, fortunate, to be able to see this production by the Library Theatre, under the skilful direction of Chris Honer, on the stage of The Quays Theatre at The Lowry. It is subtly acted by a cast that captures, with humour, pathos and sensitivity, the underlying dramatic tensions, the unresolved problems and deep personal and social conflicts, of a story set within the immediate neighbourhood of a Nottinghamshire mining family in the early years of the twentieth century.

Lawrence was a fine playwright with a strong sense of dramatic tension. There are five main characters, three female and two male roles, with a sixth small entrance part for a Cabman played for all its worth with a beautifully dismissive finger gesture by Max Calandrew. It takes some doing to be on stage for a few seconds and yet make a mark. The setting is mainly the kitchen of the house of the newly married Luther and Minnie Gascoigne, with an important opening scene in the family home of Luther's mother. The focus of the drama is entirely upon the interaction of the characters on stage, whilst significant off-stage events involving these characters, including the bitterness of the colliery dispute, intervene. The main event, which has taken place before the play begins, overshadows all that happens.

