

"Faith Healer" Reviews



★ ★ ★ 1/2

Conor McPherson and Mark O'Rowe (the latter's "Terminus" just played at the Museum of Contemporary Art) have won rapturous plaudits in recent years for their dark dramas woven from interlocking monologues. But 82-year-old Brian Friel showed them how it's done in 1979's "Faith Healer," **now receiving a stark but sterling production with Oak Park Festival Theatre under the pinpoint-precise direction of Belinda Bremner.**

The title character, Francis Hardy (Kevin Theis) is a self-described Irish "mountebank" with a heart of carbon that no amount of time and pressure can turn into a diamond.

Bremner's stellar cast nails the harsh but humane qualities of Friel's tale with performances that haunt the mind long after the light fades.

- Kerry Reid



The moment Theis takes the stage, his presence fills it up. There isn't one part of him that does not completely transform. As a faith healer, Frank must sell himself as a fact and must possess the ability to persuade anybody of anything. Theis does just this. **He has a way of speaking that is so convincing that you can't not believe every word out of mouth. Theis captivates the audience, keeping them hanging on his every word.**

All three actors keep the accents solid throughout the performance and take the characters to heart. At no point does it ever feel like a performance, and often you might even forget you're watching a play. Although the play is lengthy, clocking in around two-and-half hours, the pacing is strong and the show moves along with energy. **Faith Healer proves to be a fantastic display of theatrical talent.**



Brian Friel's 1979 play is a brutish, brilliant, relentlessly unsentimental portrait of a traveling Irish preacher, presented in a series of monologues delivered by the preacher and the two most important people in his short, unhappy life: his wife and his business manager. Stealing a page from Rashomon, Friel gives us three distinct takes on the same events, leaving it up to us to fill in the gaps. Belinda Bremner's fine cast perform with a minimum of props on a nearly empty stage--a choice that heightens the power of Friel's words. The story that unfolds is funny, heartbreaking, and beautiful. **Kevin Theis is at once charming and chilling as the inspired, crazy, ultimately self-destructive title character.** --Jack Helbig



Brian Friel's 1979, *Faith Healer*, is a mesmerizing mystery told in four monologues, each rich in imagery and anecdotal information. We hear basically the same story told by three people – contradictory truths told by Frank Hardy – the Faith Healer (Kevin Theis), Grace, his wife or mistress (Mary Michell) -and Teddy (Jack Hickey) his manager. This memory play entices the audience to listen react and believe each character. We must decide where the truth lies.

First Frank Hardy, the itinerant faith healer, played with hyper reactions and guile by Kevin Theis, tells his story revealing his arrogance, angst and bewilderment. He is a moody, hard drinking troubled 'performer' who is part charlatan, part entertainer and sometimes actually a healer. Told in vivid, often lyrical language, we take to the charismatic Faith Healer as we start to wonder if he'll cure us of our ailments. **Theis easily charms us with his honest, yet jumpy performance. His monologue titillates as it creates enough mystery to compel us to wonder what happens next.**

"Faith Healer" will have you on the edge of your chair in wonderment. **I can't think of a finer work of pure storytelling than Brian Friel's Faith Healer.** Wonderful material in deft hands makes for a fine evening of theatre. This show is a gem!